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The two went downstairs to check out. The elderly cultivator, who was dozing behind the counter, was startled awake by the footsteps. He looked up, saw Kai, and quickly stood up, a smile plastered on his face.

“Sir, are you leaving already?”

“Yes.”

Kai placed the room key on the counter. “Going north out of the city, is there anything I should be careful about on the road?”

The elderly cultivator thought for a moment, then lowered his voice: “Going northeast out of the city leads to the Qingyun Mountains. That road isn’t safe; there have been quite a few people there recently. Be careful, sir, and don’t meddle in other people’s business. If you can avoid it, take a detour.”

Kai nodded, without asking any further questions.

The two left the inn, crossed the narrow streets of the city, and headed towards the north gate.

The north gate of Fire Crow City was much smaller than the south gate, and the city walls were also lower. Only two True Immortal Realm cultivators stood lazily against the sides of the gate, barely paying attention to those coming and going.

Outside the north gate was a dirt road extending northward, its surface full of potholes, with sparse withered grass and scattered bushes on both sides.

In the distance stretched rolling hills, barren of vegetation, revealing gray-brown rocks that appeared particularly desolate in the morning light.

According to the map, a two-day journey north from here would lead to the outer edge of the Azure Cloud Mountains.

Continuing northeast from the Azure Cloud Mountains, passing through an area marked “infested with demonic beasts,” and then another three days north, one would reach the edge of the Northern Netherworld Abyss.

Kai did not choose to fly.

Not because he couldn’t, but because he didn’t want to.

The battle in the Fallen God Wasteland had made him realize that the dangers of the Eighteenth Heaven extended far beyond the visible forces. The ancient remnants of souls slumbering deep within the wasteland, the spatial rifts scattered throughout, and the demonic beasts and demonic cultivators lurking in the shadows were all threats that could not be ignored.

Flying, though fast, made him a large target, easily becoming a sitting duck.

Walking, though slower, was safer and made it easier to spot the hidden threats.

The two walked north along the dirt road at a moderate pace.

Kai’s divine sense maintained maximum coverage, perceiving everything within a hundred miles.

Just as they had walked about three or four miles from Fire Crow City, they heard hurried footsteps behind them.

Kai turned his head slightly, his peripheral vision catching sight of a group of people rushing towards them from the north gate of Fire Crow City.

There were about twelve or thirteen people, dressed in robes of various colors, each with a uniform magical artifact at their waist: a crimson short sword with flame patterns engraved on its scabbard.

Their cultivation levels were generally between the ninth rank of True Immortal and the first rank of Golden Immortal, with the leader being slightly higher, at the peak of the first rank of Golden Immortal.

The group walked quickly and in unison, clearly an organized and disciplined group.

As they passed Kai and Jiang Xuelan, the leader glanced at Kai, his gaze lingering briefly on the Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist, before withdrawing his gaze without saying a word and leading his men to continue their rapid northward journey.

The group quickly disappeared into the distant hills, leaving only a trail of deep footprints and a cloud of dust.

Jiang Xuelan frowned slightly as she watched the direction the group had disappeared in. “These people don’t seem to be rogue cultivators.”

“No,”

Kai nodded. “Their steps were too synchronized. Although their magical artifacts and robes weren’t uniform, the short swords at their waists were standard, indicating they came from the same organization. And…”

He paused, “They carried the aura of the divine race.”

“The divine race?” Jiang Xuelan was somewhat surprised. “People from the Fire God lineage?”

“I don’t know.”

Kai shook his head. “Let’s go, ignore them.”

Kai withdrew his gaze and continued north.

The two walked for about another hour. The hills gradually became steeper, and the dirt road became narrower and narrower, finally disappearing into a rocky wasteland.

The map showed that there was no road from here on, and they could only rely on their sense of direction to continue heading northeast.

Just as Kai was about to take out the map jade slip to confirm the direction, he suddenly heard a strange sound coming from ahead.

The sound was chaotic, with shouts, the clash of weapons, and the roars of wild beasts.

The roar was deep and powerful, like the rage of some large beast, each roar causing the ground to tremble slightly.

Jiang Xuelan heard it too; her hand was already on her sword hilt, her gaze warily fixed on the direction from which the sound came.

Kai closed his eyes, extending his divine sense forward. After a moment, he opened his eyes, a hint of surprise flashing in his purple eyes.

“There are people ahead,”

he said. “More than twenty people are besieging a demonic beast. That beast is no ordinary creature; its entire body is engulfed in flames. More than twenty cultivators have been attacking it for a long time without success, and quite a few have already been injured.”

“More than twenty people besieging a demonic beast and still can’t defeat it?” Jiang Xuelan was somewhat surprised. “What kind of demonic beast is so powerful?”

Kai didn’t answer, because he sensed a violent, primal fire-attribute aura emanating from those cultivators.

But it wasn’t from the gods.

It was from the demons.

And specifically, from the Flame Demon lineage of the demons .

“Let’s go, let’s go take a look.” Without hesitation, Kai led Jiang Xuelan toward the direction from which the sound came.

Instead of swaggering over, the two stealthily approached the battlefield under the cover of rocks and bushes.

After crossing a small hill, the sight before them made Jiang Xuelan gasp.

It was a relatively flat valley, surrounded by steep cliffs. The valley floor was covered with pebbles and withered grass, the ground riddled with craters.

In the center of the valley, a gigantic beast roared.

The beast was about three zhang tall and over five zhang long, resembling a lion magnified countless times, but its body was hairless, covered instead with dark red scales.

Crimson flames burned on the scales, flowing across their surface like magma flowing across cracked earth.

Its head was enormous, with a single, curved horn protruding from its forehead, wreathed in even more intense flames, the color of which had changed from crimson to dark gold, the temperature so high that even the air itself seemed to distort and warp.

Its four claws were deeply embedded in the ground, each swing leaving several feet deep trenches in the rock, the rock within melted by the intense heat into crimson magma that flowed slowly.

Its tail was about two zhang long, ending in a bone hammer covered in barbs, which itself burned with flames.

Each tail swung, the bone hammer slammed into the ground, creating a crater over ten zhang deep, scattering rubble and flames everywhere.

“This is…” Jiang Xuelan looked at the beast, a hint of shock flashing in her eyes, “The Lava Lion King?”

“You know it?” Kai asked in a low voice.

“I’ve seen it in ancient books,” Jiang Xuelan said in a low voice. “The Lava Lion King, an ancient demonic beast, is said to have the bloodline of an ancient fire beast flowing through its veins. An

adult Lava Lion King’s combat power is comparable to a third or fourth-grade Golden Immortal, and its scales have extremely strong resistance to holy light and divine fire, making it very difficult to deal with. This creature was almost extinct in ancient times; I didn’t expect it to still exist in the Eighteenth Heaven.”

Third or fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

Kai’s gaze swept over the Lava Lion King, estimating its combat power.

Clearly, this Lava Lion King was not yet an adult and hadn’t reached the combat power of a fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

Otherwise, these cultivators would have been dead long ago.

However, with his current strength, killing this demonic beast wouldn’t be difficult.

But the cultivators currently besieging the Lava Lion King obviously didn't have that kind of strength. In the valley, more than twenty cultivators were frantically attacking the Lava Lion King.

Their robes were of various colors, and they all wore standardized magical artifacts at their waists, but this time not short swords, but various different weapons: spears, broadswords, battle axes, and iron hammers, each burning with dark red flames.

These flames were different from the golden sacred fire of the Flame God Palace; they were deeper in color, hotter, and more violent, carrying a primal sense of destruction.

It was the supreme fire of the demon race.

Kai's purple eyes swept over these cultivators, discerning their cultivation levels.

Most were at the ninth level of the True Immortal Realm, a few at the first level of the Golden Immortal Realm, and the leader was a burly, bald man at the second level of the Golden Immortal Realm, wielding a double-edged battle axe burning with dark red flames. Each strike left a shallow wound on the Lava Lion King's scales.

However, the Lava Lion King's regenerative abilities were astonishing; the wounds healed quickly under the scorching flames, causing no real damage.

The attack of over twenty people seemed fierce, but to the Lava Lion King, it was merely a tickle.

Each counterattack from the Lava Lion King posed a significant threat to these cultivators.

Kai saw four or five corpses lying at the edge of the valley; some were charred by the flames, some were smashed into mincemeat by the lion's claws, and one had been struck by the lion's tail's bone hammer, half his body gone.

Their blood seeped into the gravel and sand, staining the valley edge dark red.

“At this rate, these twenty-odd people won’t last long,”

Jiang Xuelan whispered. “That Lava Lion King hasn’t even used its full strength yet.”

Kai remained silent, his gaze continuing to observe the battlefield.

He noticed that although these cultivators weren’t individually strong, their teamwork was remarkably efficient.

They were divided into three groups: one group focused on the front, drawing the Lava Lion King’s attention; one group harassed and restrained it from the flanks; and one group provided ranged attacks from the rear using magical artifacts.

Whenever a comrade was injured, others would immediately step in, and the wounded would be quickly dragged to the rear for treatment.

This kind of teamwork couldn’t be developed overnight; it showed that this group had fought together for a long time and had a deep trust in each other.

“The Demon Clan’s battle formations,”

Kai said softly. “Unlike the God Clan, their formations are more flexible and emphasize individual coordination.”

“Demon Clan?” Jiang Xuelan was somewhat surprised. “You mean, these people are demons?”

“Yes. The Flame Demon lineage.”

Kai’s gaze fell on the bald man’s forehead, where there was a dark red flame pattern, easily overlooked if not carefully examined. “See that pattern?

That's the mark of the Flame Demon lineage. Every Flame Demon has it on their forehead, but it can usually be hidden with magic power. It will appear when magic power fluctuates violently during battle."

Kai himself possessed the Demon Clan's supreme fire and knew the Flame Demon lineage well.

Jiang Xuelan looked closely and indeed found that not only the bald man, but other cultivators also had dark red patterns of varying shades on their foreheads.

"The Flame Demon lineage…aren't they supposed to be mortal enemies with the Fire God lineage, the divine race? How dare they hunt demonic beasts on the territory of the Flame God Palace?" Jiang Xuelan asked.

"Precisely because they are mortal enemies, that's why they hunt them."

Kai's gaze deepened. "The Flame Demon lineage and the Fire God lineage share the same origin, both wielding the power of the laws of fire. But the Fire God lineage's holy light follows the path of light, while the Flame Demon lineage's ultimate fire follows the path of destruction.

They restrain each other, yet also need each other. If the Flame Demon lineage can hunt demonic beasts like the Lava Lion King, which have the bloodline of ancient fire beasts flowing through their veins, and cultivate using the essence and inner core of these beasts, their cultivation can advance by leaps and bounds. And the Fire God lineage's territory has the most of these demonic beasts."

"That's why they dare to take such a great risk, venturing deep into the Flame God Palace's territory."

Just then, the situation on the battlefield suddenly changed.

The Lava Lion King seemed enraged by the harassment from these cultivators. It roared to the sky, the sound waves spreading outwards like a tangible shockwave.

The bald, burly man was the first to be hit, thrown backward by the shockwave, crashing into the rock wall and spitting out a mouthful of black blood.

The other cultivators were also thrown about, some of the lower-level cultivators unconscious. Taking advantage of

the moment, the Lava Lion King pounced on the fallen bald man, its jaws wide open, a ball of blazing dark golden flame condensing within, the temperature so high it seemed to ignite the surrounding air.

The bald man tried to dodge, but his body was numb from the shockwave, unable to move.

A flicker of despair flashed in his eyes, quickly replaced by madness.

He bit his tongue, his blood essence burning, his body surging with intense heat, preparing to fight the Lava Lion King to the death.

Just then, a crimson light streaked across the valley, striking the Lava Lion King precisely in the head.

It was an arrow burning with intense fire. The arrow itself wasn't particularly powerful, but its angle was extremely precise, striking the Lava Lion King precisely in the left eyelid.

The Lava Lion King, in pain, prematurely spewed out its dark golden flames, deviating from its trajectory and slamming into the rock wall beside the bald man.

A large hole, several meters deep, was blasted into the rock wall, scattering debris and lava everywhere.

The bald man seized the opportunity to scramble out of the Lava Lion King's attack range, panting heavily.

"Brother, are you alright?" A young cultivator wielding a longbow ran to his side and helped him up.

“I’m fine.” The bald man wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, his gaze fixed on the valley entrance, a hint of wariness flashing in his eyes.

But there was nothing there.

Enraged by the arrow, the Lava Lion King abandoned its pursuit of the bald man and instead pounced on the ranged cultivators.

The cultivators scattered and fled, but the Lava Lion King was too fast, catching up with two slower cultivators in the blink of an eye.

With a single swipe of its claw, the two cultivators were smashed into mincemeat before they could even scream, blood and bits of flesh splattering everywhere.

“Don’t panic! Maintain formation!” the bald giant roared, dragging his wounded body back to the battlefield.

The other cultivators quickly regrouped and continued to surround the Lava Lion King.

But Kai could see that their morale had plummeted.

Seven or eight people were dead, and more than half were wounded, while the Lava Lion King was almost unharmed except for a minor injury to its left eye.

At this rate, it wouldn’t be long before all twenty-odd people were wiped out.

Jiang Xuelan also realized this, turning to look at Kai with a questioning look in her eyes.

Kai shook his head, signaling her not to move.

It wasn’t that he was cold-blooded, but that he was waiting.

Waiting not for these people to be wiped out, but for another group.

He had sensed it long ago: atop the rocky cliffs on the north side of the valley, a group of cultivators from Fire Raven City were hidden in the shadows, observing the battlefield.

Their presence was well-concealed, but it couldn't escape Kai's divine sense.

That group didn't attack; they were waiting.

They waited until the demon cultivators and the Lava Lion King were both severely weakened before emerging to clean up the mess. Sure enough, after about half an incense stick's time, more than half of the demon cultivators had been killed or wounded, and the Lava Lion King was also seriously injured. Its left eye was completely blinded, and many of its scales were scorched through by the extreme fire, revealing the flesh emitting black smoke.

Although it was powerful, it was fighting twenty against one, and the demon's extreme fire could indeed harm it. The prolonged battle had left it exhausted.

Kai noticed that the Lava Lion King's speed had slowed considerably compared to the beginning, and the flames in its mouth were no longer as intense.

It began to show signs of retreat, attempting to break through and escape several times, but was desperately stopped by the demon cultivators.

The bald, burly man was covered in blood, his left arm hanging limply at his side, clearly broken.

His battle axe was stained with the Lava Lion King's dark golden blood, and the blade was chipped, but it still stood firmly in front of the Lava Lion King.

"Brothers!"

His voice was hoarse but firm. “Hold on a little longer! This beast won’t live much longer! Once we kill it and take its inner core, we can…”

Before he could finish, a cold voice suddenly rang out from the valley floor.

“Can what?”

The bald, burly man looked up sharply, his pupils contracting sharply.

Above the rock wall, twelve or thirteen figures slowly rose, looking down at the valley.

It was the group Kai had encountered outside Fire Raven City.

The leader was a middle-aged man, dressed in a crimson robe, with a crimson dagger hanging at his waist. His face was stern, and a golden flame pattern gleamed in the morning light between his brows.

It was the mark of the Fire God lineage.

The bald, burly man recognized the mark, and his face instantly turned ashen.

“People from the Fire God Palace.” His voice seemed to be squeezed out from between his teeth, each word filled with deep-seated hatred.

“Fire God Palace?”

The middle-aged man leading the group sneered. “It’s Flame God Palace. The legitimate lineage of the Fire God in the Eighteenth Heaven is Flame God Palace, not some Fire God Palace. You demon bastards can’t even remember your own names, yet you dare to come to our territory to hunt demonic beasts?”

His gaze swept across the valley, looking at the demonic cultivators lying dead and wounded on the ground, then at the Lava Lion King covered in injuries, a satisfied smile curving his lips.

“Not bad, very well done. Saved us a lot of effort.”

The bald, burly man gripped his battle axe tightly, the dark red lines on his forehead becoming even more pronounced with anger. “This was our prey, we hunted it first. If you want to reap the rewards, you’ll have to ask my axe for permission.”

“Your axe?”

The middle-aged man glanced contemptuously at the bald man’s dulled battle axe. “A mere second-grade Golden Immortal demon brat, leading a bunch of defeated soldiers, dares to negotiate with me?”

He paused, his voice suddenly turning cold. “This is the territory of our Flame God Palace. You demon cultivators, daring to trespass and hunt demonic beasts, are already guilty of a capital offense.

I’m giving you two choices—either lay down your weapons, surrender, and come back to the Flame God Palace with me for judgment. Or…”

He drew a crimson short sword from his waist, golden holy flames instantly igniting on the blade, “…and die now.”

“Bullshit!”

A young cultivator behind the bald, burly man couldn’t help but curse. “When did this area become your Flame God Palace’s territory? You can at least control a wretched place like Fire Raven City, but what right do you have to call the shots in this desolate wilderness?”

The middle-aged man’s gaze fell on the young cultivator, his eyes like those of someone looking at a dead man.

“Why?”

He laughed, a cold smile. “Because we are the gods, and you are the demons. It’s only natural for gods to kill demons. Do we need any other reason?”

Before he finished speaking, more than a dozen cultivators behind him simultaneously drew their short swords, golden holy flames burning on the blades, illuminating the entire valley.

The demon cultivators instinctively took a step back, protecting their wounded companions behind them.

Their eyes were filled with anger and resentment, but even more so with a deep-seated sense of powerlessness.

The hatred between the gods and demons had lasted for countless millennia. The gods considered themselves the orthodox race, regarding the demons as heretics; whenever they met, it was a fight to the death.

On this land, the power of the gods far surpassed that of the demons, forcing demon cultivators to hide in the shadows, eking out a living like rats.

The bald, burly man gritted his teeth; he knew today was unlikely to end well.

It was either death here or a desperate fight to carve a bloody path through.

“Brothers,”

he said, his voice low but clear to every demon cultivator, “today might be our last. But even in death, we’ll take a few down with us. Are you afraid?”

“No!”

A dozen demon cultivators roared in unison, their voices echoing through the valley, drowning out the Lava Lion King’s growl.

They raised their weapons, dark red flames burning on them, a stark contrast to the golden holy light of the gods.

The two opposing forces of fire clashed in the valley, the air distorting in the intense heat, the ground cracking.

A flicker of surprise crossed the middle-aged man's eyes; he clearly hadn't expected these demon cultivators to have the courage to fight to the death in such dire circumstances.

But after the initial surprise came an even colder killing intent.

"Seeking death."

He waved his hand, and more than a dozen cultivators behind him rushed out simultaneously, leaping down the rock face and pouncing on the demon cultivators in the valley.

Golden holy flames and dark red supreme fire collided in mid-air, creating a deafening explosion.

The two flames were inherently incompatible; their collision generated violent fluctuations of spiritual energy. Each collision was like a small spiritual energy explosion, scattering the surrounding air in all directions.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan hid behind a pile of rubble in the distance, quietly watching this battle between gods and demons.

Jiang Xuelan's hand remained firmly on the hilt of her sword, her fingers turning white from the pressure.

She wasn't trying to help, but rather preparing to deal with any attacks that might affect them.

"Who do you think will win?" she asked softly.

"The gods," Kai's answer was brief.

"Why? Although the demons are fewer in number, their individual strength is greater than that of the gods. That bald man is a second-grade

Golden Immortal, while the leader of the gods is only at the peak of the first-grade Golden Immortal."

"It's not a matter of strength,"

Kai shook his head, "it's about their condition. The demons have been fighting the Lava Lion King for a long time, suffering more than half their casualties, their stamina is exhausted, and their spiritual energy is depleted. The gods, on the other hand, are well-rested and in perfect condition. Even if their individual strength is inferior to that of the demons, they can overwhelm them with sheer numbers."

His gaze fell on the center of the battlefield, where the bald giant was engaged in fierce combat with the middle-aged man.

The bald, burly man's second-grade Golden Immortal realm was indeed a minor realm higher than the middle-aged man's peak first-grade Golden Immortal realm. However, he was injured; his left arm was broken, and most of his spiritual energy was depleted, making each swing of his axe feel strained.

The middle-aged man, on the other hand, was in perfect condition. The holy light flames on his short sword were intense yet stable, and his swordsmanship was exquisite, each strike aimed at the bald man's vital points.

With this disparity in strength, the bald man gradually fell into a disadvantageous position. Elsewhere, the demon cultivators were suffering a crushing defeat.

While the number of gods wasn't much greater than the demons, nearly half the demons had lost their fighting ability, and the rest were heavily wounded and unable to withstand the gods' onslaught.

In less than half an incense stick's time, three more demon cultivators fell.

The bald, burly man roared, trying to rush to their aid, but was forced back by the middle-aged man's sword.

"Don't rush,"

the middle-aged man sneered, "One at a time, it'll be your turn soon."

The bald man's eyes were bloodshot, his teeth grinding together.

He knew he might really die here today, but he was unwilling to accept it.

He had expended so much effort, lost so many brothers, and was about to defeat the Lava Lion King, only to encounter the gods at this crucial moment.

He would rather die under the Lava Lion King's claws than at the hands of the gods.

At least dying at the hands of a demon beast was a warrior's way of dying.

To be killed by the gods was humiliating.

Just then, the battlefield situation suddenly changed.

Whether provoked by the holy flames of the gods or sensing something else, the Lava Lion King suddenly went berserk.

Its body swelled dramatically, the flames on its scales turned from crimson to dark gold, and the single horn on its forehead blazed with a blazing white flame.

This was its life-saving technique—burning its life essence to temporarily boost its combat power to at least the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

Using this move would severely deplete the Lava Lion King's life force, leaving it weak for at least several years, even decades, after the battle.

But at this moment, it couldn’t care less.

It roared to the sky, the sound wave several times stronger than before, causing countless cracks to appear in the rock walls surrounding the valley, and debris rained down.

The cultivators of the gods and demons were all thrown about by the shockwave; several with lower cultivation levels bled from all seven orifices and collapsed to the ground.

Taking advantage of the chaos, the Lava Lion King charged towards the valley exit; it was trying to escape.

“Stop it!” the middle-aged man shouted, taking the lead in chasing after the Lava Lion King.

If he could capture a Lava Lion King alive and present it to the Flame God Palace, he could at least advance three levels and receive a personal reward from the Palace Master.

He couldn’t let this opportunity slip by.

The bald, burly man also gave chase, not for anything else but the inner core.

It was something he had obtained with the lives of more than a dozen brothers, and he absolutely couldn’t let the gods take it away.

Cultivators from both the gods and demons chased after the Lava Lion King simultaneously, and the scene became chaotic.

Although the Lava Lion King had gone berserk, it was still severely injured, and its speed was far less than its peak.

Just as it reached the valley exit, it was slashed in the back by the middle-aged man’s sword. Golden holy flames exploded on its scales, scorching the dark red scales black.

The Lava Lion King, in pain, turned and pounced on the middle-aged man, its horn, burning with blazing white flames, aimed for the middle-aged man's chest.

The middle-aged man couldn't dodge in time, and the horn grazed his left arm, instantly burning it to a charred remains.

He screamed and flew backward, crashing heavily to the ground.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, the bald giant rushed to the Lava Lion King, raised his battle axe, and cleaved it towards the lion's neck.

This axe strike concentrated all his power and life essence; dark red flames condensed on the axe blade into a three-foot-long blade of light, slashing down with unstoppable force.

The axe blade struck the Lava Lion King's neck, and dark golden blood gushed out, splattering the bald giant's face.

The Lava Lion King let out a piercing scream, its body twisting violently, the bone hammer on its tail slamming into the bald giant's chest.

The bald giant's chest caved in, the sound of breaking ribs clearly audible.

He coughed up blood, was sent flying, crashing against the rock wall, sliding down, never to rise again.

Although the Lava Lion King wasn't decapitated, the wound on its neck was extremely deep, dark golden blood gushing out like a fountain; its life force was rapidly draining away.

It staggered, trying to continue its escape, but after only a few steps, it collapsed to the ground from blood loss, its massive body leaving a long trail of blood.

The cultivators of both the gods and demons stopped, staring at the fallen Lava Lion King, none daring to approach.

Although the beast was on its last breath, its final, desperate attack was enough to kill anyone who came near.

The two sides remained locked in a stalemate, neither daring to make the first move.

The middle-aged man rose from the ground, his left arm charred black, completely useless.

His face was deathly pale, but the killing intent in his eyes remained undiminished.

“You demon bastards,”

his voice trembled with pain, but remained icy, “your people are either dead or wounded, what do you have left to fight us for? If you know what’s good for you, lay down your weapons, and I might consider giving you a quick death.”

The bald, burly man leaned against the rock wall, blood gushing from his mouth, but his gaze remained defiant.

“Bullshit!” he spat out the words through clenched teeth with his last strength.

The middle-aged man’s face was extremely grim.

He raised the short sword in his right hand, golden holy flames burning on the blade, and walked towards the bald, burly man.

He wanted to kill this ignorant demon brat with his own hands.

One step, two steps, three steps.

His steps were slow, each step heavy, as if he were enjoying the hunt.

The bald, burly man closed his eyes, not out of fear, but because he didn’t want to see the smug faces of the gods.

“Die.”

The middle-aged man raised the short sword, aiming for the bald, burly man’s neck.

Then, his body suddenly froze.

The short sword stopped in mid-air, only an inch away from the bald, burly man’s neck.

The middle-aged man’s pupils suddenly dilated, his mouth opened, wanting to say something, but nothing came out.

An arrow burning with dark red flames pierced through his chest, the arrowhead protruding from his chest, bringing with it a spray of golden blood.

He looked down at the arrow in his chest, his eyes filled with disbelief.

This was… the supreme fire of the demon race?

But how could the supreme fire of the demon race be so powerful?

His consciousness was rapidly fading, and his body slowly fell forward, crashing to the ground in front of the bald, burly man.

Golden blood gushed from his wounds, pooling on the ground.

The bald, burly man opened his eyes, saw the middle-aged man lying before him, and was initially stunned. Then, he abruptly looked up in the direction from which the arrow had come.

Three dark red beams of light descended from the sky above the valley.

The beams struck the ground, creating three craters about ten feet deep.

As the light dissipated, three figures were revealed.

All three were demon cultivators, two men and one woman.

The two men were burly, with rugged faces, and the dark red markings on their foreheads were more pronounced than the bald man's. Their cultivation was around the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

They wore dark red armor, inscribed with complex fiery runes, and wielded swords burning with intense fire. Their entire bodies radiated a violent killing intent.

However, that killing intent was not directed at the bald man and his companion, but rather at the gods. The woman made Kai freeze.

She stood between two burly male cultivators, appearing remarkably slender.

She wore a dark red dress embroidered with burning flame patterns on the hem, and her long, ink-black hair swayed gently in the wind.

Her face was exquisitely beautiful, her brows carrying an innate nobility and aloofness, but her eyes were dark red, like burning embers, or deep, blood-red gems, shimmering with an eerie light in the morning light.

Upon seeing this face, Kai was instantly stunned.

Because he recognized this woman.

Su Yuqi, the woman he had longed for.

The woman who had followed him from the very beginning of the mortal world.

The woman who had followed him from the mortal world to the Celestial Realm.

He wanted to stand up, to rush out, to call out her name.

But his shoulder was held firmly by a hand.

Jiang Xuelan.

Her strength wasn't great, but that hand felt like it was made of iron, firmly pressing down on Kai's shoulder, preventing him from moving.

"Let go." Kai's voice was low, so low that only Jiang Xuelan could hear it.

"No."

"No."

Jiang Xuelan's voice was equally low, but her tone left no room for argument. "Look carefully, she's a demon now, and she's on the territory of the Flame God Palace. If you rush out now, you'll harm her." Chen

Ping froze.

Jiang Xuelan was right.

Su Yuqi was now a demon, and clearly held a high position within the demon race. The two Golden Immortal realm demon cultivators were half a step behind her, indicating that her status was above theirs.

Kai took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing the impulse in his heart, and slowly, little by little, released his grip on the sword.

But his gaze never left the dark red figure.

In the valley, Su Yuqi's appearance stunned everyone.

The divine race cultivators, seeing the corpses of their companions on the ground, seeing Su Yuqi and the two Golden Immortal realm level three cultivators behind her, showed fear for the first time on their faces.

Golden Immortal realm level three.

In the Eighteenth Heaven, this cultivation level wasn't top-tier, but for these lower-level divine cultivators, a third-grade Golden Immortal was an overwhelming force.

Moreover, the opponent wasn't just one Golden Immortal, but two, plus a woman whose cultivation was unfathomable.

"Retreat!" someone among the divine cultivators shouted, turning and running.

The others followed, abandoning their weapons and the corpses of their companions, fleeing wildly towards the edge of the valley.

Su Yuqi didn't chase.

She didn't even glance at the fleeing divine cultivators.

Her gaze swept across the valley, looking at the heavily wounded demon cultivators lying on the ground, her brow furrowing slightly.

Then, she raised her right hand, a ball of dark red supreme fire condensing in her palm. The supreme

fire wasn't large, only about the size of a fist, but the power contained within it made Kai, hiding in the distance, feel a chill.

Second-grade Golden Immortal? Or third-grade? Or even higher?

Su Yuqi's cultivation was far higher than he had anticipated.

She tossed the supreme fire in her hand into the air, where it exploded into dozens of tiny fire lines, precisely striking each of the wounded demon cultivators.

These fire lines didn't burn their bodies; instead, they transformed into warm spiritual energy, flowing into their meridians and healing their injuries.

The bald giant's chest dent healed visibly, broken ribs rejoined, and internal injuries rapidly healed.

In less than ten breaths, all the surviving demon cultivators regained their mobility.

They struggled to their feet, knelt before Su Yuqi, foreheads pressed to the ground, their posture utterly devout.

"Thank you for saving our lives, my lord!"

Su Yuqi didn't speak, only nodded slightly.

Her gaze fell on the dying Lava Lion King, a flicker of emotion flashing in her dark red eyes.

She walked to the Lava Lion King, bent down, and placed her hand on his forehead.

Sensing the aura of the supreme fire in her palm, the Lava Lion King trembled violently, as if in fear, yet also in submission.

Su Yuqi's hand lingered on the Lava Lion King's forehead for a moment before she withdrew it.

A fist-sized, dark golden inner core appeared in her palm, its surface swirling with intense flame patterns and emanating a rich aura of an ancient fire beast.

The Lava Lion King's life force rapidly dissipated; its massive body slowly lost its temperature, and the flames on its scales extinguished layer by layer.

Finally, it closed its still-intact eye and died completely.

Su Yuqi stored the inner core in her storage ring, straightened up, and her gaze swept over the kneeling demon cultivators once more.

“Take your companion’s body and leave this place.” Her voice was soft, yet carried an undeniable authority.

“Yes!” The bald, burly man kowtowed heavily, then stood up and directed the other cultivators to clean up the battlefield and move their companion’s body.

Su Yuqi turned to leave, but at that moment, her gaze suddenly froze.

She looked at a pile of rubble outside the valley, a hint of doubt flashing in her dark red eyes.

She sensed something.

Someone was watching her from there.

It wasn’t a cultivator from the Divine Race; they had all fled long ago.

Nor was it a cultivator from the Demon Race; all the Demon Race members were here.

It was… someone else.

Her brow furrowed slightly, her gaze lingering on the pile of rubble for a moment.

Then, she sensed a familiar aura.

That aura seemed…

no, that couldn’t be, how could this aura appear in the Eighteenth Heaven?

She shook her head, dismissing the thought.

Impossible.

He couldn’t be here.

She took a deep breath, turned, and leaped into the air. Her dark red figure drew an arc in the air, disappearing into the sky above the valley.

Two Golden Immortal-level Demon Race cultivators followed closely behind, three dark red lights swiftly disappearing into the distance, leaving only a scene of devastation in the valley.

The bald, burly man, along with the remaining Demon Race cultivators, finished cleaning up the battlefield, carrying the Lava Lion King's corpse, and staggered out of the valley.

Soon, the valley fell silent once more.

All that remained were bloodstains, shattered weapons, and a few corpses of the gods that hadn't been carried away.

Behind a pile of rubble in the distance, Jiang Xuelan finally released her hand from Kai's shoulder.

Kai slowly stood up, his gaze following the dark red light that had vanished into the horizon, his purple eyes swirling with complex emotions.

"She didn't see us," Jiang Xuelan said softly, standing beside him. "Or rather, she saw us, but wasn't sure."

Kai remained silent.

He knew that Su Yuqi's last glance at the rubble wasn't because she had discovered them, but because she had sensed his presence.

They were too close.

But she didn't recognize him.

Not that she couldn't recognize him, but that she couldn't believe it.

Su Yuqi probably couldn't believe she had arrived at the Eighteenth Heaven.

And Kai couldn't imagine how Su Yuqi could be in the Eighteenth Heaven either.

If Su Yuqi was here, then where was Ning Zhi?

Why hadn't Ning Zhi appeared with Su Yuqi this time? "What do you plan to do?" Jiang Xuelan asked.

Kai remained silent for a long time.

He stared in the direction Su Yuqi had disappeared, a direction north, the same direction as the Northern Cold Abyss.

"Keep going," he finally spoke, his voice regaining its calm, "To the Northern Cold Abyss."

"And then?"

Kai didn't answer.

He withdrew his gaze, walked into the valley, squatted down, and picked up a discarded crimson dagger from the ground—the one left behind by the middle-aged man he had killed.

The blade was covered in dust and blood, but it was still sharp.

Kai turned the dagger over; a small character was engraved at the bottom of the hilt—"Flame."

A standard magical artifact of the Flame God Palace.

He put the dagger into his storage ring and turned to walk towards the northern hills.

Jiang Xuelan followed behind him, without asking any more questions.

She knew what Kai was thinking.

The Northern Cold Abyss was in the north, and the direction Su Yuqi had disappeared in was also north.

This was no coincidence.

Perhaps they would meet again on the way to the Northern Cold Abyss.

Perhaps not.

But in any case, Kai's gaze was already locked on the north.

In that direction lay not only the ruins of the Ice God's lineage, but also someone he thought he would never see again.

The two walked in silence for about half an hour. The hills gradually flattened, and the outline of a continuous mountain range appeared in the distance.

That was the Azure Cloud Mountains.

According to the map, crossing the outer perimeter of the Azure Cloud Mountains and traveling north for three days would lead to the Northern Netherworld Abyss.

Kai stopped, took out a map jade slip from his storage bag, and confirmed the direction.

"We're entering the outer perimeter of the Azure Cloud Mountains from here," he said. "The map indicates that demonic beasts roam this area; we need to be careful."

Jiang Xuelan nodded, her hand on her sword hilt, her gaze warily scanning their surroundings.

The two continued forward, walking north along a dry riverbed.

Towering cliffs lined both sides of the riverbed, covered in moss and vines. Occasionally, a few small demonic beasts would dart out from the vines, fleeing quickly upon seeing the two.

Kai's divine sense maintained maximum coverage; everything within a fifty-mile radius was within his perception.

The battle in the valley had lasted for more than half an hour. The fleeing divine cultivators should have already returned to Fire Raven City, or were on their way back.

They would certainly report their encounter with the demons to the Flame God Palace.

The people of the Flame God Palace would soon know that demons were lurking in the area north of Fire Raven City, and that there were even Golden Immortals of the third rank or higher among them.

This meant that this area would soon become unsafe.

The Flame God Palace might send people to wipe out the demons, or they might seal off the area, or they might even increase patrols.

Kai had to cross the Azure Cloud Mountains and enter the Northern Netherworld Abyss before the large force of the Flame God Palace arrived.

The Northern Netherworld Abyss was an extremely cold forbidden land that even Golden Immortals of the fifth rank were unwilling to easily set foot in, and the people of the Flame God Palace would certainly not pursue them there.

Once they got there, they would be safe.

The two walked for about another hour, and the sky gradually darkened.

The gold and crimson of the three blazing suns had already set below the horizon, leaving only the silvery-white moon hanging in the sky, casting its cold moonlight on the earth.

Kai found a relatively secluded cave and decided to spend the night there.

The cave wasn't large, about three zhang deep, and the entrance was hidden by vines, making it difficult to spot.

The cave was dry, with no trace of demonic beasts, so it should be a safe temporary shelter.

Jiang Xuelan took out several spirit stones from her storage bag and set up a simple warning array at the cave entrance. If any creature approached, the array would sound an alarm.

Kai sat cross-legged inside the cave, taking out the crimson short sword he had picked up from the valley from his storage ring, examining it closely.

The holy light runes on the blade glowed faintly in the moonlight—the mark of the Flame God Palace.

"Flame God Palace," Kai murmured, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

His enmity with the gods had been forged in the Celestial Realm.

He needed to find the God King of the gods and force him to release Wan Jianxing.

Wan Jianxing was his sect leader, and Kai was determined to rescue him no matter what.

If the God King refused to release him, Kai wouldn't hesitate to annihilate the entire god race.

However, not now. Kai was no match for the God King,

nor even for Yan Wuji .

But he knew that day wouldn't be far off.

He sheathed his short sword, closed his eyes, and slowly circulated the Mind Concentration Technique.

Chaotic power surged through his meridians, replenishing the spiritual energy he had consumed that day.

The Chaotic Fire in his dantian burned quietly, melting spiritual energy, medicinal power, and fragments of laws into the purest chaotic power.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture continued to spread under the nourishment of spiritual energy, and the golden dragon patterns had covered 65% of his skin. He

was one step closer to achieving the Great Golden Body.

Kai already possessed an indestructible golden body, and with the protection of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the golden dragon patterns spread so quickly.

At the cave entrance, Jiang Xuelan did not enter meditation but sat on a rock, gazing at the faint, icy blue halo on the northern horizon.

The halo was exceptionally clear under the moonlight, like someone had lit an icy blue lamp on the horizon.

That was the direction of the Northern Abyss.

The ruins of the Ice God lineage lay there.

Her fingers gently caressed the hilt of her sword, a complex mix of emotions surging within her.

If members of the Ice God lineage truly lived in the Northern Abyss, what did that mean?

It meant that the Ice God lineage's patience was stronger than that of other branches.

So many years had passed, and there were still members of the Ice God lineage in the Eighteenth Heaven.

Perhaps even in the Twentieth Heaven, at the Divine Clan's headquarters, there were members of the Ice God lineage patiently enduring?

She took a deep breath, withdrawing her gaze from the icy blue aura and turning back to the darkness outside the cave.

Something was moving in the darkness.

Jiang Xuelan's hand rested on the hilt of her sword, her spiritual energy circulating within her, icy blue light swirling around her fingertips.

But she didn't move, because the creature's aura was weak; it was just a low-level demonic beast passing by, posing no threat whatsoever.

The beast passed by the cave entrance, not even noticing anyone inside, and hopped away into the darkness.

Jiang Xuelan loosened her grip on her sword hilt and sat down again.

She turned her head and glanced at Kai, who was meditating cross-legged inside the cave.

Purple chaotic energy flowed around him, casting flickering light on his face.

His young face was expressionless, as calm as a stagnant pool.

But Jiang Xuelan knew what turbulent emotions lay hidden beneath that calm surface.

She withdrew her gaze and looked back at the northern horizon.

An icy blue halo flowed silently in the night, like a summons to her.

The Northern Cold Abyss, the lineage of the Ice God.

She would definitely find that place, find the ruins of the Ice God lineage, find the people of the Ice God lineage, find the inheritance of the Ice God lineage.

Not for herself, but for the tens of thousands of years of humiliation and waiting endured by the Ice God lineage. “Xue Lan…” Kai opened his eyes and called out softly.

Jiang Xue Lan was startled. Although Kai didn’t say anything, she saw something in his eyes.

Jiang Xue Lan waved her hand, and the entire cave entrance was enveloped in a white mist, obscuring what was happening inside.

Then Jiang Xue Lan began to undress. After so long, she wanted to cultivate with Kai.

As the two embraced, the temperature inside the cave gradually rose.

And with each thrust, Kai called out Su Yu Qi’s name.

Jiang Xue Lan didn’t care, because she knew that Su Yu Qi’s position in Kai’s heart was irreplaceable.

Meanwhile, in the Flame God Palace.

In the main hall, Yan Wuji sat on the Flame God Throne, his body engulfed in golden flames.

Kneeling before him were three people: Yan Hu and Yan Bao, who had escaped from the Fallen God Wasteland, and the deputy of the middle-aged man who had been killed by Su Yu Qi in the valley earlier that day.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao were covered in wounds. The sword wound on Yan Hu's chest, though bandaged, was still bleeding. The indentation in Yan Bao's chest, though treated, still caused him excruciating pain with every breath.

They knelt in the center of the hall, supporting each other, their foreheads pressed to the ground, afraid to look up.

After a day and a night of rest, they finally returned to the Flame God Palace. They

had left full of pride, but now returned in utter disarray.

The deputy, a divine cultivator, trembled violently, his face deathly pale, as if he had just crawled out of the gates of hell. Yan Wuji remained silent

.

He was silent for a long time, so long that everyone in the hall thought he was asleep.

But his eyes were open, his crimson-gold eyes flickering in the flames like two burning stars.

"So," he finally spoke, his voice chillingly calm, "Yan Po is dead. Thirty Flame Dragon Guards, all wiped out. You two, you fled back in such a sorry state."

Yan Hu and Yan Bao's bodies trembled violently.

"Your subordinate is incompetent."

Yan Hu's voice was hoarse to the extreme. "That Kai… his chaotic power suppresses all holy light. My Xing Huo is like waste paper before him.

Senior Brother Yan Po burned his essence blood to push his cultivation to the threshold of the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, yet he was still pierced through by Kai's sword."

"Pierced through by a single sword." Yan Wuji repeated these four words, his crimson-gold eyes narrowing slightly.

He stood up, the flames surging with his movement, and the temperature of the entire hall suddenly increased several times.

The divine fire lamps in the hall exploded again, golden sparks flying everywhere. Several disciples kneeling on the ground were hit by the sparks, their skin instantly burned, but they dared not move, not even utter a sound.

"Eighth rank of True Immortal Realm, one sword to kill the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm." Yan Wuji's voice held a hint of fear that even he himself did not realize. "Just who is this Kai?"

No one could answer this question.

Yan Hu and Yan Bao lowered their foreheads even further, almost touching the ground.

Yan Wuji's gaze shifted from the Flame Tiger and Flame Leopard to the divine cultivator serving as his assistant.

"What about your side?"

The cultivator trembled, his voice shaking. "Reporting…Reporting to the Palace Master, I was ordered to lead a patrol north of Fire Raven City. Today, on the outskirts of the Azure Cloud Mountains, I discovered a group of demon cultivators hunting the Lava Lion King. I intended to wait until they were both weakened before wiping them out, but…but…"

"But what?"

“But just as I was about to succeed, three powerful demons suddenly appeared. Two were at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm, and one…and one woman, whose cultivation was at least at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm. She killed my leader in one move, and I barely escaped with my life.” Yan

Wuji frowned.

Demons.

At least the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

These two words together evoked a long-forgotten unease in him.

The demons’ power in the Eighteenth Heaven had always been weak, suppressed by the Flame God Palace and the Bright Hall in the barren lands of the far north, unable to cause any significant trouble.

But recently, the Demon Clan’s activities have become increasingly frequent.

First, someone discovered traces of the Demon Clan on the edge of the Fallen God Wasteland, and now someone has encountered a high-ranking Demon Clan cultivator on the outskirts of the Azure Cloud Mountains.

This doesn’t seem like a coincidence.

“What are the woman’s characteristics?” Yan Wuji asked.

The cultivator thought for a moment, “She wore a dark red dress, had a beautiful face, and a very complex dark red pattern on her forehead, which should be the mark of the Flame Demon lineage. Her supreme fire… the holy light of my subordinates is utterly powerless in front of her, unable to even get close to her.”

A dark red dress, complex patterns, a cultivation level of at least the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

Yan Wuji searched his memory for powerful Demon Clan members, but none matched this description.

He knew all the Golden Immortal Realm cultivators of the Flame Demon lineage, but in the Heavenly Realm, the Demon Clan was always suppressed by the God Clan.

Where the God Clan was, the Demon Clan couldn't cause any trouble.

But now, a new face has appeared in the Eighteenth Heaven, a new female demon.

"Interesting," Yan Wuji said softly, a hint of killing intent flashing in his crimson-gold eyes. "What are the demons up to?"

He turned around and sat back on his throne, the flames engulfing him once more.

"Issue the order,"

his voice came from the flames, cold and authoritative. "Send out the first and second teams of the Flame Dragon Guard to seal off all passages north of the Azure Cloud Mountains.

The first team is responsible for searching for Kai's whereabouts. If you find him, kill him without mercy. Do not capture him alive, just kill him.

The second team is responsible for investigating that demon woman, finding out her identity, origin, and purpose. I want results within three days."

"Yes!"

The people in the hall acknowledged the order and withdrew.

Yan Wuji sat alone on his throne, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest, producing a dull thud.

Kai, the demon woman, the Fallen God Wasteland, the Azure Cloud Mountains, the Northern Netherworld Abyss…

These words swirled in his mind, like scattered chess pieces, their pattern yet to be found.

But he had a hunch that these pieces would connect into a line.

And the end of that line will definitely not be a good thing for him.

“Whatever you want to do,” Yan Wuji muttered to himself, his crimson-gold eyes flashing coldly in the flames, “on my territory, you have to follow my rules. Whoever breaks the rules will die.” …

Qingyun Cave Heaven, Enlightenment Cliff.

Master Yuxu still sat cross-legged on the bluestone, his white hair and beard fluttering gently in the night breeze.

Before him floated a bronze Bagua mirror, Yun Yi’s face reflected on its surface.

“Master Uncle,”

Yun Yi’s voice came from the mirror, calm and clear, “This disciple has recorded the details of the battle in the Fallen God Wasteland in a jade slip and sent it back to the cave heaven via the teleportation array. Furthermore, a conflict occurred today on the outskirts of the Qingyun Mountains, where the gods and demons fought over a Lava Lion King.”

“And the result?” Master Yuxu’s voice remained calm.

“More than ten gods died, and the demons also suffered heavy casualties. But in the end, three powerful demons appeared, one of whom, a woman, possessed a cultivation level of at least the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm. She killed the god leader with a single move. The demons left with the Lava Lion King’s corpse.”

Master Yuxu's brow twitched slightly.

A demon woman of at least the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

This information interested him more than Kai's battle.

"What were the woman's distinguishing features?"

"A dark red dress, a mark of the Flame Demon lineage on her forehead, her cultivation... I can't quite discern it, but at least at the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm, possibly higher."

Yun Yi paused. "There's something else, Master Uncle might be more interested in."

"Speak."

"Before leaving, the woman glanced at a pile of rubble outside the valley. I sensed two people hiding behind that pile of rubble. They were there from beginning to end, witnessing the entire conflict."

Master Yu Xu's eyes widened slightly for a moment, then returned to calm.

"Did the woman discover them?"

"Not sure. She looked for a long time, seemed to sense something, but didn't stop, turned and left."

Yun Yi said, "I dared not get too close, afraid of being discovered. But when she left, she headed north."

North.

The direction of the Northern Cold Abyss.

Master Yu Xu's fingers tapped lightly on his knees, lost in thought.

Kai was going to the Northern Cold Abyss, and so was the woman.

Coincidence?

Or arrangement?

If it was arrangement, whose arrangement?

The Demon Clan?

Or some other force?

“Yun Yi,” Master Yu Xu spoke.

“Disciple is here.”

“Stay close to Kai. Don’t get too close, and don’t let him notice you. If he encounters danger, help him without revealing your identity. If he enters the Northern Cold Abyss… you go in too.”

Yun Yi was silent for a moment. “The Northern Cold Abyss is an extremely cold forbidden area, and my cultivation level…”

“Your Daoist techniques cannot withstand that kind of extreme cold,”

Master Yu Xu interrupted him. “But your Heavenly Wood Sword can. The Heavenly Wood Sword is forged from peach wood struck by lightning ten thousand years ago. Peach wood is warm in nature and can resist all cold. With it, you won’t freeze to death.”

“Disciple understands.”

“Also,”

Master Yu Xu paused, “if you encounter that demon woman, do not engage in conflict with her. Her cultivation level is above yours, and… her background may be more complicated than we imagine.”

Yun Yi did not ask any further questions, accepted the order, and ended the message.

The image in the Bagua Mirror dissipated, returning to an ordinary bronze mirror.

Master Yu Xu placed the bronze mirror on his lap and looked up at the night sky above the Enlightenment Cliff.

The night sky above Qingyun Cave Heaven lacked the blazing sun, only a deep darkness and countless stars.

The stars twinkled in the night sky, like countless eyes watching over this land.

“The inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the possessor of Chaos Power, an ally of the Ice God lineage, and now he’s entangled with a woman from the Demon Clan,”

Master Yuxu murmured to himself, his voice carrying an unusual gravity. “Just how many secrets does this young man hold?”

No one could answer him.

The night wind blew across the Enlightenment Cliff, ruffling his white beard and hair, and his azure Daoist robe.

Below the cliff, the blessed land of Qingyun Cave Heaven slept in the night, the waterfall on the sacred peak shimmered with silver light under the moonlight, and cranes rested quietly in the sacred lake.

Everything was peaceful.

But Master Yuxu knew that the peace was merely a facade.

Undercurrents were surging, and a storm was brewing.

And that young man from the lower realm stood at the eye of the storm.

...

The next morning, Kai and Jiang Xuelan continued their journey.

A night's rest restored Kai's spiritual energy to its peak. Chaotic power surged through his meridians, and the barrier of the mid-stage eighth rank of True Immortal Realm had become even more pronounced.

One more battle, or perhaps another batch of resources, and he could break through to the late-stage eighth rank of True Immortal Realm.

The two continued north along the dried-up riverbed. After about two hours, the riverbed gradually disappeared, replaced by a dense primeval forest.

This was the outer edge of the Qingyun Mountains.

The trees in the forest were tall and ancient, some probably over ten thousand years old, their trunks so thick that it would take more than a dozen people to encircle them.

Their canopies blocked out the sun, obscuring most of the intense sunlight, with only sparse rays filtering through the leaves to create dappled shadows on the ground.

The air was filled with the damp scent of earth and decaying leaves, occasionally punctuated by birdsong from the depths of the canopy, creating a serene atmosphere.

Kai's divine sense covered a radius of fifty miles, and he proceeded with extreme caution with every step.

The forest teemed with far more demonic beasts than the outside world. His divine sense had already detected the auras of at least a dozen beasts; some were asleep, some were hunting, and some were fighting amongst themselves.

However, the cultivation levels of these beasts were not high; the strongest was only around the fifth rank of True Immortal, posing no threat to him.

The two walked for about another hour. The forest grew increasingly dense, and the fallen leaves on the ground became thicker, feeling like walking on cotton wool.

Just as Kai was about to take out the map jade slip to confirm their direction, he suddenly stopped. Kai suddenly stopped, and Jiang Xuelan almost bumped into his back.

“What’s wrong?” she asked softly.

Kai didn’t answer immediately, but closed his eyes, spreading his divine sense in all directions.

After about ten breaths, he opened his eyes, a complex emotion flashing in his purple eyes.

“There’s the aura of demonic cultivators,” he said, “about twenty miles ahead, not just one, at least a dozen.”

Jiang Xuelan’s hand rested on her sword hilt. “Is it the group from yesterday?”

“No.”

Kai shook his head, his voice low. “That group has already left with the Lava Lion King’s corpse. This group… just entered this area, and their direction of travel is the same as ours.”

He paused, his purple eyes narrowing slightly. “One of them has an aura… that of Su Yuqi.”

Jiang Xuelan was silent for a moment.

She could understand why Kai had become so agitated. In

that fleeting glimpse in the valley yesterday, he seemed completely different; she had clearly seen the impulse of emotions that had been suppressed for so long erupting in an instant.

And now, that aura was only twenty miles ahead.

“Shall we go take a look?” Jiang Xuelan asked tentatively.

Kai stood still, silent for a long time.

His hand gripped the hilt of the Dragon-Slaying Sword tightly, then loosened, then gripped again.

Finally, he took a deep breath and shook his head.

“No.”

His voice returned to calm, but that calmness was the result of deliberate suppression, like an undercurrent beneath ice, calm on the surface, yet turbulent deep within. “Continue along the original route to the Northern Abyss.”

“But…”

“She has amnesia; she won’t recognize me if she sees me.”

Kai interrupted Jiang Xuelan. “If she’s here now, it means they’re also going to the Northern Abyss. Since they share the same destination, they’ll meet again.”

He turned and continued walking north, his pace much faster than before.

Jiang Xuelan watched his back, a barely perceptible smile curving her lips, and then followed.

She noticed that although Kai said he “wouldn’t go,” his pace had noticeably quickened.

This was probably what they called “saying one thing but meaning another.”

The two quickened their pace, traversing the dense forest.

Kai’s divine sense remained locked onto the familiar aura ahead, an aura that fluctuated in strength, seemingly deliberately released yet unable to be contained.

The distance was gradually closing.

Twenty li, fifteen li, ten li…

When the distance closed to ten li, Kai’s pace slowed again.

He sensed something more.

There were sixteen demon cultivators in total. Besides Su Yuqi, there were two Golden Immortals, two at the third rank, and one at the second rank.

The remaining thirteen were all at the ninth rank of True Immortal.

These were not scattered individuals, but a well-trained group.

There was a peculiar resonance between their auras, an aura formed only through long-term cultivation and combat together.

What concerned Kai even more was that these demon cultivators were traveling in the same direction as him, heading directly north, towards the Northern Netherworld Abyss.

They were also heading north.

Moreover, they didn’t seem to be in a hurry, their pace neither fast nor slow, always maintaining a distance of about ten li from Kai.

Not too far, not too close, just at the edge of their divine sense's perception.

This made Kai somewhat uneasy.

What exactly were the demons doing?

Had Su Yuqi discovered his trail and was deliberately waiting for him?

Or were they already heading to the Northern Cold Abyss, and just happened to be traveling the same route?

Or perhaps… they were tracking him?

Kai couldn't figure it out, so he simply stopped thinking about it.

In any case, he and Su Yuqi would eventually meet in the Northern Cold Abyss.

At that time, everything would be answered.

The two walked through the dense forest for about two more hours. The terrain gradually rose, the trees began to thin out, and a chill filled the air.

Kai stopped and took out a jade map to confirm their direction.

According to the map, they had already crossed the outer edge of the Azure Cloud Mountains. After about a day's journey, they would enter the Northern Cold Abyss.

"Almost there." Kai put away the jade map and looked north.

The horizon ahead was no longer the outline of continuous mountains, but a hazy gray mist, within which a faint, icy blue light could be seen flowing, like the aurora borealis frozen for millennia.

The halo appeared clearer and more eerie in the daytime than at night.

It wasn't static, but slowly flowing, like an icy blue river suspended in the sky, flowing silently.

But Kai could sense that the power contained within that halo was terrifying.

It wasn't the aurora, but a solidified entity of frigid air frozen for hundreds of thousands of years.

Any cultivator below the Golden Immortal realm who came within a hundred miles of that icy blue halo would be frozen into an ice sculpture.

"The Northern Abyss of Cold Water," Jiang Xuelan said, standing beside him, gazing at the icy blue halo, her voice filled with undisguised awe, "We're almost there."

"Yes," Kai replied, withdrawing his gaze. "Keep going. Try to get as close to the edge of the Northern Abyss of Cold Water as possible before dark, and enter first thing tomorrow morning."

The two continued onward.

The demonic aura behind him remained close, never too close, always maintaining a distance of about ten miles.

Kai noticed that among the demonic cultivators' auras, Su Yuqi's aura was becoming increasingly clear.

It wasn't because she was getting closer, but because she seemed to no longer deliberately conceal her aura.

The feeling was strange, as if she knew Kai was sensing her, so she intentionally released her aura for him to detect.

Kai's heart pounded uncontrollably.

He took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing the turmoil in his heart, and continued walking.

Another hour passed, and the sky began to darken.

The gold and crimson of the three blazing suns had already sunk near the horizon, dyeing the western sky in gold and red.

The silvery-white moon had risen, its cool light spilling across the earth, reflecting the western sunset.

Kai found a relatively flat rocky plateau and decided to spend the night there.

The plateau wasn't large, only a dozen or so feet in circumference, surrounded by a sparse pine forest. The tree trunks were covered with gray moss, and the air was filled with the sweet scent of pine resin.

Looking north from here, the icy blue halo was much clearer; one could even see faint ice crystals shimmering within it, like countless diamonds suspended in the sky.

Jiang Xuelan set up several warning arrays around the plateau, took out some spiritual fruits from her storage bag, and handed them to Kai.

Kai took them but didn't eat them.

He sat cross-legged on the edge of the plateau, his gaze fixed on the icy blue halo to the north, his purple eyes reflecting a swirling icy blue light."Still following us?" Jiang Xuelan walked to his side and asked softly.

Kai nodded. "Ten miles, no more, no less."

"What do you plan to do?"

Kai was silent for a moment. "We'll enter the Northern Abyss tomorrow. If they continue to follow, it means their target is also the Northern Abyss. We'll see how things go then."

Jiang Xuelan didn't ask any more questions.

She sat down beside Kai and also looked towards the icy blue halo to the north.

The night wind blew from the north, carrying a biting chill.

That was the cold air emanating from the Northern Abyss. Although it was still hundreds of miles away, the cold air had already reached this place, indicating that the coldness of the Northern Abyss far exceeded what was marked on the map.

Jiang Xuelan shivered.

She was a descendant of the Ice God lineage and cultivated ice-attribute techniques. Ordinary cold was nothing to her.

But the cold air emanating from the Northern Abyss made her feel cold.

This meant that the temperature in the core area of the Northern Abyss was extremely low.

She turned to look at Kai, but found that Kai was expressionless, seemingly completely oblivious to the cold.

Chaotic power circulated around Kai, forming an invisible shield that kept out all the cold air.

Chaos was the origin of all things, encompassing and restraining everything.

This bit of cold air was nothing to him.

Jiang Xuelan withdrew her gaze, took out a white fur cloak from her storage bag and put it on, then took out an ice-blue pill and swallowed it, which slightly relieved the chill in her body.

“You said,” she suddenly spoke, her voice very soft, “that there are really still members of the Ice God lineage in the Northern Abyss?”

Kai did not answer immediately.

He closed his eyes, his divine sense probing into his sea of consciousness, trying to awaken the Northern Abyss.

But the remnant soul of the Northern Abyss was as silent as if it were dead, without any response.

“Senior Beiming said he sensed a trace of the Ice God lineage’s bloodline aura.”

Kai opened his eyes, his voice somewhat low, “but he was not sure whether it was a living member of the lineage, a remnant soul, or something sealed within.”

“So… maybe there’s nothing at all?” A hint of disappointment appeared in Jiang Xuelan’s voice.

“It could be anything.”

Kai turned to look at her, his purple eyes shimmering softly in the moonlight. “Whatever it may be, we have to go see. You’ve come all this way with me, haven’t you? You wanted to find your people and revive the Ice God lineage, didn’t you?”

Jiang Xuelan remained silent for a long time, then nodded.

“Sleep.” Kai stood up. “We still have to travel tomorrow.”

He walked to the edge of the plateau, leaned against a pine tree, sat down, placed the Dragon Slayer Sword across his lap, closed his eyes, and slowly circulated the Mind Concentration Technique.

The power of chaos surged through his meridians, gradually dispelling the fatigue of the day.

His divine sense still maintained its maximum coverage, everything within a fifty-mile radius was within his perception.

The auras of those demon cultivators were still there, having stopped in a valley ten miles away, presumably to spend the night.

Su Yuqi's aura was at the very center of that group of demon cultivators, clear and stable, like a dark red flame burning in the darkness.

Kai sensed that flame, his heart surging with indescribable emotions.

She was just ten miles away.

Ten miles.

For a Golden Immortal cultivator, this distance is merely a blink of an eye.

But he couldn't go to her.

Not because he didn't want to, but because he couldn't.

He didn't know her current identity, who the demon cultivators around her were, or what her purpose was in appearing near the Northern Cold Abyss.

A hasty recognition might bring trouble to her, and it might bring trouble to himself.

The best way was to wait.

Wait until he reached the Northern Cold Abyss, wait for the opportune moment, wait for everything to become clear.

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his chaotic thoughts, and fully activated the Mind Concentration Technique. Chaotic power surged through his meridians, launching an attack towards the late stage of the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm.

The night passed uneventfully.

The next morning, Kai opened his eyes from meditation, a glint of light flashing in his purple pupils.

Although the night's cultivation hadn't allowed him to break through to the late stage of the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm, the chaotic power in his meridians was more condensed than before, and his total spiritual power had increased significantly.

He was only a thin veil away from breaking through.

He stood up, stretched his limbs, and his bones cracked slightly.

Jiang Xuelan was already dressed and stood on the edge of the plateau, gazing north.

Her attire was different from yesterday; she wore a long, ice-white dress with ice-blue snowflake patterns embroidered on the hem, and her long hair was tied up with an ice-blue hairpin, making her look like a snow lotus blooming in the icy world.

"This outfit..." Kai was somewhat surprised.

"The clan robes of the Ice God lineage,"

Jiang Xuelan said softly. "If there are indeed members of the Ice God lineage in the Northern Abyss, I want to meet them as a descendant of the Ice God."

Kai nodded without saying anything more.

The two continued on their way.

Heading north from the plateau, the terrain became increasingly steep, the pine forests gradually disappeared, replaced by large areas of bare rocks and pebble beaches.

The temperature dropped lower and lower, and the moisture in the air condensed into tiny ice crystals, shimmering with iridescent light in the sunlight.

Frost began to appear on the ground, initially a thin layer, but thickening as they went north, eventually crunching underfoot like snow.

Kai noticed that the auras of the demon cultivators were still following, remaining about ten miles away.

However, their speed had noticeably slowed, not because they didn't want to move faster, but because they were also dealing with the chill emanating from the Northern Abyss.

While the demons' supreme fire could resist the cold, the chill of the Northern Abyss was not ordinary cold, but the extreme cold power inherited from the Ice God lineage for hundreds of thousands of years, naturally restraining fire attributes.

The True Immortal realm demon cultivators were already struggling, their speed significantly slower than yesterday.

But Su Yuqi and the three Golden Immortal realm demon cultivators remained relaxed; their cultivation was high enough that the chill had negligible effect on them.

"They're still following," Jiang Xuelan whispered.

"Yes," Kai's gaze turned north, "Ignore them, let's go our own way."

The two quickened their pace, heading towards the Northern Abyss.

After walking for about two more hours, the sight before them made Kai and Jiang Xuelan stop simultaneously.

They had arrived at the Northern Abyss.

Standing at the edge of the Northern Abyss, Kai finally understood why the map described this place as an “extremely cold forbidden land.”

Before them stretched an endless expanse of ice, its surface a deep, icy blue, like a giant sapphire laid across the earth.

The ice was riddled with cracks and folds, each crack several meters deep, each fold a mark of immense pressure, recording the history of glacial movement over hundreds of thousands of years.

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A thick layer of icy mist shrouded the ice plain, flowing slowly in mid-air and refracting the rays of the three blazing suns into countless colorful beams, casting dappled light and shadow on the ice surface.

These beams danced and swirled on the ice, seemingly alive, or perhaps some ancient formation at work.

Kai’s divine sense probed into the mist, but upon contact, it was immediately repelled by an extremely powerful force of ice.

This force wasn’t offensive; it was pure, primal, and devoid of any will.

It wasn’t directed at anyone; it simply existed there, unchanging through the ages.

Anything that entered the mist’s range, whether living or inanimate, would be eroded, frozen, and assimilated by this cold force, ultimately becoming part of the ice plain.

“The temperature here…”

Jiang Xuelan gasped, “is much lower than I imagined. I’ve cultivated in the Ice God Palace’s icy chambers; the temperature there is already extreme, but compared to this, it’s like the difference between a hot spring and an ice cellar.”

“Can you withstand it?” Kai asked.

Jiang Xuelan nodded. “The Ice God lineage’s techniques have a natural affinity for cold. Although the cold here is strong, it won’t harm me. On the contrary, it will accelerate my cultivation speed.”

She paused, then turned to look at Kai. “But you, while your chaotic power can isolate the cold, its intensity will increase exponentially once you enter the core area. How long can you hold out?”

Kai didn’t speak, but instead stretched out his hand, condensing a ball of purple chaotic fire in his palm.

The flame burned in his palm, dispelling the surrounding cold and forming a cold-free area several feet in radius.

“Chaotic power restrains all elements,” Kai said, “including ice.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at the purple flame in his palm and remained silent for a moment.

Chaotic power does indeed restrain all elements, but there’s a prerequisite: the user’s cultivation level must be high enough, and the chaotic power must be sufficiently refined.

If the intensity of the cold exceeds the chaotic power’s tolerance, restraint will turn into being restrained.

But she didn’t say it aloud.

She trusted Kai.

“Let’s go.” Kai extinguished the Chaos Fire and stepped onto the icy plain first.

The moment he stepped onto the plain, a bone-chilling coldness surged from his feet.

That coldness penetrated through his shoes, his skin, his muscles, and directly into the depths of his bones.

The power of chaos automatically circulated, forming a purple protective shield in his meridians, repelling the cold.

Jiang Xuelan also stepped onto the icy plain, but her reaction was completely different from Kai's.

The cold air on the icy plain was not a threat to her, but nourishment.

She could clearly sense that every wisp of cold air on the icy plain contained the aura of the Ice God lineage, left behind by powerful members of the Ice God lineage hundreds of thousands of years ago, and had become one with this icy plain.

Her Ice God bloodline boiled within her, as if responding to this call from ancient times.

Kai sensed the changes in Jiang Xuelan's bloodline, and a trace of relief flashed in his eyes.

At least, Jiang Xuelan's decision to come to the Northern Netherworld Abyss was the right one.

The frigid air here could nourish her bloodline and cultivation. Perhaps if she stayed in the Northern Abyss for a while, her cultivation could break through to the Golden Immortal realm.

The two walked on the ice plain at a moderate pace.

The ice was slippery, and every step had to be taken with care, lest they fall.

Kai noticed that the auras of the demonic cultivators were also beginning to enter the ice plain.

However, their speed had noticeably slowed down. Those True Immortal realm cultivators were almost at their limit; two of them had their auras fluctuate shortly after entering the ice plain, the frigid air eroding their ultimate fire shields.

Su Yuqi's aura remained stable, but Kai could sense a trace of strain in her aura.

Her ultimate fire could resist the frigid air, but the level of frigid air in the Northern Abyss was too high, greatly consuming her.

Kai withdrew his divine sense and continued forward.

After walking for about another hour, the ice fog on the ice plain grew thicker and thicker, and visibility dropped to only a few dozen feet.

Kai's divine sense was also affected. The icy power within the mist continuously eroded his senses, shrinking its coverage from fifty miles to less than ten.

"Something's not right here," Jiang Xuelan suddenly said.

Kai stopped and turned to look at her. "What's wrong?"

"I sensed it…"

Jiang Xuelan closed her eyes, her Ice God bloodline operating at full power, sensing the aura deep within the icy plains. "There's a very strong aura of the Ice God lineage ahead, very strong… much stronger than I expected."

She opened her eyes, a flicker of excitement in them. "That's not the aura of ordinary clansmen, it's… it's the aura of a supreme treasure of the Ice God lineage."

Kai raised an eyebrow. "A supreme treasure?"

Just then, an aged and weak voice suddenly echoed in his mind.

“The Northern Abyss… we’ve finally arrived…”

It was the Northern Abyss.

Kai was overjoyed. “Senior, you’re awake?”

“I sensed it…”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice was broken, as if he were speaking with his last breath. “The Ice God lineage’s supreme treasure… the Heart of the Cold Abyss… lies deep within this icy plain…”

“The Heart of the Cold Abyss?” Kai asked. “What is that?”

“The Ice God lineage’s inherited treasure… I forged it with my own blood essence… it contains the purest power of the Ice God lineage’s laws of ice…”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice carried an undisguised excitement. “If… if I could obtain it… my remnant soul could use its power to reshape my physical body… the Ice God lineage… could rise again…”

Reshape his physical body!

Kai’s heart trembled.

Bei Mingyuan’s remnant soul had been dormant in his sea of consciousness. Although it usually had little presence, it had repeatedly come to his aid at crucial moments.

If Bei Mingyuan could reshape his physical body, it would not only be a great favor to the Ice God lineage but also a great favor to Kai himself.

An ancestor of the Ice God lineage who has lived for countless millennia, if he could regain his physical body, would become one of his most powerful allies in all the heavens and myriad realms.

“Senior, rest assured,” Kai responded in his sea of consciousness, “I will definitely find the Heart of the Frost Abyss and help you reshape your physical body.” ”

Be careful…”

Bei Mingyuan’s voice grew weaker and weaker, “The Heart of the Frost Abyss is the supreme treasure of the Ice God lineage… countless forces are coveting it… here… it’s not just you…”

Before he finished speaking, Bei Mingyuan’s aura subsided once more.

Kai opened his eyes, a trace of solemnity flashing in his purple pupils.

Not just them.

Bei Mingyuan’s words confirmed his guess.

Those demon cultivators following them into the Northern Cold Abyss wasn’t accidental; they were after the Heart of the Cold Abyss.

“What did Senior Bei Mingyuan say?” Jiang Xuelan asked anxiously.

Kai repeated Bei Mingyuan’s words.

After listening, a complex emotion flashed in Jiang Xuelan’s eyes. The Heart of the Frost Abyss, a supreme treasure forged by the Ice God Ancestor with his own blood essence, contains the purest power of the laws of ice.

If Bei Mingyuan could obtain it, he could reshape his physical body, and the Ice God lineage could rise again.

This was her purpose in coming to the Frost Abyss of Bei Mingyuan, and also the hope of the Ice God lineage for tens of thousands of years.

But at the same time, the Demon Clan also coveted this treasure.

And, it might not be just the Demon Clan.

“We must find the Heart of the Frost Abyss before the Demon Clan.” Jiang Xuelan’s voice carried an unprecedented determination.

“Yes.”

Kai nodded, his gaze fixed on the depths of the icy plain. “Senior Bei Mingyuan said that the Heart of the Frost Abyss is deep within this icy plain. He didn’t know the exact location, but he said there was a secret passage here, built by the Ice God lineage, leading to the core area where the treasure was stored. The entrance to the secret passage… according to his memory, should be under an ice peak.” ”

An ice peak?” Jiang Xuelan looked around; the icy plain stretched as far as the eye could see, without any ice peaks in sight.

“Keep going.” Kai turned and walked deeper into the icy plain. “Senior Bei Ming said that the ice peak is in the central area of the icy plain, at least a hundred miles from here.”

A hundred miles.

On ordinary land, a hundred miles would be the distance of an incense stick burning for Kai.

But on the icy plain of the Bei Ming Cold Abyss, every step felt like walking through mud. The slippery ice, the corrosive cold, and the obstruction of the icy mist greatly reduced their speed.

A hundred miles would take at least two hours.

Kai quickened his pace, with Jiang Xuelan close behind.

The aura of the demon cultivators continued to follow behind, but their speed had slowed down. The burden on those True Immortal Realm cultivators was becoming increasingly heavy, and the auras of several of them were beginning to become unstable.

Kai stopped paying attention to them and focused all his energy on getting there.

Two hours later, a huge ice peak appeared ahead of the icy plain.

The ice peak was hundreds of feet high, entirely ice-blue, and its summit was hidden in the icy mist, its top invisible.

The surface of the ice peak was covered with icicles and pillars, like countless sharp swords piercing the mountain, gleaming coldly in the icy mist.

Below the ice peak lay a massive fissure, about three zhang wide and bottomless. The chilling air emanating from the fissure was several times more intense than on the ice plains. The ice at the fissure's edge was a deep, almost blackish blue, a color that only appeared after hundreds of thousands of years of erosion by extreme cold.

"This is it,"

Kai said, standing before the ice peak, his gaze fixed on the fissure. "The entrance to the secret passage is below this fissure."

Jiang Xuelan walked to the edge of the fissure and looked down.

The fissure was bottomless; only a layer of icy blue light could be seen shimmering below, as if something was glowing deep within.

She sensed it; the aura of the Ice God lineage's treasure emanated from the depths of the fissure.

"I'm going down," Jiang Xuelan said, about to jump into the fissure.

Kai grabbed her. "Wait."

He took out a rope from his storage bag. The rope was woven from golden silkworm silk, incredibly strong, capable of withstanding tens of thousands of kilograms of pulling force.

He tied one end of the rope to a thick icicle at the edge of the crevice, and the other end to Jiang Xuelan's waist.

"I'll go down first, you wait up here. If anything happens, pull the rope up immediately."

Jiang Xuelan opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but seeing Kai's unwavering gaze, she finally nodded.

Kai grabbed the rope and leaped into the crevice.

The cold air inside the crevice was several times more intense than outside, and even Kai's chaotic power began to feel strained.

Purple chaotic fire burned around him, dispelling the cold air, but Kai could feel that his chaotic power was being consumed more than twice as fast as outside.

He descended rapidly, the icy blue light growing brighter and brighter, illuminating the ice walls on both sides of the crevice.

The ice walls were covered with ancient ice god runes, which flickered in the icy blue light, as if they were still alive.

Kai's divine sense swept over the runes, sensing the power of laws within them.

Those were the inherited runes of the Ice God lineage, each rune containing a piece of the Ice God lineage's history, recording the achievements and glory of the Ice God's ancestor.

The rope wasn't long enough, and after descending to a depth of about two hundred zhang, Kai's feet finally touched solid ground.

At the bottom of the crevice was a passage paved with ice crystals, about two zhang high and one zhang wide, its walls all made of ice-blue crystals, emitting a soft light.

At the end of the passage was a huge ice door, engraved with the mark of the Ice God lineage:

a six-petaled snowflake, each petal inscribed with an ancient Ice God rune.

Kai stood before the ice door, placing his hand on it.

Chaotic power surged from his palm, the purple light colliding with the ice-blue light of the ice door, producing a buzzing sound.

The ice door remained unmoved.

Kai frowned, increasing the output of chaotic power.

Purple chaotic fire burned in his palm, attempting to devour the icy power on the ice door.

However, the icy power on the ice gate was extremely strong, not ordinary icy power, but the primordial icy power condensed from the Ice God Ancestor's own blood essence. Its level was so high that it even exceeded Kai's understanding.

Although the power of chaos could restrain the power of ice, when the level of the icy power far exceeded the level of condensation of the power of chaos, the restraint would fail.

Kai withdrew his palm, and the icy blue light on the ice gate stabilized again, as if it had never been disturbed.

He turned around and looked up at the exit above the crack.

Jiang Xuelan's figure at the exit was like a small black dot.

"Xuelan!" Kai called out, his voice echoing in the crack.

"What's wrong?" Jiang Xuelan's voice came from above.

“The ice gate can’t be opened! Can you come down?”

After a moment, Jiang Xuelan grabbed the rope and slowly descended.

She landed at the bottom of the crack and saw the ice gate in front of Kai, a hint of surprise flashing in her eyes.

“The seal of the Ice God Ancestor.” She walked to the ice gate, placed her hand on it, closed her eyes, and activated the Ice God bloodline at full power.

A blue light surged from her palm, resonating with the blue light on the ice gate.

The six-petaled snowflake runes on the ice gate began to rotate, each petal slowly turning and making a clattering sound, as if some ancient mechanism had been activated.

Jiang Xuelan opened her eyes, a hint of joy flashing in them, “The Ice God’s bloodline is the key to opening this gate.”

She continued to channel icy blue spiritual energy from her palms, causing the runes on the ice gate to spin faster and faster, the six-petaled snowflakes growing brighter and brighter, and the entire ice gate trembled.

Boom—

the ice gate slowly opened inwards, and an even more intense chill surged out from behind it, enveloping Kai and Jiang Xuelan simultaneously.

Kai’s Chaos Fire surged upwards, forcing back the chill.

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, inhaling the surging chill into her body; the color drained from her face instantly, but a glint of wild joy flashed in her eyes.

This chill was nourishment for her cultivation, a boost to her power. Behind the ice gate was a deeper passage, at the end of which the outline of an ice crystal palace could be vaguely seen.

“Let’s go.” Kai stepped into the passage first, followed closely by Jiang Xuelan.

They had barely walked ten paces when a series of hurried footsteps sounded behind them.

Kai turned sharply, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

At the entrance of the passage, more than a dozen figures filed in, their bodies engulfed in dark red flames, illuminating the icy blue passage in a crimson glow.

Leading them was a dark red figure, tall and slender, with long, ink-black hair, an exquisitely beautiful face, and a complex dark red marking on her forehead.

Su Yuqi.

Kai’s heart pounded, his purple eyes reflecting that familiar figure.

His hand involuntarily tightened on the hilt of the Dragon-Slaying Sword, wanting to rush forward, wanting to call out her name.

But his foot had barely taken a step when he was nailed to the spot by an invisible force.

It wasn’t Jiang Xuelan holding him back, but Su Yuqi’s gaze.

Those dark red eyes looked at him, devoid of any emotion, as if looking at a stranger.

No, colder than a stranger.

Like a high and mighty saint looking at an insignificant ant.

“Su…” Kai opened his mouth, his voice slightly hoarse.

Su Yuqi’s brows furrowed slightly, as if trying to recognize him.

Her gaze lingered on Kai’s face for a moment, then on the Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist, before she looked away.

“It’s you?” Her voice was soft, tinged with uncertainty, “Kai?”

She didn’t finish her sentence, but Kai understood.

She remembered him.

But only “remembered.”

It was from their first meeting in the Fourteenth Heaven.

She didn’t remember anything before.

Or rather, she had never experienced those things.

The Su Yuqi who appeared before Kai was not the one who came to the Celestial Realm with him, the one who had faced life and death with him.

She was a Su Yuqi with amnesia, a Su Yuqi whose memories had been reshaped after being taken away by the Demon Clan, a Su Yuqi who no longer remembered any of their past.

Kai stood motionless.

Something shattered in his purple eyes.

“You’ve also come to retrieve the Heart of the Cold Abyss?” Su Yuqi spoke, her voice as calm as if she were asking about the weather.

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his surging emotions. “Yes.”

“You can’t open that door.”

Su Yuqi's gaze passed over Kai, landing on the already opened ice door behind him. A glint of light flashed in her dark red eyes. "Ice God bloodline...you are a descendant of the Ice God's lineage?"

The last sentence was directed at Jiang Xuelan.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside Kai, her ice-white dress standing out starkly against the ice-blue light.

Her eyes held no fear, only vigilance.

"Yes," Jiang Xuelan's reply was brief.

Su Yuqi nodded, as if confirming something.

"I don't want to fight you,"

she said calmly. "The Heart of the Frost Abyss is very important to our Flame Demon lineage. I need it to activate an ancient artifact. You're here, presumably for the inheritance of the Ice God lineage.

But I sense that behind that door lies not only the Heart of the Frost Abyss, but also other things from the Ice God lineage. The Heart of the Frost Abyss is mine, and the rest are yours. How about it?"

Kai remained silent.

He knew how important the Heart of the Frost Abyss was to Bei Mingyuan.

It was the Ice God lineage's most precious heirloom, Bei Mingyuan's only hope for rebuilding his physical body.

He couldn't possibly give the Heart of the Frost Abyss to anyone, not even Su Yuqi.

But Su Yuqi had lost her memory; she didn't remember him, didn't remember anything between them.

In her eyes, he was just a stranger, an obstacle between her and the treasure.

“The Heart of the Frost Abyss is very important to me,”

Kai’s voice was low but firm. “I can’t give it to you.”

Su Yuqi’s brows furrowed even more, a hint of impatience flashing in her dark red eyes.

“Then leave.”

A hint of coldness crept into her voice. “I don’t want to fight here, but if you insist on taking it, I don’t mind showing you what the difference in strength is.” As

soon as she finished speaking, the demon cultivators behind her stepped forward simultaneously, dark red flames surging from their bodies, illuminating the entire passage in a crimson glow.

Two Golden Immortal Realm Rank 3 cultivators stood behind Su Yuqi, one wielding a dark red battle blade, the other a chain burning with intense fire, their entire bodies radiating a violent killing intent.

Kai’s hand rested on the hilt of the Dragon-Slaying Sword, chaotic fire burning in his palm, purple light clashing with the dark red flames in the passage.

Jiang Xuelan also drew her silver-white longsword, icy blue light swirling on its blade.

The atmosphere instantly became tense.

Su Yuqi looked at Kai, a complex emotion flashing in her eyes.

She didn’t know why she had glanced at this True Immortal Realm Rank 8 youth.

Perhaps it was the light in his eyes, a light she had never seen in anyone else's eyes before.

That light wasn't fear, nor anger, but something... indescribable.

Like sadness, yet also like longing.

Like looking at someone long gone.

"Do you know me?" Su Yuqi suddenly asked again.

She had asked Kai this question back in the Fourteenth Heaven.

Kai's hand trembled slightly.

He wanted to say "I know," wanted to say "You're a very important person to me," wanted to say "Don't you remember? We've walked so many roads together."

But the words that came to his lips were just one: "Yes."

A flicker of emotion crossed Su Yuqi's eyes, but it was quickly replaced by calm.

"I have amnesia. I don't remember most of the past. You know the past me, not the present me. The past me..."

She paused, a self-deprecating smile curving her lips, "is probably dead."

Kai's heart felt as if it had been gripped tightly by an invisible hand.

"The past me is dead."

These words were like a knife, piercing his chest.

He wanted to retort, to say, "You're not dead, you're alive, you're standing right in front of me," but he knew it was useless.

The amnesiac Su Yuqi wouldn't believe him; she would only see him as a stranger trying to get close.

He took a deep breath, swallowing back the words that rose to his throat.

"The Heart of the Cold Abyss..." he began, his voice hoarse, "I really can't let it."

A flicker of disappointment flashed in Su Yuqi's eyes, but it was quickly replaced by coldness.

"Then there's nothing more to say."

She raised her hand, a ball of dark red supreme fire condensing in her palm. The temperature of the supreme fire was so high that the ice crystals on both sides of the passage began to melt, water droplets sliding down the ice walls, making a dripping sound.

Kai drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, purple sword energy condensing on the blade. Chaos Fire and supreme fire clashed, the two completely different flame powers colliding in the passage, producing crackling and popping sounds.

Just as the two sides were about to make their move, a series of hurried footsteps suddenly came from the entrance of the passage, accompanied by a golden light. "Halt!"

A majestic voice echoed from the entrance.

All eyes turned to the entrance simultaneously.

A dozen figures filed in through the passage.

They wore white robes embroidered with golden sun symbols, each ablaze with golden holy flames, illuminating the icy blue passage with dazzling light.

Leading them was a middle-aged man with a handsome face, a long beard, a golden robe, and a crown of light. He held a golden scepter, topped with a fist-sized stone of light that emitted blinding holy light.

His cultivation was at the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

Behind him followed a dozen or so people, the lowest being at the first rank of the Golden Immortal realm, including two at the third rank and three at the second rank.

People from the Hall of Light.

Kai's heart sank.

Su Yuqi was already difficult enough to deal with; now, people from the Hall of Light had arrived.

And led by a fourth-rank Golden Immortal, their force far superior to the team sent by the Flame God Palace.

The treasure within the Northern Abyss had indeed attracted more than one force.

"I wondered who it was, but it's just the Holy Maiden of the Flame Demon lineage."

The middle-aged man's gaze fell on Su Yuqi, a contemptuous smile curving his lips. "You think you can come to the Northern Abyss to steal treasures with a bunch of shrimp soldiers and crab generals? Are all demons so overconfident?"

Su Yuqi frowned, a hint of killing intent flashing in her dark red eyes. "When did the people of the Hall of Light learn to sneak around and follow others?"

"Sneak around?"

The middle-aged man laughed, his smile icy. “The Northern Abyss has always been within the Hall of Light’s sphere of influence. When did it become your demon territory? I came here openly and aboveboard. It’s you demon brats who trespassed into the Hall of Light’s forbidden area; that’s a capital offense.”

As he spoke, his gaze swept over the crowd in the passage, lingering for a moment on Kai and Jiang Xuelan, a hint of contempt flashing in his eyes.

“A True Immortal Realm Eighth Grade and a True Immortal Realm Ninth Grade? And they’re even accompanied by a remnant of the Ice God lineage?”

His smile grew even more contemptuous. “It seems these young people really don’t know the meaning of death.”

Kai didn’t speak, but a cold glint flashed in his purple eyes.

He remembered this face.

A Golden Immortal Realm Fourth Grade was indeed considered a top expert in the Eighteenth Heaven.

But for Kai, a Golden Immortal Realm Fourth Grade was not invincible.

It was just that now was not the time to act.

There were too many people from the Hall of Light, more than a dozen of whom were above the Golden Immortal Realm. Adding Su Yuqi’s demonic forces, it was a three-way battle. He and Jiang Xuelan were caught in the middle, and

their chances of survival were slim. The best strategy was to sit back and watch the tigers fight, let the Hall of Light and the demons fight first, and then seize the treasure when they were both exhausted.

But would Su Yuqi let him have his way?

The middle-aged man clearly didn't intend to waste any more words with Su Yuqi.

He raised the golden scepter in his hand, and the Light Stone at the top of the scepter burst out with dazzling holy light, illuminating the entire passage.

"I'll give you ten breaths,"

his voice was cold and authoritative. "Take your people and get out of the Northern Abyss. Anyone still here after ten breaths will be killed without mercy."

Su Yuqi's face darkened.

The demon cultivators behind her instinctively took a step back, a flicker of fear in their eyes.

The hatred between the Hall of Light and the Flame Demon lineage was long-standing. The holy light of the Hall of Light had a natural restraining effect on the demons' supreme fire. At the same cultivation level, demon cultivators rarely defeated those of the Hall of Light.

Moreover, the Hall of Light's team included one fourth-grade Golden Immortal, two third-grade, three second-grade, and the rest were all Golden Immortals.

On the demon side, the strongest, Su Yuqi, was only at the peak of the third-grade Golden Immortal. Although there were two third-grade Golden Immortals, there was only one second-grade, and the rest were only ninth-grade True Immortals.

The difference in cultivation level, coupled with the elemental advantage, made the outcome of this battle, which hadn't even begun, a foregone conclusion.

But Su Yuqi did not retreat.

A stubborn flame burned in her dark red eyes, and the supreme fire in her palm burned ever brighter, evaporating the melting water droplets from the surrounding ice crystals into white steam.

“Ten breaths?”

Her voice was as cold as ice. “No need for ten breaths. I can tell you now, the Heart of the Cold Abyss is mine. You people of the Hall of Light, either get out or die.”

The middle-aged man’s smile froze.

A murderous intent flashed in his eyes, and he pointed his golden scepter forward sharply. “Seeking death!”

Before his words even finished, the dozen or so cultivators of the Hall of Light behind him attacked simultaneously, golden holy light transforming into blinding beams of light that blasted towards the demon cultivators.

Su Yuqi snorted coldly, and the supreme fire in her palm exploded violently, transforming into a dark red fire shield that blocked the incoming beams of light.

Boom!

The moment the beams of light collided with the fire shield, the entire passage trembled violently.

Large chunks of ice crystals broke off from the dome, shattering into dust upon impact with the ground. The icy blue fragments danced in the air, refracting golden holy light and crimson flames, illuminating the entire passage as a dreamlike realm of death.

Su Yuqi was thrown back several steps, her feet carving deep furrows into the ice beneath her.

Her hands split open, dark red blood dripping from her fingertips onto the ice with a hissing sound. The flames within her blood melted small, smoking pits in the ice.

But she did not yield.

Her crimson eyes were fixed on the middle-aged man before her. The flames in her palms reformed, burning even more intensely than before. Within the crimson flames, faint dark red patterns of light could be seen flowing—a sign that appeared only when the Flame Demon bloodline was activated to its extreme.

“Interesting.”

The middle-aged man looked at the re-condensed supreme fire in Su Yuqi’s palm, a hint of surprise flashing in his eyes. “A peak third-grade Golden Immortal, able to withstand my holy light impact without falling… the Holy Maiden of the Flame Demon lineage does indeed have some skill.”

He paused, a cold smile curving his lips. “But only ‘some skill’.”

The golden scepter was raised again, the light stone at its tip erupting with an even more dazzling holy light than before.

This time, the holy light was no longer a scattered beam, but condensed into a fist-sized golden sphere at the top of the scepter. The surface of the sphere was covered with dense holy light runes, each rune radiating a terrifying aura capable of incinerating the heavens and destroying the earth.

“Holy Light – Judgment.”

The middle-aged man murmured these four words, and the golden sphere flew out of his hand, trailing a long golden tail of flame as it hurtled towards Su Yuqi.

Wherever the sphere of light passed, the air was completely ignited. The ice crystals on both sides of the passage vaporized instantly upon contact with the sphere, without even melting, turning directly into white steam and dissipating into the air.

A trench several feet deep was carved into the ice surface, and the ice layer at the edge of the trench was burned into glassy black crystals by the high temperature. Su Yuqi's expression turned solemn.

She could sense the power contained within the golden sphere of light. It wasn't an ordinary attack from a fourth-grade Golden Immortal cultivator; it was a killing move condensed from the core inherited laws of the Bright Palace, powerful enough to kill any third-grade Golden Immortal cultivator.

But she didn't dodge.

Not because she couldn't, but because she didn't want to.

Behind her were her clansmen. Those True Immortal demon cultivators couldn't withstand the aftershocks of an attack of this level. If she dodged, the shockwave from the sphere hitting the passage would be enough to severely injure everyone, or even kill those demon cultivators with lower cultivation levels.

Su Yuqi took a deep breath, her Fiery Demon bloodline surging wildly. Dark red flames erupted from every pore of her body, condensing into a several-foot-thick armor of flames around her.

She crossed her hands in front of her, the flames in her palms condensing into a dark red fire sword, its blade covered in dense Fiery Demon runes. Each rune burned, roared, and yearned to incinerate everything before it.

"Flame Demon Slash!"

Su Yuqi shouted, her dark red fire sword slashing out fiercely, colliding head-on with the golden sphere of holy light.

Boom!

This explosion was several times more powerful than before.

The golden holy light and the dark red flames clashed violently at the point of impact, the two opposing fire powers mutually restraining and annihilating each other, releasing an unimaginable energy shockwave.

The shockwave spread in all directions, cracking the ice walls on both sides of the passage, and large chunks of ice crystals broke off from the dome, crashing to the ground and scattering ice shards everywhere.

A crater several meters wide was blasted into the ground, the ice layer at the bottom completely gone, revealing the dark rock beneath.

Su Yuqi's body was thrown backward by the shockwave, tumbling several times in the air before crashing heavily into the ice door at the end of the passage with a dull thud.

Dark red blood spilled from the corner of her mouth, dripping down her chin onto her ice-white dress, staining the hem dark red.

Her arms trembled, the gash between her thumb and forefinger deepened, and dark red blood dripped from her fingertips, pooling on the ground.

The intense fire in her palm dimmed considerably, and the deep red patterns within the flames became faint, a sign of depleted spiritual energy.

Yet, she did not collapse.

She slowly rose, leaning against the ice gate, wiping the blood from her lips. Her dark red eyes remained fixed on the middle-aged man before her, the stubbornness and killing intent in them undiminished.

"My lady!"

came the anxious cries of the demon cultivators behind her.

The demon cultivator at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm rushed to Su Yuqi's side, trying to help her, but she pushed him away.

"I'm fine,"

Su Yuqi's voice was hoarse, but her tone remained firm. "You all retreat, do not approach the battlefield."

"But my lady, you are injured..."

"I said retreat!"

Su Yuqi's voice suddenly turned cold, carrying an undeniable authority.

The demon cultivator gritted his teeth, ultimately leading the other demon cultivators to retreat to the corner of the passage, leaving the battlefield to Su Yuqi and the people of the Hall of Light.

The middle-aged man looked at Su Yuqi, his surprise turning into solemnity.

His move, "Holy Light Judgment," was enough to kill any Golden Immortal Realm Third Grade cultivator, and could even pose a threat to a Golden Immortal Realm Fourth Grade cultivator.

But this demon girl, only at the peak of the Golden Immortal Realm Third Grade, had actually withstood it head-on, and although injured, she had not lost her fighting ability.

"I take back what I just said."

The middle-aged man's voice held a hint of approval. "You don't just 'have some tricks,' you 'have a lot of tricks. Unfortunately..." He paused, his killing intent intensifying, "No matter how many tricks you have, you will die here today."

The golden scepter was raised again, and the Light Stone at the top of the scepter once again condensed holy light.

This time, the condensation speed was faster, the holy light was more refined, the size of the light sphere was smaller, but the power contained within was even more terrifying.

Su Yuqi gritted her teeth, her Fiery Demon bloodline surging wildly, squeezing out the last bit of spiritual energy to condense into a fist-sized ball of dark red flame in her palm.

She knew she couldn't hold on much longer.

Her spiritual energy was depleted, her essence blood was more than half gone, and the injuries to her arms made every movement excruciatingly painful.

But she couldn't retreat.

The Heart of the Cold Abyss lay behind the ice gate, the last hope of the Fiery Demon lineage.

She took a deep breath, compressing the flame in her palm to its limit, preparing to meet the middle-aged man's next attack.

Just then, a scream came from the other side of the battlefield.

Su Yuqi's heart sank. She turned sharply and saw a scene that made her eyes widen in horror.

The three Golden Immortal level demon cultivators were engaged in fierce combat with the cultivators of the Hall of Light, but they were outnumbered and surrounded by the Hall of Light cultivators, already on the verge of death.

The demon cultivator at the second rank of the Golden Immortal realm was besieged by three cultivators from the Hall of Light.

His body was covered in countless charred wounds from the holy light, which burned on his skin, suppressing the intense fire within him layer by layer. His movements grew slower and slower, like a tiger surrounded by wolves—fierce but overwhelmed by sheer numbers.

“Ah—”

He finally succumbed, a golden longsword piercing his chest.

Golden holy light surged into his body from the wound, completely extinguishing the intense fire within him.

His body stiffened for a moment, then slowly collapsed, dark red blood gushing from the wound, staining the icy blue ground dark red.

His eyes remained open, frozen with resentment and rage, but his pupils were already dilating, his life force rapidly fading.

“Third Brother!”

The demon cultivator at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm, wielding a dark red battle blade, roared in fury upon seeing this, frantically swinging his blade at the Hall of Light cultivators surrounding him.

The intense flames on the battle blade surged upwards, turning from dark red to deep crimson—a testament to the extreme power of his burning essence.

With a single strike, a first-grade Golden Immortal cultivator from the Hall of Light was caught off guard and cleaved in two from the shoulder, golden blood and entrails splattering everywhere.

But this strike had exhausted his last reserves of strength.

He staggered, and several Hall of Light cultivators rushed up from behind, seizing the opportunity to unleash a barrage of holy light beams upon his back.

His back was blasted into a bloody mess, the sound of his spine snapping clearly audible.

He coughed up dark red blood, collapsed forward onto the ice, struggled a few times, and never got up again.

“Second Brother!”

The last demon cultivator at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm, the one wielding the burning iron chain, saw his two companions fall one after another, and tears of blood welled up in his eyes.He swung his iron chain wildly, forcing the Light Temple cultivators surrounding him back several steps, but he was quickly surrounded by more Light Temple cultivators.

Golden holy light bombarded him from all directions. He dodged left and right, but was still struck by several beams. The golden holy light burned on his skin, charring his flesh and emitting a pungent, acrid smell.

He roared, and the iron chain lashed out, wrapping around the neck of a Light Temple cultivator. With a forceful pull, the cultivator’s neck snapped, his head flying off. The headless body swayed twice and crashed to the ground.

But this was his last attack.

Several beams of holy light simultaneously struck his chest, blasting a fist-sized hole in it.

Dark red blood and shattered internal organs gushed from the hole. His body stiffened for a moment, then slowly knelt down, the iron chain slipping from his grasp and clanging against the ice.

His eyes were still open, staring in Su Yuqi’s direction. His mouth opened as if to say something, but only a spurt of dark red blood escaped, and then he breathed his last.

All three Golden Immortal level demon cultivators were dead.

Su Yuqi watched this scene, tears welling in her dark red eyes.

They weren't tears of sorrow, but tears of rage.

Her people fell one after another before her, and she was powerless to stop it.

Her fists clenched so tightly they cracked, her nails digging into her palms, drawing dark red blood.

She wanted to rush forward, to fight those Bright Hall cultivators to the death, but her body wouldn't allow it. Her

spiritual energy was exhausted, her vital essence was more than half depleted, and the injuries to her arms made even clenching her fists difficult.

Rushing forward now would only be suicide.

But she didn't care.

She would rather die than watch her people being slaughtered before her eyes and do nothing.

Su Yuqi gritted her teeth and struggled towards the battlefield, each step leaving a bloody footprint on the ice.

"My lady, no!"

The few remaining True Immortal Realm demon cultivators rushed forward, desperately pulling her back.

"Let go!" Su Yuqi's voice was hoarse and trembling.

"My lady, you can't go! You are the Holy Maiden of the Flame Demon lineage. If you die, the Flame Demon lineage will be completely finished!"

A young demon cultivator's eyes were filled with tears. "Please, go quickly! We'll cover you!"

"I said let go!"

Su Yuqi abruptly shook off their hands, but after taking only two steps, she stumbled and almost fell.

Her body had reached its limit; even walking had become difficult.

The middle-aged man looked at Su Yuqi, a cruel smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

"The Holy Maiden of the Flame Demon lineage, a peak third-grade Golden Immortal, is indeed a formidable opponent."

His voice carried a cat-and-mouse-like pleasure. "Unfortunately, you brought too many burdens. If you had come alone, you might have been able to fight me to a draw, and even have a chance to take the Heart of the Cold Abyss. But you brought this bunch of trash…" He shook his head, "You deserve to die."

He raised his golden scepter, and the luminous stone at the top of the scepter once again condensed holy light.

"Now, it's time to send you on your way."

The golden holy light condensed at the top of the scepter, growing brighter and denser, finally forming a golden sphere the size of a human head, containing enough power to completely annihilate Su Yuqi.

Su Yuqi stood still, neither dodging nor blocking.

It wasn't that she didn't want to, but that she had no strength left.

She simply raised her head, her dark red eyes looking at the golden sphere, her eyes devoid of fear, only a sense of relief and calm.

Was it really over?

Perhaps.

She should have died long ago.

From the day she lost her memory, the Su Yuqi of the past had already died.

Now, she was nothing more than a puppet whose memories had been reshaped by the demons, a tool living for the benefit of the Flame Demon lineage.

Dying here might be a release.

She closed her eyes.

Then, she heard a sword's cry.

The cry was crisp and long, like something tearing through the air, or something awakening from slumber.

It wasn't an ordinary sword cry, but one imbued with some ancient law, each tremor resonating with some primal power of heaven and earth.

After the cry, a deafening roar followed.

Boom—

the golden sphere of holy light exploded less than a foot away from Su Yuqi, but not on its own; it was cleaved in two by a purple sword aura.

The instant the purple sword aura collided with the golden sphere, the two completely different forces tore at each other wildly in the confined space, releasing unimaginable energy shocks.

The golden holy light and the purple chaotic power intertwined, collided, and annihilated in the air, forming visible shockwaves that spread in all directions.

Where the shockwave passed, several deep furrows, several feet deep, were carved into the ice surface. The ice at the edges of the furrows was riddled with holes by the intense heat and chaotic power.

Su Yuqi's body was jolted back a few steps by the shockwave, but she didn't fall because she was supported by a strong hand.

It was a hand that wasn't particularly large, but it was exceptionally strong.

Su Yuqi suddenly opened her eyes, and what came into view was a purple back.

The back wasn't tall, even somewhat thin, but standing there, it was like an unshakeable mountain.

Purple chaotic power flowed around him, shimmering with a cold luster in the light of the ice-blue passage.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword was held horizontally in front of him, its blade burning with purple chaotic fire, the flames flickering and dispelling the surrounding chill.

Kai.

Su Yuqi looked at his back, a complex emotion flashing in her dark red eyes.

She didn't understand why Kai, who was only at the eighth level of the True Immortal Realm, would save her.

Was there some past between them that she didn't know about?

She wanted to ask, but the words fell into silent contemplation.

Her gaze fell on his shoulder, where a scar scorched by holy light lay, the flesh charred black, still emitting wisps of white smoke.

It was from the aftershock of his sword strike that had cleaved the golden orb of light.

He had shielded her from the deadly holy light with his own body.

Su Yuqi's eyes suddenly stung with tears.

She didn't know why.

Perhaps it was because it had been too long since anyone had protected her like that.

Since losing her memory, she had always been the Holy Maiden of the Flame Demon lineage, a high and mighty being, the protector, not the protected.

She was used to facing everything alone, used to shielding her people from all danger, used to silently licking her wounds after being injured.

She had never imagined that one day a cultivator at only the eighth rank of True Immortal would use his own body to shield her from a fatal blow.The middle-aged man's killing intent intensified as he looked at Kai, who had suddenly appeared.

"A mere eighth-grade True Immortal dares to block my holy light?"

His voice carried an angry rage at being offended. "Since you're so eager to die, I'll grant your wish."

The golden scepter was raised again, holy light gathering at its tip.

Kai didn't look at him, but turned to Su Yuqi behind him.

"Can you still stand?" His voice was soft, so soft that only Su Yuqi could hear it.

Su Yuqi nodded, remaining silent.

Her throat felt blocked, unable to speak.

“Step back.”

Kai withdrew his gaze, slowly raising the Dragon-Slaying Sword, its tip aimed at the middle-aged man’s throat. “Leave this to me.”

Su Yuqi opened her mouth, wanting to say, “How could an eighth-grade True Immortal possibly be a match for a fourth-grade Golden Immortal?” But she didn’t speak.

Because she saw Kai’s eyes.

In those purple eyes, there was no fear, no hesitation, only an indescribable calm.

That wasn’t the calm of ignorance, but the calm of absolute confidence in one’s own strength.

Like the calm of a hunter watching its prey walk into a trap.

Su Yuqi took a few steps back, leaning against the ice door, her dark red eyes fixed on Kai’s back.

She wanted to see what trump cards Kai, only at the eighth level of the True Immortal Realm, possessed that allowed him to dare face a fourth-level Golden Immortal Realm expert from the Hall of Light with his mere eighth-level True Immortal cultivation.

The middle-aged man’s holy light sphere had been fully condensed, larger and brighter than the previous two, containing even more terrifying power.

“Holy Light – Annihilation!”

the middle-aged man uttered a low shout, and the golden sphere shot out, trailing a long golden tail of flame as it hurtled towards Kai.

Wherever the sphere passed, the air was completely ignited, the ice crystals on both sides of the passage vaporized, and a trench a foot deep was plowed into the ground. The ice at the edge of the trench was melted by the high temperature, and crimson magma flowed in the trench, emitting a pungent sulfurous smell.

This attack was more than twice as powerful as the one aimed at Su Yuqi.

The middle-aged man was clearly enraged by Kai's "offense"; he wanted to obliterate this arrogant ant in one strike.

Kai stared at the oncoming golden sphere of light, his purple eyes utterly calm.

He didn't retreat, dodge, or even parry.

He simply thrust out his sword.

The instant the tip of the Dragon-Slaying Sword collided with the golden sphere, purple chaotic fire exploded violently, transforming into a massive purple flame that completely engulfed the golden sphere.

The golden holy light struggled frantically within the purple flame, like prey caught in the jaws of a beast, twisting, struggling, and roaring desperately, but unable to escape the overwhelming power of chaos.

Kai flicked his sword tip slightly, and the golden sphere, consumed by the chaotic fire, changed direction, flying towards the crowd of Bright Hall cultivators.

"Not good! Get out of the way!"

The cultivators of the Hall of Light were terrified and scattered in all directions.

But the ball of light was flying too fast, and after being devoured by the chaotic fire, it became even more unstable. It exploded with a bang when it reached the crowd.

Boom!

The golden holy light and the purple chaotic fire exploded simultaneously, transforming into countless tiny pillars of light that shot in all directions. Each pillar contained enough power to kill a Golden Immortal cultivator.

Several slow-moving cultivators of the Hall of Light were struck by the pillars of light, their bodies instantly blasted into pieces. Golden blood and shattered limbs flew through the air, landing on the ice with a pattering sound.

The golden blood flowed on the ice, intertwining with the dark red blood left by the demon cultivators, creating a bizarre and bloody scene.

The middle-aged man's face changed completely.

"Chaotic power?"

His voice was filled with disbelief and shock. "You are…you are Kai?!"

He had heard of this name before.

Elder Yan Po of the Flame God Palace led thirty Flame Dragon Guards to hunt down a young man named Kai, but they were all wiped out. Yan Po was killed with a single sword strike, and Flame Tiger and Flame Leopard fled back in disarray.

At the time, he had mocked the people of the Flame God Palace for being useless—a peak third-grade Golden Immortal leading thirty elite first-grade Golden Immortals, yet they were all annihilated by a cultivator at the eighth grade True Immortal level.

Now he understood.

It wasn't that the people of the Flame God Palace were useless, but that this young man named Kai was too terrifying.

An eighth-grade True Immortal, wielding the power of chaos, killing a peak third-grade Golden Immortal with a single sword strike.

This kind of cross-level combat power could no longer be measured by ordinary standards.

Kai remained silent.

His purple eyes coldly stared at the middle-aged man, the chaotic fire on his Dragon-Slaying Sword burning ever brighter, illuminating the entire passage with a purple light.

He didn't need to speak.

His sword was his answer.

Cold sweat beaded on the middle-aged man's forehead.

He was a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, a whole major grade higher than Kai.

Logically, with such a difference in cultivation level, he should have crushed Kai.

But the truth is, Kai's sword strike not only easily neutralized his "Holy Light – Annihilation," but also used the force to bounce the light sphere back, killing several of his subordinates.

This control over power, this judgment of the battle situation, this reaction made in the blink of an eye—this is not something a True Immortal Realm Eighth Grade cultivator should possess.

This is practically the fighting style of a battle-hardened Golden Immortal Realm Peak expert.

“I’ll see just how much you’re worth.”

The middle-aged man gritted his teeth, his golden scepter swinging wildly. The light stone at the top of the scepter erupted with unprecedented holy light, illuminating the entire passage as bright as day.

The holy light condensed on his body, forming a set of golden holy light armor. The surface of the armor was covered with dense holy light runes, each rune operating wildly, maximizing his defense and attack power.

This is the Hall of Light’s secret technique—”Holy Light Armor,” which condenses holy light into solid armor, greatly enhancing not only defense but also amplifying the power of holy light spells.

The middle-aged man clearly now considered Kai a true opponent and no longer underestimated him.

Kai looked at the golden holy light armor on the middle-aged man’s body, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

His chaotic power could counter all holy light, but only if the degree of condensation of his chaotic power was not lower than that of the holy light.

The middle-aged man was a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, and the degree of condensation of his holy light far surpassed that of Yan Po, a peak third-grade Golden Immortal.

Although Kai’s chaotic power could suppress holy light, its effectiveness was greatly reduced against holy light of this level.

However…

a slight smile appeared on Kai’s lips.

He had plenty of ways.

The middle-aged man moved.

His figure flashed through the air, disappearing from his original spot, and reappeared behind Kai the next moment, his golden scepter carrying enough power to shatter a mountain as it smashed towards the back of Kai's head. The scepter was enveloped in compressed holy light, its color shifting from gold to blazing white, so intensely hot it seemed to ignite the air, crackling and popping.

Kai didn't turn around.

He slightly shifted his body, the scepter grazing his ear, lifting a strand of black hair.

At the same time, the Dragon-Slaying Sword swung upwards, its purple sword energy slashing towards the middle-aged man's wrist.

The middle-aged man coldly snorted, retracting his scepter to block the sword energy.

The sword energy struck the scepter, producing a piercing metallic clang, sparks flying.

The middle-aged man was forced back half a step, a hint of seriousness flashing in his eyes.

Kai's power was far greater than he had imagined.

How could a True Immortal Realm Eighth Grade cultivator possess such strength?

He had no time to think further, for Kai's second sword strike was already upon him.

This strike was no longer a test, but a true killing blow.

The purple chaotic fire on the Dragon-Slaying Sword condensed into a three-zhang-long sword aura. Wherever the sword aura passed, the air

was torn apart, the ice surface was cleaved, and even space itself trembled slightly under its sharpness.

The middle-aged man dared not take it head-on and dodged to the side.

But the sword aura was too fast. Although he dodged the direct attack, his right arm was still grazed by the sword aura. His

golden holy light armor was like paper in front of the sword aura, easily torn apart. The sword aura left a deep, bone-revealing wound on his right arm, and golden blood gushed from the wound, splashing onto the ice surface with a hissing sound.

The middle-aged man groaned and retreated dozens of zhang, widening the distance between himself and Kai.

He looked down at the wound on his right arm, a trace of horror flashing in his eyes.

His holy light armor was broken by a junior at the eighth level of the True Immortal Realm with a single sword strike?

How could this be?

His holy light armor could even withstand the full-force attack of a fourth-level Golden Immortal Realm expert.

“Who exactly are you…” The middle-aged man’s voice trembled slightly, “Who are you?”

Kai didn’t answer.

His purple eyes coldly stared at the middle-aged man, and the Dragon-Slaying Sword slowly rose, its tip aimed at the man’s throat.

Purple chaotic power condensed at the sword tip, forming a thin, hair-like purple thread of light.

It was his strongest attack, compressing all his chaotic power into a single point, the same move he used to kill Yan Po.

But compared to when he killed Yan Po, this purple thread of light was more refined, purer, and contained a more terrifying power.

After the continuous battles in the Fallen God Wasteland and the outskirts of the Azure Cloud Mountains, his chaotic power was purer than before, and his understanding of the laws of chaos had deepened.

The middle-aged man looked at the purple thread of light, his pupils suddenly contracting.

He sensed the power contained within it.

That wasn't the power a True Immortal Realm Eighth Grade cultivator should possess.

It was a terrifying power capable of threatening his life.

"Retreat!"

The middle-aged man made a decisive decision, shouting as he turned and ran.

He wasn't a reckless fool; he was an elder of the Hall of Light, having lived for tens of thousands of years and experienced countless battles, deeply understanding the importance of assessing the situation.

This young man before him was too strange. A True Immortal of the eighth rank could force him to this point; if he broke through to the Golden Immortal realm, what would become of him?

If they didn't run now, they might not be able to escape later.

Seeing their elder flee, the cultivators of the Hall of Light also turned and ran, each faster than a rabbit, their golden holy light leaving long trails of flame in the passage.

Su Yuqi leaned against the ice door, watching the disarrayed retreating figures of the Hall of Light cultivators, a complex expression flashing in her dark red eyes.

A Golden Immortal of the fourth rank elder of the Hall of Light, forced to flee in disarray by a True Immortal of the eighth rank.

Who would believe such a thing if word got out?

But Kai had no intention of letting them escape.

His figure flashed, disappearing from the spot, a purple streak of light streaking through the passage, so fast that even his afterimage was invisible.

The next moment, he appeared behind the slowest-running cultivator from the Temple of Light. With a gentle flick of his Dragon-Slaying Sword, a purple sword aura slashed across the cultivator's neck.

The cultivator's head flew off, and his headless body continued running forward for several steps before collapsing to the ground with a thud.

Golden blood gushed from his neck, staining the icy blue ice surface a dark gold.

Kai didn't linger; his figure flashed again, appearing before another cultivator from the Temple of Light.

The cultivator stared in terror at Kai, who had suddenly appeared before him. His mouth opened, as if to beg for mercy, but before he could utter a word, Kai's sword had already pierced his chest.

Purple chaotic fire surged into his body from the wound, devouring his holy light, essence blood, meridians, and bones, one by one.

His body stiffened for a moment, then slowly collapsed, his eyes still open, frozen in fear and resentment.

Kai's figure weaved through the passage, each flash accompanied by the fall of a cultivator from the Temple of Light.

His sword wasn't fast, in fact, it was quite slow. Each strike was precise and clear, without any frills or unnecessary movements.

But it was precisely this extreme simplicity of swordsmanship that left the Bright Hall cultivators no chance to react before they were killed with a single blow.

This wasn't a battle; it was a massacre.

Kai harvested the lives of the Bright Hall cultivators one by one, like reaping wheat.

In the blink of an eye, more than a dozen Bright Hall cultivators lay dead in pools of blood, golden blood flowing on the ice, forming dark golden streams. Only

the middle-aged man at the fourth rank of the Golden Immortal realm remained.

He stood at the entrance of the passage, looking at the corpses scattered on the ground, watching Kai slowly walk towards him, his face deathly pale, his hand gripping the scepter trembling.

"You…you can't kill me…"

His voice trembled, all his previous dignity and arrogance gone. "I am an elder of the Bright Hall. If you kill me, the Bright Hall will not let you off…"

Kai stopped in front of him, only three steps away.

The purple eyes looked down at him, devoid of any emotion, like an executioner watching a prisoner about to be executed.

"The Hall of Light?"

Kai finally spoke, his voice soft but exceptionally clear in the silent corridor. “Do you think I care?”

The middle-aged man’s body trembled violently.

“You…”

He tried to say something, but Kai didn’t give him the chance.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword was raised, its tip aimed at the middle-aged man’s heart.

Purple chaotic power condensed at the sword tip, forming a thin, hair-like purple thread of light.

“Wait!”

the middle-aged man shouted suddenly, “You can’t kill me! I know a secret! A secret about the Heart of the Cold Abyss! A secret about the Ice God lineage! Let me go, and I’ll tell you!”

Kai’s hand paused.

He turned to look at Jiang Xuelan behind him.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside the ice gate, her ice-white dress covered in ice shards and dust. Her face was pale, but her eyes shone with a resolute light.

Upon hearing the words “the secret of the Ice God lineage,” her body trembled slightly. Kai withdrew his gaze and looked at the middle-aged man.

“Speak.”

“You must first swear you won’t kill me!”

A cunning glint flashed in the middle-aged man's eyes. "Swear on your Dao Heart, or I'd rather die than speak!"

Kai was silent for a moment.

Then he smiled.

The smile was cold, so cold it chilled the middle-aged man to the bone.

"You think you have the right to negotiate with me?"

Kai's voice was as cold as ice. "You only have two choices now—either speak, and I'll give you a quick death. Or don't speak, and I'll cut your flesh piece by piece and slowly burn it with Chaos Fire, letting you experience what it means to wish you were dead."

The middle-aged man's face turned completely pale.

He knew Kai wasn't bluffing.

A person who could kill more than a dozen Bright Hall cultivators without batting an eye was absolutely capable of such a thing.

"I'll talk…I'll talk…"

His voice seemed to be squeezed out from between his teeth, "While the Heart of the Frost Abyss is the supreme treasure of the Ice God lineage, it is also the key to opening the Ice God Palace headquarters in the twentieth heaven. Sealed within the Ice God Palace headquarters is the complete legacy of the Ice God Ancestor.

Whoever obtains the Ice God Ancestor's complete legacy will control the entire Ice God lineage. The Hall of Light has been searching for the Heart of the Frost Abyss precisely to open the Ice God Palace headquarters in the twentieth heaven and seize the Ice God Ancestor's legacy."

The twentieth heaven.

The Ice God Palace headquarters.

The Ice God Ancestor's complete legacy.

These words exploded in Kai's mind like a bombshell.

He turned to look at Jiang Xuelan.

Jiang Xuelan's expression became extremely complex, her eyes churning with shock, excitement, disbelief, and other emotions.

If the Heart of the Frost Abyss truly is the key to opening the Ice God Palace headquarters in the twentieth heaven, then the hope for the Ice God lineage's revival is not just in the eighteenth heaven, but in the twentieth heaven—the twentieth heaven where the God Clan's headquarters is located.

What does this mean?

This meant that the Ice God lineage had never truly perished. Their main altar in the twentieth heaven still sealed the complete legacy of their ancestor. As long as they obtained the legacy, the Ice God lineage could rise again.

"Finished?" Kai withdrew his gaze and looked at the middle-aged man.

The middle-aged man nodded vigorously. "Finished, finished. Can you let me go now?"

Kai didn't answer.

He simply raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword again.

"You…you're not keeping your word!" The middle-aged man retreated in terror, but behind him was the rock wall of the passage; he had nowhere to go.

"When did I say I would let you go?"

Kai's voice was terrifyingly calm. "I only said, 'Say it, and I'll give you a quick death.' I mean what I say."

Purple light shot out from the sword tip, silent and fast as lightning.

The middle-aged man tried to dodge, but the light was too fast. Before his body could react, the light pierced his forehead. His

body stiffened for a moment, his eyes widened, and his mouth opened, as if he wanted to say something, but nothing came out.

Golden blood slowly flowed from the wound on his forehead, dripping down his nose and cheeks.

His body slowly fell backward, crashing onto the ice with a dull thud.

The golden scepter slipped from his hand, clattering and rolling a long distance, the luminous stone at its tip dim and lifeless, no longer emitting any holy light.

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword and turned back to Su Yuqi and Jiang Xuelan.

He was covered in golden blood, his purple robes stained with spots, but his expression remained calm, as if he had just returned from a stroll, not from having just slain more than a dozen Golden Immortal cultivators.

The passage was silent, save for the faint sounds of ice crystals shattering and the whistling of the wind blowing through the cracks.

Su Yuqi leaned against the ice door, her dark red eyes fixed on Kai, filled with shock.

She had witnessed the entire process of Kai killing the cultivators from the Hall of Light.

From the first sword strike that neutralized “Holy Light: Annihilation,” to the reaping of the lives of the Bright Hall cultivators one by one, to the final strike piercing the middle-aged man’s forehead with a purple light thread—

every sword strike was clean and swift, without any superfluous movements or hesitation .

This was not the swordsmanship of a True Immortal Realm Eighth Grade cultivator.

It was a killing technique honed through countless life-or-death battles, honed amidst mountains of corpses and seas of blood.

Su Yuqi suddenly felt a sense of relief that Kai hadn’t attacked her.

If he had, she would likely be lying on the ground, a cold corpse, just like those Bright Hall cultivators.

“You…” Su Yuqi began, her voice hoarse, “Who exactly are you?”

Kai turned to look at her, a complex emotion flashing in his purple eyes.

“I am Kai.”

His voice was soft, as if answering a simple question, “Someone you once knew.”

Su Yuqi remained silent for a moment.

There must be a past between this Kai and her that she didn’t know about.

“I have amnesia,”

Su Yuqi said. “Except for our first meeting at the Fourteenth Heaven, I don’t remember anything else. So… what you’ve said about the past is like a story that happened to someone else to me.”

Kai was silent for a long time.

A hint of sadness flashed in his eyes, but he quickly regained his composure.

“It’s alright,” he said, his voice calm. “Whether you remember or not, you are still you.”

Su Yuqi looked at him, a complex emotion flashing in her dark red eyes.

She didn’t know how to respond.

“You’re injured,” Kai suddenly spoke, his gaze falling on the wound on her shoulder. “It needs some treatment.”

He took out a healing pill from his storage ring and handed it to Su Yuqi.

Su Yuqi took the pill, hesitated for a moment, and then put it in her mouth. As soon as

the pill entered her stomach, a warm power surged from her dantian, stabilizing her injuries, and the wound on her shoulder began to heal slowly.

“Thank you,” she said, her voice soft.

Kai shook his head and turned to walk towards Jiang Xuelan.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside the ice gate, her long, white dress covered in ice shards and dust. Her face was somewhat pale, but the light in her eyes remained resolute.

“You heard everything?” Kai asked.

Jiang Xuelan nodded.

“The Heart of the Cold Abyss is the key to opening the main altar of the Ice God Palace in the twentieth heaven; the complete legacy of the Ice God Ancestor is sealed there.”

Her voice trembled slightly, not from fear, but from excitement. “If this is true, then the Ice God lineage…”

“Whether it’s true or not, we’ll find out by going in.” Kai turned to look at the massive ice gate. “Let’s go in.”

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, walked to the ice gate, and placed her hand on it.

Her Ice God bloodline activated at full power, and icy blue light surged from her palm, resonating with the six-petaled snowflake runes on the ice gate.The ice gate slowly opened, and an even more intense chill surged out from behind it, enveloping all three simultaneously.

Kai’s Chaos Fire automatically activated, repelling the chill.

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, inhaling the surging chill, her face regaining some color, a glint of wild joy flashing in her eyes.

Su Yuqi’s body trembled slightly, dark red supreme fire appearing on her skin, keeping the chill at bay. Her injuries had not yet healed, her face still pale, but her dark red eyes remained resolute.

The three stepped through the ice gate, entering a deeper passage.

The ice walls on both sides of the passage were covered with Ice God runes, flickering in the icy blue light, as if recounting the rise and fall of the Ice God lineage over hundreds of thousands of years.

At the end of the passage was a massive ice crystal palace.

The palace was tens of meters high, its dome densely covered with ice crystals, which refracted the outside light, illuminating the entire palace.

The palace floor was a single, translucent slab of ice crystal, a deep blue, revealing ancient runes flowing beneath the surface.

In the center of the palace stood a high ice crystal platform, upon which floated a ball of ice-blue light. Within this light, a fist-sized bead was faintly visible, its surface covered in densely packed ice god runes, radiating an extremely powerful force of the laws of ice.

The Heart of the Frost Abyss.

The three stopped simultaneously.

Kai gazed at the ball of ice-blue light, his purple eyes reflecting the flowing ice-blue halo.

He could sense that the bead contained an immense power of the laws of ice, a power pure to the extreme, powerful to the extreme, and ancient to the extreme.

It was a power beyond the reach of even a Golden Immortal cultivator, let alone a cultivator at the Void Realm.

It was the primordial power condensed from the Ice God Ancestor's own blood essence, the core of the Ice God lineage's inheritance for hundreds of thousands of years.

"The Heart of the Cold Abyss."

Jiang Xuelan's voice trembled slightly. She sensed the aura of the Ice God lineage within the bead, causing her Ice God bloodline to boil wildly, as if responding to some ancient call.

Su Yuqi looked at the Heart of the Cold Abyss, a complex expression flashing in her dark red eyes.

She had come to the Northern Cold Abyss for this bead.

But now, she was injured, her spiritual power depleted, and more than half of her essence blood consumed. She had no strength to compete with Kai.

Moreover, even in her prime, she wasn't confident she could snatch the Heart of the Cold Abyss from Kai.

Someone capable of killing a fourth-grade Golden Immortal was not someone she could handle.

Su Yuqi was silent for a moment, then turned and walked towards the palace exit.

"Where are you going?" Kai's voice came from behind.

Su Yuqi stopped, but didn't turn around.

"I'm injured, I don't have the strength to fight you for the Heart of the Cold Abyss."

Her voice was calm, devoid of any emotion. "You take your treasure, I'll go my own way. We're strangers."

"What if you go out now and encounter reinforcements from the Hall of Light?"

Su Yuqi's body stiffened slightly.

Kai was right.

So many people had died in the Hall of Light, they would definitely send reinforcements to investigate.

She was currently overdrawn on her spiritual power, her essence blood was more than half depleted, and her injuries had not yet healed. If she encountered reinforcements from the Hall of Light, she wouldn't even be able to run away.

“Stay here, heal your injuries before you leave.” Kai’s voice came from behind her. “We’ll talk about what happens outside when you’re healed.”

Su Yuqi remained silent for a long time.

She stood there, her back to Kai, motionless.

Her dark red dress appeared somewhat dim in the icy blue light, her ink-black hair hanging down her back, swaying gently in the cold air.

After a long time, she finally spoke.

“Okay.”

This one word was very soft, almost inaudible.

But Kai heard it.

The corners of his mouth slightly curved into an imperceptible arc.

Su Yuqi turned around, walked to a corner of the palace, sat down against the ice wall, took out a pill from her storage ring, swallowed it, closed her eyes, and began to regulate her breathing and heal her injuries.

Her ultimate fire slowly burned on her body, the dark red light standing out conspicuously in the ice-blue palace.

Kai looked at her profile, a soft light flashing in his purple eyes.

But he quickly withdrew his gaze and turned to walk towards the ice crystal platform.

The Heart of the Cold Abyss hovered three feet above the platform, ice-blue light flowing across its surface, like a star frozen for hundreds of thousands of years.

Kai walked to the platform and reached into the ice-blue light.

Chaotic power circulated in his palm, the purple light colliding with the ice-blue light, producing a faint resonance.

He could feel that the Heart of the Cold Abyss contained an extremely vast power of the laws of ice, a power that was pure to the extreme, powerful to the extreme, and ancient to the extreme.

But that power was not hostile to him; it could even be said to be friendly.

Because his chaotic power is the source of all elements, the power of ice, as an element, has a natural affinity for chaotic power.

Kai took the Heart of the Abyss from the light and held it in his palm.

The Heart of the Abyss was cool to the touch, but not piercing; instead, it had a warm, jade-like feel.

The ice god runes on the surface of the bead glowed faintly in Kai's palm, as if welcoming his arrival.

Just then, an old and weak voice suddenly rang in Kai's sea of consciousness.

"The Heart of the Abyss...finally...found..."

It was Bei Mingyuan.

Kai was overjoyed, "Senior, you're awake?"

"I have been waiting..."

Bei Mingyuan's voice was intermittent, as if he was speaking with his last strength, "Place the Heart of the Abyss...on the Ice God Altar...I want to...use the power of the altar...to reshape my physical body..."

Kai looked around and saw an ice crystal altar on the north side of the palace.

The altar was about ten feet high and three feet wide, entirely ice-blue, its surface covered with densely packed ice god runes. The runes flickered in the ice-blue light, as if breathing.

In the center of the altar was a recess, its shape identical to the Heart of the Frozen Abyss.

Kai walked to the altar and gently placed the Heart of the Frozen Abyss into the recess.

The instant the Heart of the Frozen Abyss entered the recess, the entire palace trembled.

Simultaneously, the ice god runes on the altar lit up, illuminating the entire palace with an ice-blue light.

In the light, a phantom emerged from Kai's sea of consciousness and slowly landed before the altar.

It was an old man with white hair, a pale face, and an ethereal figure, as if a gust of wind could disperse him. This was

Bei Mingyuan.

His remnant soul stood before the altar, gazing at the Heart of the Cold Abyss on it, tears welling in his eyes.

"Hundreds of thousands of years..." His voice was hoarse to the extreme, "I... have finally returned..."

He reached out, and the instant his ethereal fingers touched the Heart of the Cold Abyss, it erupted with a blinding icy blue light, completely enveloping Bei Mingyuan's remnant soul.

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In the light, Bei Mingyuan's illusory figure began to solidify, his previously ethereal form gradually becoming clear.

His white hair turned black, his wrinkles disappeared, and his hunched body straightened.

A middle-aged man slowly emerged in the light, his face resolute, his brows carrying the unique coldness and nobility of the Ice God lineage.

This was the first time Kai had seen Bei Mingyuan so clearly.

"Senior, you have finally recovered your physical body?" Kai walked up to him, clasped his hands in a salute.

Bei Mingyuan raised his head, looked at Kai, and remained silent for a long time.

Then, he shook his head, "I haven't recovered yet. Even on this altar, with the Heart of the Cold Abyss, how could I possibly recover my physical body so quickly?" "

Then how long will it take for Senior to recover his physical body?" Kai asked.

Bei Mingyuan was silent for a moment, then said, "I don't know, perhaps a hundred years, or a thousand years, ten thousand years..."

Hearing Bei Mingyuan's words, Jiang Xuelan was stunned.

She had originally thought that if the Ice God lineage's ancestor recovered his physical body and was resurrected, then their Ice God lineage would become powerful.

But now, restoring the physical body takes so long?

A thousand years, ten thousand years later, will anyone still exist in the Ice God lineage?

Bei Mingyuan seemed to see Jiang Xuelan's worries and smiled slightly, saying, "Girl, you are the successor of my Ice God lineage. Even if I cannot restore my physical body, the Ice God lineage will not perish."

"Take the Heart of the Cold Abyss. When you reach the twentieth heaven, find the main altar of our Ice God lineage, obtain the complete inheritance, and the Ice God lineage will become powerful again."

The Heart of the Cold Abyss slowly flew towards Jiang Xuelan.

Jiang Xuelan reached out and grasped the Heart of the Cold Abyss.

The Heart of the Cold Abyss felt slightly warm in her palm, and icy blue light spread upwards along her arm, merging with her Ice God power.

Seeing this, Bei Mingyuan slowly sat down on the altar.

"You may leave. I am about to begin my seclusion to restore my physical body. After you leave, seal the secret passage. Do not let anyone disturb me," Bei Mingyuan said.

Kai nodded and turned to walk towards Jiang Xuelan and Su Yuqi.

Su Yuqi had awakened from her healing process, leaning against the ice wall, her dark red eyes fixed on Kai with an indescribable emotion.

She had seen and heard everything.

The ancestor of the Ice God lineage, the Heart of the Cold Abyss, the reshaping of the physical body...

these were things she had never known before.

"Let's go." Kai walked up to her and extended his hand.

Su Yuqi looked at his hand, hesitated for a moment, then reached out and let him take her hand.

Her hand was cold, but Kai's hand was warm.

Purple chaotic energy surged from his palm, enveloping her hand and seeping into her body, stabilizing her injuries.

Su Yuqi's body trembled slightly, a hint of surprise flashing in her dark red eyes.

"Your chaotic energy... can heal?"

"Yes."

Kai released her hand. "Chaotic energy is the source of all elements, including the life force. While it's not as effective as specialized healing spiritual energy, it can still be used."

Su Yuqi was silent for a moment, then nodded.

The three of them left the ice crystal palace, passed through the passage, and returned to the bottom of the crevice.

Kai glanced up at the exit above the crack, then turned and took out several huge rocks from his storage ring. He melted them with chaotic power, turning them into magma, which he poured into the crack.

The magma solidified upon contact with the cold air, completely sealing the crack.

He then placed several restrictions on the sealed crack, reinforcing them with chaotic power to ensure that no one could enter.

"That should be enough." Kai dusted off his hands, turned to Jiang Xuelan and Su Yuqi, and said, "Let's go."

The three climbed up the ice wall along the edge of the crack and returned to the ice field.

Three blazing suns hung high in the sky, their golden, silvery, and crimson rays intertwining, dyeing the entire ice field a magnificent tricolor.

The ice field was silent, save for the howling of the cold wind and the faint sound of ice crystals shattering.

The corpses of the Bright Temple cultivators were still scattered on the ice field, their golden blood having congealed into a dark golden film, shimmering eerily in the sunlight.

Kai's gaze lingered on the corpses for a moment before returning to his seat.

"Which way?" Jiang Xuelan asked.

Kai took out a jade map and glanced at it.

"South,"

he said. "First, leave the Northern Abyss and find a safe place for Su Yuqi to recover. Then… go to the Hall of Light."

"Go to the Hall of Light?" Jiang Xuelan was somewhat surprised. "What for?"

Kai put away the jade map, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

"They want to kill me, I have to go and say hello." His voice was calm, but a chilling undercurrent emanated from it. "Tell them I'm not someone to be trifled with."

Jiang Xuelan looked into his eyes and didn't ask any more questions.

She was used to Kai's way of speaking.

Every time he said "go and say hello," it meant someone was about to suffer.

Su Yuqi stood to the side, looking at Kai's profile, a complex emotion flickering in her dark red eyes.

She didn't know this young man well, but she could sense an inexplicable aura about him.

It was a temperament forged through countless life-and-death experiences, tempered amidst mountains of corpses and seas of blood.

Cold, composed, decisive, and ruthless.

Yet, at the same time, it carried an indescribable tenderness.

Just like the warmth he felt in her palm when he held her hand earlier.

"Let's go." Kai turned and led the way south.

Jiang Xuelan followed behind him, and Su Yuqi hesitated for a moment before following as well.

The three figures cast long shadows across the icy plain, gradually receding into the distance in the icy blue light of the Frost Abyss.

Behind them, in the sealed rift, Bei Mingyuan was in seclusion within the light of the Heart of the Frost Abyss.

Before them, the forces of the Hall of Light and the Flame God Palace were eyeing them covetously.

Kai knew the road ahead would not be easy.

But he didn't care.

He had walked even more difficult paths and faced even more powerful enemies.

These were nothing compared to this.

The only thing he cared about was the dark red figure behind him.

Su Yuqi.

He would definitely find a way to restore her memories.

Not to make her return to her past self, but to let her know that

she was never alone .

In this world, there were still people who cared about her, still people who remembered her, still people who were willing to risk their lives for her.

Even if she had forgotten everything.

Kai pulled himself together and quickened his pace.

The road ahead was still long, but he wasn't afraid.

Because he knew that no matter what lay ahead, he would not stop.

To become stronger, to find the Chaos Dao Palace, for those he wanted to protect. He would

not retreat a single step.

The three of them climbed the last ice wall from the edge of the ice field. The ice beneath their feet gradually thinned, and the dark red sand reappeared in their sight. The icy blue aura of the Northern Abyss swirled slowly behind them, like the unchanging aurora borealis, silently watching their retreating figures.

Su Yuqi walked at the very back; her injuries hadn't fully healed. Although the wound on her shoulder had scabbed over, each movement of her arm aggravated it, sending a slight stinging pain through her.

Her dark red dress was covered in ice shards and dust, and her long hair fluttered wildly in the cold wind, but she didn't complain of fatigue or slow her pace.

Kai walked at the front, the Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, his purple eyes scanning the surroundings, his divine sense covering a radius of fifty miles.

Although the edge of the Northern Abyss was much safer than its interior, who knew if the Hall of Light had already sent reinforcements?

Jiang Xuelan walked in the middle, her icy white dress fluttering in the cold wind of the Northern Abyss.

Her hand rested on the hilt of her sword, icy blue spiritual energy flowing between her fingertips, ready to respond to any unexpected situation.

The Heart of the Abyss resided within her; the icy blue bead emanated from within her, its slight coolness felt like a piece of ice jade pressed against her heart.

The three walked in silence for about an hour. The icy blue halo of the Northern Abyss had faded into a pale blue hue on the horizon behind them, and the Azure Cloud Mountains reappeared in their sight.

Pine forests, pebble beaches, dried-up riverbeds—everything was the same as when they arrived.

Only their state of mind was different.

When they came, Kai had only a vague guess: the Northern Abyss might contain a treasure of the Ice God lineage.

On the way out, he not only witnessed the Heart of the Abyss but also the beginning of the Northern Abyss's physical transformation, and learned that the Heart of the Abyss was the key to unlocking the main altar of the Ice God Palace in the Twentieth Heaven.

More importantly, Su Yuqi was by his side.

Although she had lost her memory, although she didn't remember their past, she was still alive, still standing before him—that was enough.

Kai stopped and turned to look at Su Yuqi.

She walked slowly, her face still pale, her dark red eyes half-open, her gaze somewhat unfocused, clearly forcing herself to keep going.

"Let's rest for a bit," Kai said, pointing to a flat rock nearby.

Su Yuqi glanced at him, said nothing, and walked over to sit on the rock.

She took out a pill from her storage ring, swallowed it, closed her eyes, and began to regulate her breathing.

Dark red flames slowly burned on her body, dispelling the surrounding chill and casting flickering light on her face.

Kai stood beside her, looking at her profile, a complex emotion flashing in his purple eyes.

He remembered many things.

He remembered his past with Su Yuqi.

He remembered their first meeting, when Su Yuqi almost hit him with her car.

He remembered how Su Yuqi used her family's influence to protect him.

Back then, he didn't seem so powerful...

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing those surging thoughts, walked to Su Yuqi, squatted down, and looked her in the eye.

"I have a question for you," Kai said.

Su Yuqi opened her eyes, her dark red pupils looking at him. She didn't speak, only nodded slightly.

"Where's your junior brother?" Kai asked. "Ning Zhi. "

Su Yuqi's brows furrowed slightly, as if she was recalling something.

"He's in seclusion,"

she said softly. "Ever since he was defeated by you at the Fourteenth Heaven, he's been in seclusion and hasn't come out."

Kai fell silent. This Ning Zhi had chased him all the way from the mortal realm to the Celestial Realm, and now he'd even come to the Celestial Realm.

Did he really intend to kill him?

Thinking about it, they didn't actually have any deep-seated hatred.

It was just that he killed his father, was that a big deal?

"What exactly is the hatred between you and him?"

Su Yuqi suddenly asked, a hint of curiosity in her dark red eyes. "From the Heavenly Ladder to the Celestial Realm, he's always wanted to kill you. I asked him, but he wouldn't tell me. Can you tell me?"

Kai remained silent for a long time.

He didn't know where to begin.

"If we're talking about my hatred for him, that was a long time ago, back when we were still in the mortal realm!" Kai said.

"The mortal world?" Su Yuqi frowned. She seemed to have forgotten the mortal world.

She had amnesia and no longer remembered her past.

“You don’t need to know too much.” Seeing Su Yuqi’s confused look, Kai didn’t want to tell her too much.

Now Su Yuqi had forgotten everything about herself, even the mortal world. If he said too much, it would only confuse and upset her more.

Su Yuqi looked into his eyes and didn’t press him.

The three rested for about half an hour. Su Yuqi’s complexion had improved, and the wound on her shoulder had healed most of it. The dark red scab had begun to fall off, revealing the new pink flesh underneath.

Kai stood up, dusted himself off, and said, “Let’s go, it’s time to get out of here.”

The three continued south.

The pine forest grew denser, the gravel beach turned into a dirt road, and the dirt road became the dry riverbed they had crossed on their way here.

The chill of the Northern Abyss was completely gone, replaced by the damp earthy smell of the outer Qingyun Mountains and the fragrance of pine resin.

Sunlight filtered through the gaps in the tree canopy, casting dappled shadows on the ground.

Birdsong drifted from the depths of the canopy, clear and melodious, a stark contrast to the deathly silence of the Northern Abyss.

Ahead, the outline of the Azure Cloud Mountains was clearly visible; the continuous peaks gleamed a bluish-gray in the sunlight, their summits capped with snow that never melted, appearing particularly magnificent against the backdrop of blue sky and white clouds.

According to the map, a day's journey south from here would completely take them out of the Azure Cloud Mountains.

Kai stopped and turned to look at Su Yuqi.

"What do you plan to do next?" Kai asked.

Su Yuqi was silent for a moment, her dark red eyes gazing into the distance, seemingly lost in thought.

"Return to the Flame Demon lineage,"

she said calmly. "My people are dead. I need to go back and report. The Hall of Light killed them; the Flame Demon lineage will avenge this."

Kai looked helpless. If he told Su Yuqi now that she wasn't a member of the Flame Demon lineage at all, she probably wouldn't believe him.

Su Yuqi is a fire spirit, which is actually different from the Flame Demon lineage.

But Kai can't say that right now.

"Come with me." Kai looked at Su Yuqi with purple eyes, a hint of expectation in them. "It's too dangerous for you to go back alone. The people from the Hall of Light are definitely looking for you everywhere. Your injuries haven't healed yet, what if you encounter..."

"No need."

Su Yuqi interrupted him, her voice soft but firm.

Kai's words caught in his throat, a flicker of sadness crossing his purple eyes.

He looked at Su Yuqi, wanting to say something, but nothing came out.

What reason did he have to make her stay?She had amnesia; she didn't remember him.

In her eyes, he was just someone she knew, a boy she had seen in the Fourteenth Heaven, someone who had just helped her kill the cultivator from the Hall of Light.

Nothing more.

"Alright," Kai's voice returned to calm. "Then be careful."

Su Yuqi nodded and turned to walk northeast.

She took a few steps, then suddenly stopped, without turning back, and simply whispered, "Thank you."

Then she continued walking, her dark red figure gradually disappearing into the shadows of the pine forest.

Kai stood there, watching the direction her figure had vanished, motionless.

Something churned in his purple eyes, but ultimately returned to calm.

Jiang Xuelan stood beside him, silent.

She simply stood quietly, keeping him company.

After a long time, Kai finally withdrew his gaze.

"Let's go," he said, turning to walk south.

Jiang Xuelan followed behind him, hesitated for a moment, and asked, "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Kai's voice was calm, almost unnaturally so.

Jiang Xuelan didn't ask any more questions.

She knew Kai needed time.

Some things couldn't be let go of with a simple "it's nothing."

The two walked south along the dry riverbed for about an hour. The terrain gradually flattened, and the pine forest became increasingly sparse.

Ahead was a small open area, the ground covered with pebbles and withered grass. Several huge rocks were scattered at the edge of the open area, as if deliberately placed there by someone. Just

as Kai was about to cross the open area, he suddenly stopped.

His divine sense sensed a person.

That person stood in the center of the open area, with their back to them, motionless, like a statue.

Kai's hand rested on the hilt of the Dragon-Slaying Sword, his purple eyes narrowing slightly.

The person wore a simple blue Taoist robe, had a thin face, and carried a wooden sword on their back.

The sword was covered with densely packed runes, not ordinary Taoist runes, but ancient Taoist patterns recorded in the Great Luo Golden Classic.

A Taoist.

Kai's gaze lingered on the wooden sword for a moment, then returned to his own.

He sensed the person's cultivation level: second rank of Golden Immortal.

Not too high, not too low—just enough to move freely in the Eighteenth Heaven without attracting too much attention.

But what caught Kai's attention was the complete lack of hostility from the person.

His aura was calm and deep, like a still pool in a deep mountain, without ripples, without killing intent, only a sense of…waiting.

As if waiting for someone.

The person he was waiting for was Kai.

Because Kai sensed a faint fluctuation of Daoist cultivation within the person's aura, a fluctuation that resonated subtly with the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

This was the first time Kai had encountered a Daoist since arriving in the Eighteenth Heaven.

He released the hilt of his Dragon-Slaying Sword and walked towards the person.

Jiang Xuelan followed behind him, her hand on the hilt of her sword, her gaze warily fixed on the person's back.

Kai stopped about three zhang behind the person.

The person turned around.

He looked to be in his early twenties, with a thin face and a composure and calmness beyond his years.

His skin was fair, as if he hadn't seen the sun for years, but it wasn't a sickly white; rather, it was a jade-white color that came from cultivating some kind of technique.

His eyes were very dark, like two deep pools of water, bottomless and without ripples.

His gaze lingered on Kai for a moment, then he nodded slightly, as if confirming something.

“This humble Daoist is Yun Yi.”

He bowed slightly, his voice not loud, but clearly reaching Kai’s ears, “A disciple of Qingyun Cave Heaven. By order of the sect leader, True Person Yu Xu, I invite Mr. Chen to Qingyun Cave Heaven for a discussion.”

Qingyun Cave Heaven.

True Person Yu Xu.

Kai had seen these two names on the map given to him by the Void Merchant Guild. Qingyun Cave Heaven was the foundation of the Daoist sect in the Eighteenth Heaven, and True Person Yu Xu was the sect leader of Qingyun Cave Heaven, a fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

A fifth-grade Golden Immortal powerhouse sending his disciple to invite a young man of the eighth grade True Immortal realm, and using the word “invite,” not “grab” or “bring.”

This was interesting.

Kai didn’t answer, only looking at Yun Yi. His purple eyes held neither hostility nor trust, only scrutiny.

Yun Yi didn’t urge him either.

He simply stood there, slightly bowed, like a bamboo stalk standing tall in the wind, unhurried, neither arrogant nor humble.

After a moment, he took out a jade slip from his robes and presented it with both hands.

“This is a letter from my master to Mr. Chen,” his voice remained calm.

Kai took the jade slip and probed it with his divine sense.

The jade slip contained a very brief spiritual message, only one sentence, but each word was like a nail, deeply driven into Kai’s mind.

“The three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven are willing to accept the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture as the new leader of the Daoist sect, even unto death.”

Kai’s hand trembled slightly.

He withdrew his divine sense from the jade slip, looked up at Yun Yi, a complex expression flashing in his purple eyes.

Accept the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture as the new leader of the Daoist sect.

Unto death.

What did this mean?

Was the Daoist sect going to hand over the entire Qingyun Cave Heaven?

Or is there another reason behind this?

Kai remained silent for a moment, then stored the jade slip in his storage ring.

“How long have you been waiting for me?” he suddenly asked.

Yun Yi was slightly taken aback, seemingly not expecting Kai to ask this question.

“Three days,” he said. “My master said that Mr. Chen would emerge from the Northern Cold Abyss, and instructed me to wait here.”

Three days.

True Master Yu Xu knew three days ago that he would come to the Northern Cold Abyss, that he would emerge from here.

Kai's brows furrowed slightly.

How did True Master Yu Xu know this?

Did he calculate it?

Or…did someone tell him?

In any case, this Jade Void Immortal was far more unfathomable than he had imagined.

"Aren't you afraid I won't be able to wait for you?" Kai asked again.

Yun Yi shook his head.

"My master said that Mr. Chen will definitely come." His voice was calm, carrying an unwavering trust. "My master has never been wrong."

Kai remained silent for a long time.

He stood in the center of the open space, his gaze passing over Yun Yi, looking towards the southern horizon.

There, the continuous peaks of the Azure Cloud Mountains gleamed with a bluish-gray luster under the sunlight. Between the peaks, the outlines of some buildings could be vaguely seen—not palaces, not pavilions, but ancient buildings like Taoist temples, with blue tiles and white walls, hidden in the clouds, appearing and disappearing.

That was the Azure Cloud Grotto-Heaven.

The foundation of the Daoist sect in the Eighteenth Heaven.

Kai withdrew his gaze and looked at Yun Yi.

This was the second force he had encountered showing him goodwill since arriving in the Eighteenth Heaven.

The first was the Void Merchant Guild, which gave him a map and a guest elder token.

The second was the Daoist sect, which wanted to appoint him as the new sect leader.

He didn't know if there was any connection between the Daoist sect and the Void Merchant Guild, nor how much enmity existed between the Daoist sect and the Seven Lineages of the Divine Race.

But he saw something in Yun Yi's eyes.

Something that the people of the Void Merchant Guild didn't see, and that the cultivators of the Divine Race didn't see either.

It was the look of someone who had waited in the long darkness for tens of thousands of years and finally saw a glimmer of light.

Kai had seen that look in Gui Yuanzi's eyes, in the eyes of Xuanbing Venerable, and in the eyes of everyone who had been oppressed by the Divine Race for countless years.

It wasn't scheming, it wasn't a conspiracy, but a pure, heartfelt…hope.

The people of the Daoist sect wouldn't harm him.

Kai didn't know why he had this feeling, but his intuition was always accurate.

"Lead the way," he said.

A glint flashed in Yun Yi's eyes, but it quickly returned to calm.

He bowed slightly and turned to walk south.

Kai and Jiang Xuelan followed behind him.

The three of them crossed an open area and walked onto a bluestone path hidden in a pine forest.

The path was narrow, barely wide enough for two people to walk side by side. Covered in moss, it was clearly rarely used.

Dense pine forests lined both sides of the path, their branches laden with gray moss. The canopies of the pines blocked out the sun, leaving only sparse rays filtering through the leaves to create dappled shadows on the ground.

The air was filled with the sweet scent of pine resin and the damp smell of earth, occasionally punctuated by birdsong from the depths of the canopy, adding to the tranquility.

Yun Yi walked at the front, his pace neither fast nor slow, each step firm and steady.

His back was ramrod straight, his simple Taoist robe fluttering gently in the breeze. The wooden sword on his back swayed slightly with his steps, the ancient Taoist patterns on it glowing faintly in the sparse light, like sleeping dragons slowly awakening.

Kai walked behind him, his gaze fixed on his back, his purple eyes gleaming with thoughtful consideration.

“What else did your master say?” Kai suddenly asked.

Yun Yi didn’t turn around. His voice came from ahead, calm and clear: “My master also said that Mr. Chen has many questions in his heart, and he will answer them one by one.”

Kai’s eyebrows twitched slightly.

He did indeed have many questions.

Who left the black stone token, and how did it end up in the hands of the gods?

Where exactly is the Chaos Dao Palace? What's inside?

What grudges exist between the Daoist sect and the gods?

Perhaps, he could find some answers to these questions in Qingyun Cave Heaven.

Qingyun Cave Heaven was hidden deep within the Qingyun Mountains, concealed by an ancient array. From the outside, it appeared as nothing more than endless green mountains and clear waters, showing no signs of anything unusual.

But the moment one stepped into the array, the world changed abruptly.

The green mountains and clear waters disappeared, replaced by a vast, boundless paradise of immortals.

With Yun Yi's guidance, Kai and Jiang Xuelan quickly found the location of Qingyun Cave Heaven. If no one had guided them, even if they had just passed by, they wouldn't have discovered that this place was a hidden paradise.The cobblestone path wound its way through the bamboo forest, the verdant bamboo swaying gently in the breeze, its leaves rustling softly as if whispering ancient secrets.

Kai walked behind Yun Yi, his purple eyes scanning their surroundings. He could sense that every bamboo stalk in this forest was no ordinary plant, but rather a component of some kind of array.

The bamboo roots intertwined underground, forming a vast network that gathered the spiritual energy of the entire valley, creating a natural spirit-gathering array.

The arrangement of this array was extremely sophisticated, not something that could be set up overnight, but rather the result of tens or even hundreds of thousands of years of accumulation and evolution.

The Daoist sect's foundation was far deeper than Kai had imagined.

The three walked along the cobblestone path for about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, until the bamboo forest gradually thinned out, and a cobblestone archway appeared ahead.

The archway, about three zhang high, consisted of two massive stone pillars and a horizontal beam. The pillars were inscribed with Taoist runes, and the beam bore four ancient characters: "Qingyun Cave Heaven."

Behind the archway was a wide bluestone avenue, flanked by neatly arranged spirit trees laden with colorful spiritual fruits, emitting an alluring fragrance.

At the end of the avenue stood a magnificent Taoist temple.

Built against the mountainside, its blue tiles and white walls, with upturned eaves, stretched layer upon layer from the foot of the mountain to its summit, as if growing out of the mountain itself.

Each hall was shrouded in a faint spiritual light, the glow released when the protective array was activated.

Above the temple, cranes circled, colorful clouds swirled, and a spiritual spring waterfall cascaded down from the mountaintop, its thunderous roar echoing throughout the valley.

Yun Yi stopped before the archway and turned to look at Kai.

"Mr. Chen, please wait a moment."

He bowed slightly. “My master said that Mr. Chen is a distinguished guest of the Daoist sect and should be greeted with the highest honors. I will go and inform him now.”

Kai nodded.

Yun Yi turned and walked onto the bluestone path, his pace much faster than before.

After walking about a hundred steps, he suddenly stopped, took out a jade talisman from his sleeve, and infused it with spiritual power. The jade talisman emitted a clear and melodious sound, which echoed in the valley and lingered for a long time.

As soon as the sound subsided, the bells and drums in the Daoist temple suddenly rang out in unison.

The bells were deep and resonant, ringing out nine times in total. Each ring seemed to echo throughout the entire valley, making one’s eardrums tingle, yet also giving one an indescribable sense of solemnity.

The drums were vigorous and powerful, also ringing out nine times, alternating with the bells, as if some ancient ceremony was being held.

The gates of the Taoist temple slowly opened, and two rows of Taoist disciples dressed in blue robes emerged, lining both sides of the main road. Each held a blue lantern, its flame flickering gently in the breeze, illuminating the entire road.

These disciples were all highly skilled, the lowest being at the seventh rank of True Immortal Realm, and the highest reaching the peak of the ninth rank.

They stood in neat rows, their postures respectful, their gazes fixed on Kai, their eyes filled with undisguised curiosity and anticipation.

Kai watched this scene, a hint of surprise flashing in his purple eyes.

Nine tolls of the bell, nine drumbeats, two rows of disciples lining up to welcome him—this level of ceremony was reserved for the most distinguished guests in any sect.

And he, a mere eighth-rank True Immortal Realm youth, was receiving such treatment on his first visit to Qingyun Cave Heaven.

What exactly did Master Yuxu intend to do?

This thought flashed through Kai's mind, but he had no time to dwell on it, for a figure had already emerged from the Taoist temple.

The man had white hair and beard, a refined face, and wore a blue Taoist robe. He held a whisk in his hand, his steps neither fast nor slow, each step extremely steady, as if he were measuring the earth.

There was no fluctuation of spiritual energy on his body; he looked like an ordinary old man.

But Kai's pupils contracted slightly.

He could sense how terrifying the power contained within this old man was.

That power was not outwardly projected, but rather inwardly contained, like a peerless divine sword sheathed. Although its edge was unseen, once drawn, it could cut through everything.

Fifth Rank Golden Immortal.

Master of Qingyun Cave Heaven, Jade Void True Person.

Jade Void True Person walked up to Kai and stopped three steps away.

He sized up Kai, his gaze lingering on those purple eyes for a long time, then nodded slightly, a faint smile appearing on his lips.

"The inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Classic is indeed extraordinary."

His voice was aged yet gentle, like a kind elder praising a junior. “I am Yuxu, and have long admired Mr. Chen’s name.”

Kai clasped his hands in greeting. “Junior Kai greets True Man Yuxu.”

True Man Yuxu waved his hand. “No need for formalities. Mr. Chen is a distinguished guest of the Daoist sect. I have prepared tea. Please come in.”

He then turned and walked into the Daoist temple.

Kai followed behind him, followed by Jiang Xuelan and Yun Yi.

The four of them passed through the gate of the Daoist temple and entered a spacious courtyard.

The courtyard was filled with green bamboo, and a small path paved with pebbles led through the bamboo grove to an elegant tea room deep within the courtyard.

The tea room was small, only about three zhang square, with windows on all four sides, offering views of the verdant bamboo grove and distant mountain scenery.

The interior was simply furnished with a wooden table and a few wooden chairs. On the table sat a set of celadon teaware, from which steam rose gently, filling the room with a delicate and refreshing aroma.

Master Yuxu invited Kai to sit down and personally poured him a cup of tea.

“This is a spiritual tea produced in Qingyun Cave, called ‘Qingyun Mist,’ harvested from thousand-year-old tea trees on the mountaintop. Only three catties are produced each year. Please try it, Mr. Chen.”

Kai picked up the teacup and took a small sip.

The tea warmed his throat and flowed into his dantian, circulating through his meridians, invigorating his spirit.

“Excellent tea,” Kai said sincerely, setting down his cup.

Master Yuxu smiled and sat down opposite him.

Jiang Xuelan and Yun Yi did not sit down but stood at the entrance of the tea room, one on each side like two guardian deities.

Only Kai and Master Yuxu remained in the tea room, sitting opposite each other.

A moment of silence followed.

Kai knew that Master Yuxu hadn’t invited him simply for tea.

He also had many questions he wanted to ask.

“Master,” Kai began, his purple eyes fixed on Master Yuxu, “this junior has many questions in my mind. I wonder if Master Yuxu could answer them?”

Master Yuxu nodded. “Please ask, Mr. Chen. This humble Daoist will answer to the best of my knowledge.”

Kai took the black stone from his storage ring and placed it on the table.

The stone gleamed faintly in the light of the tea room, its surface patterns subtly shifting, as if something slumbered within.

“What is this?”

Kai asked. “Where did it come from? Why is it in my possession? What is its connection to the Chaos Dao Palace?”Master Yuxu’s gaze fell upon the black stone, a flicker of emotion crossing his usually calm eyes.

He reached out and gently stroked its surface, as if caressing a lost treasure.

“This black stone,” Master Yuxu’s voice deepened, “is a fragment of the key to the Chaos Dao Palace.”

“A fragment of the key?” Kai frowned.

“The Chaos Dao Palace is no ordinary palace.”

Master Yuxu withdrew his hand, picked up his teacup, and took a sip. “It was a Dao Palace built by the ancestors of the Daoist sect with supreme magical power at the dawn of chaos and the beginning of heaven and earth. Sealed within the palace are the most core inheritances of the Daoist sect, including one hundred and eight supreme Daoist scriptures, such as the Great Luo Golden Scripture, as well as the insights into laws and cultivation methods left by the ancestors of the Daoist sect.”

One hundred and eight supreme Daoist scriptures.

Kai’s heart trembled.

The Great Luo Golden Scripture was only one of them?

What level of cultivation techniques were the other one hundred and seven scriptures?

“However, the Great Luo Golden Scripture is the foremost of these 108 Daoist scriptures. Possessing the Great Luo Golden Scripture means possessing the purest lineage of Daoism,” said Jade Void Master.

“Senior, in which heaven is the Chaos Dao Palace located?” Kai asked.

“The Chaos Dao Palace is not in any heaven of the Heavenly Realm.”

“It exists outside the laws of heaven and earth, in an independent space unbound by the Heavenly Realm. That space has no fixed coordinates, no fixed entrance, and not even a fixed flow of time.

To enter the Chaos Dao Palace, one must gather three key fragments and combine them into one to open the spatial passage leading to the Chaos Dao Palace."

Three key fragments.

Kai looked down at the black stone on the table, a thoughtful glint in his purple eyes.

"So, there are two more of these black stones?"

"That's right."

Master Yuxu nodded. "The three key fragments are held by different forces. The one you have was left by the ancestors of the Daoist sect, but it was lost during the war between the Daoist sect and the gods, and ended up in the lower realm. As for why it ended up in your hands..."

He paused, a meaningful smile appearing on his lips, "Perhaps it's fate, perhaps it's the arrangement of the ancestors of the Daoist sect. I dare not make a definitive conclusion."

Kai was silent for a moment, then put the black stone back into his storage ring.

"What exactly is the grudge between the Daoist sect and the gods?"

Master Yuxu's smile disappeared, replaced by a deep emotion that had been suppressed for tens of thousands of years.

"The grudge between the Daoist sect and the gods is a long story."

He put down his teacup, gazing at the bamboo forest outside the window, as if recalling something from a long time ago.

"The Daoist sect and the Divine Race originally shared the same origin. In the primordial era, the ancestors of both sects were cultivators who

comprehended the laws of heaven and earth. Later, due to differing understandings of these laws, they split into two factions.

One faction believed that all things possess spirits, all beings are equal, and the path of cultivation should encompass all phenomena and be inclusive—this is the Daoist sect. The other faction believed that the Divine Race were the darlings of heaven and earth, born superior to all, and should rule all realms—this is the Divine Race."

"Initially, the two factions were merely engaged in a clash of ideologies, and could coexist peacefully. But as time went on, the Divine Race grew increasingly powerful, beginning to suppress the Daoist sect and exclude those who disagreed.

They claimed that only the Divine Race was qualified to comprehend the supreme laws, and that other races were inferior beings, unworthy of cultivating profound techniques. The Daoist sect, advocating equality for all beings, naturally became a thorn in the side of the Divine Race."

"The war lasted for hundreds of thousands of years, with the Daoist sect suffering repeated defeats. The Great Luo Golden Scripture was lost during that period, and the Chaos Dao Palace was sealed into an independent space during that time."

The voice of Master Yuxu carried an undisguised sorrow.

"How is that possible? Isn't the Divine Race just a few self-proclaimed noble human branches united and calling themselves the Divine Race? Besides, the Divine Race's headquarters is in the twentieth heaven, and their God-King is only a Golden Immortal. How could they possibly defeat the Daoist Sect?"

Kai was somewhat incredulous.

After all, the Daoist Sect was an ancient force, existing since the beginning of chaos. How could they be defeated by a single Divine Race member?

Silence filled the tea room.

After Kai finished speaking, True Person Yu Xu did not immediately reply.

He picked up his teacup, took another sip of Qingyun Wu tea, and the aroma lingered on his lips and teeth, as if savoring some distant memory.

Outside the window, the green bamboo swayed gently in the breeze, the leaves rustling softly, as if whispering some ancient secret.

Jiang Xuelan stood at the entrance of the tea room, her ice-white dress shimmering faintly in the afternoon light.

Her gaze fell on True Person Yu Xu, her eyes also filled with doubt.

She was a descendant of the Ice God lineage and knew from a young age that the influence of the seven lineages of the God Clan only extended to the twentieth heaven. All the experts above the Golden Immortal realm resided in the twentieth heaven, and she had never heard of any higher-level existences within the God Clan.

Yun Yi stood on the other side, his simple Daoist robe fluttering gently in the breeze.

His face was expressionless, but a complex look flashed in his eyes, as if he knew that what Master Yu Xu was about to say would overturn Kai's entire understanding of the world.

Master Yu Xu put down his teacup, his gaze shifting from the bamboo forest outside the window to Kai.

"Mr. Chen, you're saying that the God Clan is just a few self-proclaimed noble human branches united together, calling themselves the God Clan?"

His voice was soft, but every word seemed to come from a very deep and distant place, carrying a weight of experience. “I ask you a question: have you ever seen a true god?”

Kai was stunned.

A true god?

He had seen members of the God Clan: Heavenly Extreme Venerable, Yan Wuji, Holy Light Venerable—those were all gods.

They called themselves the Divine Race, possessing combat power far exceeding that of cultivators of the same level, and wielding the power of laws such as holy light and divine fire.

But in Kai’s eyes, they were merely a group of cultivators with higher cultivation levels, far removed from the word “god.”

“The highest cultivation level of the Divine Race I’ve met is only at the fifth rank of the Golden Immortal Realm,”

Kai said truthfully. “Although they are stronger than ordinary cultivators, they are far from being true gods.”

Jade Void Master nodded, a faint smile appearing on his lips, a smile carrying an indescribable meaning, as if gratified that Kai had not been deceived by appearances, yet also as if weighing the weight of what he was about to say.

“You’re right. Those so-called Divine Race members you’ve met are indeed not true gods.”

Jade Void Master’s voice deepened. “They are merely the outer forces of the Divine Race, tools used by the Divine Race to rule the various heavens of the Celestial Realm. The true Divine Race has never resided in the twentieth heaven.”

Kai’s pupils contracted slightly.

Not in the twentieth heaven?

Then where is it?

Master Yuxu seemed to see through his question and slowly said, “Mr. Chen, do you know how many heavens there are in the celestial realm?” Kai thought for a moment, “The Thirty-Six Heavens.”

“Then do you know what lies above the Thirty-Six Heavens?”

Kai fell silent.

What lies above the Thirty-Six Heavens?

He had never considered this question.

In all the information he had come across, the Celestial Realm was the Thirty-Six Heavens, the pinnacle of the Celestial Realm.

The Divine Race’s headquarters was in the Twentieth Heaven, and the God-King was also in the Twentieth Heaven—that was all he knew.

“Beyond the Celestial Realm lies a vast cosmic river, and the Celestial Realm is but a tiny speck of dust within it. And within this cosmic river lies a place called the ‘Divine Realm.'”

Jade Void True Man’s voice carried an unusual solemnity. “That is the true foundation of the Divine Race. The Divine Race’s headquarters in the Twentieth Heaven is merely a tentacle extended from the Celestial Realm’s Divine Race to the lower realms. Only those Divine Race beings above the Golden Immortal Realm can barely grasp some of the truth about the Divine Realm.”

The Divine Realm.

Kai heard this term for the first time.

Countless thoughts flashed through his mind. If the true foundation of the Divine Race lay in the Divine Realm beyond the Celestial Realm, then the Divine Race forces he had previously fought against were merely the tip of the iceberg?

No, not even the tip of the iceberg. Only those Divine Race members above the Golden Immortal Realm could be considered the lowest level of the Divine Race, knowing a little bit of the truth about the Divine Realm.

And below the Divine Race's main altar, those Divine Race cultivators below the Golden Immortal Realm weren't even considered the lowest level.

They were considered trash…

Perhaps the Divine Race within the Divine Realm didn't even know these members existed.

Jiang Xuelan listened from the side, dumbfounded. Their eight branches of the main altar had always been scheming and fighting for the so-called God-King position.

But in the end, these self-proclaimed noble Divine Race members weren't even at the very bottom of their race.

Perhaps, they weren't even Divine Race at all.

The shock of this information made Jiang Xuelan feel dizzy.

"Mr. Chen, you've heard the term 'Myriad Realms,' haven't you? You don't actually think that among these myriad realms, the Celestial Realm is the highest." The voice of True Immortal Yu Xu seemed to come from a great distance, each word like a boulder weighing heavily on Kai's heart,

sending a chill down his spine.

Kai's mind was blank. It was like someone who studied hard, thinking that getting into university would make them the most knowledgeable person.

But now that they'd entered university, someone suddenly told them that university was nothing special; there were master's degrees, doctorates, academicians...

university graduates were the least valuable.

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his turbulent emotions.

"Senior," Kai spoke, his voice slightly hoarse, "how do you know all this?"

After all, True Immortal Yu Xu was only a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, an eighteenth-level cultivator. How could he know so much? Moreover

, even the Divine Race itself didn't know about the Divine Realm, yet True Immortal Yu Xu knew.

Master Yuxu smiled. "I only know this because I accidentally obtained a wisp of my ancestor's inheritance, but that's all I know. I don't know anything else."

"Senior, is the power of the Daoist sect also very vast?" Kai asked.

Master Yuxu nodded. "The power of the Daoist sect in the myriad realms is far greater than what you see. In the entire Heavenly Realm, every level has a Daoist sect. In other realms, there is also the power of the Daoist sect, and even in the mortal world, there are branches of the Daoist sect."

Some images flashed through Kai's mind: the Daoist temples, Daoist priests, Daoist practices in the mortal world... were they all part of the Daoist sect?

"However,"

Master Yuxu's voice became even lower, "the Daoist sects are too numerous and complex, with different philosophies between them, and they often clash. Some sects advocate using softness to overcome hardness, some advocate using hardness to overcome softness, some advocate detachment from the world for cultivation, and some advocate engaging in the world to help people.

These differences prevent the power of the Daoist sect from being unified, and it remains a scattered mess."

"A scattered mess?" Kai frowned.

"Indeed."

Master Yuxu nodded. "There are countless sects within the myriad realms of Taoism, each with its own traditions, rules, and interests.

On the surface, they all call themselves Taoist, but in reality, none submit to the others. For hundreds of thousands of years, no sect has been able to unify Taoism, nor has any individual been able to win the sincere respect of all Taoist disciples."

He paused, his gaze falling on Kai, a burning light flashing in his eyes.

"Until the appearance of the Great Luo Golden Scripture."

Kai's heart skipped a beat.

"The Great Luo Golden Scripture is the supreme Taoist scripture left by the ancestors of Taoism, the source of all Taoist cultivation methods. Whoever can cultivate the Great Luo Golden Scripture is the successor of the ancestors of Taoism, and whoever has the right to command all Taoist sects under heaven."

Master Yuxu's voice carried an undisguised excitement. "Mr. Chen, you are the first person in hundreds of thousands of years to possess the Great Luo Golden Scripture."

Silence fell over the tea room.

Kai sat in his chair, his purple eyes churning with complex emotions.

He finally understood.

Why Master Yuxu had sent Yun Yi to wait outside the Northern Cold Abyss for three days.

Why did Qingyun Cave Heaven greet him with the highest level of ceremony?

Why did Master Yuxu say, “We honor the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture as the new leader of the Daoist sect”?

It wasn’t because he was Kai, but because he had cultivated the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

Before the Great Luo Golden Scripture, who he was, where he came from, and his cultivation level were all unimportant.

What mattered was that he was the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the descendant of the Daoist ancestor, and the first person in hundreds of thousands of years qualified to command the Daoist sects of the world.

“Senior,” Kai began, his voice slightly hoarse, “Do you think I can unify the Daoist sects?”

Master Yuxu was silent for a moment, then shook his head.

“This humble Daoist doesn’t know.”

His voice was frank. “Unifying the Daoist sects isn’t something that can be done with just one cultivation technique. It requires strength, wisdom, opportunity, and… time. But this humble Daoist knows one thing: if you can’t do it, then no one in this world can.”

Kai looked into Master Yuxu's eyes; in those aged eyes, there was no calculation, no probing, only unreserved trust.

It was the look in his eyes, the gaze of someone who had waited tens of thousands of years in darkness and finally seen a glimmer of light.

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his chaotic thoughts.

"Senior, I have one last question."

"Please speak."

"How can I find the Chaos Dao Palace?"

Master Yuxu remained silent for a long time.

He picked up his teacup, took a sip, put it down, picked it up again, and put it down again.

He repeated this three times before finally speaking.

"I know that there is a faint connection between the three key fragments. If you can find the second fragment, you can sense the approximate location of the third fragment. If you can find the third fragment, you can sense the location of the Chaos Dao Palace." Kai fell silent.

Of the three key fragments, he only possessed one.

The other two were nowhere to be found, and no one knew who had them.

It was like searching for a needle in a haystack.

But he was not discouraged.

He had walked a path far more difficult than this, and faced situations far more desperate than this.

With one fragment in hand, he was not entirely without anything.

“Thank you for your explanation, Senior.” Kai stood up and bowed respectfully.

Master Yu Xu also stood up and waved his hand. “Mr. Chen, you are too kind. I merely mentioned some things that Mr. Chen would know sooner or later.”

“What are Mr. Chen’s plans next?”

Kai’s hand rested on the hilt of his sword, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

“To the Hall of Light.”

Master Yu Xu’s brow furrowed slightly. “The Hall of Light? Does Mr. Chen have a grudge against the Hall of Light?”

“Yes.” Kai’s voice was calm, but beneath the calm lay a chilling killing intent. “They injured someone they shouldn’t have.”

He didn’t say who that person was.

But Master Yu Xu read the answer in Kai’s eyes.

It was the kind of look one would only show for someone truly important.

Cold, resolute, and leaving no room for negotiation.

“The strength of the Bright Hall is not to be underestimated,”

Jade Void Master’s voice carried a hint of solemnity. “The Hall Master is a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, the Deputy Hall Master a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, with dozens of elders and thousands of disciples. Although Mr. Chen’s combat power is astonishing, to fight the entire Bright Hall alone…”

“I didn’t say I wanted to go alone,” Kai interrupted Jade Void Master, his purple eyes fixed on him. “Senior, you said that the three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven are willing to serve me as the new leader of the Daoist sect, even unto death.”

Jade Void Master’s body trembled slightly.

He looked into Kai’s eyes, those purple eyes showing no hesitation, no probing, only an undeniable firmness.

A moment of silence followed.

Then, Jade Void Master smiled.

The smile was faint, but genuine, like an old man who had waited for tens of thousands of years, finally waiting for the person he had been waiting for.

“Good,” he said, his voice soft but firm. “The three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven are willing to follow Mr. Chen into battle.”

Kai nodded, and was then arranged to rest.

Lying in bed, Kai couldn’t sleep at all; his mind was a complete mess.

Now that he knew there were cosmic galaxies beyond the Celestial Realm, what was Mr. Shi’s identity?

Was he from the Celestial Realm, or from the myriad realms beyond?

What about his father? Wasn’t he the Golden Dragon?

And what about Wen Haotian? What was his true identity?

These mysteries plagued Kai.

After thinking for an unknown amount of time, Kai covered his head to stop.

Since he had come this far, he would take it one step at a time. If one day he couldn't go on, he would stop and rest.

Or he could let his sons and grandsons continue the journey.

Anyway, he had plenty of women; he wasn't worried about not having sons.

The next morning.

Qingyun Cave Heaven, Martial Arts Arena.

Three hundred Qingyun Cave Heaven disciples stood neatly in the arena, each with the cultivation of a Golden Immortal, including more than twenty at the third rank or higher.

Although Qingyun Cave Heaven didn't have many people, they were all elites.

They wore uniform cyan Taoist robes, with standard Taoist artifacts hanging at their waists and various longswords on their backs.

A morning breeze blew, causing the robes of the three hundred people to flutter simultaneously, like a surging cyan ocean.

Master Yuxu stood on the high platform of the training ground, his white hair and beard flowing in the morning wind, his cyan robe gleaming faintly in the sunlight.

Behind him stood Yun Yi and several other Golden Immortal elders, each with a solemn expression.

Kai stood beside Master Yuxu, his purple eyes sweeping over the three hundred disciples in the training ground.

Three hundred pairs of eyes looked at him simultaneously, without doubt or dissent, only a pure, unreserved trust.

It was trust that Master Yuxu had earned with tens of thousands of years of prestige.

Master Yuxu said he was the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the successor of the Taoist ancestor, and the new leader of the Taoist sect.

The disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven believed him.

No proof was needed, no explanation was needed, no reason was required.

Kai took a deep breath and stepped forward.

“Everyone,” his voice wasn’t loud, but it reached everyone’s ears clearly, “Today, we are going to the Hall of Light.”

Silence fell over the training ground.

The three hundred disciples listened quietly, no one speaking, no one whispering.

“The Hall Master of the Hall of Light is a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, the Deputy Hall Master is a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, there are dozens of elders, and thousands of disciples.” Kai’s voice was calm, as if stating a simple fact, “We only have three hundred people.”

He paused, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

“But that’s enough.”

Silence remained over the training ground.

In the eyes of the three hundred disciples, there was no fear, no hesitation, only a burning fighting spirit.

They had cultivated in Qingyun Cave Heaven for hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of years, waiting for this day.

The Daoist sect had been suppressed by the Divine Race for hundreds of thousands of years, waiting for this day.

“Let’s go.” After saying these two words, Kai turned and walked down from the platform.

The three hundred disciples turned simultaneously, their steps in unison, heading towards the exit of Qingyun Cave Heaven.

The azure Taoist robes billowed in the morning breeze, like a blue torrent surging out of Qingyun Cave and heading towards the Hall of Light.

Master Yuxu walked at the head of the procession, a whisk in hand, his azure robes fluttering in the wind, his white hair and beard shimmering silver in the sunlight.

His pace was neither fast nor slow, each step steady, as if measuring the earth, or perhaps the hundreds of thousands of years of hatred between the Taoist sect and the divine race.

Yun Yi walked beside Master Yuxu, the wooden sword on his back glowing faintly in the morning light, its ancient Taoist patterns like awakening dragons, slowly moving.

Jiang Xuelan walked beside Kai, her ice-white dress standing out starkly against the azure backdrop.

Her hand rested on the hilt of her sword, icy blue spiritual energy flowing between her fingertips. The Heart of the Cold Abyss warmed slightly within her, as if responding to the fighting spirit within her.

Kai walked at the head of the group, the Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, his purple eyes fixed ahead.

The Hall of Light was to the southeast, about three days’ journey from Qingyun Cave.

The three hundred people proceeded on foot, choosing not to fly.

Not because they couldn't, but because it wasn't necessary.

Three days was enough for the people of the Hall of Light to know they had arrived.

This was the effect Kai wanted.

He wouldn't resort to sneak attacks or ambushes.

He wanted to enter the Hall of Light openly and honestly, letting everyone know that the gods were not invincible.

The group moved through the mountains and forests at a moderate pace.

The three hundred people formed a long dragon, their blue Taoist robes standing out vividly against the green forest. The rogue cultivators and members of small sects encountered along the way gave way upon seeing this group, their eyes filled with shock.

Qingyun Cave Heaven had mobilized its entire force—what was it planning?

Was it going to war with some major sect?

The news spread like wildfire through the mountains and forests. In less than half a day, all the forces within a radius of thousands of miles knew that Qingyun Cave Heaven had dispatched three hundred disciples, heading southeast.

Southeast.

That was the direction of the Hall of Light. At

the Flame God Palace,

Yan Wuji sat on the Flame God Throne, holding a newly arrived intelligence report.

The report contained only one line—"Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven have mobilized their entire force, heading towards the Hall of Light."

Yan Wuji looked at this line, a hint of doubt flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

Although Qingyun Cave Heaven and the Hall of Light had a history of conflict, it had never reached the point of armed conflict.

That old fox, True Person Yuxu, had been biding his time for tens of thousands of years, never actively provoking any force.

What was going on today?

"Continue the investigation." Yan Wuji tossed the intelligence report to his trusted aide. "Find out exactly what Qingyun Cave Heaven is up to."

"Yes."

The aide acknowledged and withdrew.

Yan Wuji sat alone on his throne, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest, producing a dull thud.

He had a bad feeling.

Qingyun Cave Heaven's sudden military action must be related to that Kai.

Just a few days ago, a team sent by the Bright Hall to the Northern Netherworld Abyss was completely wiped out, and the Golden Immortal Fourth Rank Elder who led the team did not return.

The Bright Hall was investigating the matter and had not yet found any results.

But if Kai participated in that battle, if Jade Void True Person knew about it…

Yan Wuji's brows furrowed even more.

"Kai…" he murmured the name, a hint of killing intent flashing in his crimson-gold eyes, "What exactly do you want?"

…

The Bright Hall was located in the southeast of the Eighteenth Heaven, situated on a massive spiritual vein.

The entire palace was built of white jade, radiating a soft white light under the sunlight, appearing from afar like a bright pearl embedded in the earth.

Nine floating altars surrounded the palace, each inscribed with holy runes that shimmered in the sunlight, enveloping the entire palace in a golden holy light shield.

This was the Palace of Light's protective array—the "Holy Light Canopy," said to be able to withstand any attack from those below the fifth rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

The Palace Master of the Palace of Light was named Holy Light Celestial Venerable, a fifth-rank Golden Immortal, second only to Yan Wuji among the Eighteen Heavens' divine race.

He had lived for hundreds of thousands of years, witnessing the entire process of the Palace of Light's development from a small branch of the divine race into the second largest power in the Eighteen Heavens.

At this moment, Holy Light Celestial Venerable sat in the main hall of the Palace of Light, holding a piece of intelligence identical to that in Yan Wuji's hands.

"Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven have all left, heading towards the Palace of Light."

His brows furrowed deeply.

Qingyun Cave Heaven.

Jade Void True Person.

That old fox, who had hidden in the Qingyun Mountains for tens of thousands of years, never actively provoking anyone.

What's going on today?

"Has the investigation been completed?" The Holy Light Celestial's voice was deep and majestic, echoing in the hall.

A cultivator from the Hall of Light, kneeling in the hall, raised his head, his face pale, his voice trembling slightly: "Reporting to the Celestial, it has been completed. The reason Qingyun Cave Heaven sent troops... is related to a man named Kai."

"Kai?"

The Holy Light Celestial's brows furrowed even more. "The same Kai who killed Yan Po in the Fallen God Wasteland and slaughtered a troop of my Hall of Light's forces in the Northern Netherworld Abyss?"

"Indeed."

"What is his relationship with Qingyun Cave Heaven?"

"According to the investigation, Kai is... the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture."

Silence fell over the hall.

The Holy Light Celestial's expression changed.

The Great Luo Golden Scripture.

The supreme inheritance of the Daoist sect, lost for hundreds of thousands of years.

Legend has it that whoever can cultivate the Great Luo Golden Scripture is the successor of the Daoist sect's ancestor, and whoever has the right to command all Daoist sects under heaven.

If this were true, if that old fox, Master Yuxu, truly recognized Kai as the new leader of the Daoist sect…

then the Qingyun Cave Heaven's dispatch of troops wouldn't be Master Yuxu's intention, but Kai's.

"Well done, Kai,"

the Holy Light Celestial Venerable's voice carried a chill. "You killed my men and still dare to bring Daoist people to the Bright Hall to cause trouble. I'd like to see just what you're capable of."

He stood up from his seat, golden holy light surging from his body, illuminating the entire hall.

"Send the order: all disciples of the Bright Hall, enter maximum alert. Activate the hall's protective array. I will personally confront this Kai."

"Yes!"

The cultivators in the hall acknowledged the order and withdrew.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable stood in the center of the hall, golden holy light flowing around him, casting flickering light on his face.

A murderous intent flashed in his eyes.

Regardless of Kai's background, regardless of who stood behind him,

this was the Bright Hall, his territory.

Anyone who dared to act recklessly here would pay the price.

Three days later.

Outside the Hall of Light.

Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven stood in neat rows before the Hall's gate. Their azure robes shimmered faintly in the sunlight, and three hundred longswords were drawn simultaneously, their light flashing like a forest of azure swords.

Kai stood at the head of the line, his Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, his purple eyes fixed on the magnificent white palace before him.

The Hall of Light's protective array was fully activated. The holy runes on the nine floating altars lit up simultaneously, golden holy light surging from the altars and condensing into a massive golden light curtain above the Hall, enveloping the entire palace.

Countless holy runes flowed across the light curtain, each one operating frantically, maximizing the array's defensive power.

Before the Hall of Light's gate, thousands of cultivators stood in formation, golden holy light emanating from them, reflecting the light of the protective array and dyeing the entire sky gold.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable stood atop the highest point of the mountain gate, his golden robes fluttering in the wind. He held a golden scepter in his hand, the luminous stone at its tip radiating blinding holy light.

Behind him stood the Vice Hall Master and dozens of elders, each with a solemn expression.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable's gaze pierced the hundreds of feet, landing on Kai.

Eighth-grade True Immortal.

This was the very youth who had slain Yan Po, and the fourth-grade Golden Immortal elder he had sent to the Northern Netherworld Abyss.

This was the very youth who, with three hundred disciples of the Azure Cloud Cave Heaven, had besieged the Bright Light Palace.

"You are Kai?" The Holy Light Celestial Venerable's voice echoed like thunder in the sky.

Kai raised his head, his purple eyes meeting the Holy Light Celestial Venerable's golden eyes.

"Yes."

A single word, no further explanation, no unnecessary words.

A flash of killing intent crossed the Holy Light Celestial Venerable's eyes.

"I have no grudge against you, so why did you bring people to my Bright Hall?"

Kai's hand rested on the hilt of the Dragon Slayer Sword, a cold glint flashing in his purple eyes.

"No grudge?"

His voice was calm, but there was a chilling coldness in it. "The people you sent to the Northern Abyss injured someone they shouldn't have." Holy Light Celestial Venerable frowned.

“Who is it?”

Kai didn’t answer.

He drew the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple chaotic fire burned on the sword, distorting the surrounding air.

“You don’t need to know,”

Kai’s voice was as cold as ice. “You only need to know that your people attacked someone they shouldn’t have. Therefore, you will all pay the price.”

Holy Light Celestial Venerable’s face darkened.

He didn’t understand what Kai meant.

His people had injured someone in the Northern Abyss?

Who was injured?

The team he sent to the Northern Abyss was to find the Heart of the Abyss, not to cause trouble.

How could they have injured someone?

Who was injured that warranted such a large-scale attack from Kai?

Holy Light Celestial Venerable couldn’t understand, but he didn’t need to.

Because Kai had already raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple sword energy condensed on the sword, growing longer and brighter, finally forming a purple pillar of light tens of feet long.

The pillar of light contained terrifying power—the destructive light released after the chaotic power was compressed to its limit.

Kai slashed down with his sword.

The purple beam of light struck the golden light barrier with a deafening roar.

The golden holy light and the purple chaotic power clashed violently at the point of impact, the two opposing forces annihilating each other and releasing an unimaginable energy shockwave.

The shockwave spread in all directions, destroying all the trees within a radius of several miles and blasting a crater several meters deep into the ground.

The protective array of the Hall of Light trembled violently, and a tiny crack appeared on the golden light barrier.

The Holy Light Celestial's expression changed.

The Hall of Light's protective array, the "Holy Light Sky Barrier," was said to be able to withstand any attack from below the fifth rank of the Golden Immortal realm.

Kai was merely an eighth-rank True Immortal cultivator; how could a single sword strike cause a crack in the "Holy Light Sky Barrier"?

What kind of monster was this?

"Everyone, listen to my command!" the Holy Light Celestial roared. "Maintain the array with all your might! Don't let that madman break it!"

Thousands of cultivators from the Hall of Light simultaneously circulated their spiritual power, pouring their holy light into the array.

The crack on the golden light barrier rapidly healed, making the barrier even thicker and more solid.

But Kai's second sword strike had already landed.

The second sword was more ferocious than the first, the purple sword aura longer and containing greater power.

"Boom—"

The golden light curtain trembled violently again, the cracks larger and more numerous than before.

The third sword.

The fourth sword.

The fifth sword.

Kai slashed at the great formation with sword after sword, each strike more powerful than the last, each leaving deep marks on the formation.

The cultivators of the Hall of Light did their best to maintain the great formation, but Kai's sword was too fast, too powerful, and their spiritual energy was being consumed at a visible rate.

"This won't do!" The deputy hall master rushed to the side of the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, his face pale, "The great formation won't hold for much longer! We must take the initiative to attack!"

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable gritted his teeth, a hint of madness flashing in his golden eyes.

"Pass down the order, open the great formation! All disciples, follow me to attack!"

"Yes!"

The golden light curtain slowly opened a gap.

Thousands of cultivators from the Hall of Light rushed out from the mountain gate, golden holy light burning on their bodies, dyeing the entire sky gold.

They formed a battle formation and charged towards the three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven.

Master Yuxu stood at the very front of the Qingyun Cave Heaven's ranks, his aged face expressionless as he watched the approaching cultivators from the Bright Hall.

"Form the formation," he commanded, his voice not loud, but clearly reaching the ears of every Qingyun Cave Heaven disciple.

The three hundred Qingyun Cave Heaven disciples moved simultaneously.

Centered on Master Yuxu, they quickly formed a massive Bagua formation.

At each of the eight directions of the Bagua formation, a Golden Immortal elder was stationed, and the three hundred disciples were distributed across the various nodes, each infusing their spiritual power into the formation.

The Bagua formation slowly rotated, and azure spiritual light surged from within, condensing into a massive Bagua phantom in the sky above.

Within the phantom, the eight trigrams—Qian, Kun, Zhen, Xun, Kan, Li, Gen, and Dui—lit up simultaneously, each containing the power of a Daoist law.

This was Qingyun Cave Heaven's most powerful formation—the "Bagua Heavenly Evolution Formation."

Legend has it that this formation was left behind by the ancestors of the Daoist sect, possessing immense power capable of trapping enemies whose cultivation surpasses that

of the formation's caster by a whole realm. For tens of thousands of years, Qingyun Cave Heaven had never used this formation, for it had never encountered an enemy worthy of its use.

Today was the first time.

The cultivators of the Bright Hall rushed into the range of the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation.

In an instant, the world changed color.

Within the illusory Eight Trigrams, eight Daoist laws erupted simultaneously, the azure spiritual light suppressing the golden holy light layer by layer.

The Qian trigram, representing Heaven, unleashed a torrent of thunder, blasting the Bright Hall cultivators at the forefront into charred remains.

The Kun trigram, representing Earth, caused the ground to suddenly crack open, swallowing dozens of Bright Hall cultivators into the earth.

The Zhen trigram, representing Thunder, unleashed purple lightning from the sky, each bolt claiming the life of a Bright Hall cultivator.

The Xun trigram, representing Wind, sent a azure storm swirling the Bright Hall cultivators about, making it impossible for them to stand firm.

The Kan trigram represents water, and a raging flood surged from the void, engulfing the Bright Hall cultivators and drowning their holy light.

The Li trigram represents fire, and azure Dao fire spewed from the void, burning the Bright Hall cultivators to ashes.

The Gen trigram represents mountains, and colossal peaks descended from the sky, crushing the Bright Hall cultivators into mincemeat.

The Dui trigram represents marshes, and swamps appeared beneath the Bright Hall cultivators' feet, trapping them and preventing their escape.

The eight Daoist laws erupted simultaneously, utterly overwhelming the Bright Hall cultivators.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable watched this scene, his face ashen.

His thousands of disciples, before the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation, were like lambs to the slaughter, unilaterally slaughtered by the three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven.

At this rate, it wouldn't be long before all his disciples were annihilated.

"Everyone retreat! Get out of the formation's range!" Holy Light Celestial Venerable roared.

The cultivators of the Bright Hall retreated desperately, but the range of the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation was too vast. No matter how fast they retreated, they couldn't outrun the formation's attacks.

In just half an incense stick's time, the Bright Hall had already lost hundreds of disciples.

Holy Light Celestial Venerable's eyes turned red.

He raised his golden scepter, and the Bright Stone at the top of the scepter erupted with dazzling holy light, condensing into a huge golden sphere of light, which he blasted towards the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation.

The golden sphere of light crashed into the Eight Trigrams phantom, producing a deafening roar.

The Eight Trigrams phantom trembled violently, but quickly returned to stability.

Jade Void True Man stood in the formation, looking at Holy Light Celestial Venerable, his aged face expressionless.

“Holy Light Celestial Venerable,” his voice was calm, “the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation is a formation left behind by the ancestors of the Daoist sect. With your cultivation of a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, you cannot break it.” Holy Light Celestial Venerable gritted his teeth, his golden eyes bloodshot.

He knew Jade Void True Man was telling the truth.

The power of the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation far exceeded his imagination.

If Jade Void True Man were merely a fifth-grade Golden Immortal cultivator, he could still put up a fight.

But Jade Void True Man wasn’t fighting alone.

He had three hundred disciples helping him maintain the formation, and the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation amplifying his power.

How could he possibly break it alone?

“Kai!”

Holy Light Celestial Venerable suddenly turned his head, his gaze falling on Kai. “What exactly do you want? I have no grudge against you! Neither your people nor my people have harmed you! Are you mistaken?”

Kai stood at the edge of the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation, the Dragon-Slaying Sword held horizontally in front of him, his purple eyes fixed on Holy Light Celestial Venerable, devoid of any emotion.

“Your men injured a woman in a dark red dress in the Northern Abyss.”

His voice was calm, but a chilling undercurrent

ran through it. “She is from the Flame Demon lineage, but she is innocent. You shouldn’t have hurt her.” A scene flashed through the Holy Light Celestial Venerable’s mind: his subordinates had reported encountering a group of demon cultivators in the Northern Abyss, including a woman in a dark red dress.

He hadn’t paid much attention then.

Demons, he thought, killed them, killed them.

He hadn’t expected that Kai would bring three hundred disciples from Qingyun Cave Heaven to the Bright Hall for revenge just because that woman was injured.

“Just for a woman?”

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable’s voice was filled with disbelief. “You brought three hundred men to my Bright Hall, just for a woman?” Kai

didn’t answer.

He simply raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple chaotic fire burned on the sword, growing stronger and stronger until it condensed into a hundred-foot-long purple sword aura.

“You hurt her.” Kai’s voice was soft, but every word was like a knife piercing the heart of the Holy Light Celestial Venerable. “Therefore, you will all die.”

The sword aura slashed down.

Not at the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, but at the mountain gate of the Hall of Light.

The hundred-zhang-long purple sword aura struck the mountain gate, splitting it in two.

White jade fragments flew everywhere, and the holy light runes on the mountain gate were reduced to ashes by the scorching Chaos Fire.

“You!” The Holy Light Celestial Venerable’s eyes turned red, and golden holy light surged wildly from his body, pushing his cultivation to the peak of the fifth rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

He raised his golden scepter, and the light stone at the top of the scepter erupted with unprecedented holy light, condensing into a golden sphere the size of a human head, containing enough power to destroy a city.

“Holy Light – Heavenly Punishment!”

The golden sphere flew out of his hand, trailing a long golden tail of flame, and hurtled towards Kai.

Wherever the sphere of light passed, the air ignited, and the ground was scourned with trenches several feet deep, the rocks within melting into crimson magma.

Kai stared at the oncoming golden sphere of light, his purple eyes showing no fear.

He didn’t retreat, dodge, or even parry.

He simply thrust out his sword.

The instant the tip of the Dragon-Slaying Sword collided with the golden sphere of light, purple chaotic fire exploded violently, transforming into a massive purple flame that completely engulfed the golden sphere. The

golden holy light struggled frantically within the purple flames, like prey caught in the jaws of a beast, twisting, struggling, and roaring desperately, but unable to escape the engulfing power of chaos.

Kai flicked his sword tip slightly, and the golden sphere of light, consumed by the chaotic fire, changed direction, flying towards the Holy Light Celestial Venerable.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable's pupils suddenly contracted.

He tried to dodge, but the golden orb was too fast, and after being devoured by the chaotic fire, it became even more unstable, exploding with a deafening roar just before reaching him.

"Boom!"

The golden holy light and the purple chaotic fire exploded simultaneously, transforming into countless tiny pillars of light that shot in all directions.

The Holy Light Celestial was blasted backward, crashing heavily into the palace wall behind him, creating a large hole in the wall. He fell into the palace.

Golden blood spilled from the corner of his mouth, dripping down his chin onto the white jade floor.

His golden robe was ripped to shreds, and his holy light armor was riddled with cracks, some of which emitted black smoke.

The Holy Light Celestial struggled to his feet from the ruins, his eyes filled with shock and fear.

A fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

He was a fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

And Kai was merely a eighth-grade True Immortal youth.

How could he have been so badly beaten by a mere eighth-grade True Immortal youth?

“Who exactly are you?” The voice of the Holy Light Celestial was hoarse to the extreme.

Kai did not answer.

He carried the Dragon-Slaying Sword and walked towards the Holy Light Celestial.

Purple chaotic fire burned on the sword, distorting the surrounding air.

His steps were neither fast nor slow, each step steady, as if measuring the steps of death.

The Holy Light Celestial watched Kai approach step by step, the fear in his eyes growing stronger.

He wanted to run away, but his body would not obey him.

Kai’s sword strike had not only shattered his Holy Light Armor but also his meridians.

His holy light was surging wildly in his meridians, unable to gather at all.

Now, he couldn’t even defeat a True Immortal cultivator.

Kai stopped three steps away from the Holy Light Celestial.

His purple eyes looked down at him, without any emotion, like an executioner looking at a prisoner about to be executed.

“Do you have any last words?” Kai’s voice was calm.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable opened his mouth, wanting to say something, but nothing came out.

Countless thoughts flashed through his mind—pleading, threatening, bribing…

but he rejected every single one.

He knew that none of these would work before Kai.

This young man had come for the woman in the dark red dress.

Hurting her would cross his bottom line.

Pleading was useless, threats were useless, bribery was useless.

The Holy Light Celestial Venerable closed his eyes.

“I have nothing to say.” His voice was hoarse to the extreme. “Do it.”

Kai raised the Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple chaotic fire burned on the sword, illuminating the pale face of the Holy Light Celestial Venerable.

The sword fell.

The purple sword energy sliced through the Holy Light Celestial Venerable’s neck, and a head flew off, tumbling several times in the air before landing on the ground, rolling a long distance away.

The headless body stiffened for a moment, then slowly fell, crashing onto the white jade ground with a dull thud.

Golden blood gushed from the neck cavity, staining the white jade a dark gold.

The Lord of the Hall of Light, the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, had fallen.

The death of the Holy Light Celestial Venerable was like the last straw that broke the camel’s back.

The morale of the cultivators of the Hall of Light collapsed instantly upon seeing their Lord killed.

Some knelt in surrender, some turned and fled, and some stood frozen in place, at a loss.

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The three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven neither pursued those who fled nor slaughtered those who surrendered.

They simply stood quietly within the Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation, awaiting Kai's orders.

Kai sheathed his Dragon-Slaying Sword and turned to look at the Bright Hall cultivators kneeling on the ground.

His purple eyes swept over their terrified faces without any fluctuation.

"From this day forward, the Bright Hall ceases to exist."

His voice was calm, yet exceptionally clear in the silent Bright Hall. "Those willing to surrender, hand over your magical artifacts, cripple your cultivation, and you may leave alive. Those unwilling to surrender..."

He didn't finish his sentence, but everyone understood his meaning.

Those unwilling to surrender, die.

The Bright Hall cultivators exchanged glances, then one by one handed over their magical artifacts, channeled their spiritual power, and shattered their meridians.

Golden holy light dissipated from their bodies, their cultivation levels rapidly plummeting—from Golden Immortal to True Immortal, from

True Immortal to Celestial Immortal, and from Celestial Immortal back to the mortal realm.

They were once high and mighty divine cultivators; now, they were nothing.

But at least they were alive.

Those unwilling to surrender, Kai gave them no chance.

The disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven acted swiftly and decisively, one sword strike at a time; in less than half an incense stick's time, all the stubbornly resisting Bright Hall cultivators were slain.

Golden blood flowed before the Bright Hall's mountain gate, forming dark golden streams.

The air was thick with the pungent, nauseating stench of blood.

Kai stood on the ruins of the mountain gate, surveying the scene before him, his purple eyes devoid of any emotion.

He was not a bloodthirsty man.

But some people deserved to die.

The people of Bright Hall who injured Su Yuqi deserved to die.

Whether intentional or unintentional, whether acting under orders or on their own initiative,

injuring those who shouldn't have been injured had to come at a price.

This was Kai's rule.

From the mortal realm to the celestial realm, from the heavens to all the myriad worlds, this rule had never changed.

Master Yuxu walked to Kai's side, his aged eyes looking at him with a complex expression.

"Mr. Chen, the Hall of Light has been destroyed. Where do we go next?"

Kai was silent for a moment, then said, "Gather all the resources of the Hall of Light and return to Qingyun Cave Heaven."

Master Yuxu nodded and turned to instruct his disciples.

The disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven began to clear the battlefield, collect spoils, and treat the wounded.

Kai stood on the ruins, his gaze fixed on the northeast.

That was the direction Su Yuqi had left in.

She didn't know what had happened here, didn't know everything he had done for her.

Perhaps she would never know.

Perhaps even if she did know, she wouldn't care.

She had lost her memory and didn't remember him.

In her eyes, he was just someone she knew, a boy she had seen in the Fourteenth Heaven, someone who had helped her in the Northern Abyss.

That was all.

But Kai didn't care.

What he had done for her didn't need her to know, didn't need her to repay him, or even care.

He just wanted her to know...

that in this world, there was someone who cared about her, someone who remembered her, and someone who was willing to risk their life for her.

Even if she forgot everything.

Even if she would never remember him.

“Let’s go.” Kai withdrew his gaze and turned to walk down the mountain.

Jiang Xuelan followed behind him, her ice-white dress standing out vividly in the golden sunlight.

In her hand, she held the Heart of the Cold Abyss, the ice-blue bead slightly warm in her palm, as if telling a story.

Yun Yi walked at the front of the group, his wooden sword swaying gently on his back, the ancient Dao patterns on it glowing faintly in the sunlight.

Master Yuxu walked at the back of the group, his white hair and beard fluttering in the wind, his aged eyes looking at the ruins of the Bright Hall, a trace of indescribable emotion flashing in them.

Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven stood in neat rows, their blue Daoist robes gleaming faintly in the sunlight, like a blue river flowing slowly through the mountains and forests.

Behind them, the ruins of the Bright Hall emitted black smoke in the sunlight, golden blood congealing on the white jade, forming a strange and bloody scene.

The Hall of Light, a divine force that had existed in the Eighteenth Heaven for tens of thousands of years, was utterly destroyed today.

The news spread like wildfire throughout the entire Eighteenth Heaven.

Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven poured out, and under Kai's leadership, annihilated the Hall of Light in a single day.

The Hall Master, Holy Light Celestial Venerable, was personally killed by Kai, and thousands of Hall of Light cultivators either died, surrendered, or fled.

The once glorious Hall of Light was reduced to nothing in a single day.

...

Flame God Palace.

Yan Wuji sat on the Flame God Throne, holding the newly arrived intelligence, his crimson-gold eyes filled with shock.

The Hall of Light was destroyed.

Destroyed in a single day.

The Hall Master, Holy Light Celestial Venerable, a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, was personally killed by Kai.

"Kai..." Yan Wuji murmured the name, his voice carrying a fear he himself didn't realize, "How many more people will you kill?"

No one could answer him.

The hall was deathly silent; even the sound of the divine fire lamps burning could be clearly heard.

Yan Wuji put down the intelligence report, his fingers lightly tapping the armrest, producing a dull thud.

He was pondering.

Could Kai's next target be the Flame God Palace?

If Kai brought three hundred disciples from Qingyun Cave Heaven to the Flame God Palace, could he stop him?

Even the Bright Hall's protective array, the "Holy Light Curtain," couldn't stop Kai; could the Flame God Palace's protective array withstand it?

Even the Holy Light Celestial Venerable had died under Kai's sword; could he defeat Kai?

Yan Wuji's brows furrowed deeply.

He didn't know the answer.

But he knew one thing: he had to find a way to deal with Kai as soon as possible.

Otherwise, the next to be destroyed would be the Flame God Palace.

...

The Void Merchant Guild.

Wu Yuan stood before the floor-to-ceiling window on the ninth floor of the Void Pavilion, a cup of Enlightenment Tea in his hand, gazing at the surging sea of clouds outside.

Behind him, his trusted attendant was reporting the destruction of the Hall of Light.

"The Hall of Light was destroyed? In just one day?" Wu Yuan's voice held disbelief. "Kai did it all by himself?"

"Not entirely,"

the attendant said. "Three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven also participated. True Person Yuxu personally led the team, using the

Eight Trigrams Heavenly Evolution Formation. But it was indeed Kai himself who killed Holy Light Celestial Venerable."

Wu Yuan remained silent for a long time.

He put down the Enlightenment Tea, walked to the window, and looked at the sea of clouds outside, a shrewd glint in his eyes.

"Daoist sect... Kai... Qingyun Cave Heaven..." He murmured these words, a meaningful smile appearing on his lips. "Interesting, very interesting."

He turned to his trusted attendant. "Any news from Su Jingqiu?"

"Vice President Su has returned and is waiting for the president's summons."

"Summon her to see me." Wu Yuan picked up his Enlightenment Tea again, took a sip, and said, "I need to have a good talk with her."

"Yes."

The trusted attendant acknowledged and withdrew.

Wu Yuan stood alone by the window, his fingers lightly tapping the teacup, producing a crisp tinkling sound.

With the destruction of the Bright Palace, the power structure of the Eighteen Heavens would undergo a dramatic change. The

dominance of the Flame God Palace would be broken.

Under Kai's leadership, Qingyun Cave Heaven would become the new overlord of the Eighteen Heavens.

And the Void Merchant Guild must find its place in this new order.

"Kai, Kai..." Wu Yuan murmured the name, his smile deepening. "I truly can't understand you anymore." ...

The Qingyun Cave Heaven's procession moved slowly through the mountains and forests.

The three hundred-strong group stretched out in a long line, their azure robes standing out starkly against the green backdrop.

Kai led the procession, his Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, his purple eyes fixed ahead.

His mind replayed everything that had happened that day.

From setting out at dawn, to besieging the Bright Palace, to slaying the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, to the destruction of the Bright Palace.

Everything had happened too fast, almost unreal.

But he had no regrets.

The people of the Bright Palace had injured Su Yuqi; they deserved to die.

This was his rule, his bottom line.

No one could cross it.

Jiang Xuelan walked beside Kai, her ice-white dress standing out against the azure procession.

She looked at Kai's profile, at the emotions churning in his purple eyes, and a feeling she couldn't quite define welled up inside her.

This man, for Su Yuqi, could destroy a divine force that had existed for tens of thousands of years.

If one day she were in danger, would he do the same for her?

Jiang Xuelan didn't know the answer, nor dared she ask.

She walked silently beside him, like a white, icy leaf gently drifting in a blue river.

Yun Yi walked at the head of the group, the wooden sword on his back gleaming faintly in the afterglow of the setting sun.

His face was expressionless, but his heart was churning with turbulent emotions.

He was a second-grade Golden Immortal, the most outstanding disciple of the Daoist sect in this generation.

He had always thought he was already quite remarkable.

But today, witnessing Kai's slaying of the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, he finally understood what true power meant.

An eighth-grade True Immortal slaying a fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

Of all the people he knew, only Kai could accomplish such a feat.

Jade Void True Man walked at the back of the group, his white hair and beard fluttering in the evening breeze.

He looked at Kai's back ahead, a hint of relief flashing in his aged eyes.

He had waited tens of thousands of years, and finally, he had met this person.

The inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the successor of the Daoist sect's ancestor, the new leader of the Daoist sect.

He believed that under Kai's leadership, the Daoist sect would surely rise again.

They will surely break through the suppression of the gods for hundreds of thousands of years and once again become the most powerful force in all the heavens and myriad realms.

As the sun set, the gold and crimson of the three blazing suns had fallen below the horizon, leaving only the silvery-white moon hanging high in the sky.

The cool moonlight spilled through the mountains and forests, enveloping the three hundred-strong group in a silvery glow.

The distant Qingyun Mountains appeared and disappeared in the moonlight, the snow on their peaks shimmering with a silvery-white light.

When the group returned to Qingyun Cave Heaven, it was completely dark.

The silvery-white moon hung high in the sky, its cool light spilling over the continuous peaks of the Qingyun Mountains, enveloping the entire valley in a silvery glow.

One by one, the green lamps in the Taoist temple lit up, swaying gently in the mountain breeze, like countless fireflies dancing in the night.

Kai walked at the head of the group, stepping over the stone archway and onto the wide stone avenue.

The spiritual trees lining the avenue gleamed softly in the moonlight, and the fragrance of spiritual fruits filled the night air, creating a more serene and tranquil atmosphere compared to the daytime.

The gates of the Taoist temple were wide open, and two rows of Qingyun Cave Heaven disciples stood guard on either side, holding green lanterns in their hands, respectfully welcoming the returning group.

Their gazes fell on Kai, their eyes filled with awe.

News of the destruction of the Bright Hall had already reached them, and they knew that it was this young man, who looked to be under twenty, who had personally slain the Fifth-Rank Golden Immortal, the Holy Light Celestial Venerable.

Master Yuxu stopped at the entrance of the Taoist temple and turned to look at Kai.

“Mr. Chen, you have had a long day. I have already had guest rooms prepared; Mr. Chen and Miss Jiang can rest now. The disciples are currently taking inventory of the Bright Hall’s resources, and they will be delivered to you first thing tomorrow morning.” Kai

nodded. “Thank you, Senior.”

Master Yuxu waved his hand and turned to walk deeper into the Taoist temple.

His white hair and beard shimmered silver in the moonlight, his blue Taoist robe fluttered gently in the night breeze, and his pace remained unhurried, each step steady.

But his back looked much older than during the day, as if the battle had drained his spirit.

Yun Yi approached Kai and bowed slightly. “Mr. Chen, please follow me.”

Kai followed Yun Yi through the main hall of the Taoist temple, along a long corridor, to a secluded courtyard at the back of the temple. The

courtyard was small, surrounded by blue brick walls, with several bamboo stalks rustling in the night wind.

In a corner of the courtyard was an ancient well, its water reflecting the bright moon. A gentle breeze caused the moon’s reflection to sway softly in the water.

The main house had three rooms, with two rooms each in the east and west wings, all with blue tiles, white walls, and upturned eaves, consistent with the overall style of Qingyun Cave Heaven—simple yet elegant.

Yun Yi pushed open the door to the main house and lit the blue lamp on the table.

“Mr. Chen, this is the best guest room in Qingyun Cave Heaven. It used to be used to receive the leaders and elders of other branches of the Daoist sect,”

Yun Yi’s voice was calm, but his tone carried a hint of respect. “The courtyard next door was prepared for Miss Jiang; I’ve already had it ready.”

“Please thank the True Immortal for me,” Kai said.

Yun Yi nodded, turned to leave, and suddenly stopped at the door. Without turning back, he simply said softly, “Mr. Chen, I have cultivated for three thousand years and have never submitted to anyone. But today, I submit.”

After saying this, he strode away, his blue Daoist robe casting a faint shadow in the moonlight.

Kai watched his figure disappear through the courtyard gate, a flicker of emotion flashing in his purple eyes.

Three thousand years of cultivation, reaching the second rank of the Golden Immortal realm—in the Daoist sect, this was already considered an unparalleled genius.

For such a person to utter the words “submit,” it wasn’t because he had killed the Holy Light Celestial Venerable, but because he, with the cultivation of the eighth rank of the True Immortal realm, had accomplished something even the fifth rank of the Golden Immortal realm couldn’t.

Such superior combat power was unprecedented in the Daoist sects.

Kai closed the door, sat cross-legged on the wooden bed, and slowly circulated the Mind Concentration Technique. The power of chaos surged through his meridians, gradually dispelling the fatigue of the day.

The chaotic fire in his dantian burned quietly, melting all the spiritual power, medicinal power, and fragments of laws into the purest chaotic power.

However, the battle with the Temple of Light consumed too much spiritual energy, and he couldn't fully recover it in a short time. He needed time and resources. The next morning, as the first golden sun peeked over the eastern horizon, Kai opened his eyes from his meditation.

A night of cultivation had restored most of his spiritual energy, but it was still far from his peak.

His cultivation remained at the mid-stage of the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm, and the refinement of his chaotic power hadn't significantly improved.

The battle at the Hall of Light, though intense, had been a crushing victory against a fifth-rank Golden Immortal, failing to provide sufficient combat pressure and thus missing the opportunity for a breakthrough.

He needed stronger opponents and more intense battles to break through to a higher realm.

However, the God-King of the twentieth heaven was estimated to be at the peak of the ninth rank of the Golden Immortal Realm; challenging him with his current cultivation would be like throwing an egg against a rock.

He had to become stronger, at least breaking through to the Golden Immortal Realm, to have any chance of fighting a God-King.

And breaking through to the Golden Immortal Realm required astronomical resources.

Kai stood up and walked out of his room.

In the courtyard, a young disciple of the Azure Cloud Cave Heaven stood at the entrance, holding a storage bag. Seeing Kai emerge, he quickly bowed in greeting.

“Mr. Chen, this was sent by the Sect Master through his disciple. All the resources of the Bright Hall have been inventoried and are all in this storage bag.”

Kai took the storage bag and probed it with his divine sense.

His pupils contracted slightly.

The resources in the storage bag were far more than he had expected.

Crystals—millions, of all grades, including tens of thousands of top-grade crystals.

Pills—tens of thousands, from healing pills to cultivation-enhancing pills, from low-grade to high-grade, everything imaginable.

Magical artifacts—thousands of pieces, of varying grades, but the worst were at least True Immortal level, and there were dozens at the Golden Immortal level.

Cultivation technique jade slips—hundreds of slips, recording various cultivation techniques, secret techniques, formations, and pill formulas collected by the Bright Hall over tens of thousands of years .

Spiritual materials—piled up like mountains, various rare and precious materials, demon beast cores, spiritual herbs and fruits, a dazzling array, many of which Kai had never seen before.

The Bright Hall’s tens of thousands of years of accumulation had been emptied in one fell swoop, all falling into Kai’s hands.

These resources were enough for an ordinary True Immortal cultivator to break through from the ninth rank of True Immortal to the third or even fourth rank of Golden Immortal.

However, for Kai, who cultivated the power of chaos, these resources were still insufficient.

The power of chaos required dozens or even hundreds of times more resources than that of cultivators of the same level. With these resources, he would be lucky to break through to the ninth rank of True Immortal; the Golden Immortal realm would remain a distant dream.

Kai put away the storage bag and walked towards the neighboring courtyard.

Jiang Xuelan had already gotten up and was standing in the courtyard, her ice-white dress shimmering faintly in the morning light.

In her hand, she held the Heart of the Cold Abyss, its icy blue light surging forth and merging with her Ice God power.

A night of cultivation had completely stabilized her cultivation at the first rank of Golden Immortal, giving her a bit more color in her face, and her eyes were brighter than before.

Seeing Kai enter, Jiang Xuelan put away the Heart of the Cold Abyss and walked towards him.

“How did you rest?” Kai asked.

“Very good.”

Jiang Xuelan nodded. “The spiritual energy in Qingyun Cave is much denser than outside. One day of cultivation here is equivalent to ten days outside. With the aid of the Heart of the Cold Abyss, my cultivation should be able to break through to the second rank of the Golden Immortal Realm in a short time.”

Kai took out a storage ring from his storage bag and handed it to her.

“What’s this?”

“Resources from the Hall of Light, half for you.”

Jiang Xuelan was stunned for a moment, then shook her head. “No. These resources were earned with your life, I can’t accept them. Besides, you need these resources to break through your cultivation. Your Chaos Power requires too many resources; if you give me half, you won’t have enough for yourself.”

“Precisely because I need too many resources, this amount is not very meaningful to me.” Kai stuffed the storage ring into her hand. “But these resources are enough for you to break through from the first rank of the Golden Immortal Realm to the third rank. You’ve followed me all this way, risking your life several times; I can’t let you follow me for nothing.”

Jiang Xuelan looked at the storage ring in her hand and remained silent for a long time.

She knew Kai was telling the truth. The power of chaos requires dozens, even hundreds, of times more resources than cultivators of the same level. Although the Bright Hall has abundant resources, they are merely a drop in the ocean for Kai.

However, these resources are a treasure trove for her, enough to propel her cultivation forward by leaps and bounds.

“Alright.”

Jiang Xuelan put away her storage ring, looked up at Kai, a determined glint in her icy blue eyes. “I will use these resources to improve my cultivation as quickly as possible. Once I reach the twentieth level, I won’t hold you back.”

Kai nodded, then took out a palm-sized black tower from his storage bag and held it in his palm.

The tower was entirely black, covered with densely packed runes that glowed faintly in the morning light, as if something slumbered within.

“You cultivate in the tower; I’ll wait for you here,” Kai said.

Jiang Xuelan nodded, placed the Demon-Suppressing Tower on the stone table in the courtyard, and infused it with spiritual energy.

The tower slowly grew, from the size of a palm to the height of a person. The tower door opened automatically, and an ancient aura emanated from it.

Jiang Xuelan glanced back at Kai, then took a deep breath and stepped into the Demon-Suppressing Tower.

The tower door slowly closed behind her, and the small tower shrank back to the size of a palm, lying quietly on the stone table.

Kai put the Demon-Suppressing Tower away and placed it in his storage bag.

One month.

Nearly ten years had passed inside the tower .

With the resources of the Heart of the Cold Abyss and the Hall of Light, Jiang Xuelan’s cultivation should have made a qualitative leap in ten years.

Kai, too, couldn’t be idle.

He turned and walked out of the courtyard towards the main hall of the Taoist temple.

For the next three days, Kai stayed in Qingyun Cave Heaven.

During the day, he discussed the Dao with Master Yuxu, listening to Master Yuxu explain the history and inheritance of the Daoist sect, and

learning about the power distribution of the various heavens and the grudges and entanglements between the major sects.

Master Yuxu had lived for tens of thousands of years, and his understanding of the heavens far surpassed that of anyone else; every word he said benefited Kai immensely.

That night, Kai cultivated alone on the Enlightenment Cliff, fully activating the Mind Concentration Technique. Chaotic power surged through his meridians, drawing in the almost liquefied spiritual energy of Qingyun Cave Heaven, refining it into the purest chaotic power.

The Enlightenment Cliff was the most spiritually concentrated place in Qingyun Cave Heaven. Standing atop the cliff, one could overlook the entire valley, seeing the distant mountain peaks faintly visible under the moonlight. The

night wind at the cliff top was strong, causing Kai's robes to flutter, but he was oblivious, his eyes closed, focused solely on the circulation of spiritual energy within his body.

In three days, his cultivation advanced from the mid-stage of the eighth rank of True Immortal Realm to the late-stage of the eighth rank.

Although it was only a half-level advancement, his chaotic power was more condensed than before. Each wisp of spiritual energy was like a divine sword forged through countless trials, containing unimaginable power.

The protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture also continued to spread under the nourishment of spiritual energy, and golden dragon patterns had covered seventy-two percent of his skin. He

was one step closer to achieving the Great Golden Body. Three days later, at dawn, Kai was cultivating on the Enlightenment Cliff when Yun Yi hurried over.

“Mr. Chen,” Yun Yi stopped at the edge of the cliff and bowed slightly, “Someone is looking for you.”

Kai opened his eyes, a hint of doubt flashing in his purple pupils.

In the Eighteenth Heaven, he knew absolutely no one.

Besides the people of Qingyun Cave Heaven, there was only Su Jingqiu of the Void Merchant Guild and the people of the Flame God Palace.

The people of the Flame God Palace couldn’t possibly have found Qingyun Cave Heaven, so it could only be Su Jingqiu who was looking for him.

“Who is it?” Kai asked.

“A woman claiming to be Su Jingqiu,”

Yun Yi’s voice was calm, but his brows were slightly furrowed. “She says she’s from the Void Merchant Guild, and on the orders of Guild Master Wu Yuan, she invites Mr. Chen to the Void Merchant Guild for a meeting. The Headmaster Master sent me to ask Mr. Chen whether he will see her or not?”

Kai stood up and dusted himself off.

Su Jingqiu.

Void Merchant Guild.

Wu Yuan.

Outside Fire Crow City, Su Jingqiu gave him a map and a guest elder token, then turned and left without leaving any contact information or making any requests.

Kai knew then that the Void Merchant Guild was playing the long game.

Now the line was long enough, and the fish should take the bait.

“See you,” Kai said. “Have her wait for me in the tea room.”

Yun Yi nodded and turned to leave.

Kai walked down Enlightenment Cliff, through the Taoist temple’s corridor, and arrived at the tea room.

Jade Void Master was already there, sitting in the main seat, holding a teacup, his expression somewhat grave.

Seeing Kai enter, he put down his teacup, a hint of worry flashing in his aged eyes.

“Mr. Chen, how do you know the people from the Void Merchant Guild?”

Kai sat down opposite Jade Void Master and briefly recounted what had happened outside Fire Crow City: Su Jingqiu had given him a map, a guest elder token, and then left without leaving any contact information or making any requests.

Jade Void Master listened in silence for a moment, then slowly shook his head.

“The people of the Void Merchant Guild have always been hypocritical. They are merchants, driven by profit, and would never do anything without benefit,”

Jade Void Master’s voice was low, as if afraid of being overheard. “They gave you the map and token not to make friends, but to invest in you. When you are strong enough, they will come to collect their debts.”

Kai nodded, “This junior understands.”

“The Void Merchant Guild has a great deal of power,”

Jade Void Master continued. “In the Eighteenth Heaven, they are just the tip of the iceberg. Above the Eighteenth Heaven, their influence extends. Even outside the Heavenly Realm, in other realms, there are branches of the Void Merchant Guild. Their tentacles are spread throughout the myriad realms, no less powerful than the God Race.”

Jade Void Master’s words made Kai frown slightly.

Equal in strength to the God Race?

How could a merchant guild have such power?

“Who stands behind the Void Merchant Guild?” Kai asked.

Master Yuxu was silent for a moment, then shook his head. “No one knows. The Void Merchant Guild has existed for countless millennia, their influence spreading throughout the myriad realms, but where their headquarters are, who their president is, and who stands behind them—these are all mysteries.

I have lived for tens of thousands of years and have never known the true ruler of the Void Merchant Guild.”

“The Void Merchant Guild is that powerful?” Kai was somewhat surprised, but upon reflection, it made sense. To be called the Void Merchant Guild, they must possess considerable ability.

Beyond the Heavenly Realm lies the void; the name Void Merchant Guild sounds impressive.

Master Yuxu nodded. “Mr. Chen, the people of the Void Merchant Guild are not to be trusted. They are kind to you because you have value to them.

Once your value is used up, they will abandon you without hesitation. I advise Mr. Chen to refuse their invitation and not to get too close to the Void Merchant Guild.”

Kai was silent for a moment, then shook his head.

“Master, I know the Void Merchant Guild is untrustworthy,”

he said calmly. “But I need allies now. The power of the God Clan is too great; I alone cannot contend against them. Qingyun Cave Heaven has already sided with me, but it’s not enough. Although the Void Merchant Guild is profit-driven, their power and intelligence network are exactly what I need.”

Master Yuxu looked at Kai, a complex expression flashing in his aged eyes.

He understood Kai’s meaning.

Fighting the God Clan was not a matter for one person, but for a group.

Although the Daoist sect was willing to accept Kai as their new leader, the sect was too fragmented, with each faction unwilling to submit to the others, making it impossible to form a united force in a short time.

The Void Merchant Guild, however, was different. They were a unified whole with a tight organizational structure, an intelligence network spanning countless worlds, and countless resources and connections.

If Kai could leverage the power of the Void Merchant Guild, his path would be much easier.

“Since Mr. Chen has made his decision, I will say no more.”

Master Yuxu stood up, walked to Kai, and took out a cyan jade talisman from his sleeve, handing it to him. “This is a communication jade talisman from Qingyun Cave Heaven. If Mr. Chen encounters danger at the Void Merchant Guild, simply crush this talisman, and I will immediately send people to his aid.”

Kai took the talisman and stored it in his storage ring.

“Thank you, Master.”

Master Yuxu waved his hand, turned, and walked out of the tea room. He suddenly stopped at the door without looking back.

“Mr. Chen, Wu Yuan, the president of the Void Merchant Guild, is no ordinary person. Although he only has the cultivation of a fourth-grade Golden Immortal, his cunning and shrewdness are even more terrifying than Yan Wuji, a fifth-grade Golden Immortal. Mr. Chen must be careful when dealing with him.”

After saying this, he strode away, his cyan Taoist robe fluttering in the morning breeze, his white hair and beard shimmering with silver light in the sunlight.

Kai watched his figure disappear into the bamboo forest outside the tea room, a thoughtful look flashing in his purple eyes.

A fourth-grade Golden Immortal possesses a cunning and shrewdness even more terrifying than a fifth-grade Golden Immortal.

Such a person is indeed difficult to deal with.

But Kai is not afraid.

He has walked a more difficult path and faced more formidable opponents.

A merchant, no matter how formidable, is still just a merchant.

Kai left the tea room and went to the main hall of the Taoist temple.

Su Jingqiu was already waiting in the hall.

Today, she wore an elegant light gray dress, similar to the one she had seen outside Fire Crow City, but her expression was much more composed than before, with a faint smile on her lips, like an old friend reunited after a long separation, rather than a merchant guild’s envoy.

Seeing Kai enter, Su Jingqiu stood up and bowed slightly.

“Mr. Chen, we meet again.”

Kai walked up to her, stopping five steps away, his purple eyes fixed on her without any emotional fluctuation.

“Vice President Su, your president sent you to invite me. What is it?”

Su Jingqiu’s smile remained unchanged, but a hint of surprise flashed in her eyes. Kai knew her identity; he knew she was the vice president of the Void Merchant Guild.

She hadn’t left any name or contact information outside Fire Raven City, yet he had still managed to find her. “The president wishes to meet Mr. Chen,”

Su Jingqiu said calmly, as if discussing a trivial matter. “The Void Chamber of Commerce is willing to cooperate with Mr. Chen to jointly combat the God Race. If Mr. Chen is interested, please come with me to the Void Chamber of Commerce for a discussion.”

Jointly combating the God Race.

Kai’s eyebrows twitched slightly.

The Void Chamber of Commerce was going to oppose the God Race?

Weren’t they afraid of the God Race’s retaliation?

“Does the Void Chamber of Commerce have a grudge against the God Race?” Kai asked.

Su Jingqiu shook her head. “No. The Void Chamber of Commerce operates purely on business principles and doesn’t make enemies with any forces. However, the interests of the Chamber of Commerce and the God Race conflict in many ways.

The God Race likes monopolies, control, and keeping all resources in their own hands.

The Chamber of Commerce needs circulation, trade, and the free flow of resources.

Therefore, from a perspective of interests, the Void Chamber of Commerce and the God Race are natural adversaries."

She paused, a meaningful smile appearing on her lips. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend. Mr. Chen, don't you agree?"

Kai remained silent for a moment.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend—that's true, but only if that "friend" won't stab me in the back.

Master Yuxu was right; the people of the Void Merchant Guild are untrustworthy.

But Kai needs them now.

"Lead the way," Kai said.

A glint flashed in Su Jingqiu's eyes, but she quickly regained her composure.

She bowed slightly and turned to walk out of the Taoist temple.

Kai followed behind her, his purple eyes scanning the surroundings, his divine sense covering a radius of fifty miles, not escaping his perception of any disturbance.

Tianlan City was tens of thousands of miles away from Qingyun Cave Heaven.

From Qingyun Cave Heaven, one had to cross the Qingyun Mountains, cross the Fallen God Wasteland, and travel thousands of miles north to reach Tianlan City's sphere of influence.

Su Jingqiu didn't choose to walk or fly, but instead took out a silver-white jade talisman from her sleeve and infused it with spiritual power.

The jade talisman exploded in the air, transforming into a silver-white flying boat.

The flying boat was about ten zhang long and three zhang wide, its hull covered with spatial runes, and the Void Merchant Guild's mark was engraved on the bow—a treasure ship traversing the void.

"Mr. Chen, please board." Su Jingqiu was the first to leap onto the flying boat.

Only forces like the Void Merchant Guild possessed such flying boats. Ordinary cultivators struggled to even guarantee their cultivation resources, let alone have resources to consume on a flying boat.

The Void Merchant Guild wasn't worried; it was all public property, so why not use it?

Kai followed, leaping onto the flying boat and standing at the bow, his purple eyes gazing into the distance.

The flying boat soared into the air, flying north at an extremely fast speed.

The Azure Cloud Mountains below rapidly shrank in the field of vision, the continuous peaks turning into green waves, the snow on the summits shimmering white in the sunlight. The

Taoist temple of Azure Cloud Cave Heaven was hidden in the clouds and mist, appearing and disappearing like an embellishment in a traditional Chinese ink painting.

Su Jingqiu stood behind Kai, watching his back, her long, light gray dress fluttering in the wind.

She had many things to say, but she knew now was not the time.

Kai isn't someone who can be won over with just a few words.

It takes time, patience, and for him to see the value of the Void Merchant Guild.

The airship flew for about two hours, the scenery below changing from green mountains to a dark red wasteland.

The Fallen God Wasteland had arrived.

From the air, the Fallen God Wasteland looked even more desolate and eerie than from the ground. The dark red sand stretched as far as the eye could see, and scattered bones and battle relics cast long shadows in the sunlight, like a silent tombstone.

Spatial rifts deep within the wasteland shimmered eerily in the sunlight, like open eyes peering into this world.

The airship didn't linger in the Fallen God Wasteland, flying directly over it.

After flying for another hour, the scenery below changed from the dark red wasteland to a snow-covered ice plain.

The Far North had arrived.

The temperature here was even lower than in the Northern Abyss, and the moisture in the air condensed into tiny ice crystals, shimmering with iridescent light in the sunlight.

The ground was covered with a thick layer of ice and snow, beneath which lay permafrost that had remained frozen for millennia. There was no vegetation, no living creature, only an endless expanse of white.

The flying boat pierced through the clouds, and the entire panorama of Tianlan City unfolded before Kai's eyes.

Dozens of floating islands, varying in size, ranged from a few hundred feet in diameter to tens of miles in length.

The islands were connected by thick iron chains, adorned with colorful flags that fluttered in the wind, each bearing the insignia of the Void Merchant Guild and a treasure ship traversing the void.

Each island boasted unique architecture: magnificent palaces, ancient and elegant pavilions, towering spires reaching into the clouds, and courtyards hidden among lush vegetation.

Teleportation arrays connected the islands, and cultivators frequently emerged from these arrays, hurrying off in various directions.

The bustling atmosphere of Tianlan City far surpassed any city Kai had seen in the Seventeenth Heaven.

Tianlan City was orderly; no one fought, no one forced purchases, and even loud noises were rare.

Every cultivator wore a cautious expression, as if afraid of breaking the rules.

The rules of the Void Merchant Guild were stricter than those of any major sect.

Anyone who dared to cause trouble in Tianlan City, regardless of who they were or who was backing them, would be apprehended by the Void Merchant Guild's guards immediately and thrown out of Tianlan City, never to set foot there again.

Su Jingqiu maneuvered her flying boat to land on the platform of the central floating island.

The platform was large enough to accommodate dozens of flying boats taking off and landing simultaneously.

Su Jingqiu stowed her flying boat and turned to look at Kai.

“Mr. Chen, please follow me. The Guild Master is already waiting at the Void Pavilion.”

Kai nodded and followed Su Jingqiu down the platform, walking along a wide bluestone avenue towards the center of the island.

The bluestone avenue was lined with spirit trees, their branches laden with colorful spirit fruits, emitting an enticing fragrance.

Every hundred steps along both sides of the avenue stood a stone lamppost, each topped with a fist-sized luminous pearl that emitted a soft glow even in the daytime.

At the end of the avenue lay a vast plaza.

In the center of the plaza stood a completely black tower, nine stories high, each inlaid with tens of thousands of spatial crystals.

The spatial crystals refracted the sunlight, casting a rainbow of colors and enveloping the entire tower in a dreamlike halo.

This was the Void Pavilion, the headquarters of the Void Merchant Guild in the Eighteenth Heaven.

Su Jingqiu led Kai through the gates of the Void Pavilion.

Inside was a spacious hall, its dome inlaid with a massive star map, marking the coordinates of countless worlds. Some of the stars Kai recognized, others he had never heard of.

The stars on the map rotated slowly, as if alive, or perhaps like some ancient formation in operation.

On either side of the hall were rows of counters, behind which sat deacons of the Void Merchant Guild, receiving guests from all directions.

Some guests were exchanging spirit stones, some were buying pills, some were inquiring about information, and some were commissioning tasks.

Each deacon wore a professional smile, speaking politely yet tactfully.

Su Jingqiu didn't linger in the hall, leading Kai directly through it and into a teleportation array.

The array flashed, and the two appeared on the ninth floor of the Void Pavilion.

The ninth floor was a spacious reception room with floor-to-ceiling windows on all four sides, offering panoramic views of the sea of clouds and dozens of floating islands surrounding Tianlan City.

Standing by the window, the entire city of Tianlan was laid out before them, with snow-covered ice plains in the distance, and further still, the dark red Fallen God Wasteland. The clouds on the horizon shimmered with golden light under the sunlight.

The reception room was far more luxurious than the tea room in Qingyun Cave.

The floor was paved with solid pieces of spirit jade, the walls were adorned with calligraphy and paintings by famous artists, and priceless antique porcelain was displayed in the corners.

The tables and chairs were crafted from ten-thousand-year-old spirit wood, emitting a faint fragrance. Sitting on them, one could feel a warm spiritual energy flowing into the body, invigorating the spirit.

A middle-aged man stood before the floor-to-ceiling window, his back to the door, holding a cup of tea and gazing at the sea of clouds outside.

He wore a dark gold robe embroidered with the Void Merchant Guild's emblem. Tall and broad-shouldered, his hair was tied back with a jade hairpin, revealing a sharply defined profile.

Hearing footsteps, he turned.

His face was refined, with a shrewdness characteristic of a merchant, but it was so well-hidden that it was almost imperceptible.

A faint smile played on his lips, neither warm nor cold, just right—neither too distant nor too intimate.

A fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

President of the Void Merchant Guild, Wu Yuan.

Wu Yuan's gaze fell on Kai, scrutinizing him from head to toe, then his smile deepened.

"Mr. Chen, I've long admired your name."

His voice was gentle yet powerful, possessing a magnetic quality that was like a gentle breeze. "I am Wu Yuan, President of the Void Merchant Guild. Please have a seat."

He gestured for him to sit, taking the lead in the main seat.

Kai sat opposite him, his purple eyes fixed on him, devoid of any emotional fluctuation.

Su Jingqiu didn't sit down, but stood behind Wu Yuan. Her long, light gray dress shimmered faintly in the sunlight streaming through the French windows.

Wu Yuan personally poured Kai a cup of tea. The aroma filled the air, fresh and elegant. Unlike the Qingyun Mist Tea from Qingyun Cave, this tea had a hint of fruitiness, a sweet taste, and a lingering aftertaste.

“This is a special spiritual tea from the Void Merchant Guild, called ‘Void Dew.’ It’s harvested from a spiritual plant in the void, with an annual yield of no more than one pound. Please try it, Mr. Chen.”

Kai picked up the teacup and took a small sip.

As the tea entered his mouth, a cool spiritual energy surged from his throat into his dantian, circulating through his meridians and invigorating him. The quality of this tea was a level above the Qingyun Mist Tea.

“Good tea.”

Kai put down his teacup and looked at Wu Yuan. “President Wu, there’s no need for formalities. You had Vice President Su invite me here, not just for tea, right?”

Wu Yuan smiled and put down his teacup.

“Mr. Chen is straightforward, so I won’t beat around the bush either.” His voice became more serious. “The Void Chamber of Commerce wishes to make friends with Mr. Chen.”

Kai didn’t speak, just looked at him.

Wu Yuan continued, “I know Mr. Chen may be somewhat wary of the Void Chamber of Commerce. After all, business is business, and the Void Chamber of Commerce does everything for profit. I don’t deny that.”

He paused, his smile becoming more meaningful. “But profit doesn’t necessarily have to be achieved through confrontation. Cooperation can also bring profit. And the profit from cooperation is often greater than that from confrontation.”

Kai leaned back in his chair, his purple eyes slightly narrowed.

“Make friends?” His voice was calm. “President Wu, business is business. What do you want from me?”

Wu Yuan was silent for a moment, then smiled.

The smile was honest, so honest it didn't seem like that of a businessman.

"Initially, I did indeed covet the Great Luo Golden Scripture and the power of chaos

that Mr. Chen possessed." His voice was completely undisguised, as if he were stating something ordinary. "My younger brother, Wu Heng, the president of the Seventeenth Heaven Void Merchant Guild, sent me a message saying that Mr. Chen possessed the Great Luo Golden Scripture, a supreme inheritance lost to the Daoist sect for tens of thousands of years.

At the time, I thought that if I could seize the Great Luo Golden Scripture, the Void Merchant Guild's status in the myriad realms would rise even higher."

Kai's fingers tapped lightly on the table, making a soft thumping sound.

He wasn't angry, nor surprised.

When Wu Heng gave him the guest elder token, he knew the Void Merchant Guild was after the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

"And then?" Kai asked.

Wu Yuan's smile turned somewhat bitter.

"Then, Mr. Chen killed Yan Po with a single sword strike in the Fallen God Wasteland, wiped out a group of Bright Hall's troops in the Northern Dark Abyss, and led three hundred disciples of Qingyun Cave Heaven to destroy Bright Hall in a single day, personally killing the Fifth-Rank Golden Immortal Saint Light Celestial Venerable."

He paused, looking into Kai's eyes, a complex expression flashing in his crimson-gold eyes. "Although I am arrogant, I am not foolish enough to

believe that I can fight against a powerhouse capable of killing a Fifth-Rank Golden Immortal.

Since we cannot be enemies, let's make friends. A merchant's instinct is to make the most appropriate choice at the most appropriate time."

Kai was silent for a moment.

Wu Yuan's words were very frank.

So frank that Kai was somewhat surprised.

A merchant admitting that he had once coveted the other party's treasures, admitting that he dared not be enemies now, admitting that he chose to make friends because of profit—this kind of frankness was hard to dislike.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Kai asked.

Wu Yuan picked up his teacup, took a sip, then set it down, crossed his hands on his knees, leaned forward slightly, and looked directly at Kai.

"The Void Merchant Guild has received information that deep within the icy plains of the far north, there is a void passage leading to a secret realm, said to be an ancient battlefield."

An ancient battlefield.

A void passage.

Kai's brow twitched slightly.

He thought of the Ruins of Return.

In the Fourteenth Heaven, he and Jiang Xuelan had entered the ancient battlefield of the Ruins of Return.

There lay countless skeletons of ancient powerhouses, remnant souls slumbering in spatial rifts, and countless dangers and opportunities.

It was there that he saved the remnant soul of Bei Mingyuan.

Could Wu Yuan be talking about the same place?

Kai didn't speak aloud, but simply looked at Wu Yuan, waiting for him to continue.

"The Void Merchant Guild has tried many times to pass through that void passage,"

Wu Yuan's voice deepened, "but all attempts have failed. The spatial turbulence within the passage is too intense; our cultivators simply cannot withstand it.

Cultivators below the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm are torn to shreds upon entering. Even those above the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm can only barely endure for a few dozen breaths, unable to penetrate any deeper."

He paused, his gaze growing even more fervent, "But I observed that when Kai traversed the void passage, the power of chaos easily dissolved the spatial turbulence.

The power of chaos is the source of all elements, and the power of space is no exception. Mr. Chen, you are the only one who can pass through that void passage." Kai understood.

Wu Yuan's purpose in inviting him wasn't to drink tea or make friends, but to have him help open the void passage.

"You want me to enter that secret realm and help you retrieve your treasures?" Kai asked.

Wu Yuan shook his head. "It's not about retrieving treasures for us. It's about exploring together. The Void Merchant Guild will provide the

location and protection of the passage, and Mr. Chen will be responsible for navigating it.

The treasures within the secret realm will be shared equally between the Void Merchant Guild and Mr. Chen, without interference."

He paused, then added, "If Mr. Chen is willing, the Void Merchant Guild will also provide detailed information about the secret realm. We've also gathered some information about the secret realm during our exploration of the passage."

Kai remained silent for a long time.

He picked up his teacup, drank the slightly cooled tea in one gulp, then put it down, his purple eyes looking at Wu Yuan.

"We can try," he said, "but I can't guarantee we'll be able to get through."

A glint flashed in Wu Yuan's eyes, and his smile became even more sincere.

"I'm already extremely grateful that Mr. Chen is willing to help."

Kai took the black stone from his storage ring and placed it on the table.

The black stone gleamed faintly in the light of the reception room, its surface patterns subtly shifting, as if something slumbered within.

"President Wu, have you ever seen something like this before?" Kai asked.

Wu Yuan's gaze fell on the black stone, his pupils contracting slightly.

He reached out, wanting to touch it, but his hand froze in mid-air.

"This is..." Wu Yuan frowned slightly.

“President Wu doesn’t need to know what it is. I obtained it in the lower realm. I would like to ask the Void Merchant Guild to keep an eye out. If this kind of black stone is found elsewhere, please notify me,” Kai said.

Wu Yuan was silent for a moment, then nodded.

“Mr. Chen, rest assured, the Void Merchant Guild is spread throughout the myriad realms, its intelligence network far exceeding that of any other power. Wherever this kind of black stone appears, the Void Merchant Guild will be informed immediately.”

He paused, looking into Kai’s eyes, “At that time, I will personally inform Mr. Chen.”

Kai put the black stone back into his storage ring.

“Thank you very much, Chairman Wu.”

Wu Yuan waved his hand, stood up, walked to the French windows, and looked at the sea of clouds outside.

“Mr. Chen, please rest in the city for the night. Tomorrow morning, I will personally escort you to the void passage.”

Kai also stood up. “Alright.”

Wu Yuan turned to Su Jingqiu. “Jingqiu, take Mr. Chen to the best guest room and arrange everything. Please fulfill any needs Mr. Chen may have.”

Su Jingqiu bowed slightly. “Yes.”

She walked to Kai and gestured for him to follow. “Mr. Chen, please come with me.”

Kai followed Su Jingqiu out of the reception room and into the teleportation array.

The teleportation array flashed, and the two disappeared into the ninth floor.

Wu Yuan stood alone by the French windows, looking at the sea of clouds outside, his crimson-gold eyes gleaming with shrewdness.

His fingers tapped lightly on the windowsill, making a soft thumping sound.

“The Great Luo Golden Scripture, the power of chaos, the inheritance of the Daoist sect…” he murmured to himself, the smile on his lips deepening. “Kai, who exactly are you?”

No one could answer him.

Outside the window, the sea of clouds surged under the sunlight, and the floating islands of Tianlan City appeared and disappeared within them, like celestial mountains floating in a dream.

Su Jingqiu led Kai to the seventh floor of the Void Pavilion.

The seventh floor was a guest room area specifically for VIPs, with only eight rooms on the entire floor, each occupying dozens of feet in area and decorated with the utmost luxury.

Kai’s room was at the far end of the corridor, with the Void Merchant Guild’s mark engraved on the door. Pushing open the door, a spacious suite came into view. It

had a living room, bedroom, cultivation room, and bathroom, each exquisitely furnished.

The living room floor was paved with spirit jade, the walls were adorned with calligraphy and paintings by famous artists, and priceless antique porcelain was displayed in the corner.

The bed in the bedroom was made of ten-thousand-year-old warm jade; lying on it, one could feel a warm spiritual energy flowing into the body, making one feel completely comfortable.

The walls of the cultivation room were engraved with spirit-gathering runes, and the concentration of spiritual energy was several times that of outside. Cultivating here for one day was equivalent to cultivating outside for one month.

Su Jingqiu stood at the door, not entering.

“Mr. Chen, if you need anything, simply press the communication jade talisman at the door, and a steward will come to your service.”

Her voice was calm, but her tone carried a hint of respect. “The president will personally pick you up early tomorrow morning. Please rest well tonight.”

Kai nodded. “Thank you, Vice President Su.”

Su Jingqiu bowed slightly, turned, and left, her long, light gray dress casting a faint shadow in the corridor light.

Kai closed the door and sat cross-legged on the futon in the cultivation room.

He didn’t cultivate, but pondered.

He believed seventy percent of Wu Yuan’s words. It was true that Wu Yuan coveted the Great Luo Golden Scripture and the power of chaos.

It was also true that Wu Yuan dared not be his enemy. It was probably also true that Wu Yuan wanted to cooperate with him to explore the secret realm.

But the remaining thirty percent, which Wu Yuan didn’t mention, was the key.

Was the secret realm Wu Yuan spoke of truly an ancient battlefield?

If it really was an ancient battlefield like the Ruins of Return, what was inside?

Why did Wu Yuan need his help?

Was it merely because the power of chaos could resolve spatial turbulence?

Kai didn't believe it was that simple.

The Void Merchant Guild was spread throughout the myriad realms, its power no less than that of the gods.

If they truly wanted to explore that secret realm, even if they couldn't enter themselves, they could bring in more powerful cultivators from other realms. If

fourth or fifth-grade Golden Immortals couldn't enter, they could bring in even more powerful cultivators.

Did the Void Merchant Guild not even have cultivators above the fifth grade of the Golden Immortal realm?

Unless—that secret realm had cultivation restrictions, allowing only those below a certain cultivation level to enter.

Or perhaps there were other secrets.

A slight smile curved Kai's lips.

He was determined to find out what Wu Yuan didn't want him to know.

He took out a communication jade talisman from his storage ring—not the one from Qingyun Cave, but the dark red jade talisman Su Yuqi had left him.

He infused it with spiritual power, and the jade talisman became slightly warm, its dark red light flickering in the cultivation room.

There was no response.

Su Yuqi either hadn't received it, or she had received it but didn't want to respond.

Kai put away the jade talisman, a hint of sadness flashing in his purple eyes.

Was she alright?

Had her injuries healed?

Had she encountered any more danger?

He didn't know.

He only knew that she didn't remember him anymore.

In her eyes, he was just an ordinary stranger.

Nothing more.

Kai took a deep breath, suppressing his chaotic thoughts, closed his eyes, and slowly circulated the Mind Concentration Technique.

The power of chaos surged through his meridians, gradually dispelling the fatigue of the day.

All the spirit-gathering runes in the cultivation room lit up, and dense spiritual energy surged in from all directions, flowing into his body and being refined by the chaotic fire into the purest chaotic power.Nothing happened that night.

The next morning, Kai opened his eyes from meditation, a glint of light flashing in his purple pupils.

A night of cultivation had fully restored his spiritual energy. Although his cultivation level hadn't broken through, his chaotic power was more condensed than before.

He stood up, left his guest room, and went to the main hall of the Void Pavilion.

Wu Yuan was already waiting in the hall.

Today, he was wearing a silver-white robe embroidered with the Void Merchant Guild's mark, a silver-white token hanging from his waist, and a whisk in his hand. He looked less like a merchant and more like a venerable cultivator.

Su Jingqiu stood behind him, her greyish-blue dress replaced by silver-white armor, a slender rapier hanging from her waist, her long hair tied up. She looked dashing and heroic, a stark contrast to her previous quiet demeanor.

Behind Wu Yuan stood a dozen or so people, all elite cultivators of the Void Merchant Guild. The lowest cultivation level was at the first rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, and the two highest were at the peak of the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm.

They wore uniform silver-white armor, with standard magical artifacts hanging from their waists, and each wore a solemn expression.

This was the Void Merchant Guild's most elite team, specially formed for exploring secret realms.

"Mr. Chen, did you rest well?" Wu Yuan asked with a smile.

Kai nodded, "Very well."

Wu Yuan turned and walked towards the door, "Then let's set off."

The group left the Void Pavilion and came to the platform.

Wu Yuan took out a golden jade talisman from his sleeve and infused it with spiritual power. The jade

talisman exploded in the air, transforming into a huge golden flying boat.

The flying boat was about thirty zhang long and ten zhang wide, its hull covered with dense spatial runes. The Void Merchant Guild's mark was engraved on the bow, and a golden flag fluttered at the stern.

The flying boat's cabin was divided into three levels: the bottom level was a storage cabin, the middle level was a guest room and cultivation room, and the top level was a control room and a reception room.

The flying boat was several times faster than the silver-white flying boat Su Jingqiu had previously traveled on, and it was also much more stable; one could hardly feel any turbulence while sitting in the cabin.

Wu Yuan leaped onto the flying boat first, followed by Kai. Su Jingqiu and the other cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild also boarded one after another.

The flying boat soared into the air, flying north at an extremely fast speed.

Tianlan City rapidly shrank behind them, and dozens of floating islands became a few small black dots in the sea of clouds.

The ice plains below stretched endlessly, the white ice and snow shimmering dazzlingly in the sunlight.

After flying for about an hour, the scenery below changed from the ice plains to an even more desolate frozen tundra. Not a blade of

grass grew on the frozen tundra, only black rocks and white ice and snow intertwined, forming a black and white picture.

In the distance, a huge crack appeared in the sky.

The crack stretched from the ground all the way to the sky, like an invisible giant sword cleaving heaven and earth.

Intense spatial power surged from the crack, shimmering with an eerie light in the sunlight.

The air around the crack was distorted and deformed, as if something was struggling, roaring, and howling within the crack.

That was the void passage leading to the secret realm.

Wu Yuan stood at the bow, gazing at the crack, a burning light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“Mr. Chen, that’s the void passage.”

His voice held an undisguised excitement. “The Void Merchant Guild has tried countless times, but to no avail. Today, it’s up to Mr. Chen.”

Kai nodded, his purple eyes fixed on the crack, sensing the spatial power surging within.

That power was immense, chaotic, and filled with an aura of destruction.

A cultivator below the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm would indeed be torn to shreds if they entered.

But his chaotic power could suppress all elements, including spatial power.

Passing through this crack should not be difficult for him.

The flying boat stopped dozens of miles from the crack.

It wasn’t that it couldn’t get any closer, but that it absolutely couldn’t get any closer.

The space around the crack was extremely unstable; if the flying boat got any closer, it would be swept into the crack by the spatial turbulence, and everyone on board would die.

“Mr. Chen, the road ahead is up to you.”

Wu Yuan turned to look at Kai, a complex expression flashing in his crimson-gold eyes. “I will wait here for your good news, Mr. Chen.”

Kai nodded and was about to leap off the flying boat when he suddenly heard Su Jingqiu’s voice.

“President, someone is following us.”

Wu Yuan’s face instantly turned cold.

He turned sharply, his gaze like lightning, sweeping towards the back of the flying boat.

Hundreds of miles away, several black flying boats emerged from the clouds, flying towards their direction.

There were no markings on the flying boats, but golden holy light runes flowed on their hulls—the mark of the gods.

The gods.

A murderous intent flashed in Wu Yuan’s eyes, his fingers lightly rubbing his whisk, making a soft creaking sound.

“How many?” His voice was as cold as ice.

Su Jingqiu closed her eyes, spreading her divine sense. After a moment, she opened her eyes, her expression somewhat solemn.

“Five flying boats, about fifty people. The highest cultivation level… is Golden Immortal Level 4, two are Golden Immortal Level 3, and the rest are Golden Immortal Level 1 and 2.”

Wu Yuan's lips curled into a cold smile.

"The Divine Race doesn't want us to have an easy time."

His voice was soft, but every word was like a knife piercing the air. "How did they know we were coming here?"

No one could answer him.

But everyone knew the answer: the Void Merchant Guild had a traitor.

Wu Yuan took a deep breath, suppressing his anger, and turned to look at Su Jingqiu.

"Jingqiu, you take a team and intercept them."

Su Jingqiu's body stiffened slightly, a hint of hesitation flashing in her eyes.

Fifty people, the highest cultivation level being Golden Immortal Level 4, two are Golden Immortal Level 3, and the rest are Golden Immortal Level 1 and 2.

And the team she was leading, including herself, only had a dozen or so people, the highest cultivation level being her own Golden Immortal Level 3.

This wasn't an ambush, it was suicide.

But she didn't refuse.

She was the vice president of the Void Merchant Guild, and carrying out the president's orders was her duty.

"Yes." Su Jingqiu's voice was calm, so calm that no emotion could be detected.

She turned to look at the dozen or so Void Merchant Guild cultivators behind her, “Follow me.”

A dozen or so people simultaneously leaped from the flying boat, their silver-white armor gleaming blindingly in the sunlight.

They formed a battle formation in the air and flew towards the black flying boats.

Wu Yuan watched Su Jingqiu’s retreating figure, a complex expression flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

But it was only for a moment before he regained his composure.

He turned to look at Kai, his smile returning as if nothing had happened.

“Mr. Chen, some minor troubles, Jingqiu can handle them. Let’s take care of business first.”

Kai watched Su Jingqiu’s departing figure, a flicker of emotion in his purple eyes.

A dozen people against fifty.

The highest cultivation level was only at the third rank of the Golden Immortal Realm, while the opponents had fourth-rank Golden Immortal Realm cultivators.

How could they possibly win?

But he said nothing.

This was the Void Merchant Guild’s business, not his.

He leaped off the flying boat and flew towards the void rift.

Purple chaotic power flowed around him, enveloping him in a purple light.

Spatial turbulence raged around him, but it was all dissolved by the chaotic power, unable to cause him any harm.

He flew to the rift, stopped—no, stopped completely, hovering in the air.

The spatial power surging from the rift was several times stronger than what he sensed from the outside. Black spatial turbulence surged wildly within the rift, like angry black dragons roaring, tearing, and trying to shred any intruder.

Kai took a deep breath and stepped into the rift.

Behind him, on the flying ship, Wu Yuan watched Kai's figure disappear into the rift, a glint of light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

"Kai, I hope you can come out alive,"

he murmured to himself, his smile deepening. "Only by coming out alive will you have value. If you die... then you're nothing."

His gaze shifted from the rift to the distance.

There, Su Jingqiu was leading a dozen or so people charging towards the five flying ships of the Divine Race.

Silver-white armor and golden holy light collided in the air, creating a deafening roar.

Wu Yuan watched the battle, which was destined to be lost, his eyes devoid of any emotional fluctuation, as if watching a slaughter that had nothing to do with him.

"Jingqiu, don't blame me." His voice was very soft, so soft that only he could hear it. "The interests of the Void Merchant Guild are above all else." Within the void rift, spatial turbulence roared like countless enraged black dragons.

Black spatial power condensed into tangible blades, shooting in all directions within the rift, each blade containing enough power to tear a Golden Immortal cultivator to shreds.

The moment Kai stepped into the rift, these spatial blades, like sharks smelling blood, attacked him from all sides.

He didn't dodge.

Chaotic power condensed into a purple shield around his body. The spatial blades struck the shield, producing a piercing metallic scraping sound, then silently melted away, like ice meeting the blazing sun, without even a ripple. Chaotic power

is the source of all elements, and spatial power is no exception.

Before chaos, even the most violent spatial turbulence is nothing more than a trickle returning to its origin.

Kai walked step by step deeper into the rift.

The deeper he went, the stronger the spatial turbulence became.

At first, there were only scattered blades, but after walking about a hundred feet, the blades transformed into a dense rain of blades, overwhelming him. Deeper still, the rain of blades transformed into a storm.

A massive vortex of black spatial power formed around him, filled with destructive force capable of tearing a fifth-grade Golden Immortal cultivator to shreds.

Fine cracks began to appear on Kai's protective barrier.

His brow furrowed slightly as he channeled more chaotic power into it, rapidly healing the cracks and thickening the barrier.

However, the consumption of chaotic power was far faster than anticipated.

At this rate, he could only sustain himself for half an hour at most.

Within half an hour, he had to find the end of the passage, or he would be swallowed by the spatial turbulence.

Kai quickened his pace.

The depths of the rift were pitch black, with only occasional flashes of spatial rifts releasing eerie light, illuminating the path ahead.

These lights flickered, casting the scene within the rift like a living hell.

Twisted space, shattered laws, floating boulder remnants, and fragments of ancient magical artifacts scattered throughout.

These artifact fragments still retained a faint ancient aura, proving that a world-shaking battle had once taken place here.

After walking for about fifteen minutes, a bright light suddenly appeared in the darkness ahead.

It was a silver-white gate, about ten zhang high and five zhang wide, its frame covered with dense ancient runes that flowed slowly in the light, as if breathing.

Behind the gate lay the ancient battlefield.

Kai quickened his pace and rushed towards the gate.

Just as he was less than ten zhang away from the gate, the surrounding spatial turbulence suddenly increased several times over.

Black spatial power condensed into a gigantic palm, slamming down on him.

That palm contained enough power to crush a fifth-grade Golden Immortal cultivator into a pulp; if struck, Kai would be severely injured, if not killed.

Kai did not retreat.

He drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword.

Purple sword energy condensed on the blade, and with a single slash, he collided head-on with the gigantic palm.

“Boom…”

The purple chaotic power and the black spatial power tore at each other at the point of impact, producing a deafening roar.

The shockwave spread in all directions, scattering the surrounding spatial turbulence.

The enormous hand was shattered by the sword, turning into countless tiny spatial fragments that drifted in the air.

Using the recoil from the sword strike, Kai shot forward, rushing into the silver-white portal.

The portal slowly closed behind him.

Kai landed on unfamiliar land.

Beneath his feet was grayish-white sand, mixed with countless tiny bone fragments and metal shards, crunching crisply underfoot.

Above him was a hazy gray sky, devoid of sun, moon, and stars, only a thick, perpetually shrouded gray mist.

The mist flowed slowly in the sky, like silent gray rivers.

The air was thick with the stench of decay and blood, the accumulated aura of death over countless millennia, now inseparable from the spiritual energy of this world.

Looking out, the entire land stretched as far as the eye could see, littered with the marks of battle: massive craters, fractured mountains, dried-up riverbeds, and scattered skeletons.

Some skeletons resembled humans, others beasts, and still others some unknown creature.

Some skeletons were as large as mountains, with a single rib tens of meters long; others were as small as needles, almost invisible in the sand.

The skeletons were of various colors: white, gold, silver, and black, some still emitting a faint spiritual light, testifying to the immense power of their owners in life.

This place was more desolate, more eerie, and more dangerous than the ancient battlefield he had entered from the Ruins of Return.

Kai didn't even know if he had entered an ancient battlefield.

In any case, the aura here contained not only the lingering will of ancient powerhouses but also an inexplicable… malice.

This world itself seemed to be filled with hostility towards all life.

Kai spread his divine sense, covering a radius of a hundred miles.

He found no signs of life.

He sensed many powerful auras, not living ones, but dead ones—the lingering resentments of ancient powerhouses who had perished here, embedded in their bones.

These resentments, refined over countless millennia, had become one with the world, a part of this battlefield.

If disturbed, they would awaken and attack any intruder.

Kai withdrew his divine sense and looked around.

He was in a relatively flat valley.

Low hills surrounded the valley, barren and devoid of vegetation.

A dried-up riverbed ran through the center of the valley, its surface strewn with grayish-white pebbles and bone fragments.

The scene here was completely different from the ancient battlefield he had encountered in the Ruins of Return.

The battlefield in the Ruins of Return was even older and more desolate, but at least it had a sky, a sun, and wind.

Here, however, there was nothing but eternal grayness and eternal silence.

Just as Kai was about to explore his surroundings, the silver-white portal behind him suddenly lit up again.

Then, more than a dozen figures rushed out of the portal.

Leading the group was Wu Yuan, followed by more than a dozen elite cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild. Each of them had a pale face, clearly having consumed a lot of spiritual energy while passing through the void passage.

Upon seeing Kai, Wu Yuan’s eyes flashed with a glint of light, and he quickly walked over.

“Mr. Chen, what a skill

!” His voice was filled with barely concealed excitement. “I saw that black palm slapping towards you outside the passage, and I thought you were going to… but I didn’t expect you to shatter it with a single sword strike. Impressive, truly impressive!”

Kai glanced at him but remained silent.Wu Yuan’s acting was excellent, but Kai saw something different in his eyes. It wasn’t gratitude, nor admiration, but the excitement of a hunter watching its prey walk into a trap.

“President Wu, is this the secret realm you mentioned?” Kai asked.

Wu Yuan nodded, looking around, a burning light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“That’s right. This is the ancient battlefield, the place where, according to legend, the Daoist sect and the gods fought their decisive battle in ancient times. Countless ancient powerhouses perished here, and their inheritances, magical artifacts, elixirs, and crystals are buried somewhere in this land. Finding even one or two of them would be enough to make a sect prosper for tens of thousands of years.”

The place where the Daoist sect and the gods fought their decisive battle.

Kai’s brows twitched slightly.

He recalled the words of Jade Void True Man: the Daoist sect and the gods shared the same origin, splitting into two factions in ancient times due to differing ideologies.

Later, a war lasting hundreds of thousands of years broke out, with the Daoist sect suffering repeated defeats. The Great Luo Golden Scripture was lost during that period, and the Chaos Dao Palace was sealed into an independent space during that time.

If this truly is the site of the ancient battle between the Daoist sects and the divine race, then the treasures here are indeed worth the Void Merchant Guild’s great effort.

However, Kai also noticed a problem: Wu Yuan said that the legacies of the Daoist sects and the divine races were buried here, yet when he walked out of the light gate just now, he showed no hesitation or confusion, as if he already knew what lay behind the light gate.

This indicated that Wu Yuan's understanding of this place was far greater than he claimed.

Kai didn't point it out, but simply nodded.

"Guild Master Wu, which way do we go next?"

Wu Yuan took out a jade slip from his sleeve, probed it with his divine sense, and after a moment, raised his head, pointing southeast.

"According to the intelligence gathered by the Merchant Guild, there is an ancient powerful being's tomb three hundred miles to the southeast. There are no remains in the tomb, only an altar, and an ancient magical artifact is sealed on the altar. If we can break the seal, that artifact will be ours."

Three hundred miles.

In ordinary places, three hundred miles is merely the distance of an incense stick's burning incense for a Golden Immortal cultivator.

But in this ancient battlefield, every step could be a trap, every corner could hide danger; three hundred miles might take a day or even longer to traverse.

"Let's go then," Kai said, leading the way southeast.

Wu Yuan followed behind him, with a dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild scattered around, vigilantly observing everything.

The group moved across the greyish-white earth at a moderate pace.

Kai's divine sense maintained maximum coverage, perceiving everything within a hundred miles.

He had already sensed over a dozen dangerous auras: some were remnants of souls slumbering in ancient skeletons, some were remnants of ancient ferocious beasts hidden in spatial rifts, and some were spatial nodes twisted into traps by some kind of law.

Whenever they encountered danger, Kai would issue a warning in advance, leading the group around it.

Wu Yuan watched Kai's retreating figure, a complex expression flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

He had spent tens of thousands of years gathering intelligence on this ancient battlefield, expending countless resources and manpower, and sacrificing countless cultivators, just to barely understand the distribution of dangers on the outskirts of this battlefield.

But Kai, a first-timer here, could sense the dangers with his divine sense alone, and his perception was more accurate than any intelligence gathered over tens of thousands of years.

Was this the power of Chaos?

Wu Yuan didn't know, but he knew one thing: bringing Kai here was the best decision he had ever made.

After walking for about two hours, the scenery ahead suddenly changed.

The grayish-white sand disappeared, replaced by a patch of black scorched earth.

The scorched earth was covered with countless cracks, from which black smoke billowed, and the air was filled with the pungent smell of sulfur.

The scorched earth was extremely hot; stepping on it felt like being burned. Any cultivator below the Golden Immortal realm who lingered there for too long would likely be roasted to a crisp.

In the center of the scorched earth lay a gigantic skeleton.

The skeleton was about a hundred feet tall, humanoid in shape, but its bones were several times larger than a human's, and it was a dark gold color.

The skeleton's posture was strange: kneeling with its hands on the ground, its head bowed, as if it were kneeling before something.

The skeleton was covered in cracks, some deep enough to expose the bone, others running through the entire skeleton, as if shattered by some immense force and then glued back together.

"This is..." A cultivator from the Void Merchant Guild looked at the skeleton, his voice trembling slightly, "A Celestial King realm expert?"

Wu Yuan's gaze fell on the skeleton, his brows furrowing slightly.

"Not a Celestial King realm expert." His voice was soft, but his tone carried an undisguised solemnity, "Celestial King realm skeletons are pure gold, this skeleton is dark gold... This should be a Celestial Emperor realm expert, or perhaps a half-step Saint."

A half-step Saint.

Kai's pupils contracted slightly.

Above the Celestial Emperor realm was the Saint realm.

Saints were the highest level of cultivation in the Heavenly Realm. It was said that reaching the Saint realm meant living as long as heaven and earth, shining as brightly as the sun and moon, able to create or destroy worlds in an instant.

A half-step Saint was someone only one step away from becoming a Saint.

A half-step Saint expert, kneeling dead here.

Moreover, judging from his posture, he didn't die in battle, but rather knelt there voluntarily, as if submitting to some being, and was then killed by some force.

What kind of being could make a half-step Saint-level expert kneel down and be killed without any resistance?

A chill ran through Kai's heart.

The only information he knew was about the Celestial Realm. As for what lay beyond the Celestial Realm, the Divine Realm, the myriad worlds, what realms cultivators reached, and how they were classified, Kai knew nothing.

In his eyes, Saints were the most powerful beings.

Perhaps when Kai reached the Saint level and stood at the top of the Celestial Realm, he would realize that he was still an ant, and that there were even more powerful worlds and even more powerful people beyond the Celestial Realm.

Wu Yuan's expression also became solemn.

"Go around it," he decisively said. "Don't go near that skeleton. The lingering will of a half-step Saint is not something we can provoke."

The group bypassed the scorched earth and continued to advance southeast.

After walking for about an hour, a low stone mountain appeared ahead.

The stone mountain is about a hundred feet high, and its entire body is gray-black. Its surface is covered with traces of weathering, as if it has endured countless millennia of wind and rain.

At the foot of the stone mountain, there is a cave entrance. The entrance is not large, only allowing one person to pass through at a time. A cold, damp wind blows out of the cave entrance, carrying a putrid smell.

Wu Yuan stopped and looked at the cave entrance, a hint of excitement flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“This is it.” His voice was filled with barely concealed excitement. “The altar is inside the cave.”

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Kai stood at the cave entrance, probing in with his divine sense.

The cave was very deep; his divine sense extended three hundred feet, yet he still couldn’t reach the bottom.

The cave was riddled with branching paths, like a giant underground labyrinth.

Some of these paths led to dead ends, some to traps, and some to even deeper unknowns.

But at the very depths of the labyrinth, he sensed an extremely powerful fluctuation of spiritual energy.

That fluctuation didn’t seem to originate from a living being; it was more like the lingering aura of something sealed away in its slumber.

“There’s something inside,” Kai withdrew his divine sense, looking at Wu Yuan, “but something’s not right.”

“What’s not right?” Wu Yuan asked.

“That fluctuation of spiritual energy… it’s too strong.”

Kai’s voice was somewhat low, “It doesn’t seem like a Golden Immortal level artifact, not even a Great Luo Golden Immortal level one. If that artifact is really that powerful, with the strength of the people here, there’s no way we could control it.”

Wu Yuan was silent for a moment, then smiled.

“Mr. Chen, you’re overthinking it.”

His voice was calm, but there was an indescribable meaning behind it. “Ancient magical artifacts all have spirits, and these spirits automatically adjust the artifact’s power output based on the user’s cultivation level.

A lower-level user will have a lower power output,

while a higher-level user will have a higher power output.

Although our cultivation is not high, as long as we obtain that artifact, the spirit will naturally adapt to our level.”

He paused, his smile becoming even more meaningful. “Even if that artifact is truly too powerful for us to control, we can take it back to the Void Merchant Guild and study it slowly.

The Void Merchant Guild has plenty of ways to deal with artifacts of this level.”

Kai looked into Wu Yuan’s eyes. Those crimson-gold eyes showed no evasion, no hesitation, only a thirst and obsession for the treasure.

But Kai still felt something was amiss.

Wu Yuan’s understanding of this battlefield far exceeded what he claimed to have “gathered some information.”

He knew there was an altar here, knew there were magical artifacts on it, knew the altar was inside the cave, and even knew the labyrinth within the cave

like the back of his hand. This didn't seem like information gathering; it was as if he had been here before.

At this moment, Kai truly grasped the power of the Void Merchant Guild.

Clearly, the information here was far beyond what Wu Yuan, a mere fourth-grade Golden Immortal, could gather.

Perhaps it was information relayed by forces from the upper levels of the Void Merchant Guild.

"Let's go in then," he said, leading the way into the cave.

Wu Yuan followed behind him, and a dozen or so Void Merchant Guild cultivators filed in.

The cave was pitch black, so dark you couldn't see your hand in front of your face. Kai's Chaos Flame burned in his palm, its purple light illuminating the path ahead.

The cave passage was narrow, only wide enough for two people to walk side-by-side. The stone walls on both sides were covered with dense scratches, like those left by some kind of sharp claws.

The scratches were deep, some even penetrating several feet into the stone wall. Faint traces of black liquid remained on the wall, the residue of some creature's dried blood.

"There's a creature here," Kai stopped, looking at the scratches and black liquid. "And it's not an ancient creature; it's recent."

Wu Yuan's expression changed.

He walked to the stone wall, touched the scratches, rubbed his fingers on the black liquid, and smelled it.

“A demonic beast

,” his voice was low. “And a Golden Immortal level demonic beast. Judging from the depth and spacing of the scratches, this beast isn’t large, but its strength and speed are terrifying. If you encounter it, don’t fight it head-on; use an array to trap it.”

The group continued forward.

The cave grew deeper, with more and more forks in the path.

Wu Yuan’s familiarity with the place far exceeded Kai’s expectations. He almost never hesitated, accurately choosing the correct direction at each fork in the path, as if strolling in his own backyard.

Kai followed behind him, a thoughtful glint in his purple eyes.

Wu Yuan had been here before.

And not just once.

He had previously said that the Void Merchant Guild had tried many times to pass through the void passage, but all attempts had failed—that was true.

But the one who failed wasn’t his subordinates, but himself.

He had come personally, tried to enter this ancient battlefield, but he hadn’t succeeded.

That’s why he sought Kai’s help.

A slight smile curved Kai’s lips.

Wu Yuan wanted to use him, and so did he.

Wu Yuan's understanding of this battlefield was exactly what he needed.

And his control over the power of chaos was what Wu Yuan needed.

Each got what they needed—a fair trade.

As for who would ultimately gain the most, that would depend on their individual abilities.

The group walked through the cave for about half an hour when the passage ahead suddenly widened.

At the end of the passage was a huge underground cavern.

The cavern was tens of feet high and hundreds of feet wide, its dome inlaid with countless luminous crystals, illuminating the entire cavern.

In the center of the cavern was a stone altar.

The altar was about three zhang high and five zhang wide, entirely gray-black, its surface covered with densely packed ancient runes.

The runes flickered in the light of the glowing crystals, as if breathing.

At the top of the altar floated a ball of dark golden light.

Within the light, a sword could be vaguely seen.

The sword was about three chi long, its blade entirely dark gold, intricately patterned, and a dark red gem inlaid on its hilt.

There wasn't a trace of rust or damage on the sword; it looked as if it had just been forged.

Even sealed within the light, the sword still radiated an astonishing sword aura.

This aura was condensed and didn't dissipate, forming an invisible aura around the altar, slightly distorting the surrounding space.

Wu Yuan looked at the sword, a burning light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

"It's it," he said, his voice tinged with barely concealed excitement, "An ancient magical artifact, 'Dark Abyss'."

Dark Abyss.

Kai looked at the sword, a flicker of emotion crossing his purple eyes.

He could sense that the power contained within that sword was extremely terrifying, far exceeding any magical artifact he had ever seen.

But his intuition told him there was something wrong with the sword.

The problem wasn't with the sword itself, but with the altar.

The runes on the altar weren't sealing runes, but sacrificial runes.

The purpose of sacrificial runes wasn't to seal things, but to offer something as a sacrifice to a more powerful being.

In other words, the sword wasn't sealed on the altar, but offered as a sacrifice to some being.

If someone took the sword, that being would awaken.

And then, everyone present would die. Kai looked at Wu Yuan, whose eyes held only a thirst for the treasure, devoid of any wariness or hesitation.

He didn't know these were sacrificial runes.

Or perhaps he did, but didn't care.

“President Wu,” Kai began, “do you know what the runes on this altar are?”

Wu Yuan paused, then shook his head.

“I don’t know much about ancient runes. Does Mr. Chen recognize them?”

“These are sacrificial runes,” Kai said calmly. “This sword was offered as a sacrifice to a certain being. If it is taken, that being will awaken.”

Wu Yuan’s expression changed.

He walked to the altar, carefully examining the runes, a hint of solemnity flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

He remained silent for a moment.

Then he smiled.

“Mr. Chen, you’re overthinking it.”

His voice was calm, but there was an indescribable meaning behind it. “This ancient battlefield has existed for countless millennia. Even if there were any beings there, they would be long dead.

Even if they aren’t, they’re certainly dormant. We’re just taking a sword; the commotion won’t be significant and won’t awaken it.”

Kai looked into Wu Yuan’s eyes. In those crimson-gold eyes, there was no guilt, no evasion, only an unwavering obsession with the treasure.

But Kai knew Wu Yuan was lying.

He knew it was a sacrificial rune; he knew taking the sword would awaken something, but he didn’t care.

Because his purpose was never the sword.

His purpose was to awaken that being.

Kai didn't know why Wu Yuan was doing this, but he knew Wu Yuan was playing a very long game.

And he was the most important piece on that game.

"If President Wu wants the sword, then take it."

Kai took a few steps back, leaned against a stone pillar, crossed his arms, and looked at Wu Yuan with his purple eyes. "But I won't make a move."

Wu Yuan's expression changed slightly, but he quickly regained his composure.

"If Mr. Chen is unwilling to do it, then I will do it myself."

He walked to the altar and reached into the dark golden light.

The light flowed between his fingertips, and dark golden runes spread upwards along his arm, as if something was trying to enter his body.

Wu Yuan gritted his teeth, his spiritual power surging wildly, forcing back the runes.

His hand gripped the hilt of the sword.

Then, he pulled it out with a swift motion.

The dark golden blade emerged from the light, emitting a crisp sword cry that echoed through the cave, making everyone's eardrums tingle.

The dark golden light on the blade suddenly exploded, transforming into shockwaves that spread outwards, sending rubble flying everywhere in the cave.

Wu Yuan held the Dark Abyss in his hand, a hint of wild joy flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“A fine sword! Truly a fine sword!”

As soon as he finished speaking, the cave suddenly shook violently.

The glowing crystals on the ceiling fell off and shattered into dust on the ground.

Huge cracks appeared in the ground, from which black smoke billowed, filled with a thick, decaying stench.

Simultaneously, the sacrificial runes on the altar lit up, their dark red light illuminating the entire cave in a blood-red glow.

The runes spun wildly, as if transmitting a message to some being.

Then, a voice echoed within the cave.

The voice was faint, distant, as if coming from the depths of the earth, or perhaps from another dimension.

It was devoid of emotion, possessing only an ancient, unchanging, utterly cold majesty.

“Mortals…you…daring to touch my offerings…”

Wu Yuan’s face turned deathly pale.

His hand gripping the Dark Abyss trembled, his crimson-gold eyes filled with terror.

That being had truly awakened.

“Go!” Wu Yuan roared, turning and running towards the cave’s exit.

Kai remained still.

His purple eyes stared at the altar, where the sacrificial runes were slowly fading, and the voice of that being was gradually dissipating.

He had not awakened.

He had only sensed that someone had disturbed his offerings, so he released a wisp of his will as a warning.

But if they didn't run, if they stayed in the cave any longer, that being would truly awaken.

Kai turned and followed Wu Yuan out of the cave.

A dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild followed closely behind, each with fear written on their face.

The group rushed out of the cave, and had barely run a hundred feet when a deafening roar suddenly came from behind them.

"Boom..."

The entire stone mountain exploded from the inside, scattering debris everywhere and sending dust billowing into the sky.

From within the dust, a huge black shadow slowly rose.

The shadow was about a hundred feet tall, humanoid in shape, but without flesh, only a dark golden skeleton.

In the skeleton's head, two empty eye sockets burned with eerie green flames, the flames flickering with a strange light in the darkness.

The remnant soul of a half-step Saint

had attached itself to its own skeleton and awakened.

Kai stopped, turned around, and looked at the huge skeleton, his purple eyes showing no fear.

"President Wu, is this the result you wanted?" His voice was calm.

Wu Yuan's hand gripping the Dark Abyss trembled, his crimson-gold eyes filled with terror.

"I…I didn't know it would turn out like this…"

His voice trembled slightly, "I just wanted that sword, I didn't know it would awaken…"

Kai looked at him, a cold smile curving his lips.

"You knew."

Wu Yuan's body stiffened abruptly.

He looked into Kai's eyes, those purple eyes devoid of emotion, only a piercing calmness.

He truly knew.

He knew the runes on the altar were sacrificial runes, he knew taking the sword would awaken that being, he knew the consequences.

But he still did it.

Because he needed that being to awaken.

Because only when that being awakened could he obtain what he truly desired.

Wu Yuan took a deep breath, concealing the fear on his face and replacing it with a calm expression.

"Mr. Chen is indeed intelligent."

His voice returned to calm, a meaningful smile playing on his lips. "I do know. But rest assured, Mr. Chen, I won't let you risk your life in vain.

Within the remains of that being lies a Soul Crystal. The Soul Crystal contains some of its memories and cultivation insights from its previous life. If you can obtain that Soul Crystal, Mr. Chen's cultivation will definitely break through to the Golden Immortal Realm." A

Soul Crystal.

Kai's brow twitched slightly.

He had heard of such things.

After the fall of ancient powerhouses, if their willpower was strong enough, their remnant soul would condense into a Soul Crystal within their remains.

The Soul Crystal contained the memories and cultivation insights of the powerful being, making it an extremely precious treasure for cultivators.

The Soul Crystal of a half-step Dao Realm powerhouse was immeasurably valuable.

"You want me to help you obtain the Soul Crystal?" Kai asked.

Wu Yuan shook his head. "It's not me getting it for you. It's me getting it for Mr. Chen. I don't want the soul crystal; it's all Mr. Chen's. I only want the sword and the other treasures here." Kai looked into Wu Yuan's eyes. Those crimson-gold eyes held no evasion, no guilt, only an unwavering sincerity.

But Kai knew Wu Yuan was lying again.

Soul crystals were indeed valuable, but compared to them, the sword was far more precious.

Wu Yuan wouldn't abandon the soul crystal for the sword.

Unless there was something wrong with the soul crystal.

“President Wu is so generous; I am unworthy of such kindness,”

Kai said calmly. “The soul crystal is for President Wu; I only need the sword.”

Wu Yuan’s smile froze.

He looked into Kai’s eyes, those purple pupils leaving no room for negotiation.

A moment of silence followed.

Then, Wu Yuan smiled.

“Mr. Chen, there is indeed a problem with the Soul Crystal.”

His voice carried a hint of bitterness. “That Soul Crystal not only contains the memories and cultivation insights of that being, but also its obsession.

If you absorb it directly, you will be corrupted by its obsession, at best you will suffer a cultivation deviation, at worst you will be possessed.

The Void Merchant Guild has a way to purify the obsession in the Soul Crystal, but it takes a long time. And Mr. Chen does not have that time, nor does he have that means.”

He paused, looking into Kai’s eyes. “I don’t want to harm Mr. Chen, I just want Mr. Chen to help me retrieve the Soul Crystal.

After I retrieve it, I will take it back to the Void Merchant Guild to purify it, and after purification, I will give it to Mr. Chen. If Mr. Chen does not believe me, I can swear on my Dao Heart.”

Swearing on one’s Dao Heart.

For cultivators, swearing on their Dao Heart is the most solemn oath. Once broken, the Dao Heart will shatter, and cultivation will be completely ruined.

Wu Yuan dared to swear on his Dao Heart, which means he was not lying this time.

Kai was silent for a moment, then nodded.

“Alright.”

A hint of joy flashed in Wu Yuan’s eyes, but he quickly regained his composure.

“Then I’ll have to trouble you, Mr. Chen.”

The enormous skeleton had completely risen from the rubble.

It stood about a hundred feet tall, its dark golden frame standing out starkly against the gray sky.

Eerie green flames burned fiercely in its eye sockets, like two will-o’-the-wisps flickering in the darkness.

Its mouth opened, emitting a silent roar, the sound waves transforming into tangible shockwaves that spread in all directions.

Wherever the shockwaves passed, the ground was ripped up, rubble was pulverized, and the spiritual energy in the air was thrown into chaos.

Wu Yuan led the cultivators of the Void Merchant Guild to a distance, leaving the battlefield to Kai.

Kai stood before the skeleton, the Dragon-Slaying Sword held horizontally before him, purple chaotic fire burning on its blade.

The skeleton looked down at Kai, the eerie green flames in its eye sockets flickering.

Then, it raised its enormous foot and stomped down on Kai.

The foot blotted out the sky, like a small mountain descending from the heavens, carrying immense force, enough to crush any cultivator below the Golden Immortal realm into a pulp.

Kai didn't retreat.

He swung his Dragon-Slaying Sword upwards, the purple sword energy striking his foot with a piercing metallic clang.

The sword energy left a deep mark on his foot, but it wasn't severed; it merely deflected him slightly, causing him to land on the ground beside him.

"Boom..."

A crater several meters deep was created, sending debris flying and dust billowing into the sky.

Taking advantage of this opportunity, Kai shot forward, climbing up the skeleton's legs.

Chaotic power condensed beneath his feet, allowing him to walk on the skeleton as if on solid ground. He ran incredibly fast, reaching the skeleton's waist in the blink of an eye.

The skeleton seemed to sense Kai's location, its massive hand slamming down towards his waist.

Kai leaped away, dodging the hand and landing on the skeleton's ribs.

The hand struck the skeleton's own waist with a deafening crash, breaking several ribs, sending fragments flying everywhere.

Kai continued climbing, passing through the ribs to reach the skeleton's chest cavity.

Inside, a fist-sized, dark golden bead floated in the center, its surface shimmering with a ghostly green light, as if something slumbered within.

That was the Soul Crystal.

Kai reached for it.

Just as his fingers were about to touch it, a ghostly green hand suddenly emerged from the crystal, grabbing at him.

That hand contained an extremely powerful force of obsession; if it caught him, his soul would be corrupted, even possessed.

Kai didn't retreat.

Chaotic fire condensed in his palm, the purple flames colliding with the ghostly green hand, producing a hissing sound.

The ghostly green hand rapidly melted under the scorching heat of the chaotic fire, like a block of ice thrown into a furnace, instantly turning to nothingness.

The Soul Crystal let out a piercing scream, the sound echoing in his chest cavity, making Kai's eardrums tingle.

Kai grabbed the Soul Crystal and pulled it from his chest cavity.

The Soul Crystal pulsated wildly in his palm, like a heart, its eerie green light flickering frantically on its surface. The power of obsession struggled madly, trying to break free from the shackles of chaotic energy.

But Kai's chaotic energy was the source of all elements, suppressing all power, including the power of obsession.

The Soul Crystal gradually calmed in his palm, its eerie green light dimming, like a tamed beast lying obediently in his hand.

The skeleton, having lost the Soul Crystal, quickly extinguished the eerie green flames in its eye sockets.

The massive skeleton began to crumble, its dark golden bones breaking one by one, falling from the height and crashing to the ground with a dull thud.

Kai leaped down from the collapsing skeleton, landing in front of Wu Yuan and handing him the Soul Crystal.

Wu Yuan took the Soul Crystal, a burning light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“Thank you, Mr. Chen,”

he said, his voice tinged with barely concealed excitement. “I will purify the Soul Crystal as soon as possible and deliver it to you, Mr. Chen.”

Kai nodded, remaining silent.

His gaze fell upon the Dark Abyss Sword, which Wu Yuan held in his hand, its dark golden blade shimmering eerily in the sunlight.

That sword was even more powerful than the Dragon Slayer Sword.

But Kai didn’t want it.

Because it was a sacrifice, an offering to a certain being.

Whoever wielded it would be targeted by that being.

Wu Yuan wanted to be targeted, that was his business.

Kai didn’t want that.

Besides, the Dragon-Slaying Sword contained Zhong Li, and in Kai’s heart, Zhong Li was no longer just a simple sword spirit.

Zhong Li was his woman, and even if there were something better, Kai would never trade his woman for her.

“President Wu, where to next?” Kai asked.

Wu Yuan put away the Soul Crystal and the Dark Abyss Sword, took out a jade slip from his sleeve, probed it with his divine sense, and after a moment, raised his head, pointing southwest.

“Five hundred miles southwest, there is an ancient powerful figure’s tomb, containing the remains of a Tai Xu Realm expert. Among his burial goods is a storage ring, which should contain a large amount of crystals, pills, and magical artifacts.”

Five hundred miles.

Another day’s journey. “Let’s go.” Kai took the lead and headed southwest.

Wu Yuan followed behind him, with a dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild close behind.

The group moved across the gray-white land at a moderate pace.

Kai’s divine sense maintained maximum coverage, perceiving everything within a hundred miles.

After the group had traveled for about an hour, his divine sense suddenly detected something, and he abruptly stopped.

“Someone.” His voice was cold.

Wu Yuan’s expression changed. “Who?”

“The Divine Race.” Kai turned around, his purple eyes looking north. “Five flying boats, fifty people. They’ve followed.”

Wu Yuan’s expression completely changed.

Su Jingqiu had led a dozen or so people to intercept the fifty members of the Divine Race, and she had failed.

She was dead.

A complex look flashed in Wu Yuan's eyes, but it was fleeting before he regained his composure.

"How many?" he asked.

"Fifty. The highest cultivation level is Golden Immortal Level 4, two are Golden Immortal Level 3, and the rest are Golden Immortal Level 1 and 2." Kai's voice was calm, as if stating a simple fact.

Wu Yuan was silent for a moment, then looked at Kai.

"Mr. Chen, can we fight?"

Kai looked into Wu Yuan's eyes, those crimson-gold eyes showed no fear, no hesitation, only an extremely calm calculation.

He was calculating the outcome.

Fifty Divine Race cultivators, one Golden Immortal Level 4, two Golden Immortal Level 3, and the rest are Golden Immortal Level 1 and 2.

On his side, including Kai, there were only a dozen or so people, the highest cultivation level being his own Golden Immortal Level 4 and Kai's True Immortal Level 8.

If they fought head-on, the chances of winning were almost zero.

But if they added Kai's Chaos Power, the environment of the ancient battlefield, and some strategies...

the chances of winning were still there.

“We can fight.” Kai’s voice was calm, “but we need President Wu’s cooperation.”

Wu Yuan nodded, “Mr. Chen, please speak.”

Kai turned around and looked at the distant horizon.

There, five black flying boats were rapidly approaching, golden holy light runes flashing blindingly on their surfaces.

“In the ancient battlefield, there are many slumbering ancient remnants of souls. If we can lure those souls and have the gods deal with them…”

Kai’s voice was calm, but a chilling undercurrent ran through it. “Fifty of them won’t be enough to kill those remnants of souls.”

A glint flashed in Wu Yuan’s eyes.

“Mr. Chen, what a brilliant plan.” His voice held a hint of admiration. “I’ll make the arrangements immediately.”

Wu Yuan turned and gave a few instructions to the Void Merchant Guild cultivators behind him. The group quickly dispersed, disappearing into the gray-white earth.

Kai stood alone on a high ground, the Dragon-Slaying Sword hanging at his waist, his purple eyes fixed on the distant black flying boats.

The flying boats drew closer and closer.

Five hundred li, three hundred li, one hundred li.

When they were less than fifty li away, the flying boats stopped.

The five flying boats hovered in the air, golden holy light runes flashing wildly on their hulls, as if surveying their surroundings.

Then, the people on the flying boat spotted Kai.

Fifty divine cultivators leaped from the flying boat, golden holy light burning on their bodies, dyeing the entire sky gold.

Leading them was a middle-aged man, clad in golden armor, wielding a golden spear with blazing holy flames dancing at its tip. He was a

fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

Behind him were two third-grade Golden Immortals, one wielding twin swords, the other a longbow, each with a cold, murderous intent on their faces.

The middle-aged man looked at Kai, a contemptuous smile playing on his lips.

“You are Kai?”

Kai didn’t speak, only looked at them. “I am Yan Huo, the Vice Palace Master of the Flame God Palace.

” The middle-aged man’s voice carried an arrogant air of superiority. “The Palace Master has ordered your death. Will you take your own life, or will I do it?” Kai’s brow twitched slightly. Yan Wuji had sent his Vice Palace Master to personally hunt him down; it seemed he was truly desperate. “How did you find this place?” Kai asked. A cold smile curled at the corner of Yan Huo’s lips. “What do you think? The Void Merchant Guild is such a large organization; of course, there are members of our Divine Race inside. Your every move is under our surveillance.” There was a traitor among the Divine Race within the Void Merchant Guild. Kai wasn’t surprised. Wu Yuan had sent Su Jingqiu with a dozen or so people to intercept and kill the fifty members of the Divine Race, not to ensure their victory, but to buy them time, giving Kai a chance to enter the Void Passage. Did Su Jingqiu know this? Perhaps she did, perhaps she didn’t. But regardless, she went. Because she had no choice. Kai pulled himself together and looked at Yan Huo. “You want to kill me? Then come on.” A murderous glint flashed in Yan Huo’s eyes. His golden spear thrust out fiercely, a golden beam of holy light shooting from its tip towards Kai. Kai didn’t take the hit head-on; instead, he flashed away into the distance. Yan Huo snorted coldly and led the Divine Race in pursuit.

Fifty people formed a battle formation in the air, their golden holy light stretching out like a giant net, enveloping Kai. Kai flew very fast, but the gods were no slower. The two sides chased each other in the air for about fifteen minutes before Kai suddenly stopped, hovering in the air, and turned to look at the pursuing gods. Yan Huo also stopped, looking at Kai with a hint of doubt in his eyes. “Not running anymore?” A slight smile appeared on Kai’s lips. “Run? Why should we run? You’re the ones who should run.” As soon as he finished speaking, the ground around them suddenly cracked open. Huge fissures spread across the ground, black smoke billowing from them, filled with a strong stench of decay. Then, skeletons crawled out of the fissures.

Some were humanoid, some beast-like, and some half-human, half-beast. The skeletons varied in shape and size, but each one had a ghostly green flame burning in its eye sockets—a sign of ancient remnant souls possessing them.

Hundreds of skeletons crawled out of the cracks and rushed towards the gods.

Yan Huo’s expression changed drastically.

“These are… ancient remnant souls?”

Kai didn’t answer.

He turned and flew away, purple chaotic power flowing around him, leaving a purple trail in the gray sky.

Behind him, the battle between the skeletons and the gods had begun.

Golden holy light and the ghostly green power of the remnant souls collided in the air, producing deafening roars.

The gods’ holy light had some restraining effect on the remnant souls, but there were too many of them, and they were fearless; for every one killed, ten more would pounce.

Although the gods were highly skilled, they couldn't withstand the sheer number of remnant souls.

In less than half an incense stick's time, more than a dozen gods had been torn to pieces by the remnant souls. Yan Huo swung his golden spear, blasting several skeletons that lunged at him into fragments, his golden eyes bloodshot.

"Retreat! Everyone retreat!"

The gods desperately retreated, but the remnant souls relentlessly pursued them.

Several more god cultivators were caught by the remnant souls and torn to pieces.

Yan Huo gritted his teeth, took out a golden jade talisman from his robes, and crushed it.

The talisman exploded, transforming into a golden light shield that enveloped the remaining god cultivators.

The remnant souls crashed into the light shield, bounced back, and let out a shrill scream.

Yan Huo led the remaining god cultivators away into the distance, the golden light shield swirling around them, blocking the remnant souls' pursuit.

Kai stood on a distant hill, watching the gods flee in disarray, his purple eyes devoid of any emotion.

Wu Yuan emerged from behind a boulder, stood beside Kai, his crimson-gold eyes fixed on the direction the gods had gone, a satisfied smile playing on his lips.

"Mr. Chen, what a brilliant plan. You killed over a dozen of them in one go, and the rest were severely weakened."

Kai remained silent. His

gaze fell on the distant horizon, where the Divine Race's flying ship was rapidly disappearing into the distance. They wouldn't give up easily. They would regroup and then return. Next time, they would be more cautious and wouldn't be so easily fooled. "What's next?" Wu Yuan asked. Kai withdrew his gaze and turned to walk southwest. "Keep going, to that powerful figure's tomb. Before the Divine Race returns, take the treasure and leave." Wu Yuan nodded and followed behind him. A dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild emerged from various places and followed the group. The group continued southwest. After walking for about two hours, the scenery suddenly changed. The gray-white land disappeared, replaced by a dense forest. The trees in the forest were tall and ancient, some probably over a hundred thousand years old, with trunks so thick that it would take dozens of people to encircle them. The canopy of trees blocked out the sun, completely obscuring the gray sky. Only sparse sunlight filtered through the leaves, casting dappled shadows on the ground. The air was thick with the damp scent of earth and decaying leaves, occasionally broken by birdsong from the depths of the canopy, creating an eerie tranquility. But Kai sensed that this forest harbored many dangerous auras: ancient demonic beasts slumbering beneath the tree roots, poisonous insects lurking among the leaves, and spatial nodes twisted into traps by some kind of law. "This forest is strange," Kai stopped, his purple eyes scanning the surroundings. "The auras inside are too mixed—demonic beasts, poisonous insects, spatial traps. Entering rashly could be dangerous." Wu Yuan took out a jade slip from his sleeve, probed it with his divine sense, and after a moment, looked up, his expression grave. "This forest isn't marked on the jade slip. The intelligence gathered by the merchant guild contains no information about it." No information. This meant everything here was unknown. The unknown meant danger. "Go around it," Kai decided immediately. "Go around it from the edge of the forest." The group bypassed the forest and continued along a dried-up riverbed to the north. After walking for about an hour, the scenery changed again. The dried-up riverbed disappeared, replaced by a vast swamp. The swamp was filled with black silt, from which bubbles rose, releasing pungent poisonous gases when they burst. White bone fragments and decaying plant remains floated on the surface of the swamp, and occasionally a few skeletons could be seen half-buried in the silt. These

skeletons were of different colors—white, gold, and black—representing powerful individuals of different races and cultivation levels. A thick layer of gray mist shrouded the swamp, filled with potent poisonous gases and spatial rifts. Anything that flew over the swamp would be corroded by the poisonous gases and torn apart by the spatial rifts. “Go around it,” Kai decided again. The group circled the edge of the swamp and walked for about two more hours before finally reaching their destination. It was a massive stone tomb. The stone tomb was several tens of feet high and a hundred feet wide, entirely gray-black, its surface covered with densely packed ancient runes. The runes shimmered faintly under the gray sky, as if breathing. The entrance to the tomb was a massive stone door, tightly shut, with a huge character for “Dao” carved on it. Wu Yuan stared at the character, a burning light flashing in his crimson-gold eyes. “This is it,” he said, his voice tinged with barely concealed excitement. “The tomb of a powerful figure. His storage ring is inside.” Kai walked to the stone door and placed his hand on it. Chaotic power surged from his palm, the purple light colliding with the runes on the stone door, producing a buzzing sound. The stone door slowly opened. A putrid stench emanated from behind the door, carrying a dense aura of death that was nauseating. Kai stepped through the stone door first. Wu Yuan followed behind him, and a dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild filed in. The interior of the stone tomb appeared even more spacious than the exterior. A wide passageway led deep into the tomb, its walls adorned with murals. The murals depicted the tomb owner’s life, his cultivation, his battles, and his demise. From the murals, it was clear the tomb owner was a powerful Daoist. He was severely wounded in the ancient battle between the Daoist sect and the divine race, fled here, and then perished. His burial goods were abundant: crystals, elixirs, magical artifacts, and jade slips containing cultivation techniques—everything imaginable. However, Kai’s attention was not on the burial goods. His gaze was fixed on the deepest part of the tomb. There, he found a stone coffin. The coffin was entirely white, crafted from ten-thousand-year-old spiritual jade, its surface covered with densely packed sealing runes. The runes shimmered faintly in the darkness, as if sealing something. Beside the coffin lay a storage ring. That storage ring was entirely silver-white, its surface shimmering with a faint spatial energy—clearly not an ordinary item.

Wu Yuan's eyes flashed with a burning light as he saw the storage ring and strode over.

But he had only taken two steps when Kai stopped him.

"Wait a minute," Kai said in a low voice, "There's something in the stone coffin."

Wu Yuan's body stiffened abruptly.

He turned to look at the stone coffin, a flicker of fear in his crimson-gold eyes.

"What…what is it?"

Kai didn't answer.

His divine sense probed into the stone coffin, sensing the aura within.

It was an extremely powerful aura, so powerful that his divine sense was repelled the moment it touched it.

That aura wasn't the aura of the dead, but the aura of the living.

The person in the stone coffin was still alive.

Or rather, the being in the stone coffin had never died. "Let's go." Kai turned and walked towards the outside of the stone tomb. "Let's go now."

Wu Yuan hesitated for a moment, glanced at the storage ring, then at Kai's back, gritted his teeth, and followed.

A dozen or so cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild followed closely behind.

As soon as they stepped out of the stone tomb, a deafening roar came from behind them.

“Boom—”

The entire stone tomb exploded from the inside, rubble flying everywhere, and dust billowing into the sky.

From the dust, a white figure slowly rose.

It was a middle-aged man, dressed in a white Daoist robe, with a stern face, long hair flowing down his shoulders, and an aura of terror emanating from him.

His eyes were closed, as if he were asleep.

But his aura had already locked onto everyone present.

Wu Yuan’s face turned pale, and his hand holding the sword trembled.

“This is… the tomb owner? Is he still alive?”

Kai didn’t speak.

He looked at the white-robed man, his purple eyes showing no fear.

Because he sensed a familiar aura on the white-robed man.

It was the aura of the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

This man had cultivated the Great Luo Golden Scripture.

The white-robed man slowly opened his eyes.

His eyes were golden, devoid of any emotion, only possessing an extreme, cold majesty.

His gaze swept over everyone, finally settling on Kai and stopping.

He looked into Kai’s eyes, a flicker of emotion flashing within them.

“The inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture…?”

His voice was soft, distant, as if from another dimension.

The white-robed man’s voice echoed in the gray sky, as if from the deepest recesses of time, carrying a sense of vicissitude and weariness accumulated over countless millennia.

His body hovered in the air, his white Daoist robe fluttering in the wind, his long hair as black as ink, his face serene, his golden eyes reflecting the gray sky and the ravaged earth.

His body was translucent, like a wisp of smoke about to dissipate, yet the aura emanating from him was so powerful that it suffocated everyone present.

Kai looked up at him, his purple eyes devoid of fear, only filled with an inexplicable sense of familiarity.

It was a resonance deep within his bloodline, a resonance between the Great Luo Golden Scripture and the cultivator.

Wu Yuan’s crimson-gold eyes were filled with terror.

He wanted to run, but his legs seemed nailed to the ground, unable to move an inch.

The dozen or so Void Merchant Guild cultivators behind him were even more ashen-faced, some of the more timid ones already trembling.

The white-robed man’s gaze shifted from Kai, sweeping over Wu Yuan and the Dark Abyss Sword in his hand, a cold glint flashing in his golden eyes.

That cold glint was like an invisible blade, piercing straight into the depths of Wu Yuan’s soul.

Wu Yuan's body trembled violently, his hand gripping the sword involuntarily loosening its hold, the Dark Abyss Sword slipping from his grasp and clattering to the ground with a crisp sound.

"This sword... is not something you can wield."

The white-robed man's voice was soft, but each word was like a heavy hammer, striking Wu Yuan's heart. "A sacrificial weapon; whoever wields it will be devoured by its master. Considering your ignorance, I will not pursue the matter. But this sword must not be taken away."

Wu Yuan's face turned deathly pale, his lips trembling. He wanted to say something, but nothing came out.

He could sense that if the white-robed man wanted to kill him, it would only take a single thought.

Before an existence of this level, he had no room for resistance.

The white-robed man withdrew his gaze and focused it back on Kai.

The cold light in his golden eyes faded, replaced by a complex emotion, like relief, like感慨 (gǎnkǎi, a feeling of deep emotion), and like some kind of inexplicable nostalgia.

"You, come in." His voice softened slightly, then he turned and floated behind the stone tomb.

Clearly, there was more space behind this stone tomb.

Kai did not hesitate and followed.

"Mr. Chen!" Wu Yuan's voice came from behind, tinged with urgency and worry. "You can't go in! What if..."

Kai stopped and turned to look at him. His purple eyes were calm as still water, without a ripple, like a bottomless ancient well.

“President Wu will wait here.” His voice was calm. “If I don’t come out in half an hour, you can leave on your own.”

With that, he walked into the stone tomb without looking back.

Wu Yuan watched his figure disappear into the stone gate, a complex expression flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

He wanted to follow, but his feet seemed to be nailed to the ground by an invisible force, unable to move.

He knew that it was a restriction left by the white-robed man, preventing him from entering.

“President, what do we do?” A cultivator from the Void Merchant Guild approached, his voice low.

Wu Yuan was silent for a moment, then bent down, picked up the Dark Abyss Sword from the ground, and gripped it again.

The dark golden light on the sword had dimmed considerably, as if suppressed by the white-robed man’s words.

But he could sense that the power within the sword was still there, only temporarily suppressed.

“Wait,” his voice was cold, “Wait for Kai to come out.”

Behind the stone tomb, the murals on both sides of the passage suddenly lit up as Kai passed by, emitting a faint glow, as if welcoming his arrival.

The figures in the murals began to move, like a living history slowly unfolding before Kai’s eyes.

Kai saw the glory of the Daoist sect in the primordial era: countless cultivators practicing on the sacred mountain, cranes soaring among the clouds, palaces and pavilions standing side by side, and spiritual springs and waterfalls scattered throughout the mountains.

The Daoist ancestor sat in the highest Daoist palace, surrounded by chaotic energy, imparting the supreme Dao to his disciples.

He saw the process of the Daoist sect and the divine race going from shared origins to separation. One group of cultivators believed that all things possessed spirits and that all beings were equal, advocating for the inclusiveness and eclecticism of all things—this was the Daoist sect.

The other group of cultivators believed that the divine race was the darling of heaven and earth, born superior and deserving to rule all realms—this was the divine race.

The conflict between the two factions escalated from a clash of ideologies to a struggle for interests, and from a struggle for interests to a life-or-death battle.

He witnessed a war that lasted for hundreds of thousands of years, with the armies of the Daoist sect and the divine race clashing in the myriad realms, countless cultivators falling every day, stars being shattered every day, and worlds being destroyed every day.

The Daoist sect suffered repeated defeats, the Great Luo Golden Scripture was lost during that period, and the Chaos Dao Palace was sealed into an independent space.

Looking at all this, Kai realized that what they had just entered was not the real stone tomb. If he hadn't possessed the Great Luo Golden Scripture, they would probably all have died outside, never even seeing the true stone tomb. At the end of the passage was the tomb chamber.

The chamber was more spacious than the outside, its dome inlaid with countless luminous crystals, illuminating the entire space.

The walls were covered with Taoist runes, which flowed slowly in the light, like sleeping dragons gradually awakening.

The floor was covered with solid pieces of spirit jade, imbued with rich spiritual energy. Standing on it, one could feel a warm spiritual force flowing from the soles of one's feet into the body, invigorating the spirit.

In the center of the chamber, the white stone coffin was open.

The lid was off, and the coffin leaned against itself. It was empty, or rather, the being within had risen.

A man in white stood before the coffin, his white Taoist robe shimmering faintly in the chamber's light.

His body remained translucent, like a wisp of smoke about to dissipate, but his eyes were real, reflecting Kai's image in his golden pupils.

"Come here." The white-robed man's voice was soft, yet remarkably clear in the empty tomb.

Kai walked up to him, stopping three steps away, and clasped his hands in a salute.

"Junior Kai greets Senior."

The white-robed man scrutinized him, his gaze lingering on Kai's purple eyes for a long time, then falling on the Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist, and finally settling on the area of his consciousness.

There, the protective runes of the Great Luo Golden Scripture were slowly circulating, golden dragon patterns faintly visible through his clothes.

"The Great Luo Golden Scripture, the power of chaos." The white-robed man's voice carried a hint of emotion, "I have waited ten thousand years, and finally I have waited for you."

Kai raised his head, looking into the white-robed man's eyes.

There was no hostility in those golden eyes, only a weariness and relief that came after countless millennia of accumulation.

“Senior, you have been waiting for me all this time?”

The white-robed man nodded, turned and walked to the stone coffin, picking up the silver-white storage ring from the ground and holding it in his palm.

The storage ring glowed faintly in his palm, like a sleeping star being awakened.

“The Daoist ancestors left a prophecy that hundreds of thousands of years later, when the Great Calamity of Heaven and Earth arrives, the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture will appear. He will unify the Daoist sect, rebuild the Chaos Dao Palace, and lead

the sect to fight against and overcome the calamity.” The white-robed man’s voice was calm, but every word seemed to come from the deepest and most distant depths of time. “I don’t believe it, but the prophecies of the Daoist ancestors have never failed. So I’m waiting here for your arrival.”

The Great Calamity of Heaven and Earth.

Kai’s brows furrowed slightly.

He had never heard of this term before.

“Senior, what is the Great Calamity of Heaven and Earth?”

The white-robed man shook his head. “I don’t know either. The prophecy of the Daoist ancestors only mentioned these four words without explanation.

But I guess it’s a disaster powerful enough to destroy the Heavenly Realm. At that time, all forces in the Heavenly Realm will be reduced to nothing in that disaster.

And the only one who can stop that disaster is the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture."

He paused, looking into Kai's eyes, "That's you."

Kai fell silent.

He had never imagined that he would bear such a mission.

He only wanted to become stronger, to find the Chaos Dao Palace, to rescue Wan Jianxing, to protect those he wanted to protect, and to find his father.

He didn't want to be a savior, didn't want to unify the Daoist sects, and even less did he want to save the Heavenly Realm.

But fate seemed to have denied him the right to choose.

The white-robed man handed him a storage ring.

Kai took the storage ring and probed it with his divine sense.

The resources inside the storage ring were many times greater than what he had obtained in the Hall of Light.

There were hundreds of millions of crystals of various grades, including millions of top-grade crystals. There were hundreds of thousands of pills, from healing pills to cultivation-enhancing pills, from low-grade to high-grade, everything imaginable.

These resources were enough for him to break through from the eighth rank of the True Immortal Realm to the Golden Immortal Realm.

The white-robed man then took out a golden jade slip from his robes and handed it to Kai.

"This is a map left by the ancestors of the Daoist sect, marking the locations of all the branches of the Daoist sect throughout the myriad

realms. From the First Heaven to the Thirty-Sixth Heaven, from the Celestial Realm to other realms, but they are all scattered, and none of them submit to the others. You need to find them and reunite them."

Kai took the jade slip and probed it with his divine sense.

A huge map unfolded in his mind.

The map was marked with tens of thousands of points, each point representing a branch of the Daoist sect.

Some of these branches were closely related and frequently interacted;

some were sworn enemies, regarding each other as heretics;

some even had deep-seated hatred, ready to fight to the death whenever they met.

Reuniting these branches was harder than climbing to heaven.

The man in white seemed to see through Kai's thoughts, and a faint smile appeared on his lips.

"It's difficult, isn't it?"

Kai nodded. "It's very difficult."

"But you must do it."

The white-robed man's voice carried an undeniable firmness. "Because only a united Daoist sect can resist the calamity. However, you must find the three keys to open the Chaos Dao Palace. Only by opening the Chaos Dao Palace can you obtain the complete inheritance of the Daoist sect's ancestors."

He paused, looking into Kai's eyes. "This is a path of no return. Are you ready?"

Kai remained silent for a long time.

He looked at the storage ring and jade slip in his hand, at the white-robed man's golden eyes, and countless images flashed through his mind.

His days in the mortal world, the battles in the Celestial Realm, the carnage in the Celestial Realm, saving Bei Mingyuan in the Ruins of Return, finding the Heart of the Cold Abyss in the Cold Abyss of Bei Ming, destroying the Hall of Light in the Azure Cloud Cave, fighting against the skeleton of a half-step Saint in the ancient battlefield…

He had traveled so far, experienced so much life and death, not to turn back.

"I'm ready." Kai's voice was calm.

The white-robed man nodded, the smile on his lips becoming more pronounced.

"Very good." His voice held a hint of relief. "My time is running out. Before I vanish, there is one more thing I must tell you."

He walked to the stone coffin and placed his hand on it.

The sealing runes on the coffin lit up simultaneously, their dark red light illuminating the entire tomb chamber in a blood-red glow.

The runes spun wildly, as if releasing some sealed power.

Then, the bottom of the stone coffin cracked open.

A dense, primordial energy surged from the crack. This energy wasn't the familiar purple of Kai, but a deeper, more ancient gray.

That gray contained the primordial power of all things, the laws of the beginning of heaven and earth, and a higher level of primordial power that Kai had never encountered before.

At the bottom of the stone coffin was a fist-sized gray bead.

The bead's surface shimmered with gray light, within which countless tiny runes could be faintly seen flickering, each rune representing a law:

time, space, life, death, creation, destruction, light, darkness, fire, ice, thunder, storm… all the laws intertwined, merged, and coexisted within that bead.

It was the Bead of Chaos. The Chaos Pearl is the core of the Chaos Dao Palace, a supreme treasure condensed by the Daoist ancestors with unparalleled magical power, containing the complete laws of the Chaos Dao.

Whoever can refine the Chaos Pearl can grasp the origin of the Chaos power and become the inheritor of the Chaos Dao.

Kai looked at the gray pearl, his purple eyes reflecting a flowing gray light.

He could feel the Chaos power within his body surging wildly, as if sensing a power of the same origin calling to it.

"This is the Chaos Pearl,"

the white-robed man's voice carried a rare solemnity, "the core of the Chaos Dao Palace. Before sealing the Chaos Dao Palace, the Daoist ancestors took it out and gave it to me.

I have been waiting for the inheritor of the Great Luo Golden Scripture to appear so that I can give the Chaos Pearl to him. Now, it is yours."

Kai walked to the stone coffin and reached into the crack.

The Chaos Pearl fell into his palm, a cool touch coming from his hand, like a piece of ten-thousand-year-old ice.

But that coolness wasn't cold; it was a pure, unadulterated coolness, devoid of any impurities.

The moment Kai obtained the Chaos Pearl, a cataclysmic change occurred within his body.

The Chaos Fire in his dantian surged, the purple flames colliding with the gray light of the Chaos Pearl, creating a subtle resonance.

Chaos power surged wildly through his meridians, several times faster than before, each meridian being widened, strengthened, and reshaped.

But Kai could feel that his cultivation had broken through.

True Immortal Realm, Ninth Rank.

Not the late stage of the Eighth Rank, not the peak of the Eighth Rank, but directly skipping the entire late stage and peak of the Eighth Rank, leaping from the mid-stage of the Eighth Rank to the Ninth Rank of the True Immortal Realm.

Only a tiny fraction of the power within the Chaos Pearl had been released, yet it had allowed him to break through a realm.

If he fully refined it, to what extent could he break through?

Golden Immortal Realm?

Great Luo Golden Immortal?

Immortal Lord?

Immortal King?

Immortal Emperor?

Or even a higher Saint?

Kai didn’t know, but he knew one thing—this Chaos Pearl was the most precious treasure he had ever obtained in his life.

The white-robed man watched Kai’s breakthrough, a hint of relief flashing in his golden eyes.

“The power of the Chaos Pearl is too strong; with your current cultivation, you cannot fully refine it. You need time, resources, and opportunities. But you have taken the first step; the rest of the journey is up to you.”

His body began to become more transparent, like a wisp of smoke about to be blown away by the wind.

His voice grew softer and more distant, as if coming from another dimension.

“My time has come. The ten thousand years of waiting have finally ended.”

Kai put away the Chaos Pearl and his storage ring, looking up at the white-robed man, a complex expression flashing in his purple eyes.

“Senior, do you have any last wishes?”

The white-robed man was silent for a moment, his golden eyes gazing at the dome of the tomb chamber, where a star map was engraved, marking the coordinates of countless worlds.

His gaze lingered on the star map for a long time, as if looking at a homeland he could never return to.

“The Daoist sect… cannot perish.” His voice was soft, almost inaudible. “This is my only wish.”

Kai nodded. “This junior promises senior. The Daoist sect will not perish.”

A slight smile curved the corners of the white-robed man's lips—a smile of relief, a smile without regret.

Then, his body completely dissipated.

White specks of light drifted in the air, like a silent snowfall, landing on Kai's shoulders, hair, and sword before vanishing.

Silence returned to the tomb.

Only the luminous crystals on the dome still emitted a faint glow, only the Daoist runes on the walls still slowly flowed, only the sealing runes on the stone coffin still flickered slightly.

Kai stood there, watching the direction the white-robed man had vanished, silent for a long time.

Then, he took a deep breath, turned, and walked out of the tomb.

His steps were steady, each step firm, as if measuring a path of no return.

...

Outside the tomb, Wu Yuan and the cultivators of the Void Merchant Guild waited anxiously.

Wu Yuan gripped the Dark Abyss Sword, his crimson-gold eyes fixed on the entrance to the stone tomb. His face was expressionless, but his fingers tapped lightly on the hilt, producing a faint thumping sound that betrayed his inner unease.

Nearly half an hour had passed, and Kai still hadn't emerged.

What had he experienced inside?

What had the white-robed man told him?

What had he gained?

Wu Yuan didn't know, but he knew one thing: if Kai had obtained the white-robed man's inheritance, then Kai's value would be even greater.

He had to firmly bind Kai to the Void Merchant Guild's chariot, at all costs.

Just then, his divine sense detected something.

In the northern sky, five black flying boats were rapidly approaching.

The Divine Race had returned.

Wu Yuan's expression changed.

In the previous wave, the Divine Race had lost over a dozen people, suffering a severe blow.

But they still had over thirty people, including the fourth-grade Golden Immortal Yan Huo and two third-grade Golden Immortal elders.

His side only had a dozen or so people, the highest-ranking being himself, a fourth-grade Golden Immortal.

If the gods launched an attack now, they wouldn't be able to withstand it.

"Everyone, prepare for battle!" Wu Yuan shouted.

The cultivators of the Void Merchant Guild quickly dispersed, forming a defensive formation. Their silver-white armor gleamed blindingly against the gray sky.

Their expressions were grave, their hands gripping their magical artifacts trembling slightly, but not a single one retreated.

Five black flying boats stopped thirty miles from the stone tomb.

More than thirty gods leaped from the boats, golden holy light burning upon them, dyeing the entire sky gold.

Yan Huo stood at the forefront, his golden armor stained with dust and black blood—stains left from the attack by the ancient remnant soul.

His face was somewhat pale, and a deep wound on his left arm still oozed golden blood.

But his eyes remained sharp, still filled with killing intent.

Behind him, two elders at the third rank of the Golden Immortal realm were also injured; one had a gash in his chest, and the other limped in his right leg.

The remaining Divine Clan cultivators were also wounded, some lightly, some severely, but none of them retreated.

Yan Huo's gaze fell on Wu Yuan, a cold smile curving his lips.

"President Wu, we meet again."

Wu Yuan gripped the Dark Abyss Sword, his crimson-gold eyes fixed on Yan Huo, his face expressionless.

"Vice Palace Master Yan, you Divine Clan people are truly persistent," Wu Yuan said coldly. A murderous glint flashed in Yan Huo's eyes. "Still haunting us? Your Void Merchant Guild trespassed into the territory of my Flame God Palace, stole our treasures, and you dare say we're still haunting us? Guild Master Wu, have you been living too comfortably?"

"The territory of the Flame God Palace?" Wu Yuan laughed, his smile icy. "This ancient battlefield has existed for countless millennia. Back then, your Flame God Palace was probably still huddled in some corner of the earth. When did it become your territory?"

Yan Huo's face darkened.

He disliked Wu Yuan's attitude.

"Guild Master Wu, I don't want to waste words with you."

His voice was as cold as ice. “Hand over the sword in your hand, hand over all the treasures you obtained in the tomb, hand over Kai. I might spare your life.”

Wu Yuan looked at Yan Huo, a hint of mockery flashing in his crimson-gold eyes.

“Vice Palace Master Yan, have you been beaten senseless? You think you have the right to negotiate with me?”

Yan Huo gripped the golden spear tightly, the holy flames at the tip of the spear suddenly leaping higher.

“Whether you’re qualified or not, we’ll find out after the fight.”

Before the words were even finished, his figure shot out, the golden spear carrying immense force as it thrust towards Wu Yuan.

Wu Yuan coldly snorted, the Dark Abyss Sword held horizontally in front of him, blocking the spear.

“Clang…”

Golden holy light and dark golden sword energy collided in the air, producing a piercing metallic clang.

The shockwave spread in all directions, lifting a layer of debris from the surrounding ground, sending rubble flying everywhere.

Both of them were simultaneously thrown back several steps.

A hint of surprise flashed in Yan Huo’s eyes.

He hadn’t expected that Wu Yuan, a merchant, would possess such fierce swordsmanship.

The sword energy within the Dark Abyss Sword was even more bizarre; when it collided with his holy light, it actually seemed to be devouring it.

“A fine sword.” Yan Huo’s voice carried a hint of greed, “This sword, I want it.”

A cold smile curled at the corner of Wu Yuan’s lips, “Want it? Then let’s see if you have the ability.”

The two charged at each other again, the golden spear and the Dark Abyss Sword intertwining in the air, producing a dense clang.

Meanwhile, the cultivators of the Divine Race and the Void Merchant Guild clashed.

Golden holy light and silvery-white spiritual energy collided in the air, each collision accompanied by violent explosions and shockwaves.

Although the Divine Race outnumbered the Divine Race, they were all wounded, significantly reducing their combat strength.

The Void Merchant Guild, though fewer in number, consisted entirely of elites, and having rested and prepared, their combat strength remained relatively intact.

The two sides fought fiercely, neither able to gain the upper hand.

However, as time passed, the Divine Race’s numerical advantage began to emerge.

Although the Void Merchant Guild cultivators were valiant, they couldn’t withstand the sheer number of opponents.

A second-grade Golden Immortal cultivator from the Void Merchant Guild was surrounded and attacked by three Divine Race cultivators, struggling to defend himself, his body already bearing several burn marks from the holy light.

Another first-grade Golden Immortal cultivator was struck in the shoulder by a second-grade Golden Immortal cultivator from the Divine Race, his entire arm nearly severed, golden blood gushing out.

Seeing this, Wu Yuan's eyes flashed with anxiety.

He knew they couldn't hold out much longer if they continued fighting like this.

But he couldn't retreat.

Kai was still inside the tomb.

If he retreated now, Kai would face an attack from over thirty members of the Divine Race when he emerged, and would surely die. If

Kai died, all his plans would fall apart.

Wu Yuan gritted his teeth, and his Dark Abyss Sword swung out fiercely, a dark golden

sword aura slashing towards Yan Huo. Yan Huo dodged to the side,

his golden spear thrusting towards Wu Yuan's chest. Wu Yuan couldn't dodge in time, the spear grazing his left ribs, leaving a deep bloodstain. His

silver-white armor was torn open, dark red blood gushing from the wound and dripping onto the ground.

He retreated rapidly, widening the distance between himself and Yan Huo.

Yan Huo didn't pursue, but stopped, looking at Wu Yuan, a smug smile playing on his lips.

"President Wu, you won't last much longer. Your men are almost at their limit. If you know what's good for you, surrender, and I might consider giving you a quick death."

Wu Yuan gritted his teeth, his crimson-gold eyes bloodshot.

He glanced at the entrance to the stone tomb.

The stone door remained tightly shut, and Kai had not yet emerged.

He then looked at the battlefield.

Five cultivators from the Void Merchant Guild had already fallen, and the rest were all wounded, their fighting strength greatly diminished.

Although the Divine Race had also lost seven or eight people, they still had more than twenty, giving them a clear advantage.

At this rate, they really wouldn't last much longer.

Wu Yuan took a deep breath, planted the Dark Abyss Sword in the ground, placed his hands on the hilt, and looked at Yan Huo.

"Vice Palace Master Yan, let's make a deal."

Yan Huo raised an eyebrow. "What deal?"

"Let's stop fighting." Wu Yuan's voice was calm. "If we both suffer heavy losses, neither of us will benefit. Let's sit down and talk, and divide the resources here equally."

Yan Huo was silent for a moment, then smiled.

"Equally? Your Void Merchant Guild has a dozen or so people, while our Divine Race has over thirty. Why should we evenly split it?"

Wu Yuan shook his head. "Vice Palace Master Yan, that's not how it works. You have more people, but you're injured.

We have fewer people, but we have Kai. Kai's fighting power alone is equivalent to twenty of yours. Do you think you can win if we really fight?"

Yan Huo's expression changed.

Kai.

He had almost forgotten about this person.

In the Fallen God Wasteland, Kai killed Yan Po, a peak third-grade Golden Immortal, with a single sword strike.

In the Northern Netherworld Abyss, Kai wiped out a group of people from the Hall of Light and killed a fourth-grade Golden Immortal elder of the Hall of Light.

Kai then led three hundred disciples of the Azure Cloud Cave Heaven to destroy the Hall of Light in one day and personally killed a fifth-grade Golden Immortal, the Holy Light Celestial Venerable.

This eighth-grade True Immortal youth cannot be judged by ordinary standards.

If Kai were to emerge from the tomb now and join the battle, the Divine Race might not necessarily win.

Yan Huo remained silent for a long time.

His fingers lightly traced the spear, his crimson-gold eyes gleaming with contemplation.

“Where is Kai?” he finally spoke. “Where is he?”

Wu Yuan pointed to the stone tomb. “Inside. A senior from the Daoist sect is talking to him.”

“Talking?” Yan Huo frowned. “What are they talking about?”

“I don’t know.”

Wu Yuan shook his head. “But I know one thing: when Kai comes out, he’ll be even stronger. He’s been inside for half an hour; his cultivation

might have already broken through. If he comes out to help us, none of your Divine Race members will escape."

Yan Huo's expression became even more serious.

He knew Wu Yuan wasn't bluffing.

"How do you plan to divide it?" Yan Huo asked.

Wu Yuan's lips curled into a smile. "It's simple. The resources in the tomb will be split equally between our Void Merchant Guild and your Divine Race.

Kai's share will come from his share.

Our Void Merchant Guild prioritizes business and profit.

It's clear now that cooperating with your Divine Race is more profitable. So we choose to cooperate."

Yan Huo looked at Wu Yuan, his crimson-gold eyes filled with suspicion.

"President Wu, you were just fighting me to the death, and now you suddenly want to cooperate. Do you think I'll believe you?"

Wu Yuan took out a silver-white token from his robes. The front of the token was engraved with the Void Merchant Guild's mark, and the back was inscribed with the words "Integrity First."

"Vice Palace Master Yan, I, Wu Yuan, swear in the name of the Void Merchant Guild that everything I have said is true. If there is even a single lie, may the reputation of the Void Merchant Guild be completely destroyed throughout the myriad realms, may my cultivation be completely destroyed, and may I die a horrible death."

The reputation of the Void Merchant Guild.

In the myriad realms, the Void Merchant Guild's reputation is the best.

They are true to their word and never break their promises. If a member of the Void Merchant Guild swears an oath in the name of the guild, it means they are telling the truth.

Because the reputation of the Void Merchant Guild is more valuable than any person's life. Yan Huo remained silent for a long time.

He looked into Wu Yuan's eyes, those crimson-gold eyes showing no evasion, no guilt, only an extreme sincerity and honesty.

"Alright," Yan Huo finally spoke, "I trust you."

A hint of joy flashed in Wu Yuan's eyes, but it quickly returned to calm.

"Then it's settled. When Kai comes out, we'll attack together, kill him, and seize the resources from him. Then we'll split the resources in the tomb equally."

Yan Huo nodded, "Deal."

Both sides stopped, retreating to one side, watching each other warily, but no longer making a move.

The stench of blood in the air hadn't dissipated. A dozen corpses lay on the ground, golden and dark red blood intertwined, forming dark streams on the grayish-white sand.

Wu Yuan leaned against a boulder, took out a healing pill from his storage ring, and swallowed it. The wound on his left rib began to heal slowly.

His face was still pale, but his crimson-gold eyes gleamed with shrewdness.

He was waiting.

Waiting for Kai to come out.

Waiting for the perfect moment to strike.

He didn't know what Kai had obtained in the tomb, but he knew those things must be priceless.

If he could kill Kai and seize his resources, combined with the resources in the tomb, the Void Merchant Guild's power in the Eighteenth Heaven would be unmatched.

As for the cooperation with the God Clan, that was only temporary.

After killing Kai, he would have plenty of ways to deal with the God Clan.
Yan Huo

stood not far away, also waiting.

The wound on his left arm was still bleeding, but he didn't treat it.

He just stared intently at the entrance of the stone tomb, his crimson-gold eyes filled with killing intent.

Kai had killed his subordinates, killed the people of the Hall of Light, destroyed the Hall of Light, and dealt a heavy blow to the God Clan's power in the Eighteenth Heaven.

He must avenge this.

As for the cooperation with the Void Merchant Guild, that was only temporary.

After killing Kai and seizing the resources, he would let Wu Yuan know that the God Clan was not to be trifled with.

Both sides had their own thoughts and waited in silence.

Inside the stone tomb, Kai sat cross-legged in the center of the tomb chamber, the power of chaos surging wildly within his body.

After the white-robed man dissipated, he did not leave immediately.

Because he knew what was happening outside.

Everything from the outside world was projected into Kai's mind.

Wu Yuan's waiting outside the tomb, the arrival of the gods, the battle between the two sides, the negotiation between Wu Yuan and Yan Huo, Wu Yuan's oath in the name of the Void Merchant Guild, the agreement to kill him together once he emerged.

Kai saw it, heard it, and understood it all.

Wu Yuan had never considered him a friend.

In Wu Yuan's eyes, he was merely a pawn, a valuable pawn.

When the pawn's value outweighed the risk, Wu Yuan would protect him;

when the pawn's value was less than the risk, Wu Yuan would abandon him without hesitation;

when killing him would bring greater benefits, Wu Yuan would act without hesitation.

Kai wasn't surprised.

He knew from the beginning that Wu Yuan was untrustworthy.

But he still came.

Because he needed Wu Yuan to bring him here, he needed Wu Yuan to help him find what he was looking for.

Now, his goal had been achieved.

It was time to settle accounts.

Kai opened his eyes, a cold glint flashing in his purple pupils.

He stood up, hung the Dragon-Slaying Sword at his waist, straightened his robes, and walked out of the tomb.

His steps were neither fast nor slow, each one steady, as if measuring the steps of death.

Outside the tomb, Wu Yuan saw the stone door open and abruptly stood up from the boulder.

His face was full of smiles as he strode towards Kai.

“Mr. Chen! You’re finally out!”

His voice carried an undisguised excitement. “How was it inside? What did the man in white say to you? What did you get?”

Kai looked at Wu Yuan, his purple eyes devoid of emotion.

“I got the storage ring, and a lot of resources.” His voice was calm.

A flicker of greed flashed in Wu Yuan’s eyes, but he quickly concealed it.

“Excellent! Mr. Chen truly lives up to his reputation as a descendant of the Daoist patriarch!”

His voice was filled with exaggerated praise. “Mr. Chen, I have something to tell you.”

“What is it?”

Wu Yuan pointed to the Divine Race members not far away. “The Divine Race just fought with us, and both sides were injured. Now they are all wounded and not worth mentioning. If we join forces, we can wipe out these Divine Race guys.”

The Divine Race members were all dumbfounded upon hearing Wu Yuan's words.

Yan Huo's expression changed instantly.

"Wu Yuan! You!"

His voice was full of anger. "Didn't you just say you wanted to cooperate? You swore in the name of the Void Merchant Guild that you would deal with Kai together! Now you've gone back on your word!"

Wu Yuan turned to look at Yan Huo, a cold smile curling at the corner of his mouth.

"Vice Palace Master Yan, let's talk business. I did intend to cooperate with you earlier, but the situation has changed."

His voice was calm, as if he were discussing a trivial matter. "Mr. Chen has emerged from the tomb, and he's stronger now. I feel that cooperating with him is more valuable. Therefore, I choose to cooperate with him."

"You!"

Yan Huo trembled with rage, the veins on his spear bulging. "You're untrustworthy! The reputation of the Void Merchant Guild is ruined by people like you!"

Wu Yuan shook his head. "Vice Palace Master Yan, you're wrong. The reputation of the Void Merchant Guild isn't about breaking promises in transactions, but about always choosing the side that's most advantageous to oneself. Right now, the side most advantageous to the Void Merchant Guild is Mr. Chen."

He paused, his smile becoming even more meaningful. "Moreover, I did swear an oath in the name of the Void Merchant Guild. But the content of my oath was that everything I said above was true. I told the truth,

without a single lie. As for changing my mind later, that's a later matter and has nothing to do with my oath."

Yan Huo's face turned ashen.

He knew he had been tricked by Wu Yuan.

From the very beginning, Wu Yuan had no intention of cooperating with him.

Wu Yuan was merely using him to buy time until Kai emerged.

Now that Kai was out, Wu Yuan kicked him aside.

"Wu Yuan, you'll regret this," Yan Huo's voice was icy cold. "The Divine Race won't let you get away with

this." Wu Yuan smiled. "That'll have to wait until you leave here alive."

He turned to Kai, his smile becoming even more genuine.

"Mr. Chen, let's do it. Let's wipe out all these Divine Race bastards together."

Kai looked at him, his purple eyes devoid of emotion.

"Alright," he replied calmly.

A flicker of joy flashed in Wu Yuan's eyes as he turned and walked towards Yan Huo.

The Dark Abyss Sword emitted a deep, resonant sound in his hand, dark golden sword energy flowing across its blade.

The Divine Race members instinctively took a step back when they saw Wu Yuan approaching. Their eyes were filled with fear, not because of Wu Yuan, but because of Kai.

Kai’s name had become a taboo among the Divine Race.

An eighth-rank True Immortal killing a fifth-rank Golden Immortal—such an event had never occurred in the history of the Divine Race.

Now, Kai has emerged from the tomb, his cultivation has broken through, and he’s even stronger.

How could they possibly defeat him?

Yan Huo gritted his teeth, his golden spear held horizontally in front of him, his crimson-gold eyes bloodshot.

“Everyone, listen to my command! Don’t panic! We still have more than twenty people, they only have a dozen! Fight to the death!”

Hearing Yan Huo’s words, the morale of the Divine Race people was slightly boosted.

They gripped their magical weapons tightly, golden holy light burning on their bodies, dyeing the entire sky gold.