the mans Decree: Kai Ping/Chen Ping

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The search lasted for two full days.

Two days later, the aquatic cultivators from various groups returned one after another, bringing back astonishingly consistent reports: there was no trace of the Eye of the Void in the entire Void Sea.

Not to mention spatial rifts or ancient passages, they hadn't even sensed the slightest abnormal spatial fluctuation or distortion of laws.

Shui Wuhen's face was pale, sweat beaded on his forehead, and he repeatedly bowed in apology, his tone full of guilt: "Mr. Chen, what the aquatic people said is all true. If even we can't find it... then the Eye of the Void is probably truly not in this Void Sea."

Kai's expression remained unchanged, his purple eyes slightly lowered, lost in thought.

He wasn't surprised that Yue Wuhen said the Eye of the Void was an ancient passage leading to the Twenty-Second Heaven.

The owner of that illusory figure was so anxious for him to step into the Twenty-Second Heaven; how could such an important passage be easily left in the open sea for anyone to search?

It must be hidden in an extremely secretive and inaccessible place.

"I understand,"

Kai said calmly, his figure flickering as he disappeared into the depths of the Void Sea. Shui Wuhen watched the direction Kai vanished, secretly relieved that their aquatic race hadn't become enemies with him.

Having failed in the Void Sea, Kai's next target was the Netherworld Abyss.

Kai arrived through the air, his figure landing at the entrance of the Netherworld Abyss.

The gray-black mist surged and rolled, like a ferocious maw about to devour him, a shrill howl echoing from the depths of the abyss, sending chills down one's spine.

However, the Netherworld energy, powerful enough to corrode the foundation of a Great Luo Golden Immortal cultivator, collided with the gray chaotic domain surrounding Kai.

Like thin snow meeting the blazing sun, it hissed and evaporated rapidly, unable to get close, not even a trace of coldness could touch his body.

He steadily walked into the abyss; the deeper he went, the denser the Netherworld energy became, the more profound the chilling aura.

The faint, mournful howls of vengeful spirits and the unwilling whimpers of remnant souls echoed from the void. Countless fragmented souls drifted in the mist, emitting weak pleas and roars.

Ancient nether runes covered the abyss's rocky walls, each rune radiating a chilling aura, telling tales of timeless vicissitudes and loneliness.

Kai went directly to the Netherworld Elder.

Since the Eye of the Void wasn't within the Void Sea, it was highly likely hidden within the Netherworld Abyss.

After all, the Seven Star Continent had collapsed; the Eye of the Void couldn't possibly exist there.

The Netherworld Elder looked at Kai's arrival without any surprise. He knew everything that had happened.

The Seven Star Continent had collapsed, and Kai had annihilated the three great families of the Divine Race.

Now, Kai's strength was godlike in the entire Twenty-One Heavens.

No one could rival him, and no one dared to provoke him.

Fortunately, the Netherworld Abyss was a friend of Kai, so the Netherworld Elder wasn't afraid of him.

“Senior, I’ve come to you for one thing only,” Kai said to the Netherworld Elder.

“For the Eye of the Void?” the Netherworld Elder asked.

Kai nodded, somewhat surprised. “How did you know that, Senior?”

“The Eye of the Void is a crucial link to the Twenty-Second Heaven. This isn’t a secret in the Twenty-First Heaven, but very few people know its location.”

“With your current strength, you’re already invincible in the Twenty-First Heaven, so you’ll definitely go to a higher world to develop, and that’s why you need to find the Eye of the Void,” the Netherworld Elder explained.

Kai said, “Senior, after the Seven Star Continent collapsed, I went to the Void Sea and asked the aquatic tribes to help search, but the Eye of the Void wasn’t found anywhere in the entire Void Sea. So I think it might be in the Netherworld Abyss, which is why I’ve come to ask for your help.”

The Netherworld Elder stared intently at Kai for a long time, his eerie green ghostly flames flickering, as if he were thinking, as if he were weighing his options, and the Netherworld aura around him fluctuated accordingly.

After a long silence, he slowly shook his head, his voice carrying the weariness and helplessness of countless ages: "Though the Netherworld Abyss is deep, it cannot contain an existence like the Eye of the Void.

That ancient passage that transcends the celestial realms must exist in the area of the Twenty-First Heaven closest to the edge of the void, the area least bound by the laws of the heavens."

"Closest to the edge of the void?" Kai frowned slightly, already having a guess in his mind.

"The Starry Sky Belt." The Netherworld Elder spoke slowly and deliberately, his tone solemn, "That void belt located at the very edge of the Twenty-First Heaven, the most desolate, the most neglected.

There are no continents, no spiritual power, no living beings, only endless void turbulence and spiritual energy so thin it's almost nonexistent.

But precisely because of this, the spatial laws there are the weakest, the easiest to be torn apart and penetrated by external forces, making it the most likely place to hide the Eye of the Void."

Kai's eyes brightened slightly.

The Starry Sky Belt.

He was familiar with this name, but had never before associated it with the Eye of the Void.

That area was too desolate and remote, with spiritual energy extremely thin. Even at his peak, he wouldn't have gone there intentionally. He never imagined it would be the key to the Twenty-Second Heaven.

He turned to leave, but the old man's voice echoed from behind him again, carrying a hint of warning: "Young man, although the Starry Sky Belt can reach the Eye of the Void, the power required to open the passage is far beyond what one person can achieve.

Those ancient passages require power that resonates with the origins of all heavens to awaken. If you insist on going to the Twenty-Second Heaven, you'd better be fully prepared and not act rashly."

Kai didn't stop; his gray figure disappeared into the darkness, leaving only a faint reply, his tone firm: "I have my own plans."

He was already prepared; no matter the cost, he would open the passage and step into the Twenty-Second Heaven.

Three days later, Kai's figure appeared at the most desolate and peripheral edge of the Twenty-First Heaven.

The Starry Sky Belt.

This is a transitional zone between the Twenty-First Heaven and the outer void. As far as the eye can see, there are no continents, no soil, no solid objects, only an endless abyss of void and a thin, almost illusory spatial membrane.

Above the sky is an unchanging, pitch-black abyss, devoid of stars, sunlight, or any other light; only an eternal night of silence and vast emptiness, where not even a sound can be heard, a silence so profound it's suffocating.

The spiritual energy concentration here is less than one ten-thousandth of that in the inner region, so thin it's almost negligible.

Ordinary cultivators who enter this place find it extremely difficult not only to cultivate but even to maintain the most basic circulation of spiritual energy; if they stay too long, they may even die from spiritual exhaustion.

Yet, precisely because of this, for countless ages no one has lived and multiplied here, no one has established a power here, no one has sought opportunities here; this area has become the most secluded corner of the Twenty-First Heaven.

Kai's divine sense slowly spread out in this desolate and vast expanse. Without the interference of spiritual energy, without the folds of laws, and without the obscuring aura of countless living beings, his perception was clearer and more vivid than ever before. He quickly detected the anomaly.

Deep within the void, at its very edge, lay an extremely faint spatial fold.

This fold was almost seamlessly integrated with the void, nearly imperceptible. Had Kai not undergone a perfect transformation of his Chaos Origin, his perception exceeding its limits

, any peak Grand Luo Golden Immortal would have dismissed it as a natural fluctuation of void turbulence.

Kai moved in an instant, a gray stream of light traversing tens of thousands of miles of void, landing precisely before the spatial fold.

Closer now, he could clearly sense the faint yet profound spatial aura emanating from the depths of the fold—the fluctuations of the laws of the Twenty-Second Heaven, far more substantial, vast, and majestic than those of the Twenty-First Heaven.

Within the void, a roughly ten-foot-wide, gray-white, oval spatial rift hung silently, like the closed eyelid of a giant eye that had slept for millennia.

Ancient and obscure spatial laws flowed along the edge of the rift, each line containing profound mysteries that transcended levels and pierced through the heavens, radiating a faint pressure that made one afraid to look directly at it.

The Eye of the Void.

Kai's purple eyes fixed on this slumbering ancient passage, sensing the faint yet incredibly clear aura of the Twenty-Second Heaven emanating from the depths of the rift, he was certain.

However, his expression did not ease in the slightest. The words of the Netherworld Elder still echoed in his ears, and his divine sense clearly perceived it.

Although this Eye of the Void was dormant, its dormant sealing power was extremely strong and ancient. It was virtually impossible for him alone to forcibly awaken or open it.

This sealing power vaguely shared the same origin as the ancient primordial energy accumulated over countless ages on the Seven Star Continent, clearly set up in ancient times to seal the passage.

A flash of inspiration struck Kai—the ruins of the Seven Star Continent.

The combined, resonating power of the ancient ruins hidden within the seven continents might be the key to awakening the Eye of the Void.

He immediately turned back, his figure traversing the void, returning to the core area of the Tian Shu Islands.

A gray stream of light landed on a newly formed island. Kai's aura subtly shifted, emitting a clear divine thought wave in a certain direction, undisguised, spreading throughout the entire island.

Not long after, a black-gold demonic light shot into the sky from a distant island, rapidly approaching.

Ning Zhi's face was pale, his injuries not yet healed, and a faint demonic aura still lingered around him, but his eyes remained sharp and his spirit unwavering.

He landed steadily in front of Kai, his lips slightly pursed, his tone calm: "You're looking for me?"

Kai didn't beat around the bush, directly stating his purpose: "I need your power. The primal power of the Tianming Continent ruins, combined with the power of the other five ruins I've refined, might be able to awaken the Eye of the Void and open the passage to the Twenty-Second Heaven."

His tone was calm, yet carried an undeniable authority, and he didn't conceal his purpose.

Ning Zhi remained silent for a moment, took a deep breath, and slowly nodded, his tone firm: "Okay."

He didn't want to ask why, nor what he could gain.

Kai asked for his help, so he would help.

This had nothing to do with grudges or hatred; it was simply an instinctive choice a cultivator made when facing a higher level, and it was also the necessary path for him to become stronger and catch up with Kai.

Just then, Xuan Zhenzi arrived from afar on his sword, his white hair flowing, his Daoist robe fluttering, his expression slightly solemn, and the Daoist aura around him slightly disordered.

After hearing Kai and Ning Zhi's conversation, he stroked his beard thoughtfully and slowly spoke, his tone tinged with worry: "If the power of the Seven Star Ruins were all gathered, there would be no problem. But the current situation... I'm afraid it's not optimistic."

Kai looked at him, a hint of doubt in his purple eyes: "Why?"

Xuan Zhenzi continued: "Yao Guang Continent was the weakest link among the Seven Stars, and the first continent to completely collapse and disintegrate.

The ancient origin within the Yao Guang Continent ruins was not absorbed or refined by anyone during the collapse; instead, it dissipated directly and escaped into the depths of the void, its whereabouts long unknown.

Now, if we want to gather the power of the Seven Stars, but we're missing this one link, I'm afraid..."

He didn't finish his sentence, but his meaning was clear enough: without the power of one link, whether the passage could be opened was uncertain.

Upon hearing this, Ning Zhi's expression also changed slightly. He knew that the power of the Seven Star Ruins was of the same origin and indispensable; without the power of the Yao Guang Ruins, it would truly be impossible to awaken the Eye of the Void.

Kai remained calm, his gaze deep and unwavering, showing no sign of panic. He gently shook his head: "We'll only know if we try."

Regardless of the outcome, he had to give it a shot; this was his only chance to reach the Twenty-Second Heaven.

With that, he raised his hand, and gray chaotic power transformed into a condensed pillar of light, shooting directly towards the dormant spatial rift deep within the star belt.

Within the pillar of light lay the primal power of the five ruins he had refined, profound and boundless, carrying an ancient Daoist aura, traversing the distant void and precisely locking onto the Eye of the Void.

Ning Zhi followed closely behind, his black-gold demonic energy erupting and condensing into a pure black demonic light, running parallel to Kai's gray chaotic pillar of light, their brilliance intertwined.

Within the demonic light, the primal power of the Heavenly Netherworld Ruins surged, carrying the domineering and weighty nature of the demon race, resonating with the chaotic power, both pouring into the Eye of the Void.

The two torrents of power traversed the distant void, precisely pouring into the Eye of the Void, instantly activating the dormant seal.

The Eye of the Void trembled violently!

Its closed eyelids suddenly twitched, and the gray-white spatial folds twisted and expanded wildly!

Endless ancient law patterns surged out from the depths of the rift, layering, interlocking, and rapidly reorganizing, radiating dazzling light, causing the entire star belt to tremble.

But then, that power suddenly weakened as if it had run out of steam, and the expansion of the Eye of the Void abruptly stopped.

After struggling for a few breaths, it began to slowly shrink back and close again, the sealing power regaining the upper hand, attempting to fall back into slumber.

"Not enough power!"

Ning Zhi's expression changed drastically, his black-gold demonic energy suddenly surged and surged wildly, fine beads of sweat seeping from his forehead as he tried to make up for the deficiency, "I can't hold on much longer!"

He could clearly feel that the combined force of the two powers was simply not enough to shake the seal; the missing link of power had become the key.

Xuanzhenzi's face paled, and he shook his head repeatedly, his tone full of helplessness: "As expected! Without the support of a certain power, this passage simply cannot be fully opened!

The power of the Seven Star Ruins is of the same origin and is indispensable. Now, without the power of Yao Guang, we simply cannot awaken the Eye of the Void!"

Kai's eyes narrowed; he sensed something within the Eye of the Void... As Xuanzhenzi said, although he possessed the primal power of five ruins within him, along with Ning Zhi's Heavenly Nether Power, he barely managed to gather the six paths.

The missing Yao Guang could not be compensated for, and the six paths could not resonate completely, making it impossible to break the seal.

With the six paths incomplete, the Eye of the Void refused to fully awaken, the sealing power became increasingly stable, and the channel's retraction speed increased.

Just when everyone thought all efforts were about to fail, the core force imprint deep within Kai's dantian suddenly lit up and pulsated violently!

A heterogeneous power, completely different from the Dao of Spiritual Qi and transcending the laws of the heavens, surged out along his meridians, merging into the pillar of chaotic light and pouring directly into the Eye of the Void!

That power was not vast, even weak compared to the primal chaos and the black gold demonic energy, yet it possessed a strange penetrating power, transcending the constraints of the laws of the heavens.

It was heterogeneous, different, and transcendent; the dimensions of its laws were diametrically opposed to those of the myriad paths

of the heavens. Like a strange wedge that could pry open the entire world, it precisely wedged itself into the cracks in the sealing power of the Eye of the Void, instantly shattering the balance of the seal.

The Eye of the Void abruptly paused, its tendency to retract halting instantly.

Then, it burst open!

A grayish-white rift, about ten feet wide, rapidly expanded, twisted, and tore apart, transforming in the blink of an eye into a massive elliptical spatial passage spanning hundreds of feet across and stretching across the sky.

Deep within the passage was a chaotic and hazy vortex of flowing light, where countless fragments of broken space surged, swirled, and collided violently, radiating an extremely violent void turbulence, even tearing apart the surrounding spatial membrane, causing it to tremble incessantly.

The passage was open!

Before the joy on Xuanzhenzi's face could spread, it suddenly froze into terror. He cried out, "This passage... is extremely unstable!

The law disorder caused by the loss of Yao Guang's power is too severe; the void turbulence is completely out of control!

If we rashly enter, we'll probably be torn apart by the turbulence!"

He could clearly feel that the spatial laws inside the passage were completely disordered and could collapse at any moment.

Before he finished speaking, the giant spatial passage suddenly trembled violently, and the internal vortex of flowing light expanded wildly, twisting and deforming.

Countless fragments of void scattered like blades, and the space of the entire star belt began to shake violently and crack inch by inch, on the verge of complete collapse.

Kai frowned, made a decision in an instant, and said firmly, "Go in! Before it completely collapses!"

This was the only chance; if they missed it, who knew when they would be able to open the passage again.

The gray stream of light suddenly shot out and plunged straight into the void passage, the power of chaos enveloping its entire body, resisting the violent void turbulence.

Ning Zhi gritted his teeth and followed closely behind, his body enveloped in black-gold demonic energy as he swiftly entered

the passage. Even if it were a bottomless abyss ahead, he would not back down. Xuan Zhenzi, Su Yuqi, Jiang Xuelan, and the Seven Fairies all exerted their full power and filed in, each channeling their strength to resist the onslaught of the turbulent currents, daring not to be careless in the slightest.

But just as everyone rushed into the passage, the already extremely unstable void passage could no longer withstand the violent tearing force from within and without.

It exploded with a deafening roar!

The chaotic and hazy vortex of flowing light suddenly shattered, transforming into countless extremely violent void turbulences, like billions of invisible blades, frantically ripping and sweeping in all directions!

The spatial laws within the passage completely collapsed, became completely disordered, and were reduced to zero.

Everyone who entered was instantly torn into countless streams of light heading in different directions, like fallen leaves in a gale or duckweed in a torrent, helplessly swept into the unknown depths of the void.

Kai felt an overwhelming, irresistible force of void turbulence slam into his body. The force was so great that even with his current cultivation, he couldn't withstand it.

His primordial chaos erupted instantly, layer upon layer of gray protective shields spreading out.

But the turbulent force contained dimensional tearing power surpassing the laws of the twenty-first heaven, originating from the rift between the two realms. It relentlessly ripped apart his shields, layer by layer, disintegrating them inch by inch, a trickle of pale purple blood spilling from the corner of his mouth.

He struggled to steady himself, his purple eyes fixed on the blurry figure of Su Yuqi ahead, his heart filled with anxiety: "Yuqi—!"

He could see Su Yuqi's figure being swept away by the turbulence, drifting further and further away, seemingly about to be torn apart at any moment.

But before he could finish speaking, an exceptionally violent void vortex suddenly split open beside him, instantly tearing him and Su Yuqi apart.

Su Yuqi's figure receded rapidly, blurred quickly, and vanished into the depths of the chaotic, misty currents, leaving no trace of her presence.

Kai's pupils contracted, and his chaotic essence surged wildly, attempting to break free from the turbulent currents to catch up. But in the next instant, an even more violent void turbulence crashed down upon

him, completely engulfing him, sweeping him away, and throwing him into that unknowable, unpredictable vast void.

His consciousness blurred, his senses indistinct, and his spatial orientation completely lost; all his perception was severed by the raging turbulence.

The only remaining sense told him that a warm and familiar power was faintly glowing in his arms.

It was nuclear power, which had automatically activated at the last moment before he was torn apart by the turbulence, transforming into a layer of... Kai slowly opened his eyes.

Before him stretched a gray, gloomy sky, devoid of sunlight, stars, and any natural light source, save for the flickering artificial lights on a few giant metal towers in the distance.

Their pale, cold light shrouded the entire land in an apocalyptic gloom.

He moved his fingers, and his senses quickly returned.

His meridians were unobstructed, his primordial chaos flowed smoothly, and the nuclear imprint deep within his dantian pulsed slightly, radiating a warm afterglow.

He slowly sat up, his palms supporting him on the ground—rough, dry, and hard, typical of a desert landscape composed of gravel and weathered stones.

Kai surveyed his surroundings.

The reddish-brown desert stretched as far as the eye could see, covered with fine pebbles, occasionally interspersed with clumps of withered, almost unrecognizable shrubs stubbornly growing in the cracks.

In the distance stood colossal metal towers, each hundreds of feet high, their exposed steel frames rusted and billowing black smoke, leaving long, dark trails against the gray sky.

Further still, massive concrete chimneys stood like silent giants on the earth, their bases revealing intricate mechanical pipes and conveyor belts.

The air was thick with a metallic and sulfurous odor, choking the throat.

Kai frowned slightly; this smell had nothing to do with spiritual energy, but rather resembled a pungent mixture of industrial waste.

He took a deep breath, indeed sensing no fluctuation of spiritual energy whatsoever.

The world was as parched as a dry well, the laws manifesting were extremely thin, less than one ten-thousandth of the twenty-first heaven.

Kai stood up, brushing the dust from his gray robe, a thoughtful look flashing in his purple eyes.

Where was this?

The Celestial Realm?

Impossible, the Celestial Realm couldn't be this barren;

the mortal realm? It didn't seem like the mortal world at all. The mortal realm still had its sun, moon, stars, mountains, and rivers, unlike this apocalyptic ruin before him.

His divine sense slowly spread out, like invisible ripples spreading in all directions.

Soon, he detected a large gathering of life force a dozen miles away—a crowd was gathering, and quite a few of them.

Kai moved slightly, a gray streak of light silently flashing out, instantly traversing that distance.

He landed on a low earthen slope, looking down at the scene before him, which made him slightly startled.

Below the slope was a wide, flat plain, the ground compacted by footsteps, dust flying everywhere. A large area was enclosed by rusted wire mesh and cement pillars, the wire mesh wrapped with sharp barbs, exuding a heavy sense of vigilance.

Within the area, a densely packed long queue stretched out. Without exception, the men, women, and children in the queue were all ragged, emaciated, with high cheekbones, sunken eyes, rough, cracked skin, and covered with traces of wind and sand.

Everyone wore an expression of exhaustion bordering on numbness, their eyes vacant, like walking corpses, silently waiting for food to be distributed, clutching broken earthenware pots or iron bowls.

Occasionally, a child would let out a weak cry, but the adults would quickly cover their mouths, fearing it would bring disaster.

Kai noticed that these people had no spiritual energy fluctuations, nor any cultivation foundation in their bloodlines; they were all utterly ordinary mortals.

Yet their clothing, appearance, and the order of their queue were completely different from those in the mortal world.

Mortals in the mortal world had fields to cultivate and markets to go to; although they were not as carefree as cultivators, they were not so impoverished, and their eyes would not have such a deep-seated despair and numbness.

On both sides of the queue, every ten steps stood a fully armed soldier.

These soldiers wore dark green standard military uniforms, helmets, and military boots, with standard short blades at their waists and holding long black weapons that Kai had never seen before.

The weapons were strangely shaped, constructed from a combination of metal and wood, with a slender tube at the front and a trigger and grip at the rear.

The soldiers' thumbs were always resting on the triggers, their postures upright, their eyes alert, clearly ready to fire at any moment, exuding a chilling aura.

Kai narrowed his eyes slightly, his divine sense focusing on the weapons, carefully sensing their power.

He didn't recognize these weapons, but they resembled firearms, yet were cruder, like homemade guns made by old farmers.

Could this really be the mortal world?

But how could the mortal world have such an apocalyptic scene?

And how could there be such massive metal towers and industrial systems?

Kai's doubts deepened, but he showed no sign of them, remaining quietly standing on the earthen slope, observing the movements below.

Just as he was deep in thought, an old man leaning on a wooden cane at the edge of the group suddenly looked up towards the earthen slope.

The old man's gaze met Kai's in the hazy air.

The old man was first taken aback, a hint of confusion flashing in his cloudy eyes, which then turned into utter shock.

He saw a young man in a gray robe, his clothes spotless, his face handsome and his bearing extraordinary, standing on the earthen slope.

His demeanor and appearance, compared to the surrounding dusty, disgraced refugees, were like those of a different world, a dazzling and abrupt pearl in the mud.

The old man opened his mouth, his hand gripping the wooden stick trembling slightly, as if he wanted to say something but ultimately dared not utter a sound. Only a tear welled up in his cloudy eyes, as if he had seen some hope.

Kai's purple eyes met the old man's cloudy gaze for a moment in the gray air.

He could read too much in the depths of those aged eyes—fear, numbness, weariness, and a glimmer of hope, flickering like a candle in the wind.

Without hesitation, Kai waved his hand lightly, and the old man's figure vanished instantly, then reappeared before him.

The surrounding soldiers and refugees didn't even notice that the old man had disappeared.

The old man's body trembled violently, completely bewildered. He didn't know how he had suddenly appeared there.

His cloudy eyes twitched violently, and the rough wooden stick in his hand nearly slipped from his grasp.

He instinctively tried to kneel, his withered knees slightly bent, his lips trembling: "Divine...divine messenger..."

Kai gently reached out and supported the old man's arm, his strength gentle yet unyielding, steadily supporting his about-to-kneel body: "No need to kneel. I just want to ask a few questions."

The old man's body stiffened, the arm supported by that hand transmitting a warm and steady strength, like a sudden touch of embers in the dead of winter, slightly warming his numb and cold body.

He swallowed, his dry lips moving a few times, finally nodding tremulously: "My lord...my lord, please ask. What I know, I will certainly not conceal."

Kai withdrew his hand, his gaze falling on... The old man paused slightly.

A storm?

He couldn't detect a trace of lying on the young man's extraordinary demeanor; the calm and open gaze slightly eased the wariness in his heart.

He opened his mouth, hesitated for a moment, and finally lowered his voice to speak: "My lord... this place is called Ash Land."

"Ash Land?" Kai repeated the unfamiliar name, his purple eyes flickering slightly.

"It is... Ash Land."

The old man's voice was hoarse and dry, as if his throat was filled with grit. "I've lived on this land since I can remember. My father, grandfather, great-grandfather... generation after generation have all lived here.

No one knows how big this land is, and no one knows what lies beyond. We are born here, we die here, and we can never escape this gray sky."

He raised his withered hand, trembling as he pointed to the giant chimneys belching black smoke and the endless metal towers in the distance: "Those... those are sacrificial towers. We Ash Land..." The people of this village spend their entire lives revolving around those towers.

The boys are dragged to work in the factories from a young age, while the women sew, cook, and care for the children in the sheds.

Even teenagers, if they can reach a wrench, have to go to the factory. They

start work before dawn and don't get released until it's completely dark, without a break all year round.

Following his finger, Kai looked at the towering steel towers, which resembled silent behemoths against the gray sky. Their bases were riddled with pipes and conveyor belts, and he could vaguely see countless tiny figures bustling about among the towers.

His divine sense extended slightly, sensing that the towers were filled with some kind of extremely unstable energy—

scorching, violent, and containing terrifying destructive power.

That energy had a subtle resemblance to the primordial energy of the nuclear imprint deep within his dantian.

Kai's heart sank slightly, but he continued calmly, "What are those towers for?"

The old man's eyes suddenly became complicated, his cloudy eyes churning with fear, anger, and a deep-seated helplessness.

He looked around before lowering his voice, speaking in a volume barely audible to Kai, "To create... to create 'divine fire'."

"Divine fire?"

"It's the fire that explodes on top of those towers."

The old man's voice trembled with suppressed emotion. "Every ten days, the Great Chief orders the lighting of a sacrificial tower. The top of the tower bursts with blinding light, followed by a deafening roar... illuminating the entire sky and shaking the ground."

“And those who were sent into the sacrificial tower to be lit, none of them will ever come out.”

Kai’s eyes suddenly narrowed: “Those sent in?”

The old man’s cracked lips twitched, and his eyes reddened slightly: “Before each sacrificial tower is lit, the Great Leader will select a batch of ‘sacrifices’ from various factory areas.

Men, women, young and old, it doesn’t matter, they are called out and sent, with absolutely no room for resistance.

Those people are sent into the tower to ignite the divine fire at the top of the tower. After the divine fire explodes, they never come out again.

The Great Leader said that it was to offer power to the supreme deity, and only after the deity accepted our offerings did they...” "It will continue to protect the Ashes, allowing us to live."

His voice choked with emotion, his withered fingers gripping the tip of the wooden stick tightly, knuckles white. "But I've lived for over sixty years, watching wave after wave of people around me being sent in. Where is that so-called protection...where is it?

The Ashes have never seen dawn, the land has never been fertile, people still die, diseases still arise, the divine fire explodes more and more frequently, yet we have less and less to eat..."

Kai listened silently, an indescribable undercurrent surging deep within his purple eyes.

He had pieced together the outline of this world from the old man's fragmented narration—the Ashes, a barren land devoid of spiritual energy.

Generations of people under oppressive rule engaged in some kind of industrial labor, and the core product of their labor was those towering sacrificial towers.

The so-called "divine fire" was nothing more than a phenomenon of some violent energy eruption, and the essence of that energy...was very likely the nuclear power he was familiar with.

His fingertips gently rubbed his cuff, suppressing the surging guesses in his heart, and continued to ask, "Who is the Great Leader?"

The old man's expression suddenly became extremely complicated, and a light of fear and apprehension flashed in his eyes.

He subconsciously shrank his neck, lowering his voice even further: "The Great Chief is indeed the Great Chief... He lives in the core city, and it's said he's lived for a very, very long time, some say a thousand years.

The people of Jintu call him 'Descendant of the Gods,' saying he's the bloodline of the gods left on earth, born to rule all people.

Everything the Great Chief says is law, and those who disobey will be executed in public.

No one has ever seen the Great Chief's true face, but his soldiers are all over Jintu, and anyone who talks about him behind his back will be dragged away."

"A thousand years?"

Kai caught the time scale in the old man's previous words. "You said he's ruled for a thousand years?"

A bitter look flashed in the old man's eyes: "The words passed down from my great-grandfather's generation say that the Great Chief has been the same person from ancient times to the present, with generation after generation of ministers, but he has never aged.

Some say he's a god, some say he's a demon, but I think..."

He paused, his cloudy eyes looking at Kai, as if he had finally found someone to confide in, and the words that had been suppressed for decades poured out like a flood.

"I believe that the Great Chief, like those divine flames, is a cannibal. He's been eating the flesh and blood of the people of Jintu for over a thousand years and is still not satisfied," the old man said.

Upon uttering these words, the old man himself was startled, abruptly covering his mouth and looking around in terror, afraid the soldiers would overhear.

Kai calmly looked at the old man's weathered and fear-stricken face, remaining silent for a moment before slowly speaking: "Those things you've created... are they nuclear bombs? And your Great Chief shouldn't be an ordinary human, but a cultivator."

Kai couldn't fathom how ordinary people could live for thousands of years; only cultivators could do that.

For cultivators, living for a thousand years was effortless, without any pressure.

Moreover, in the eyes of these ordinary people, cultivators were like gods.

The old man paused, clearly unfamiliar with the term.

He frowned and pondered for a while before hesitantly nodding, "The Great Chief calls that thing 'Divine Fire Source Core,' saying it's the essence of the divine fire.

Each sacrificial tower contains several, and once they've served their purpose, the Great Chief will personally preside over the sacrifice... and with a bang, it explodes, leaving nothing behind."

"As for the cultivators you mentioned, I don't know what they are..."

Kai closed his eyes and took a deep breath

. The "divine fire" the old man had mentioned was nothing more than the extreme energy produced by a nuclear explosion.

As for why this cultivator wanted to refine a nuclear bomb for detonation, Kai didn't know; he would only find out when he met the Great Leader.

A thousand years.

For over a thousand years, enslavement, exploitation, and sacrifice had taken place, the lives of billions of mortals thrown into the flames like fuel, all to feed a so-called god high above.

He opened his eyes, a faint chill swirling within his purple pupils, yet his face remained calm and composed.

He looked at the old man, his tone softening slightly: "What's your name?"

The old man paused, as if no one had asked his name in a long time. His lips moved before he answered in a hoarse voice, "My surname is Gu, my given name is Gu Gen. Everyone calls me Old Gu Head."

"Gu Gen,"

Kai repeated the name, nodding slightly. "I will remember what you just said."

A glimmer of light flashed in Gu Gen's cloudy eyes, a light like a spark suddenly bursting forth in the darkness, weak yet scorching.

He opened his mouth, as if to say something, but ultimately only nodded forcefully, his withered hand gripping the wooden stick tightly.

At that moment, a soldier noticed something amiss. The next second, his pupils contracted sharply, and his entire body tensed instantly.

"Who goes there!"

The soldier abruptly leveled his rifle, pointing it directly at Kai on the earthen slope, and shouted sharply. His voice, amplified by a megaphone, echoed across the vast desert, "Don't move! Hands above your head! Slowly walk down!"

This shout, like a stone thrown into a lake, instantly created ripples.

A dozen or so soldiers around him turned in unison, their dark gun barrels all aimed at the gray figure on the earthen slope.

The clanging of metal parts filled the air—the crisp sound of guns being cocked, chilling to the bone.

The refugees queuing for food were terrified, crouching down with their heads in their hands, trembling. Some covered their children's eyes, others clutched their broken bowls tightly to their chests, huddled together, afraid of being caught in the crossfire.

The old man even knelt on the ground, his body trembling, repeatedly pleading with Kai, "Divine Messenger, quickly raise your hands! Those bullets have no eyes!"

Kai stood on the earthen slope, seemingly oblivious to the old man's words. His purple eyes swept indifferently over the gun barrels pointed at him, his expression calm and undisturbed, without the slightest hint of tension or wariness.

He remained motionless, his gray robe fluttering gently in the breeze, his serene aura making those potentially deadly gun barrels seem like mere toys in a child's hand, utterly insignificant.

He simply raised his hand slowly, his fingertips twitching slightly. There was no surge of powerful spiritual energy, no dazzling supernatural phenomena, but rather a composure that allowed him to control everything.

Seeing Kai's refusal to obey, the soldier at the front saw a flash of ruthlessness in his eyes and abruptly pulled the trigger.

In his eyes, the strangely dressed young man before him was nothing more than a refugee of unknown origin, daring to disobey his orders and deserving punishment.

Bang!

A deafening gunshot ripped through the gray silence, shattering the oppressive atmosphere of the desert.

A brass-colored bullet, spinning rapidly with intense heat, tore through the air, traversing a distance of several dozen feet, and aimed precisely at Kai's brow!

The bullet flew at incredible speed, leaving a faint afterimage in the air; to an ordinary person in the mortal world, it would be too fast to react.

But to Kai's perception, the bullet's trajectory was like a magnified image, every inch of its advance clearly visible, incredibly slow, even the texture on the bullet's surface was clearly discernible.

He had experienced countless life-or-death battles, witnessing attacks a hundred times more powerful than this bullet; such an attack was like an ant trying to shake a tree to him.

He did not dodge. He

did not move. He

didn't even blink.

The bullet struck three inches in front of him, and a pale gray light screen suddenly appeared, thin as a cicada's wing and supple as flowing water, without any dazzling light, yet exuding an ancient and unchanging weight.

But the bullet, carrying terrifying kinetic energy, struck it as if hitting an indestructible stone wall, instantly stopping, deforming, flattening, and shattering.

It turned into a handful of brass fragments that fell silently, as if it had never been fired.

The light screen shimmered and then vanished, as if it had never existed, leaving only the faint scent of metallic fragments in the air, proving that what had just happened was not an illusion.

The entire scene was deathly silent.

The soldier who fired remained in his firing position, hands holding the gun, but his eyes were wide open, pupils dilated, his entire body frozen in place as if under a spell, his mind blank, even forgetting to breathe.

The weapons in the hands of the remaining dozen or so soldiers trembled slightly. Some gaped, their teeth chattering.

Some legs buckled, barely able to stand, their knees slightly bent. Others had unfocused pupils, rapid breathing, and nearly dropped their guns, their faces filled with horror and disbelief.

The refugees who had been crouching with their heads in their hands raised their heads, their numb, empty eyes now gleaming with an indescribable light—horror, trembling, hope, and awe.

Some couldn't help but gasp softly, their voices trembling. Others covered their mouths, tears streaming down their faces. Some collapsed to their knees, foreheads pressed against the sand, trembling all over.

Then, like dominoes, one figure after another knelt down.

The soldiers dropped their weapons, falling to their knees with a thud, foreheads pressed tightly to the sand, their bodies trembling like leaves in the wind.

The soldiers' voices were filled with extreme fear and utmost piety: "God... Divine Envoy! The Divine Envoy has descended! Divine Envoy, please forgive us! We were blind and offended your divine power!"

They had never seen such a bizarre sight; bullets could not harm it in the slightest. Such power could only belong to the legendary gods.

The refugees were already prostrate on the ground, not daring to raise their heads. Some even wept bitterly, kowtowing incoherently: "Divine Envoy! Divine Envoy, protect us! We beg the Divine Envoy to bless us! We beg the Divine Envoy to save us!"

On this land of despair, they had long placed all their hopes on the ethereal gods. At this moment, Kai's appearance was like a ray of light in the darkness, giving them a chance to survive.

Kai's brow furrowed almost imperceptibly.

He slightly raised his hand, his voice calm and clear, yet possessing an irresistible penetrating power, clearly reaching everyone's ears like a divine pronouncement: "Rise, all of you."

There was no superfluous emotional fluctuation, no feigned authoritative tone, yet those three simple words carried an innate pressure

. The soldier who fired the first shot looked up tremblingly, tears streaming down his face, his lips quivering, his voice hoarse: "Divine... Divine Envoy... I deserve to die... I didn't know it was you who descended..."

Kai's purple eyes fell calmly on him, his tone flat, without a trace of blame, yet carrying an undeniable authority: "I don't need an apology. Take me to see your Great Leader."

He needed to find out as soon as possible whether this Great Leader was a cultivator, and from what place.

The soldier shuddered, scrambling to his feet, bowing and scraping repeatedly, his back bent at almost a ninety-degree angle, his attitude extremely respectful: "Yes, yes! Divine Envoy, please come with me! The Great Leader is in the core city, I'll take you there right away!"

He turned and ran to a large, gray-green armored vehicle not far away, scrambling into the driver's seat, starting the engine. The armored vehicle emitted a muffled roar, and the body vibrated slightly.

The remaining soldiers, trembling with fear, opened the rear doors, bowed, and gestured for him to get in: "Your Excellency, please get in!"

Kai glanced at the boxy armored vehicle with metal wheels and raised an eyebrow slightly.

There were similar things in the mortal world, what were they called... armored vehicles?

He shook his head slightly, not getting in. His gaze swept across the distant helipad, and he asked casually, "Do you have any flying vehicles?" He could

fly thousands of miles in an instant; this armored vehicle was too slow for his needs. If he were to use it, it would take an unknown amount of time to reach the core city.

The soldier hesitated for a moment, then nodded vigorously, replying hastily, "Yes, yes! Your Excellency, please follow me!"

He dared not delay, quickly leading the way, his steps hurried, occasionally glancing back at Kai, afraid of displeasing the Divine Envoy.

Soon, a large, uniquely shaped flying vehicle slowly rose from a distant helipad and hovered before Kai.

The aircraft was enormous, entirely constructed of metal, with long wings extending from both sides.

Pale blue flames spewed from its tail, emitting a deep rumble. Its surface was covered with a dense network of pipes and instruments, exuding a strong sense of technology.

The hatch opened, and Kai stepped inside, his movements calm and unhurried.

The cabin was simply furnished, with rows of metal seats neatly arranged and round windows on either side offering views of the outside world. A faint smell of engine oil filled the air.

Kai chose a seat by the window, looking down at the land below, his purple eyes half-closed, his expression serene.

The soldiers inside stood ramrod straight, barely daring to breathe, their eyes filled with awe. They didn't even dare to look up at Kai, afraid of offending this unfathomable divine envoy.

The aircraft slowly ascended and accelerated, the massive metal city gradually shrinking and receding from view.

Kai could see towering metal towers densely packed together on the ground.

Each tower resembled a giant rocket thrust upside down into the ground, its base connected to a dense network of pipes and conveyor belts, with massive mechanical arms and sealed hatches vaguely visible at the top.

The sheer scale and number of these towers far exceeded Kai's initial estimates; as far as the eye could see, the land stretched for hundreds of miles, covered in similar steel structures.

Thousands upon thousands of metal towers, like a silent steel forest, exuded a cold and austere aura under the gray sky.

This scale was even more extravagant than the tallest buildings in the mortal world, more magnificent than any divine temple of the Twenty-First Heaven.

Every rivet, every weld, every pipe on those towers bore the marks of extremely precise industrial manufacturing.

They were products of a highly advanced technological civilization, completely different from the cultivation civilization Kai was familiar with, yet possessing a unique kind of awe.

The aircraft moved at a very slow speed at low altitude, its engines emitting a muffled hum, the fuselage slightly swaying.

Kai frowned slightly; this speed was practically crawling by a tortoise in the eyes of a cultivator.

In an hour, they only covered about 1,800 kilometers, less than a tenth of what he could achieve by flying.

He leaned back in his metal seat, his purple eyes half-closed, his divine sense constantly extending downwards to probe this unfamiliar land, trying to capture more information about this world.

Seeing Kai's calm expression, yet with a hint of impatience, the soldier beside him quickly stepped forward and respectfully asked, "My lord, do you have any orders?"

He was anxious, fearing that the speed of the aircraft was slowing down his lord.

Kai opened his purple eyes, looked at him calmly, and said in a composed tone, "How far is it from here to the core city? At this speed, how long will it take to arrive?"

He didn't deliberately show displeasure, but he exuded an inherent pressure that instantly made the soldier tense.

The soldier quickly bowed his head and replied cautiously, "Reporting to the Divine Envoy, we are still over five thousand li from here to the core city. At the speed of the aircraft, it will take approximately five more hours to arrive."

He had barely finished speaking when he saw Kai's brow furrow slightly, and his heart sank. He quickly added, "Divine Envoy, please forgive us, our aircraft is already the fastest vehicle in the Ash Land; we simply cannot increase its speed any further..."

Five hours.

Kai's heart stirred. This speed was undoubtedly a waste of time for him.

Having lived through countless ages, he was accustomed to flying thousands of miles in an instant. Being trapped in this slow aircraft was undeniably sluggish.

In this spiritless land, his power was unrestricted; his Chaos Origin was operating at full power, far exceeding the speed of these mortal technological vehicles. Why waste time here?

He slowly stood up, his gray robe fluttering gently in the cabin. His aura suddenly deepened, yet no spiritual energy leaked out.

The innate pressure emanating from him instantly caused all the soldiers in the cabin to kneel on the ground, trembling and afraid to raise their heads.

"Too slow,"

Kai said calmly, his voice not loud, but clearly reaching everyone's ears. "I don't have time to waste here."

With that, Kai moved swiftly, heading straight for the cabin door.

The soldiers, terrified, immediately kowtowed, pleading, "Divine Envoy, you mustn't! It's ten thousand meters above the ground outside the cabin! Jumping will mean certain death! Please, Divine Envoy, reconsider!"

They couldn't comprehend that for a mortal jumping from ten thousand meters, death was the only outcome, yet Kai's actions left them no room for doubt.

Kai ignored their pleas, gently waving his hand. The cabin door opened instantly, letting in a howling gust of wind carrying heavy industrial waste. The soldiers, terrified, rushed to the portholes and looked out. They saw Kai's figure hovering ten thousand meters in the air.

His clothes fluttered, his posture upright, like a god descending to earth. He stood steadily in the void, completely unprotected.

The next second, Kai raised his hand, palm upward. An invisible force surged forth, without dazzling light or overwhelming aura.

Yet, it caused the tens-of-tons-heavy aircraft to momentarily halt, its fuselage tilting slightly, as if supported by an invisible hand.

Kai's figure moved parallel to the aircraft, his purple eyes calm, and he spoke softly, his voice reaching the soldiers' ears through the cabin door: "Hold on tight."

As soon as he finished speaking, Kai's figure suddenly accelerated, a gray streak of light erupting as he propelled the aircraft forward at breakneck speed.

The speed far exceeded the aircraft's original limits, like a meteor streaking across the gray sky, the air around the fuselage instantly torn apart, emitting a piercing whistling sound.

The soldiers inside the cabin were violently thrown into their seats by the sudden acceleration, their hands gripping the armrests tightly, their faces pale, their eyes filled with horror and despair.

They could clearly feel the aircraft hurtling forward at a speed far beyond their comprehension.

The scenery outside the window rushed past, and what would normally be a five-hour journey was shortened infinitely by Kai's support.

Through the porthole, they saw Kai's figure speeding ahead, his gray robes fluttering, his posture upright, like a god who controlled the heavens and earth, while the aircraft they were riding was merely a toy in his hands.

Fear swept over all the soldiers like a tidal wave; they trembled, lost control of their bladders and bowels, and wet patches quickly spread across their groins, filling the cabin with a stench of blood.

Some couldn't help but scream, some covered their mouths to keep quiet, and some fainted. Even so, some still stared intently at Kai's figure ahead, their eyes filled with awe and reverence.

They had never imagined that such terrifying power existed in the world. A single person could lift a spacecraft weighing tens of tons, covering thousands of miles in an instant—such strength could only belong to a god.

In just a few minutes, they had traversed over five thousand miles.

Kai slowly came to a stop, gently lowering the spacecraft to a smooth landing on the helipad in the core city.

The cabin door opened, and Kai was the first to disembark. His gray robe was spotless, his breathing even, as if his actions had been nothing more than a casual gesture, showing no sign of fatigue.

The soldiers inside the cabin took a long time to recover. They slumped into their seats, soaked to the bone, pale-faced, their eyes vacant, as if they had survived a life-or-death ordeal.

They scrambled off the spacecraft, and upon seeing Kai, they instantly knelt on the ground, foreheads pressed to the earth, trembling uncontrollably.

Their voices, filled with extreme fear and piety, cried out, "Your Majesty, the Divine Envoy, your divine might is unparalleled! We were blind and ignorant, offending you unjustly. Please forgive us!"

Kai ignored their panic, merely raising his gaze to the towering skyscraper in the distance, a thoughtful glint in his purple eyes.

He could clearly sense a faint yet sharp aura emanating from that skyscraper, watching his direction with probing and scrutiny.

He walked slowly towards the skyscraper, his steps composed, his aura restrained, yet still exuding an air of superiority over all living beings.

The soldiers immediately rose, following respectfully behind him, daring not to show the slightest disrespect. They had already revered Kai as a god, daring not to disobey him in the slightest.

Seeing the soldiers' respectful demeanor and Kai's unique attire, the guards of the skyscraper all lowered their guard, bowing slightly in greeting. No one dared to approach to investigate, no one dared to ask a single question.

The elevator arrived at the top floor with lightning speed, almost imperceptible.

The doors opened, revealing a long corridor carpeted in dark red, leading to a massive metal door.

The door was engraved with intricate geometric patterns, with a palm-sized circular emblem embedded in its center. The emblem's appearance caused Kai to pause slightly.

Nine golden rays intertwined and circled, like nine blazing suns forming a circle, with a blurry vertical pupil at the very center.

He recognized this emblem from the ruins of the Celestial Pivot Clan's temple.

It was the iconic symbol of the gods, representing supreme authority and inviolable divine power. A sense

of unease crept into Kai's heart, but he remained outwardly calm.

He walked to the door, and the metal doors slid open silently and automatically.

Behind them was an extremely spacious top-floor hall, with floor-to-ceiling windows spanning the entire exterior wall, offering panoramic views of the city. In

the center of the hall sat a large black and gold table, behind which sat a middle-aged man in a dark gold robe.

The man appeared to be around fifty years old, with a handsome face, meticulously combed hair, and a neatly trimmed short beard.

His eyes were extremely sharp, carrying the composure and scrutiny characteristic of someone who had wielded power for many years.

The moment Kai entered, a faint golden light flashed deep within the man's eyes, then vanished almost instantly, so quickly that it seemed like an illusion.

Kai slightly raised his purple eyes, his gaze meeting the sharp eyes opposite him in a fleeting moment.

He could clearly sense a faint aura of divine laws emanating from this middle-aged man in a dark gold robe, though it was deliberately suppressed and concealed by some secret technique.

However, for Kai, who had already cultivated the Chaos Origin to perfection, that aura was like a candle flame in the darkness, impossible to hide.

The man sat behind a long black and gold table, his hands clasped on the surface, his expression remaining calm and composed.

His gaze swept over Kai, subtly probing with his divine sense to try and discern the uninvited guest's background.

When he sensed the perfectly balanced aura of chaotic origin surrounding Kai, a faint surprise flashed deep in his eyes, quickly transforming into an indescribable sense of apprehension and wariness.

"Who are you?"

the man asked, his voice low and cold, carrying the oppressive aura of a ruler with millennia of experience. "Why did you come to this world?"

Kai didn't answer his question. Instead, he took two slow steps forward, the hem of his gray robe brushing lightly against the carpet, making a soft rustling sound.

His pace was unhurried, yet it carried an invisible pressure, causing the air in the entire hall to stagnate slightly. His purple eyes remained fixed on Ye Mang's face, his gaze cold and icy, devoid of any emotion.

"A cultivator of the Divine Race,"

Kai said, his voice calm yet carrying an undeniable certainty, "Peak of the Third Grade of the Great Luo Golden Immortal, with an aura of oppression..." The man's expression shifted slightly, a golden glint flashing in his sharp eyes, like a wild beast whose sore spot had been struck.

He slowly rose to his feet, the hem of his dark gold robe trailing on the ground. His aura, no longer suppressed, emanated a golden divine radiance that slowly permeated the cold white light of the entire hall, bathing it in a pale gold glow. His

previously composed and refined middle-aged face now became cold and menacing, his brows displaying the unique arrogance and superiority of a divine cultivator.

"My affairs are none of your business,"

the man's voice deepened and chilled, his previous composed probing replaced by naked hostility and pressure. "But you, a mere cultivator who appeared out of nowhere, dare to trespass on my territory and be so presumptuous..."

His divine sense probed again, this time without concealment, using a unique divine detection technique to precisely and sharply pierce Kai's dantian, attempting to probe the other's true cultivation level.

Kai did not stop it, allowing the divine sense to probe into the outer edge of his origin, even deliberately releasing his aura as an eighth-grade Golden Immortal so that the other party could see it clearly.

The man sensed the aura, a flicker of surprise crossing his eyes, which quickly transformed into intense contempt and disdain.

A cold, mocking smile curved his lips: "Eighth-grade Golden Immortal? Ha... I thought it was some earth-shattering figure, capable of breaking through spatial barriers to enter this realm. Turns out, just a junior in the Golden Immortal realm."

He slowly emerged from behind the table, his dark gold robe fluttering wildly. His aura was no longer concealed; the overwhelming pressure of a peak third-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal surged forth like a tidal wave, causing the tables, chairs, and lamps in the entire hall to tremble slightly.

That pressure, imbued with the unique power of the divine race's laws, carried the domineering force that suppressed all laws and an unyielding majesty, crashing down on Kai like a tangible hammer.

"I've been in seclusion for a thousand years, too lazy to lift a finger. But since an ant has delivered itself to my doorstep, I'll use you to relieve my boredom." As

the man finished speaking, he suddenly raised his right hand, his five fingers spread wide, and a golden divine light, condensed to its extreme, burst forth from his palm, transforming into a blade of light. With a sharp aura capable of tearing through the void, it pierced straight towards Kai's chest.

This blade of light contained the full force of a peak third-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal, and contained the destructive characteristics of the divine laws.

Under this attack, even an ordinary Golden Immortal cultivator with a thousand supernatural powers and ten thousand protective secrets would only have their foundation pierced and die on the spot.

Kai stood still, his body completely unmoved, not even raising his eyes to look at the blade of light.

He simply raised his right hand casually and lightly clenched his five fingers.

The next instant, the golden blade of light, condensed to its extreme and capable of piercing mountains, suddenly stopped three inches away from Kai's palm.

As if gripped tightly by an invisible hand, it emitted a sharp, piercing buzzing sound, its golden light trembling violently and flickering erratically.

The man's pupils suddenly contracted.

Kai clenched his fists.

Crack.

The golden blade of light shattered like broken glass, turning into countless golden fragments that scattered and vanished into the air in the blink of an eye, without even a ripple spreading outwards.

"A third-grade Grand Luo Golden Immortal?"

Kai slowly raised his purple eyes, looking at Ye Mang's suddenly frozen face, his voice calm and undisturbed. "That's it?"

The moment his words fell, Kai's figure disappeared from the spot.

Without warning, without gathering power, without any sign of spiritual energy fluctuations, he vanished completely from Ye Mang's sight as if evaporated into thin air.

The man's hair stood on end, his Grand Luo Golden Immortal-level divine sense instantly expanding to its maximum, covering the entire hall, trying to capture the vanished figure.

But his divine sense found only emptiness, unable to find even the slightest trace of Kai, as if the other party didn't exist in this space at all.

The next instant, an overwhelming and irresistible force, as heavy as if the entire world were collapsing, suddenly descended upon the back of his neck.

A slender and powerful hand gently rested on the back of his neck, the five fingers loosely interlocking, the gray-purple chaotic power at the fingertips flickering uncertainly, like an invisible blade hanging over his throat.

The man's whole body stiffened, cold sweat instantly seeping down his back, even his breath caught in his throat for a moment.

He wanted to turn around, wanted to retaliate, wanted to unleash all his cultivation to blast away the person behind him, but the moment that hand touched him, a terrifying primal force, more than one or two levels higher than his own, formed an invisible net,

sealing off all his meridians, dantian, and divine foundation, preventing him from mobilizing even a trace of divine power.

"You..." The man's voice was filled with undisguised shock and rage, but his words were cut short as soon as they left his lips.

Because that hand tightened slightly, the gray-purple chaotic power at the fingertips acted like a tangible chain, gently gripping his throat, preventing him from uttering even a complete sentence.

Kai appeared behind the man, his gray robes fluttering, his purple eyes calm, looking down at this so-called Great Luo Golden Immortal whom he had completely suppressed with a single hand.

His tone remained calm, as if discussing a trivial matter: "I ask, you answer. If you utter another word of nonsense, you'll lose your ten thousand years of cultivation."

The man's pupils contracted sharply, extreme resentment and humiliation churning within his eyes, but the chaotic primordial power emanating from that hand made him clearly realize that

the young man before him, who appeared to be only at the eighth rank of the Golden Immortal realm, possessed a true combat strength far beyond what he could measure based on his perceived cultivation level.

That overwhelming sense of power, transcending ranks and ignoring the laws of nature, even reminded him of the ancient monsters he had encountered in the Twenty-Second Heaven.

"You... who exactly are you..." the man managed to squeeze out these words, his voice hoarse and trembling.

"You don't need to know,"

Kai said calmly. "I'm asking you, who are you? Why are you in this world? Why have you enslaved the mortals here for a thousand years? What are those so-called sacrificial towers doing?"

Ye Mang tensed, his golden eyes churning with complex emotions: humiliation, resentment, fear, and weighing his options... After a moment of silence, he finally spoke: "Who do you think you are? Who do you think you can..."

Kai didn't speak, but with a slight exertion of force, a highly condensed chaotic power pierced Ye Mang's meridians like a fine needle, precisely bypassing the core of his dantian and landing on the edge of his divine foundation.

The force wasn't heavy, but it carried a tearing pain, causing the man's body to tremble violently. A fine layer of cold sweat instantly seeped from his forehead, and his face turned deathly pale.

"I said, don't..." A wave of excruciating pain washed over his entire body. The man trembled violently, cold sweat dripping from his forehead and staining his dark gold robe.

He could clearly feel the chaotic power coursing through his meridians, each movement carrying a soul-tearing agony, as if it would utterly crush his divine foundation at any moment.

The threat of death had never felt so real.

He had lived for thousands of years, enduring the rigorous training and external trials of the divine race, never imagining that he would be so utterly suppressed on this barren wasteland by a young man whose cultivation seemed far inferior to his own, leaving him no room to resist.

The pride and resentment in his heart finally crumbled bit by bit in the face of extreme pain and the life-or-death crisis.

"I...I'll talk..."

The man's voice was hoarse, like a broken gong, each word seemingly squeezed out from between his teeth, carrying undisguised humiliation and fear. "Please...stop this power, and I'll tell you everything."

Kai's fingers loosened slightly, the tearing pain suddenly subsiding, but a trace of chaotic power remained locked on the man's divine foundation, ready to detonate at the slightest movement.

He slowly withdrew his hand, still standing behind Hao Yang, his purple eyes calm and undisturbed, yet carrying an undeniable pressure: "Speak."

The man slowly turned around, his once cold and arrogant face now as pale as paper, his golden eyes filled with exhaustion and apprehension.

He took a deep breath, suppressing the panic in his heart, and slowly spoke, his voice low and hoarse: "I am Haoyang, a disciple of the Haotian Divine Clan of the Twenty-Second Heaven.

A thousand years ago, the Twenty-Second Heaven was attacked by extraterrestrial forces. The battle was extremely fierce. Although we ultimately repelled the powerful extraterrestrial enemies, it also completely depleted the resources of the Twenty-Second Heaven, severed its spiritual veins, and made it impossible to support the cultivation and reproduction of cultivators of various races."

He paused, his gaze sweeping across the gray sky outside the window and the sacrificial tower emitting black smoke in the distance. A complex emotion flashed in his eyes, a mixture of resentment and helplessness: "In order to survive, the major divine races had

no choice but to turn their attention to those small realms that were lacking in resources or even spiritual energy.

Although these small realms lacked spiritual energy, they each had their own characteristics. Some contained special minerals, and some had unique creatures. And this Ash Earth was one of the targets we chose."

"Although this Ash Land lacks any spiritual energy, it possesses an extremely advanced technological civilization. Mortals can create 'Divine Fire Source Cores'—what you call nuclear bombs,"

Haoyang continued, his tone carrying a hint of disdain for mortals, yet also a hidden fear of this world. "We divine cultivators cannot directly absorb the spiritual energy of heaven and earth to cultivate in this spiritless land, but we discovered that the extreme energy produced by nuclear explosions can be transformed into the divine power we need through special techniques.

Thus, I was assigned here to enslave the people of Ash Land, forcing them to work day and night to create Divine Fire Source Cores, and then periodically detonate the sacrificial towers to collect nuclear energy and convert it into cultivation resources."

Upon hearing this, Kai's purple eyes flashed with understanding, followed by a hint of coldness.

He had also experienced the ferocity and terror of nuclear power in the Seven Star Continent ruins of the Twenty-First Heaven, but he never expected that this power would be targeted by the divine cultivators of the Twenty-Second Heaven, and used to enslave mortals and seek personal gain.

He asked in a deep voice, "I also saw traces of nuclear power in the Seven Star Continent ruins of the Twenty-First Heaven. How does your divine race control the technique for converting nuclear power? This technique is definitely not something that came out of thin air."

Upon hearing this, Hao Yang's expression suddenly changed. His previously relaxed expression instantly became tense, his lips pressed tightly together, and he remained silent.

The technique for converting nuclear energy was the core secret of the Haotian Divine Race, concerning the survival of the entire Twenty-Second Heaven. Even in the face of the threat of death, he would never dare to easily reveal it.

If the technique were leaked, not only would he be severely punished by the race, but the entire Haotian Divine Race might be plunged into crisis.

"What? You won't tell me?"

Kai raised an eyebrow slightly, his fingertips twitching slightly. The chaotic power locked on Hao Yang's divine foundation surged again, and a faint pain instantly spread, even more intense than before.

Hao Yang trembled, cold sweat pouring down his forehead again, but he still gritted his teeth and endured it, his voice trembling slightly but unusually firm: "I won't say a word! This is the top secret of my Haotian Divine Clan. Even if you kill me, I will never utter a single word!"

He paused, as if remembering something, a ruthless and threatening glint flashing in his eyes, "Don't think that killing me will give you control of everything!

Tomorrow, the divine envoy sent by the clan will arrive in the Ashes Land to collect the nuclear energy from this sacrifice. If I die, the divine envoy will notice something amiss and will definitely take action. At that time, the entire Ashes Land world will be reduced to ashes, and you will not escape death either!"

He stared intently at Kai, trying to force the other party to compromise with the life-or-death crisis: "You are just a cultivator who accidentally stumbled into this world, why must you be an enemy of my Haotian Divine Clan?

Why not stop here, I can report to the clan and grant you a nuclear energy resource so that you can cultivate peacefully in this world, how about it?"

Kai looked at his blustering appearance, his purple eyes showing no ripples, but instead slowly curving into a cold arc.

Having traversed countless realms and witnessed countless threats and schemes, how could he be deterred by mere intimidation?

Moreover, Haoyang had enslaved mortals for millennia, his hands stained with the blood and tears of countless people in the Ash Land; he deserved to die. The so-called divine messenger was nothing more than another pawn of the Haotian Divine Clan.

"No need,"

Kai said calmly, his tone resolute and unwavering. "Since you refuse to speak, I will not force you. But remember, tomorrow, I will let you see with your own eyes how I crush the divine messenger you speak of." With

that, Kai raised his hand, and a gray-purple chaotic power surged forth, transforming into an invisible chain that firmly bound Haoyang's limbs and bones.

This chain was not formed from spiritual power, but contained the power of the primordial chaos, specifically designed to counter the laws of the divine race.

Haoyang struggled a few times, only to find his divine power completely sealed, making even the slightest movement extremely difficult, let alone activating any techniques to resist.

"You... what do you want to do?" Hao Yang's face turned deathly pale upon seeing this, a sense of foreboding rising in his heart.

"What do I want to do?"

Kai sneered, his gaze sweeping over the sacrificial tower outside the window. "Naturally, I'm waiting for the divine envoy you speak of to arrive. I want to see just how capable the gods of the Twenty-Second Heaven are on this scorched earth."

Having said that, Kai ignored Hao Yang, turned, and walked to the floor-to-ceiling window, looking down at the core city below.

The entire city?