the mans Decree: Kai Ping/Chen Ping

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He could clearly feel the nuclear energy accumulating inside the sacrificial tower, waiting for the arrival of the divine envoy tomorrow to detonate the sacrifice and collect the energy.

Haoyang, bound by chains, watched Kai's retreating figure, his eyes filled with resentment and fear.

He knew that the arrival of the divine envoy tomorrow would inevitably lead to a fierce battle. If the envoy lost, not only would his life be in danger, but the secrets of the Haotian Divine Clan might also be exposed;

if the envoy won, he might be able to escape, but the strength of this young man before him was too strange, and he had no confidence whatsoever.

A night passed in the blink of an eye.

The entire night passed in silence.

As dawn broke, although the sky over the Ash Land never truly lit up, the artificial light sources on the distant tower gradually went out, signifying the arrival of a new day.

Kai slowly opened his purple eyes, clear and bright, showing no signs of fatigue from a sleepless night.

He stood up, his gray robe fluttering gently, his gaze falling on the hazy horizon outside the window.

"When will the divine envoy you spoke of arrive?" Kai asked, his voice calm.

Haoyang curled up on the ground, his cracked lips moving slightly, his hoarse voice trembling with a hint of schadenfreude: "It's almost time... On this day every month, the Divine Envoy will descend on time.

If you know what's good for you, release me from my restraints now, kneel down and beg for mercy, and perhaps the Divine Envoy will spare your corpse."

Kai didn't turn to look at him, only saying calmly, "You still don't understand the situation."

He raised his hand and waved it lightly, a gray-purple stream of light flashing from his fingertips and entering Haoyang's body.

Haoyang shuddered violently, feeling the power burrowing into his limbs and bones like a living thing, intensifying the already unbearable pain in his meridians, yet precisely avoiding his vital points, preventing him from even fainting.

The intense pain made him curl up into a ball, his teeth grinding, unable to utter another harsh word.

Just then, the sky above the entire core city suddenly lit up!

A dazzling, sacred, golden pillar of light suddenly descended from the very center of the gray sky!

The light was so intense, so blinding, that it dyed the entire gray expanse within a hundred miles into a golden glow, like a blazing sun bursting forth from the darkness, instantly shattering the millennia-old gloom of the scorched earth!

All the mortals on the ground looked up, the blinding golden light causing them to instinctively raise their hands to shield their eyes, yet the oppressive power contained within the light made their legs weak and their hearts tremble.

Almost everyone knelt on the ground at the same instant, foreheads pressed to the earth, trembling all over, murmuring, "God...the god has descended..."

The pillar of light slowly receded, and a figure stepped out from the sky.

It was a young man dressed in a pure white robe inlaid with gold, his face almost otherworldly handsome, his skin as white as jade, and his long hair cascading over his shoulders like a waterfall.

His body emanated an extremely dense aura of divine laws, far surpassing Hao Yang's deliberately concealed aura.

His eyes were pure gold, their gaze devoid of emotion as he looked down upon the world below, like a god scrutinizing ants—indifferent, cold, and aloof.

He stood suspended in mid-air, not even a ripple of spiritual energy emanating from his feet, as if the laws of this world were inherently obligated to bow down to him.

He slightly raised his hand, palm down, seemingly sensing the aura of this land, then his brow furrowed almost imperceptibly, his voice clear yet carrying a chilling edge: "Hao

Yang, why haven't the nuclear energy reserves been transferred this month? You—have been negligent?"

His voice wasn't loud, yet it pierced through the thick concrete walls of the core city, crossed the distance of a hundred-story building, and landed precisely in the hall where Kai was, clearly reaching every corner.

Haoyang, curled up on the ground, felt a complex mix of emotions flash across his eyes the moment he heard the voice—fear, awe, hope of being saved, and despair of being abandoned.

He abruptly looked up and hoarsely shouted towards the sky outside the window, "Divine Envoy, save me! Something has changed here! There's..."

His words trailed off as Kai's hand gently pressed against the top of his head, the gray-purple chaotic power pulsating uncertainly, capable of annihilating his soul with a mere flick of its wrist.

Kai slowly raised his head, his purple eyes meeting the cold, golden eyes above through the floor-to-ceiling window.

"A change?"

Above, the white-robed divine envoy's brow twitched slightly, his golden gaze falling on the highest floor-to-ceiling window in the core city.

He seemed to see Kai's figure and sensed the gray-purple chaotic power, so different from the laws of the gods. A faint surprise flickered in his golden pupils.

His gaze shifted to one of condescending scrutiny. "A wisp of primordial chaos? Interesting. Which realm are you from? Why are you here?"

Kai didn't speak, but simply waved his hand, causing the French windows to shatter instantly. Countless shards of glass swirled into the sky like fluttering silver butterflies.

He took a step forward, appearing outside the building, thousands of feet above the ground, facing the white-robed envoy.

His grey robes fluttered, his purple eyes were cold, and a grey-purple chaotic aura slowly spread around him, pulling the golden divine light-infused world back into a vast, gray gloom.

The white-robed envoy's brows finally furrowed truly. He scrutinized Kai, his golden divine sense probing him without hesitation.

A moment later, a slight smile appeared on his lips, revealing a hint of amusement: "Eighth-grade Golden Immortal? A Chaos Origin is somewhat rare, but with this level of cultivation, you're not even worthy to carry my shoes.

How did you injure Haoyang? What despicable methods did you use?"

Kai's purple eyes remained calm, not responding to his provocation, but simply asking, "Are you from the Haotian Divine Clan?"

The white-robed envoy raised an eyebrow slightly: "Oh? You even know about the Haotian Divine Clan? Looks like you

're not some nobody who stumbled upon this place. That's right, I am Hao Ling of the Haotian Divine Clan, responsible for collecting nuclear energy in this region for a thousand years. Tell me, how did you trespass into this realm? If you confess honestly, I can let you die a quick death."

Kai gently shook his head: "I don't want to hear your nonsense."

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

Without any warning, without any premonition of spiritual energy fluctuations, he disappeared completely from Hao Ling's sight as if he had evaporated into thin air.

Hao Ling's pupils suddenly contracted. His alertness, honed over thousands of years, made him almost instinctively unleash all his divine power. Golden divine radiance surged instantly, condensing into an incomparably thick barrier of divine light around him!

This barrier contained the full defense of a fourth-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal, enough to withstand a full-force attack from an ordinary fifth-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal! Boom!!!

A burst of gray-purple chaotic power erupted, like an ancient volcano suddenly erupting. The terrifying power instantly shattered, disintegrating, and annihilating the golden divine light surrounding Hao Ling's body!

Hao Ling's pupils dilated sharply, his composure and calmness completely shattered, replaced by utterly incomprehensible horror!

His body was slammed down from a great height like a kite with a broken string. His pure white robe, inlaid with gold, tore and fluttered in the air, golden divine blood gushing from the corner of his mouth, scattering across the sky in a dazzling yet tragic golden arc.

Bang!!!

His body crashed heavily onto a scorched wasteland outside the core city, creating a massive crater tens of feet deep. The earth cracked, dust filled the sky, and the ground for miles around trembled violently.

Kai's figure slowly descended, his gray robe billowing, his purple eyes calm, as if he had dealt with an insignificant insect.

He landed at the edge of the pit, looking down at the white-robed figure at the bottom, covered in blood, whose golden divine light had dimmed to almost extinguished.

Hao Ling lay at the bottom of the pit, panting heavily, golden divine blood constantly gushing from his mouth and nose.

Most of his meridians had been shattered and torn apart by the gray-purple chaotic power, his divine foundation was cracked, his dantian was in turmoil, and his cultivation of a fourth-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal was leaking out like a sieve.

He stared intently at the gray figure above the pit, his golden eyes filled with horror, fear, and incomprehensible bewilderment.

"You...who exactly are you..."

Hao Ling's voice was hoarse and trembling, no longer displaying the indifference and arrogance of before. "Your cultivation is clearly...clearly only at the Golden Immortal Realm..."

"Cultivation doesn't represent everything,"

Kai said calmly, stepping into the pit and landing in front of Hao Ling. His purple eyes looked down at him. "I'll give you a chance. Tell me, how did you, the Haotian Divine Clan, obtain the technique for converting nuclear energy?"

Hao Ling's pupils contracted sharply, and his lips moved slightly.

He wanted to beg for mercy, wanted to confess everything, but in that instant, something even deeper than fear flashed in his eyes.

Something more terrifying than death.

His lips trembled a few times, finally pressing tightly together. He turned his face away, his voice hoarse yet carrying a hint of resolute determination: "I...will not tell. That is the Haotian Divine Clan's top secret. If I reveal even a fraction of it, my soul will be eternally condemned to hell, never to be reborn..."

Kai's purple eyes narrowed slightly; he could clearly sense the deep-seated fear in Hao Ling's words.

The fear didn't stem from Kai's threat, but from some ancient, inviolable contract or curse, etched deep within his soul, a fate from which there was no escape once triggered.

He nodded slightly, not pressing further.

Those forbidden chains couldn't be broken by torturing the body; forcibly applying pressure might trigger a backlash, causing him to completely lose all his information.

"I understand,"

Kai's voice was calm and even. "I won't force you to speak."

Hao Ling suddenly looked up, a flicker of surprise in his eyes, seemingly not expecting Kai to let him off so easily. Kai

leaned slightly forward, his purple eyes meeting Hao Ling's unfocused golden eyes, his voice clear and resolute: "You will witness firsthand how I utterly destroy all the arrangements your Haotian Clan has made in the Ashes Land."

Kai slowly straightened up, his purple eyes shifting from Hao Ling's pale face to the distant, endless steel forest.

Thousands upon thousands of sacrificial towers stood silently, cold, and imbued with the accumulated sins and bloodshed of millennia.

He could clearly sense the scorching, violent nuclear core deep within each tower, like countless beating hearts awaiting the next sacrifice.

Kai raised his right hand, his five fingers slowly spreading.

Grayish-purple chaotic power condensed in his palm, without any earth-shattering phenomena or dazzling light, only a deep, abyss-like grayish-purple halo slowly flowing between his fingers.

That power was not ostentatious, yet it exuded an ultimate aura of the return of all things to nothingness and the annihilation of all laws, making the air within a hundred miles slightly heavy.

"What are you doing!"

Hao Ling's hoarse and terrified voice came from the bottom of the pit. "There are tens of thousands of mortal laborers in those sacrificial towers! If you destroy them all..."

"They will be fine."

Kai interrupted him calmly, his purple eyes steady and confident. "I can make all of them leave instantly."

Hao Ling's pupils dilated suddenly, and he froze on the spot as if struck by lightning.

He turned his head sharply to look at the sacrificial towers that still stood under the gray sky in the distance, his divine sense rapidly spreading to investigate. Then his face turned ashen, his lips trembled violently, and he couldn't utter a single word.

All the towers were indeed empty.

He hadn't expected Kai to have such supernatural power, making tens of thousands of people disappear into thin air in an instant.

Hao Ling didn't know that Kai possessed the origin of space, and in addition, he had the Demon-Suppressing Tower.

To instantly transfer tens of thousands of mortals was as easy as turning his hand.

Kai said no more, his palm clenching tightly. A low, almost silent hum spread from the void, causing the entire earth to tremble violently!

Grayish -purple chaotic power, like invisible ripples, rapidly spread from Kai's center, radiating for thousands of miles, penetrating the earth, and precisely striking the violently scorching nuclear core deep within each sacrificial tower! The next instant! Almost simultaneously, a grayish-purple pillar of light exploded within thousands of sacrificial towers! The pillar of light shot into the sky from the depths of the tower's base, piercing through the thick metal tower body, tearing apart layers of sealed mechanical structures, and instantly igniting, detonating, and annihilating the nuclear core that had been condensing for months or even years! Boom!! Boom!! Boom!! Countless grayish-purple explosive pillars of light, like ten thousand swords unleashed simultaneously, shot into the sky from all directions, tearing the entire gray sky into countless fragments. Those millennia-old steel towers crumbled layer by layer, shattering into pieces amidst the gray-purple light, as if crushed from within by an invisible giant hand, turning into countless steel fragments and flying dust that scattered across the earth. Dust blotted out the sun, and the earth roared. The entire wasteland trembled. After a series of explosions lasting for dozens of breaths, the world finally returned to silence. Thick smoke drifted slowly like a curtain above the gray sky, and the millennia-old sacrificial towers had all been reduced to ruins, utterly vanished. Only charred remains of the foundations and scattered metal fragments remained on the earth. Gugen stood at the forefront of the crowd, his withered hand still clutching the rough wooden stick.

His cloudy eyes were fixed on the ruins, his lips trembling violently, tears silently streaming down his deeply lined, aged face.

"Gone... those towers... really gone..."

His voice was hoarse and choked with sobs, carrying an unreal quality, like a dream.

Behind him, men and women, young and old, thousands upon thousands of mortals from the Ashlands, were all silent.

No one cheered, no one shouted; they simply stared blankly as the steel forest that had oppressed their ancestors for generations turned to ruins, their bodies trembling.

Tears streamed down their faces; some knelt on the ground, some wept bitterly, some cried out to the heavens, but no sound came out.

The heavy shackles that had accumulated for millennia, seeping into their blood, seemed to finally crack at this moment.

Then, something no one had anticipated happened.

Above, the gray sky that had remained unchanged for countless years began to slowly crack open.

The thick, almost tangible artificial shadow, the gray curtain formed by industrial dust and the seals of law, split open like a torn old cloth, a narrow crack appearing in the center.

From this crack, a warm golden light poured down, falling upon the ruins, upon the faces of every mortal in the scorched earth.

It was—sunlight.

Real, blazing, life-filled sunlight, as if descending upon this land for the first time since time immemorial.

Gently yet firmly, it pierced through the crack, sprinkling onto every inch of scorched earth.

Gugen slowly raised his head, his cloudy eyes squinting from the blinding sunlight, tears flowing even faster.

He stretched out his withered, trembling hand, opening his fingers to meet the sunlight; golden spots of light fell on his rough palm, warm, real, with a temperature he had never experienced before.

"This...this is..."

Gu Gen's voice trembled uncontrollably, "It's the sun...it's the sun!"

The thousands of mortals behind him, like slumbering monks awakened from their slumber, raised their heads one by one to meet the sunlight descending from the sky. Their eyes, numb for millennia, burst forth with a scorching, intense, and dazzling light.

Some wept loudly, some laughed wildly with joy, some knelt and kowtowed, some roared to the heavens. Emotions suppressed for millennia poured out like a torrent.

"Dawn! Dawn has finally broken!"

"The sun! It's the sun! We, the Ashes, have a sun!"

"Those towers are gone...the divine fire is gone...dawn has broken!"

Cheers, cries, and wild laughter mingled together, like an unprecedented symphony, echoing endlessly across the ruins, under the sunlight, and on the land torn apart by a thousand years of gloom.

Ten thousand feet above, Kai stood calmly, his purple eyes looking down at the boiling earth below, his gray robe fluttering gently in the breeze.

He didn't speak, only silently watching the jubilant mortals, watching their faces rise from despair, a slight softening stirring deep within his heart.

He too had once been a mortal, yet now he was a god in their eyes, towering high in the sky.

Kai reached out, and Hao Ling was lifted up and instantly transported into the building.

Hao Yang, watching the divine messenger being carried like a dog by Kai, was deeply shocked.

Kai threw Hao Ling to the ground.

Hao Ling and Hao Yang were like two soulless shells, their faces ashen.

They looked up at the sunlight descending from the sky, at the ruins of the sacrificial towers in the distance, their golden eyes filled with a deathly despair.

It was over.

Everything was over.

A thousand years of painstaking effort had been destroyed in an instant, the nuclear energy array had collapsed, and the sacrificial system had been utterly annihilated.

Even if they managed to return alive to the Haotian God Clan in the Twenty-Second Heaven, only the most severe punishment awaited them.

At best, they would be stripped of their cultivation and cast into reincarnation; at worst, their souls would be annihilated, condemned to eternal damnation.

They could never go back.

Never again.

Hao Ling's lips trembled violently, golden divine blood spilling from the corners of his mouth once more. He slowly turned his head to look at the gray-robed figure in mid-air, his hoarse voice trembling with an almost pleading tone: "You...who exactly are you...which force sent you?

The Tianyan Ancient Clan? Or the Xuanming Ancient Clan? They've long coveted my Haotian Divine Clan's nuclear energy conversion technique. You're their spy sent to steal it, aren't you?"

Kai's purple eyes calmly met Hao Ling's gaze: "No. I come from the Twenty-First Heaven, merely a cultivator from the lower realm."

Hao Ling was first taken aback, then... He shook his head violently, his golden eyes filled with disbelief: "Impossible! The void barrier between the twenty-first and twenty-second heavens was completely sealed a thousand years ago!

Apart from the Eye of the Void, there is no other passage to cross the levels!

And the opening of the Eye of the Void requires the simultaneous resonance of the primal power of the seven great ruins of the Seven Star Continent.

The Tian Shu Continent of the Seven Star Continent is firmly controlled by the three divine races, and those three families would never tolerate anyone touching the core of the ruins! How could you possibly..."

His words stopped abruptly, because Kai's lips curled into a very faint smile.

"The three divine races of the Tian Shu Continent?"

Kai said calmly, "They have already been destroyed by me. The three clan leaders, one sword each, all perished in ten breaths. The primal power of the seven ruins has also been completely refined by me."

Hao Ling's pupils suddenly contracted to their extreme, his pale face filled with unbelievable horror.

He stared intently at Kai, his golden divine sense surging out uncontrollably, recklessly piercing the edge of the chaotic origin surrounding Kai, trying to find any trace of his lie.

But when his divine sense touched the depths of Kai's dantian, he clearly sensed a primal force identical to the nuclear energy he had collected and refined over a thousand years.

That force gently and steadily resided deep within the chaotic origin, peacefully slumbering as if it had found its home.

Hao Ling trembled, as if all his strength had been drained, collapsing to the ground, golden divine blood dripping from the corner of his mouth, but he didn't even have the strength to lift his hand to wipe it away.

"You...you really...you really can absorb nuclear energy..."

His voice was faint and trembling, like a murmur, "Chaotic origin...the origin of all things...so that's how it is...so that's how it is..."

Kai looked down at him, his purple eyes cold: "I have answered your question. Now..." He took a deep breath, raised his pale face, and met Kai's cold purple eyes. His voice was hoarse and weary: "You...are you really willing to help me remove the soul restriction?"

Kai looked down at him, his face expressionless: "I keep my word."

Hao Ling's lips moved, his Adam's apple bobbing up and down, before he finally spoke with difficulty: "That restriction...was personally imprinted on my soul's origin by the patriarch of the Haotian Divine Clan.

Its function is not only to prevent leaks, but also a location marker and detonation device.

Once I voluntarily reveal core secrets, the restriction will detect the anomaly and instantly detonate my soul, causing..." " My body and soul will be annihilated.

And if I try to forcefully break the restriction in any way, it will also alert the soul lamp of the Haotian God Clan

. At that time, the clan elders will know immediately, and they will remotely activate the restriction to directly obliterate me." He paused, a deep-seated fear flashing in his golden eyes: "So... this matter must be kept 'invisible' to the Haotian God Clan.

We must not only remove the restriction, but also ensure that the soul lamp of the Haotian God Clan does not sense any abnormality during the removal process.

Otherwise, whether we succeed or not, I will surely die."

Kai lowered his purple eyes, his mind sinking into thought.

He had seen countless restrictions in his cultivation so far, but this kind of locking soul restriction that is connected to the primordial soul lamp and triggered remotely across levels is indeed quite troublesome.

If he simply tried to break it by force, his chaotic origin would be enough to crush it, but the price of doing so would be triggering an alarm and killing Hao Ling on the spot.

He closed his eyes, his mind sinking deep into his dantian. The chaotic origin surged and circulated like a vast ocean, countless solutions rapidly deduced, collided, and were eliminated within his sea of consciousness.

A faint gray-purple chaotic power flowed around him, making the air in the entire hall heavy and oppressive.

Hao Ling curled up on the ground, barely daring to breathe, staring intently at Kai's calm and composed face, his eyes filled with both anticipation and trepidation.

After a long while, Kai slowly opened his eyes, his purple pupils surging with a profound light: "Simply dismantling it with brute force isn't difficult, but to do it silently, without being detected by the outside world... is indeed not easy.

I need something that can form an isolation barrier on the outer layer of your soul restriction, temporarily severing the legal connection between the restriction and the Haotian Divine Clan's soul lamp.

As long as that connection is temporarily isolated, I can completely erase the restriction without being noticed."

Hao Ling suddenly looked up, a glint of light flashing in his eyes: "Yes! There is something that can do that!"

Kai's purple pupils narrowed slightly: "What is it?"

"The 'Mysterious Heaven Soul-Severing Jade' of the Twenty-Second Heaven!"

Hao Ling's voice was urgent and excited. "It's a rare divine material produced deep within the territory of the Xuanming Ancient Clan in the Twenty-Second Heaven, naturally possessing the miraculous effect of isolating the transmission of divine soul laws.

As long as the Soul-Severing Jade is refined into a thin sheet using a special method and attached to the outer layer of the divine soul restriction, it can completely block all connections between the restriction and the outside world. Even the soul lamp of the Haotian Divine Clan patriarch cannot sense it at all!"

He paused, then his face showed difficulty: "But... the Mysterious Heaven Soul-Severing Jade comes from the secret realm of the Xuanming Ancient Clan." Deep within, ordinary cultivators cannot even approach, let alone obtain.

I only heard about it by chance at a trade banquet between the Haotian Divine Clan and the Xuanming Ancient Clan years ago, but I have never seen the actual object.

Kai's expression remained unchanged, he simply nodded: "It's alright. Since we know what it is, we'll always find a way to get it. Take me to the Twenty-Second Heaven."

Hao Ling trembled violently, his golden pupils suddenly contracting: "You...you really want to go to the Twenty-Second Heaven? Do you know that's Haotian Divine Clan territory? Once discovered..."

“I was going anyway,”

Kai interrupted him, his purple eyes cold and resolute. “It’s just a matter of time. You lead the way, I’ll take care of the supplies.

After the restriction is lifted, you tell me the origin of the *Primordial Core Refining Technique*. After that, whether you stay or leave, I won’t interfere.”

Hao Ling stared blankly at Kai’s deep and determined purple eyes, his lips twitching slightly before he finally lowered his head in despair, his hoarse voice carrying a resigned sigh: “Fine... I’ll take you.”

Kai turned and walked to the French windows, looking down at the core city gradually awakening in the sunlight.

The gray gloom was slowly receding, and large swaths of golden sunlight spilled onto the streets, rooftops, and ruins. Countless mortals of the Ash Earth were still immersed in the ecstasy of the millennium’s gloom being torn apart.

Some knelt and kowtowed, some embraced and wept, some looked up at the sun with outstretched arms, as if to embrace all the light they had never seen before in their lives.

He turned his head slightly, his purple eyes falling on the ancient root at the edge of the ruins in the distance.

The aged figure leaned on a wooden cane, his hunched body casting a long shadow in the sunlight. Tears welled in his cloudy eyes, yet they held an unprecedented peace and serenity.

Kai withdrew his gaze, his voice calm yet carrying a barely perceptible warmth: "The matter of Jintu is over. They are their own masters now."

He raised his hand and gently waved it, a wisp of grayish-purple chaotic primordial power piercing through the void like an invisible thread, silently entering Gu Gen's withered body.

That power was thin yet gentle, capable of nourishing the body and prolonging life, ensuring the old man would not be tormented by illness for the rest of his days.

Then, Kai turned, raising his palm, and grayish-purple light enveloped Hao Ling's body, temporarily releasing a tiny fraction of his sealed divine power, enough to maintain his basic mobility, while still firmly locking away his core cultivation.

"Let's go," Kai said calmly.

He strode out of the hall, his grey robes billowing, his figure soaring into the sky like a grey-purple streak of light tearing through the heavens, disappearing into the azure expanse.

Hao Ling followed closely behind, his golden divine radiance dimmed considerably, yet he still managed to keep pace with Kai's speed.

Below, countless mortals of the Ash Land looked up, watching the grey-purple figure break through the clouds and disappear into the gradually blue sky.

Some cried out, some knelt in worship, some raised their hands above their heads and shouted, "The Divine Envoy is gone! The Divine Envoy has left the heavens to us!"

Gu Gen stood at the forefront of the crowd, his dry lips slightly parted, his cloudy, tearful eyes gazing at the departing grey-purple streak of light, murmuring softly, "He's not the Divine Envoy... he's our Ash Land's savior. A living, true savior..."

The young man beside him chimed in, "Master Gu, how... how can we remember him? What will we do in the future?"

Gu Gen raised his withered hand to wipe the tears from his face, his cloudy... Several days later, in the central square of the core city, a towering stone statue, dozens of feet high, rose from the ground.

The statue, clad in a long robe, possessed a handsome face and deep purple eyes. Its left hand was behind its back, while its right hand pointed upwards, as if pointing to the once-gloomy, now-bright blue sky.

Engraved on the base of the statue were several lines of rough yet powerful characters: " Kai, Savior of the Ash Land. A thousand years of gloom dispelled in a single day, a clear sky opened for ten thousand miles."

Millions of years later, the Ash Land world had long since regained its vibrant life, with lush trees, crisscrossing rivers, and all things growing.

Yet, the stone statue still stood in the center of the core city, weathered by wind and frost yet unyielding.

Every generation of Ash Land children heard the same name, the same story, from their elders' tales.

How that gray-robed young man who descended from the sky destroyed the sacrificial tower that had oppressed for millennia, how he tore apart the shadows that had obscured the sun, and how he returned the true sun to the people of Ash Land.

His name was written into the annals of Jintu, etched into the bloodline of Jintu, and fused into the faith of Jintu. Through

billions of years of rise and fall, Jintu has seen countless rulers and countless social forms, yet the incense before that stone statue has never ceased.

Every Jintu person, in their most desperate moments, would come before the statue and whisper, "Savior, please protect me..."

Kai, however, knew nothing of this.

At this moment, he and Hao Ling were suspended side-by-side before the void barrier at the edge of the Jintu realm.

Ahead lay a gray-black chaotic illusion, beyond which lay the boundary of the Twenty-Second Heaven.

He could clearly feel the ancient law patterns flowing upon that barrier—more profound, more majestic, and more inviolable than those of the Twenty-First Heaven.

Kai slowly raised his hand, his palm pressing against that invisible barrier. His purple eyes reflected the golden divine light shimmering deep within the barrier and the dark spatial rifts, a cold and resolute smile curving his lips.

"The Twenty-Second Heaven, here I come."

The barrier of the Twenty-Second Heaven was far thicker than Kai had imagined.

The moment his palm touched the layer of gray-black chaotic mist, a vast, almost stagnant power of law surged forth like an ancient glacier, attempting to repel his divine consciousness and physical body entirely.

The ancient and majestic patterns flowing across the barrier contained a will of heaven and earth far exceeding that of the Twenty-First Heaven, as if the entire celestial realm was warning all beings attempting to cross it.

Kai's purple eyes narrowed slightly, and the Chaos Origin surged within his body. A gray-purple wave of energy erupted from his palm, like an invisible blade slicing into the barrier.

He did not forcibly tear the barrier apart—the resulting fluctuations would be too violent, inevitably alerting the guardians at the boundary of the Twenty-Second Heaven.

Instead, with the unique inclusiveness of the Chaos Origin, he permeated, assimilated, and merged layer by layer, silently dissolving into the labyrinth of laws like a stream flowing into the sea.

Hao Ling watched in stunned silence.

He had lived for thousands of years and had traveled between the Twenty-Second Heaven and the Ash Earth many times. Each time he crossed the barrier, he had to expend a great deal of divine power and rely on a specially made teleportation talisman from his clan to barely pass.

Yet this young man before him had merged into the barrier as effortlessly as a fish entering water, without even stirring a ripple of law.

"Let's go,"

Kai said calmly, waving his hand. A gray-purple light swept up Hao Ling, and the two instantly disappeared into the depths of the barrier.

After a brief darkness, their vision suddenly opened up.

A dense spiritual energy rushed towards them, surging into every pore as if it were tangible.

Kai narrowed his eyes slightly, sensing the spiritual energy of heaven and earth, nearly ten times denser than that of the Twenty-First Heaven, and a slight thought crossed his mind.

Cultivating here would indeed be twice as effective, but when he extended his divine sense again, sweeping across the thousands of miles of heaven and earth, his brows furrowed slightly.

Although the spiritual energy was dense, the signs of depleted spiritual veins on the earth were clearly visible.

On the distant mountains, the spiritual fields that should have been teeming with countless immortal herbs were now barren and cracked;

in the valleys that once yielded abundant spirit stone veins, only exposed brown rock layers and weathered slag remained;

the streams that should have flowed with spiritual springs had dried up completely, leaving only withered, yellow riverbeds winding their way through.

The air was thick with spiritual energy, yet it was like a rootless plant, water without a source, possessing concentration but lacking the power of a continuous cycle.

"You see?"

Hao Ling noticed Kai's expression and spoke bitterly, "The spiritual energy of the Twenty-Second Heaven is indeed rich, but it's merely the remnant of the great battle years ago.

The spiritual veins are broken, the immortal herbs have withered, the spirit stone mines are exhausted—everything is only going out and not coming in.

Relying solely on absorbing the spiritual energy of heaven and earth for cultivation, a Golden Immortal cultivator can hardly advance a step in a thousand years, and a Great Luo Golden Immortal can hardly make any progress at all.

Those resource-rich small realms are our last straw."

Kai didn't reply, his purple eyes surging with a deep light.

He needed to find Jiang Xuelan, Xuanzhenzi, and the others as soon as possible . He

also didn't know if Ning Zhi and Su Yuqi had arrived in the Twenty-Second Heaven.

The void passage was unstable due to the lack of power, and perhaps they had been teleported to other worlds.

Regardless, Kai needed to find them first; he wasn't in a hurry for the Xuan Tian Soul-Severing Jade.

"Is there a Void Merchant Guild in the Twenty-Second Heaven?" Kai asked.

Hao Ling hesitated for a moment, then nodded: "Yes. The Void Merchant Guild has branches in various major cities of the Twenty-Second Heaven, but due to resource scarcity, the guild no longer engages in resource trading, relying solely on selling intelligence and information to maintain its operations.

It's said that several reclusive old monsters are backing the guild, and even the major divine races dare not easily provoke them."

"Take me there,"

Kai said calmly, yet with an undeniable certainty. "I need to find out the whereabouts of a few people."

Hao Ling didn't dare ask further questions and quickly activated his mostly sealed divine power, leading the way.

The two transformed into streaks of light, one gray and one gold, sweeping across the barren, cracked mountains and rivers, speeding northeastward.

After flying for about two hours, a majestic city appeared in their sight.

The city walls, forged from dark golden divine iron, soared into the clouds, their surfaces covered with the mottled marks left by the erosion of time.

Divine cultivators guarded the city gates; though their clothes were elegant and their bearing extraordinary,

Kai could clearly sense that the divine power within these guards was generally mixed and unstable, clearly lacking stable resources for nourishment; their cultivation was high in theory but low in foundation.

Hao Ling stepped forward and exchanged a few words. The guards glanced at Kai, their gazes carrying a hint of scrutiny and wariness.

However, after sensing the restrained yet profound chaotic aura surrounding Kai, they did not make things difficult for him. The streets were bustling with pedestrians, dressed in various attire. There were cultivators of the divine race, faces of other races, and even a few beings with extremely obscure auras, seemingly not belonging to this world, hurrying past.

Everyone was in a hurry, their faces solemn, and a tense, oppressive atmosphere permeated the air.

Hao Ling navigated the streets and alleys with practiced ease, finally stopping in front of a gray-white three-story building.

Above the building hung an old wooden plaque with four dark gold ancient characters—"Void Merchant Guild."

The paint on the edges of the plaque was peeling and faded, but the characters remained clear and sharp, exuding a sense of calm and mystery honed by time.

"This is it,"

Hao Ling said softly. "However, the Chamber of Commerce has strict rules; they only recognize money, not people. If you want to gather information, you'll need to prepare enough 'Eternal Spirit Stones.'"

Eternal Spirit Stones are the current currency of the Twenty-Second Heaven. They are pale golden crystals formed from the residual pure spiritual energy of heaven and earth. Although far less precious than ancient spirit stones, they are still an indispensable hard currency in transactions between various forces.

Kai didn't have any, but he reached into his robes and took out a nuclear energy crystal he had casually collected in the core city of the Ash Earth.

It was a small mass of compressed nuclear energy that he had extracted from the aftershocks of the Sacrifice Tower explosion, sealed with the origin of chaos, and extremely pure.

"Is this enough?" Kai handed the pale blue crystal to Hao Ling.

Hao Ling took it and probed it with his divine sense. His expression changed instantly.

Although the mass of nuclear energy was small, its purity was astonishing, far exceeding the average level of nuclear energy he had collected over the past thousand years. It would definitely fetch a high price in the Twenty-Second Heaven.

He nodded repeatedly, "That's enough, more than enough."

The two entered the Void Merchant Guild.

The main hall was small and simply furnished, with a long, gray-black table in the center.

Behind the table sat an elderly man with white hair and beard, his face thin, his eyes cloudy yet unusually sharp.

His aura was unremarkable, but when Kai's divine sense touched half an inch around the old man, he sensed a nearly transparent shield of laws that silently blocked his probe.

Kai's heart skipped a beat; this old man was definitely not as ordinary as he appeared.

"What do you need, sir?"

The old man looked up at Kai, his cloudy gaze lingering on him for a moment before shifting to Hao Ling. A subtle ripple flashed in his eyes, but it quickly returned to calm.

Kai stepped forward, placing the nuclear energy crystal on the table, and got straight to the point: "I need to inquire about a few people. They recently fell from the void turbulence and are likely scattered throughout the Twenty-Second Heaven.

One woman, with ice-type bloodline and stunning beauty; one man, a demonic cultivator; another woman, with fire-type bloodline; an elderly Taoist priest, a sword cultivator; and seven young women."

The old man's gaze fell on the nuclear energy crystal on the table, a glint of light flashing in his cloudy eyes.

He then nodded slightly, extending a withered finger to gently press on the crystal, closing his eyes in silence for a moment.

When he opened his eyes again, the crystal had vanished, replaced by a wisp of extremely fine golden light that entered his brow.

"Please wait a moment."

The old man slowly rose, turned, and disappeared through a hidden door behind him.

The hall fell silent. Hao Ling stood beside Kai, not daring to breathe.

He would occasionally steal glances at Kai's profile, only to see his purple eyes calm and still, revealing no trace of anxiety or anticipation, as if everything in the world was under his control.

After about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, the old man emerged again from the hidden door, holding a pale golden jade slip.

He placed the jade slip on the table, his cloudy gaze falling on Kai: "I've found several pieces of information about the guest. However... the price will need to be increased."

Kai then took out a nuclear energy crystal and placed it on the table.

The old man nodded slightly, pushing the jade slip towards him. His voice was calm and even: "The female cultivator you're looking for has indeed been found.

Three days ago, near the 'Blood Abyss Rift Valley' outside Haoyue City in the southwest, a patrol team belonging to the 'Blood Refining Divine Sect' captured a female cultivator from elsewhere.

This woman's cultivation level isn't high, roughly a first-grade Grand Luo Golden Immortal, but she possesses the extremely rare 'Mysterious Ice Dao Body,' with pure blood and solidified origin, perfectly matching the 'Crimson Sun Melting Fire Technique' that the Blood Refining Divine Sect's sect leader is currently cultivating.

The sect leader was overjoyed upon hearing this and has ordered an auspicious day to cultivate and fuse with the woman, using the Mysterious Ice Dao Body to harmonize the Crimson Sun Technique, hoping to break through the fourth-grade Grand Luo Golden Immortal barrier."

When Kai heard the words "Mysterious Ice Dao Body," his purple eyes suddenly narrowed.

Jiang Xuelan.

It must be her.

The old man continued, "According to information gathered by the Chamber of Commerce, the Blood Refining Divine Sect's sect leader has imprisoned the female cultivator in the sect's core forbidden area, the 'Crimson Flame Heavenly Prison,' guarded day and night by several Grand Luo Golden Immortal elders, with Grand Luo Golden Immortal protectors stationed on the outer perimeter.

Although the Blood Refining Divine Sect's strength isn't top-tier in the Twenty-Second Heaven, the sect leader himself already possesses the cultivation of a fourth-grade Grand Luo Golden Immortal, and the sect's protective array is an ancient inheritance, making it difficult for ordinary cultivators below the fifth grade of Grand Luo Golden Immortal to force their way in."

Kai's expression remained calm, though the chaotic energy around him surged slightly before quickly returning to its steady state.

He slowly asked, "Where is the Blood Refining Divine Sect located? What is the exact location of the Crimson Flame Heavenly Prison?"

The old man glanced at Kai, a scrutinizing and curious glint in his cloudy eyes, as if assessing whether this young cultivator dared to venture into the Blood Refining Divine Sect's territory to rescue the woman.

He didn't ask any further questions, but simply reached out again: "This is the price for another piece of information."

Kai took out the nuclear energy crystal for the third time and placed it on the table.

The old man accepted it, his withered fingers lightly tracing the jade slip. The characters on the jade slip's surface subtly shifted, transforming into a clear line of coordinates and a topographical map.

The Blood Refining Divine Sect was located deep within the Blood Abyss Rift Valley, tens of thousands of miles to the southwest. The Crimson Flame Heavenly Prison was built in a magma cave at the very bottom of the rift valley.

Kai put the jade slip into his sleeve, turned, and left.

His gray robes fluttered, his steps were composed, and his aura was calm as still water, yet everyone in the hall felt an invisible pressure, even the air seemed to stagnate.

Hao Ling hurriedly followed, his steps quick, and asked in a low voice, "Sir... are you going to... force your way into the Blood Refining Divine Sect?"

Kai didn't turn around, his voice calm yet carrying an undeniable certainty: "They captured my people."

Six simple words, without embellishment or deliberate threat, sent a chill down Hao Ling's spine.

He stared at Kai's grey-robed back, his throat bobbing, but ultimately swallowed the words he was about to say, remaining silent. Deep within the Crimson

Flame Prison, scorching magma flowed slowly through the cracks beneath their feet, turning the entire cage a blood-red hue.

The air was thick with the stench of sulfur and the lingering heat of the array runes; every inch of space was filled with ancient restrictions that suppressed spiritual power and sealed one's foundation.

Jiang Xuelan huddled in a corner of the cage, a thin layer of icy frost forming around her, only to be constantly melted, evaporated, and re-condensed by the surrounding heat, in a recurring cycle.

Her robes were tattered, revealing shocking whip marks on her snow-white shoulders, dark red blood clots forming at the edges of the wounds, emitting a faint, bloody odor in the scorching air.

Her exquisitely beautiful face was now deathly pale, her lips cracked and white, but her icy blue eyes remained clear and stubborn, fixed intently on the dark red iron bars outside the cage.

Outside the iron bars, two Grand Luo Golden Immortals, clad in crimson robes, stood with their hands behind their backs, their faces cold and their gazes warily sweeping over the female prisoner in the cell.

Their duty was simple—to guard this possessor of the Profound Ice Dao Body until the sect leader completed the dual cultivation ritual.

"I said, I won't agree,"

Jiang Xuelan's voice was hoarse yet firm, each word clear, like icicles striking a jade plate, conveying an unshakeable resolve. "You'd better kill me now, otherwise, once Kai finds this place, not a single one of you from the Blood Refining Divine Sect will survive."

Upon hearing this, the two guards exchanged a glance, a mocking smile simultaneously appearing on their lips.

One of them sneered, " Kai? We don't know him, do we?"

Another chimed in, "Our Sect Master is willing to cultivate with you; that's a sign of respect. Cooperate obediently, and you'll be the Sect Master's wife of the Blood Refining Divine Sect. If you don't know what's good for you..."

He paused, a sinister glint in his eyes, "While our Sect Master may be gentle, our methods are far from mild."

Jiang Xuelan closed her eyes, a faint, almost mocking, curve curving her pale lips, a mixture of sarcasm and resolve: "You can try."

In her palm, a wisp of icy blue primordial power quietly condensed, like a miniature ice core, slowly rotating within her hand.

That was the source of her Profound Ice Dao Body; if forcibly detonated, it would be enough to freeze and annihilate the entire Crimson Flame Heavenly Prison and the surrounding dozens of miles.

She had already prepared for the worst.

If it truly came to that, she would rather perish, soul and spirit, than allow anyone to defile her purity.

Half an hour later, a series of steady, heavy footsteps echoed from the end of the crimson passage outside the cage. The two guards immediately turned around, bowed respectfully, and said, "Greetings, Sect Master!"

A tall figure emerged from the shadows of the passage.

The newcomer appeared to be around forty years old, with long, crimson hair cascading over his shoulders. His eyes burned like torches, and he exuded the immense pressure of a fourth-grade Grand Luo Golden Immortal. He was none other than the Blood Refining Divine Sect Master—Venerable Crimson Sun.

He stopped outside the cage, looking down at Jiang Xuelan. His gaze lingered on her pale yet still beautiful face for a moment, a flicker of greed and fervor flashing in his eyes.

The Profound Ice Dao Body and his Crimson Sun Melting Fire Technique were a perfect match. If he could successfully cultivate and fuse them, his cultivation would at least break through to the peak of the fifth grade of the Grand Luo Golden Immortal, and he might even have a chance to touch the threshold of the sixth grade.

"Young lady, I'll give you one last chance,"

Venerable Chiyang said, his voice low and impatient. "Your cultivation in the lower realms was difficult; reaching the twenty-second heaven is already a great stroke of luck.

I value talent and don't want to force you. If you obediently submit to me, I can grant you the position of vice sect leader, with spirit stones, magic treasures, and cultivation techniques to your heart's content. If you still don't know what's good for you..."

His tone suddenly turned cold: "I have a thousand ways to make you wish you were dead, but even then, you still won't escape the fate of cultivating with me."

Jiang Xuelan slowly opened her eyes, her icy blue pupils filled with sneer and contempt. She looked at Venerable Chiyang and said, word by word, "I'd rather self-destruct my Dao foundation than let you touch a single finger of mine."

Her palm suddenly lit up, and the icy blue primordial core suddenly expanded, the icy frost instantly spreading throughout the entire cage, freezing the scorching red rock walls with a thick layer of white frost!

The Crimson Sun Venerable's expression changed, and he subconsciously took a half-step back.

He could clearly sense that the core of origin in the woman's palm was on the verge of exploding.

The self-destruction of the Profound Ice Dao Body's origin was no small matter. Even though his cultivation was several major realms higher than hers, he was absolutely unwilling to bear the impact of that freezing everything unprepared.

"You—"

The Crimson Sun Venerable gritted his teeth, his eyes surging with rage and resentment, "You won't listen to reason, so you'll have to drink the penalty cup!"

But in the end, he dared not gamble on Jiang Xuelan's determination.

He flicked his sleeves fiercely, turned around and strode away, his crimson robes fluttering in the scorching air, his voice filled with suppressed rage: "Keep an eye on her! Don't let her have any chance to self-destruct!"

His footsteps faded into the distance, the icy aura in the cage slowly subsided a bit, and the core of origin in Jiang Xuelan's hand sank back into the depths of her dantian.

Fine beads of cold sweat trickled down her forehead. The exertion she had just mustered had exhausted her remaining strength. Now, utterly drained, she slumped against the cold rock wall, panting heavily, yet her icy blue eyes still gleamed with a stubborn and resolute light.

Gazing at the dark red dome above the cage, she murmured softly, " Kai...where are you..."

Outside the cage, Venerable Chiyang stormed back into the sect's council hall.

He slammed his fist on the main seat, shattering the jade tea table beside him, his expression shifting between anger and uncertainty.

The elders in the hall remained silent, trembling with fear.

After a long pause, a thin elder with a goatee cautiously stepped forward, cupped his hands, and said, "Sect Master, please calm your anger. I have a plan that might make that woman submit."

Venerable Chiyang raised his eyes, a glint of cunning in them. "Speak."

The elder lowered his voice, a sinister glint in his eyes. "When I was traveling in my youth, I obtained a rare medicine from an ancient ruin called 'Crimson Phoenix Bewitching Powder.'

This medicine is colorless and odorless, dissolving instantly in water. Any cultivator who takes it will experience a brief blurring of consciousness, boiling blood, and heightened lust.

At that time, even if she has the Xuanbing Dao Body, or even a ten-thousand-year-old iceberg, she will melt into a soft touch.

Once she loses her mind, whether you, Sect Master, engage in dual cultivation or not, her self-destruction or resistance will be meaningless."

Upon hearing this, Venerable Chiyang's rage slowly subsided, replaced by a cold and satisfied smile.

He nodded slowly: "Very well. I'll leave this matter to you. If you succeed, I will reward you handsomely."

That night, a maidservant carried a bowl of dark red medicinal soup into the Crimson Flame Prison.

She lowered her head, no...

Jiang Xuelan glanced at the maid, noticing her trembling body and avoidance of eye contact, and sensed something amiss.

However, her injuries were severe, and her spiritual energy depleted; without medicine to nourish her, she feared she would have little strength left to continue.

She hesitated for a moment, then finally picked up the bowl of

medicine and slowly drank it all. Initially, the medicine seemed normal.

But less than the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, a scorching heat suddenly surged from the depths of Jiang Xuelan's dantian!

This heat spread rapidly through her meridians like wildfire, instantly making her body burning hot, her cheeks flushed crimson, her breathing rapid and hot, and a misty haze rising in her icy blue eyes.

Her mind began to blur, her consciousness like a floating weed tossed about in a heatwave, sometimes near, sometimes far, sometimes bright, sometimes dim.

She bit her lower lip hard, trying to stay awake through the excruciating pain, but the medicine's effects were too overwhelming.

Even the Xuanbing essence within her was suppressed, rendering her immobile, allowing the scorching heat to rampage through her limbs and bones.

Outside the cage, the figure of Venerable Chiyang reappeared.

He stood outside the iron bars, looking at Jiang Xuelan's flushed and hazy face, at those once clear and cold eyes now swirling with misty tears, a satisfied and greedy smile flashing in his eyes.

"That's a good girl."

Venerable Chiyang chuckled, raising his hand and gently waving, the iron bars opening with a click.

He stepped into the cage, his crimson robe trailing on the scorching rock floor, making a dull rustling sound.

He reached out, his slender fingers landing on the front of his robe, slowly unbuttoning the first button, his voice filled with long-suppressed heat and unwavering determination: "You won't be so strong later."

Jiang Xuelan's mind struggled violently under the corrosive effects of the drug.

She could see the crimson figure drawing ever closer, sense the scorching, dangerous aura approaching, but her body felt as if it were ablaze, her limbs weak and powerless, unable even to lift a finger.

The last vestige of her consciousness told her—if this person succeeded, she would rather die now.

She gritted her teeth, trying to unleash her remaining primal power once more.

But the drug had paralyzed her, along with her dantian; the icy blue light flashed in her palm and vanished instantly, weak and futile like a candle flickering in the wind.

Despair washed over her like a tidal wave, tears silently streaming down her burning cheeks, dripping onto the scorching rock, evaporating instantly.

The Crimson Sun Venerable drew ever closer, his fingers already on the second button.

...

Kai and Hao Ling had arrived at the Blood Abyss Rift.

The Blood Abyss Rift was like a hideous scar across the earth, its opening dozens of miles wide and its depth unfathomable.

The two rock walls were dark red, flowing with scorching rivers of lava, and crimson heat waves rose upwards, dyeing the entire sky a fiery color.

From the depths of the rift came the faint roars of colossal beasts and the rumble of colliding laws—the unique aura fluctuations of an ancient protective array in operation.

Kai hovered above the rift, his purple eyes looking down at the massive, dark red fissure.

His divine sense spread out like a tidal wave, piercing through layers of scorching heat, precisely locking onto the colossal prison forged from crimson divine iron at the deepest part of the rift.

He could clearly sense that in the deepest part of that prison, a familiar, icy aura was being sealed, suppressed, and imprisoned, like a snow lotus trapped in a cage, struggling to survive under the scorching flames.

Jiang Xuelan.

She was still alive.

Kai slowly clenched his fist, the grayish-purple chaotic power in his palm pulsating slightly, emitting a low and dangerous hum.

A chilling glint surged in his purple eyes, and the aura surrounding him suddenly thickened and solidified, like a colossal beast that had slumbered for millennia slowly opening its eyes.

"Haoling, retreat,"

Kai said calmly, his voice carrying an undeniable chill. "Next, I'm about to unleash a massacre."

Haoling immediately moved far away.

*Whoosh!

* A terrifying aura, so vast it seemed to freeze the heavens and earth, so heavy it felt like the collapse of all things, suddenly descended from the heavens!

The aura was silent, without warning, without any indication, like the ancient heavens suddenly falling, enveloping the entire Blood Abyss Rift, the entire Blood Refining Divine Sect, and the entire Crimson Flame Heavenly Prison!

Grayish-purple waves of energy descended from the heavens, like an endless curtain, suppressing, freezing, and locking down all the laws of heaven and earth within a hundred miles!

The Crimson Sun Venerable's fingers froze, his pupils contracting to their extreme!

A bone-deep fear shot from his feet to the top of his head, instantly causing cold sweat to break out on his back and his whole body to tremble violently as if drenched in ice water!

He had cultivated to the fourth rank of the Great Luo Golden Immortal realm and ruled the Blood Refining Divine Sect for thousands of years, facing countless powerful enemies and dangers, but never before had he felt such a clear and pure threat of death!

This aura—far exceeded his understanding, far exceeded his realm, far exceeded anything he could contend with!

Without even hesitating, he abruptly pulled his robe, which had just been unbuttoned two buttons, to his chest, and retreated rapidly, rushing out of the cage like a wild beast whose tail had been stepped on.

His crimson robe fluttered wildly in the chaos; he didn't even have time to fasten it properly before disappearing at the end of the passage.

Inside the cage, Jiang Xuelan slumped against the rock wall, her body burning hot and her mind in a daze, yet a final glimmer of clarity and trembling light flickered in her hazy, icy blue eyes.

Her lips moved slightly, as if murmuring a few words in a dream:

"Chen... Kai..."

The greyish-purple figure, like a war god tearing through the heavens, hovered tens of thousands of feet above the Blood Abyss Rift.

His grey robes fluttered, his purple eyes were icy, and his aura was as deep and violent as an ancient abyss, looking down at the Blood Refining Divine Sect shrouded in boundless pressure.

He slowly... A wave of grayish-purple chaotic energy, like an ancient ocean, poured down from the heavens, carrying a terrifying pressure capable of crushing stars and annihilating all laws, engulfing the entire Blood Abyss Rift.

The dark red rock walls on both sides of the rift groaned under the immense pressure the moment the energy wave touched them.

Countless fine cracks spread wildly like a spiderweb, splitting and peeling away layer by layer.

The scalding lava river was suddenly forced into a depression several feet deep by the energy wave, stirring up a sky full of crimson lava fragments.

These fragments were crushed into dust in mid-air by the chaotic power, leaving not even a spark.

The Blood Refining Divine Sect's protective array, passed down for ten thousand years, trembled violently the instant this energy touched it.

The dark golden array patterns twisted and flickered wildly like a spiderweb torn by a gale, emitting a piercing, almost mournful buzzing sound.

Several ten-thousand-year-old spirit jades at the core of the formation instantly shattered, turning into countless jade fragments. The originally thick light barrier dimmed considerably in an instant, as if it would completely collapse at any moment.

Throughout the entire sect, every cultivator felt an irresistible fear at the same instant.

It was an instinctive submission originating from the depths of their souls, unrelated to cultivation level, but solely concerning the absolute crushing of their life force.

The Supreme Elders who were resting with their eyes closed in the secret chambers suddenly lost their protective divine light, blood spilled from the corners of their mouths, and they involuntarily fell from their prayer mats;

the alchemists who were refining pills in the alchemy room had their furnaces explode with a bang, and the scalding pills splashed on them, but they were completely unaware, only trembling as they looked up at the sky;

the inner disciples who were sparring in the square had their magical weapons fall to the ground with a thud, their legs went weak uncontrollably, and some even knelt down, their foreheads pressed tightly against the cold rock, without even the courage to raise their heads;

the guardians on patrol had their halberds fall to the ground with a clang, their bodies stiff as iron, their pupils dilated, and even their breathing became cautious.

"What...what kind of power is this?!"

An inner disciple's teeth chattered, his voice hoarse, his eyes filled with horror and bewilderment. "Why...why am I so terrified? I can't even muster the thought of resistance..."

"It's a god...a god has descended to earth!"

An elderly cultivator knelt on the ground, trembling all over, his hands clasped together, his tone full of piety and fear. "Only a god could possess such world-destroying power. Before him, we are nothing but ants!"

Kai hovered tens of thousands of feet in the sky, his gray robes fluttering in the wind, his garments spotless, his purple eyes as cold and deep as a frozen pool, devoid of any emotional fluctuation.

The aura around him was heavy and profound, yet not ostentatious. There was no violent outburst, no hysterical roar, only a calm and oppressive aura, more suffocating than any violent gesture.

His figure stood out starkly against the gray sky, as if he stood apart from heaven and earth, looking down upon the masses below and this sect on the verge of destruction.

He lowered his head slightly, his gaze piercing through layers of rocks and array barriers, precisely locking onto the Crimson Flame Prison deep within the rift valley.

His divine sense spread downwards, clearly perceiving Jiang Xuelan's aura fluctuating violently—scorching, chaotic, carrying the unique weakness and confusion of someone suffering from drug abuse; he could even sense her suppressed pain and struggle.

She had been drugged and imprisoned in this dark, sunless prison, enduring unimaginable torture.

Kai's purple eyes suddenly turned cold, a chilling killing intent surging deep within them, yet not a trace of it leaked out.

In that instant, the temperature above the entire rift valley plummeted, a faint, frost-like chill rising from the grayish-purple chaotic air currents.

Even the churning lava river below seemed to freeze for a moment; the scorching heat in the air was completely dispelled, replaced by a bone-chilling cold.

"Blood Refining Divine Sect."

Kai spoke again, his voice calm yet like a judgment from the heavens. Every word clearly pierced through the protective array, reaching the ears of every cultivator, carrying an undeniable authority. "Release them. Otherwise, the sect will be destroyed."

A hurried and chaotic commotion came from the depths of the rift valley, mixed with the sounds of clashing magical artifacts and shouts from cultivators.

Several crimson figures rapidly ascended into the air, the leader being none other than Venerable Crimson Sun.

He had already straightened his disheveled robes, his face once again displaying the dignity and sternness befitting a sect leader. However, a lingering fear remained hidden deep within his crimson eyes, and his trembling fingertips betrayed his inner turmoil.

The terrifying oppressive feeling of that aura that had descended was still fresh in his mind, forcing him to personally confront it, fearing the sect's annihilation.

Behind him followed three Supreme Elders, each with the cultivation of a fourth-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal. The four formed an array, their bodies surrounded by divine light, assuming a fighting stance.

At the same time, the sect's protective formation also activated at full power, dark golden light soaring into the sky, transforming into a thick light curtain that enveloped the entire Blood Refining Divine Sect.

The array patterns flowed with the Daoist principles of laws and rituals infused by successive sect leaders, attempting to resist this unknown and terrifying power.

"Who are you?"

Venerable Crimson Sun spoke in a deep voice, his tone carrying a forced composure and a hint of probing. His gaze was fixed on Kai high above, trying to discern his true nature. "The Blood Refining Divine Sect has no enmity with you. Why are you making such a fuss?

If there is any misunderstanding, you may come down and discuss it. I will investigate and give you an explanation."

"You captured my man,"

Kai interrupted him, his voice flat and emotionless, as if stating a trivial fact. His purple eyes were devoid of emotion, only cold scrutiny. "Hand him over. Or I will destroy your sect, and you can find him yourself."

Venerable Crimson Sun's expression changed, the fear in his eyes quickly transforming into coldness and wariness.

His eyes flickered as he rapidly calculated his next move—the gray-robed youth before him seemed to possess only the cultivation aura of an eighth-grade Golden Immortal.

Yet, the terrifying pressure emanating from him far exceeded the expected range of a Golden Immortal, even surpassing his own as a fourth-grade Great Luo Golden Immortal several times over.

This contradiction made him extremely uneasy, as if facing a bottomless ancient well, its surface calm and still, but concealing an abyss capable of swallowing everything.

"You mean that ice-elemental female cultivator?"

Venerable Chiyang tentatively asked, a glint of cunning in his eyes, attempting to stall for time and find a weakness. "You're mistaken.

That woman was found in distress by my patrol team in the wilderness. I kindly took her in to heal her wounds; how could I have 'captured' her? You've probably misunderstood..."

"Too much nonsense,"

Kai uttered indifferently, his tone devoid of any patience.