

My System 281

Chapter 281: Senior Brother, Why Are You Ignoring Me _3

"Duke, General Qin has arrived."

Duke Cheng Shiyuan and Cheng Guang both directed their gazes towards the distance, where at the far end of the street opposite to the one Cheng Guang had come from, a middle-aged man clad in silver war armor was striding quickly towards Cheng Shiyuan.

The man was none other than Qin Beifeng.

At this moment, Qin Beifeng's face bore a hint of anxiety, and his steps were somewhat hurried.

Qin Gaozhi was also following close by Qin Beifeng's side.

"Duke, Princely Heir."

Upon reaching Cheng Shiyuan, Qin Beifeng greeted him first, bowing in respect, then he nodded slightly towards Cheng Guang as a salute.

Qin Gaozhi was also coming over to greet Duke Cheng Shiyuan and Cheng Guang at this time.

While facing Cheng Guang, Qin Gaozhi still looked a bit embarrassed.

However, besides embarrassment, his face also revealed a trace of sorrow.

Cheng Guang merely glanced at Qin Beifeng and Qin Gaozhi's expressions before sensing that something was amiss.

No matter what had happened, it must be significant to cause both Qin Beifeng and Qin Gaozhi such distress.

Could it be that Qin Yanqiu had already been swept into the Secret Realm, and these two had discovered it?

Cheng Guang couldn't help but think of this possibility.

He was aware that the Secret Realm had appeared.

But Duke Cheng Zihai was still unaware at this time. He too noticed Qin Beifeng's worried expression, but did not overthink it, simply assuming that Qin Beifeng might be fretting over how to deal with the Devil Clan.

Therefore, he said to Qin Beifeng with a smile, "Beifeng, it's good that you've come. My grandson has also just arrived today. He is soon to wed Yanqiu, and I planned on finding an opportunity for these two

young ones to meet first, to get acquainted, so that they won't be complete strangers on the day of the wedding ceremony, when we bow before the high hall."

Upon hearing this from Duke Cheng Shiyuan, Qin Beifeng naturally didn't have much to object to and nodded in agreement, but then hesitated and looked somewhat troubled as he said,

"Duke, it's fine for my daughter, Qin Yanqiu, to meet with the Princely Heir, and we military leaders don't need to pay special attention to formalities. It's just that, Yanqiu... has run into trouble."

"Run into trouble?" Upon hearing Qin Beifeng's words, Duke Cheng Shiyuan's brows involuntarily twitched slightly.

"What kind of trouble?"

Duke Cheng Shiyuan's eyes fixed on Qin Beifeng.

Qin Yanqiu could be said to be the apple of Qin Beifeng's eye, and if she indeed had an accident, Qin Beifeng surely would not appear as composed as he did at this moment.

It was thus certain that Qin Yanqiu was not in mortal danger.

Or to be precise, she wasn't dead yet.

As Duke Cheng Shiyuan watched Qin Beifeng, Cheng Guang's gaze also fell upon him.

Although Cheng Guang roughly knew what might have happened to Qin Yanqiu, he did not expect her to encounter trouble so quickly.

He had only just arrived in North City when he heard the news.

If he had arrived any later, would Qin Yanqiu then be gone?

Cheng Guang felt somewhat pained by the thought. Qin Yanqiu, a famed Female Martial God among the Northern Army, now somehow gave Cheng Guang the impression of a fragile university student.

Under the gazes of Duke Cheng Shiyuan and Cheng Guang, Qin Beifeng slowly began to speak, "Duke, on the battlefield of the Border Area, for reasons unknown, a Secret Realm suddenly appeared, and the Spacetime Rift that emerged as a result directly drew Yanqiu into it."

"As to what lies beyond that Spacetime Rift, whether it is dangerous or not, we are completely in the dark."

After Qin Beifeng finished, Duke Cheng Shiyuan's brow furrowed even more deeply.

Secret Realms and Different Treasures usually appeared out of nowhere, without any trace to follow.

Besides that, what troubled Qin Beifeng the most was the randomness of the dangers within the Secret Realm.

Other than entering the Secret Realm to carefully explore it, the only way for others to gauge the level of danger inside was by judging from its appearance and the Qi leaking from it.

The only remaining option was to enter the Secret Realm themselves.

After finishing, Qin Beifeng clenched his teeth tightly and said, "Now that Yanqiu has entered the Secret Realm, I cannot rest easy, and so I plan to go look for her myself."

Upon hearing this, Duke Cheng Shiyuan was about to outright refuse.

To him, Qin Beifeng was a significant general in the Northern Expedition Army, and he must not come to any harm.

But...

Qin Yanqiu was not someone who could be easily given up on either.

After all, she was about to marry his grandson, and now her life hung in the balance before the wedding could even take place.

Now, tell me...

Now, tell me...

What kind of situation is this?

Duke Cheng Shiyuan felt helpless, suffering from a severe headache.

"Beifeng, you needn't go. I will check out the Secret Realm myself."

Upon hearing Duke Cheng Shiyuan's words, Qin Beifeng immediately wanted to refuse.

"Duke, how can you expose yourself to danger? The risks within the Secret Realm are unpredictable, and no one can be sure whether even a Sky-Man like you can emerge unscathed."

"Let me be the one to go."

Duke Cheng Shiyuan's aged eyes widened slightly, "What are you talking about? I am a Sky-Man; even if there are dangers in the Secret Realm, I have more means to protect myself than you do."

"You stay here in North City, don't go anywhere. I'll take a look."

As Duke Cheng Shiyuan spoke, his eyes closed slightly, and immense Qi surged out from within his body, probing the surroundings as if searching.

A moment later, as if he had found something, Duke Cheng Shiyuan slowly opened his eyes, prepared to step forward.

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Cheng Guang called out to Cheng Shiyuan at this moment.

"Grandfather, wait a moment."

Cheng Shiyuan paused slightly before turning to Cheng Guang with a face of stern coldness, revealing a hint of puzzlement.

"What is it?"

Cheng Guang looked at Cheng Shiyuan and said, "Grandfather, take me with you to have a look. Maybe I can be of some help."

To these words, Cheng Shiyuan shook his head with slight helplessness. "You, you might not realize the dangers of the Secret Realm. Just stay put in North City, don't go anywhere. It's enough for this old man to go and take a look."

But Cheng Guang shook his head, insisting again and again.

Seeing the resolute expression on Cheng Guang's face, Cheng Shiyuan seemed to understand something, probably thinking that his grandson was worried about that wife-to-be, Qin Yanqiu, who had not yet crossed the threshold of their home.

A look of indulgence appeared on his face.

For this grandson, Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, could not really utter any words of refusal, and he sighed, saying,

"Alright then, I will take you with me. But, my grandson, you must promise me one thing."

Cheng Guang nodded. "You say."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, said, "You must not leave my side, understand?"

In Cheng Shiyuan's view, even if the Secret Realm was dangerous, it was not likely to threaten him, a Sky-Man. This self-confidence was something that the Duke still possessed.

Of course, even if there were dangers that could threaten him, protecting Cheng Guang alone wouldn't pose much of a problem.

Besides, taking his own grandson to have a look at the Secret Realm and letting his grandson show off in front of others wasn't a bad idea.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, thought to himself, and a timely expression of happiness appeared on his aged face.

Cheng Guang agreed once more.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, upon hearing Cheng Guang being so sensible and obedient, gently picked him up and stepped out, turning into a streak of light, and dashed towards the distance.

Qi surged through the sky, imposing and magnificent, quickly catching the attention of the many soldiers in North City.

"Where is the Duke going?"

"He's streaking in the direction of the Border Area battlefield, has the Devil Clan stirred again?"

"Who knows? If the Devil Clan were stirring, wouldn't General Qin also have set out along with the Duke?"

A number of soldiers began discussing aloud.

Qin Beifeng, who remained in place, watched as Duke Zhen Guo Cheng Shiyuan left with Cheng Guang, the color of worry in his eyes not diminishing.

No one knows the degree of danger in the Secret Realm.

Even if the Duke was confident that there would be no danger to himself and Cheng Guang at his side.

But this...

still couldn't guarantee that Qin Yanqiu would be able to return safely.

Qin Yanqiu was originally supposed to wed Cheng Guang, the Town-Nation Duke's Heir.

She should not have been wandering around everywhere, let alone stepping onto a battlefield.

But...

Qin Yanqiu simply had no patience; she'd probably even go to the battlefield while pregnant if it didn't hinder her from fighting the enemy, and in the future, she might still charge into battle with a swollen belly.

Qin Beifeng felt rather helpless about Qin Yanqiu's unruly nature.

Now that the Duke himself was en route, the chances of Qin Yanqiu surviving increased significantly.

Even if he was anxious, there was little he could do at the moment; he could only wait helplessly and quietly.

"Father, what do we do now? Do we go back? Or shall we go and take a look around the Secret Realm?" Qin Gaozhi, standing beside Qin Beifeng, asked.

While speaking, his gaze involuntarily turned toward the vicinity of the Border Area battlefield.

He was somewhat lost in thought.

He also had not expected that he would hear such terrible news just after returning to North City.

If Qin Yanqiu truly died within the Secret Realm...

Qin Gaozhi could hardly bear to imagine the scene.

He hurriedly shook his head.

Qin Beifeng did not pay attention to the change in Qin Gaozhi's expression, but looked towards the distant Border Area battlefield, saying,

"Let's go take a look. Even if we cannot enter the Secret Realm, we should lead the troops there to prevent the Demon Beasts from approaching it!"

With that, Qin Beifeng pulled out a military Token and issued a command.

A moment later.

The heavy gates of North City slowly opened, and the surging flood of tens of thousands of Iron Cavalry burst forth from North City, charging toward the Border Area battlefield.

...

Cheng Guang, supported by Duke Zhen Guo Cheng Shiyuan, was soaring towards the depths of the Border Area battlefield.

The Border Area battlefield was a unique space filled with chaos and order, connecting different Border Areas and serving as a focal point where various forces converged.

The closer one got to the depths of the Border Area battlefield, the figures from the Great Zhou Dynasty, or rather, from the Four Directions Mortal World, began to blur.

The sky over the battlefield resembled a shattered mirror, with its cracks revealing profound darkness.

In the far-off horizon, the silhouettes of other Border Areas were faintly visible, as if they were communicating an indescribable ancient mystery.

On the ground, endless traces of war scathed the land like enormous scars etched deeply into the barren earth. The desolate plains, ruined forests, and cities atop the rubble all silently narrated the intense battles once fought here.

The air was permeated with the smells of gunpowder and blood, filling the entire battlefield with the scent of death. This aroma stimulated the nerves of every being, keeping them highly alert to their surroundings.

When Duke Zhen Guo Cheng Shiyuan finally halted, Cheng Guang found himself above a vast canyon, tens of thousands of feet deep.

Beneath the canyon was a shadowy trace like a dark little serpent.

That was the Spacetime Rift leading to the Secret Realm.

Even before getting close, one could feel the dreadful aura emanating from the rift.

"My grandson, don't stray from me when we're there," Duke Zhen Guo instructed.

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Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, left orders before he took a step and dashed towards the Spacetime Rift.

Just as he entered the rift in time.

An invisible pressure came bearing down on him.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan's expression changed slightly, "Such a formidable aura, it can actually suppress me."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan was slightly alarmed, but not panicked, and he struck out with a palm.

Vast Qi surged from the palm of his hand while Divine Power Marks of his Sect flickered.

"Retreat!"

The oppressive sensation, dark as gathering clouds, dissipated in an instant.

Cheng Guang breathed a sigh of relief, and then the scene before his eyes brightened slightly.

What he saw was a palace resplendent with gold and jade in dazzling splendor.

At the entrance of the palace, two bronze lions stood guard, exuding a majestic presence. Inside the gate was a road paved with jade, flanked by all kinds of odd flowers and strange herbs. Even though most of the flowers and herbs were withered, some still released a fragrant scent that rushed to the nose.

Around the palace, seas of clouds shimmered with gold.

In the distance, broken immortal mountains and palaces could be seen drifting amidst the clouds.

They had become dilapidated, crumbling into ruins.

From afar, the boundless sky seemed to have been torn asunder, the light of the stars no longer twinkled but was covered by darkness and broken clouds. Those once magnificent palaces and towers were now only fragments and ruins.

The clouds were no longer immaculate white, but marred with bloodstains and scorch marks.

On the ground, shattered tiles and broken columns intermingled, forming a fractured world. The flowers that once bloomed had now withered and fallen, leaving only desolate barrenness.

"This Secret Realm..."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, after stepping into the Secret Realm, paused, his face betraying his alarm, sensing something was amiss.

The moment he entered this Secret Realm, he felt his Qi move sluggishly. The sight before him—a place seemingly devastated by a terrifying battle—made even him, who would remain unfazed if Mount Tai collapsed before him, feel stirring in his heart.

Merely the aura lingering on the remnants of the walls within this Secret Realm gave him an inexplicable sense of fear.

You must know, he is now a Sky-Man, already standing at the pinnacle of humanity.

How could he be frightened by an aura that had, who knew, gone through countless years?

This Secret Realm was unlike any other he had ever entered.

The Duke immediately wanted to have Cheng Guang exit.

If it were an ordinary Secret Realm, well and good, he still had the confidence that, should danger arise, he could protect Cheng Guang in time.

But this Secret Realm was different; if an accident occurred, he truly wasn't sure he could keep Cheng Guang safe.

Therefore, Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, turned to Cheng Guang and said, "Grandson, I sense something is off here. You go out first. I will have Qin Beifeng keep guard outside, and you do not need to worry about any danger..."

Duke Zhen Guo had only gotten halfway through his sentence when he saw Cheng Guang casually pull out an oddly-styled garment from his Storage Jade Ring.

Such a style of clothing, Duke Zhen Guo remembered, seemed to be what some corpses were dressed in within a certain Secret Realm.

What is happening with my grandson, has he also entered a Secret Realm before?

Duke Zhen Guo was stunned by Cheng Guang's action.

As he was still lost in thought.

Cheng Guang suddenly took out another Daoist Robe and tossed it to Duke Zhen Guo.

"Grandfather, you put it on too. With this robe on, it should be easier," Cheng Guang said.

"Also, try not to use your Qi. Without using Qi, I reckon you won't feel any danger."

Upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, confusion filled Duke Zhen Guo's heart. He didn't quite understand his grandson's method, but out of indulgence for Cheng Guang, Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, ultimately said nothing and silently draped the Daoist Robe handed to him over his shoulders.

No sooner had he put it on than Duke Zhen Guo's face, previously marked with helpless bewilderment, froze in astonishment.

For he suddenly realized that as soon as he wore the Daoist Robe, the suppressed Qi in his body, flowing very sluggishly, felt as if a heavy shackle had been removed.

It became extremely relaxed.

"Grandson, this..."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan's aged eyes widened in surprise as he looked at Cheng Guang.

For a moment, with all his experiences, he was a bit befuddled as to what was happening.

Cheng Guang smiled and said, "Grandfather, I've read many books before. Some of them mentioned that wearing clothes of this style could avoid many dangers."

Cheng Guang vaguely explained.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, upon hearing Cheng Guang's words, didn't ponder further, but his face showed a hint of emotion."

"I never imagined my grandson had such talent. You must have read numerous books to have discerned such patterns."

"This Secret Realm is ever-changing, and even I dare not claim to be at ease in the face of its secrets, yet you can..."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, felt somewhat sad.

Initially, he agreed to take Cheng Guang into the Secret Realm to show off his prowess, hoping to be revered by his grandson, but it did not go as expected...

Instead of displaying his own sage-like prowess, his grandson had inadvertently one-upped him.

Reading a myriad of books wasn't a problem.

Anyone could do it with enough dedication.

But to be able to go beyond the contents of the books, to discover and summarize things not mentioned in them, that was truly remarkable.

At that moment, Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, felt that even if his grandson didn't pursue cultivation, simply entering the Great Zhou Academy to become a Civil Servant would ensure he was an outstanding official.

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At this moment, Cheng Guang was unaware that Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, had already conjured up an entire drama in his mind in such a short time.

Gazing at the magnificent golden palace not far away, he spoke out, "Grandfather, let's go take a look inside."

"It won't necessarily be easy to find Qin Yanqiu right now."

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, nodded slightly and immediately stepped forward, leading the way for Cheng Guang.

And Cheng Guang was closely following behind Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan.

In front of the palace lay a pathway paved with white jade, which perhaps due to being tainted with blood, now seemed darkened and sullied, losing all semblance of its former sanctity.

They walked along the White Jade Avenue towards the palace.

After entering the palace, they encountered its expansive inner chamber.

Cheng Guang followed behind Cheng Shiyuan, looking up towards the top floor.

Normally, after entering the Secret Realm, the only way out was to return the same way one came in.

However, Qin Yanqiu and her party didn't enter the Secret Realm under normal circumstances but were suddenly enveloped and drawn into it.

At this point, they still didn't know where in the Secret Realm they had been pulled into.

Cheng Shiyuan's ability to sense his surroundings was greatly restricted after entering the Secret Realm.

Furthermore, he was unable to use his Qi, so right now, there was no other way but to search methodically, one place at a time.

In Cheng Shiyuan's view, Qin Yanqiu was not foolish.

Once she realized she had been drawn into the Secret Realm, she would definitely not run around indiscriminately but would likely ponder over a way to escape, or wait for someone like himself to come to her rescue.

Cheng Guang followed Cheng Shiyuan as they searched room by room.

The interior of the palace was vast.

Beyond the numerous rooms, there were many side halls and auxiliary chambers as well.

Simply making a complete tour would take some time.

After visiting many rooms with Cheng Shiyuan, Cheng Guang suddenly found themselves in a large hall filled with numerous counters, upon which various bottles and jars were placed.

Inside these containers were pills faintly glowing with light.

Upon seeing these pills, Cheng Shiyuan felt his breath catch slightly.

"All of these are long-lost elixirs, seemingly all from Ancient Times; who knows how many years have passed since then."

Even though Cheng Shiyuan knew his purpose here was to rescue Qin Yanqiu, his gaze was still irresistibly drawn to the pills before him.

At the same time, he knew that no matter how precious these pills were, after so many years, their efficacy was likely to have completely dissipated.

Furthermore,

These pills may look enticing, but they were untouchable for him.

If he were here alone, maybe he would have explored more thoroughly.

But at this moment, Cheng Guang was by his side.

If he touched anything and it led to unforeseen consequences, he could not bear the responsibility.

Therefore, Cheng Shiyuan merely glanced at them, took a deep breath, forced his eyes away from the pills, and continued leading Cheng Guang away.

Cheng Guang wasn't particularly interested in the pills arrayed on the counters either.

However, he suddenly remembered that the system had once mentioned that within Douluo Palace, there were Divine Elixirs that could unrestrictively enhance one's cultivation.

Such Divine Elixirs were incredibly valuable, so much so that their medicinal properties wouldn't diminish in the slightest no matter how much time had passed.

To Cheng Guang, who had only just reached the Fourth-grade Divine Realm, such elixirs would be extremely beneficial, let alone to those powerful beings at the Heavenly Human Realm.

Otherwise, the Princely Heir in the system's quest notifications wouldn't be so fixated on the Nine Turn Golden Pill.

And this Nine Turn Golden Pill was one of Cheng Guang's objectives for this journey.

Just now, Cheng Guang didn't spot the Nine Turn Golden Pill on the counters.

Since the Nine Turn Golden Pill was a Divine Elixir, it might well be stored separately.

With this thought in mind, Cheng Guang continued exploring with Cheng Shiyuan.

After they had searched through three side halls,

they arrived near a room that appeared somewhat distinctive, where the temperature was noticeably higher.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, eyes became seriously focused.

"There's someone in here."

"Someone?"

Cheng Guang was surprised. "Is it Qin Yanqiu and her party, or someone else?"

Throughout the journey, Cheng Guang hadn't encountered any danger, so he had gradually let his guard down. But now, seeing Cheng Shiyuan's eyes suddenly take on a serious expression, he immediately felt that something unexpected was likely about to happen.

Cheng Shiyuan slowly approached the side hall doorway.

He hadn't gotten close yet.

Suddenly.

Boom!!!

A sound as deafening as thunderous drums blasted from within.

The doors flung open.

Scorching heat and flames surged forth.

Cheng Guang felt the blistering heat on his face, a red glare filling his vision, and he covered his eyes, looking away.

After a moment, his eyes felt more comfortable.

He lifted his gaze,

and the scene inside the hall came into view.

A gigantic pill furnace, about several zhang high, stood in the center of the side hall.

On the surrounding jade pillars, gourds hung, each faintly shimmering with a golden light.

A faint fragrance wafted from the gourds.

Just by taking a whiff, Cheng Guang felt refreshed, his cultivation subtly increased.

This was most likely the Nine Turn Golden Pill!

Cheng Guang's face revealed a surprised and delighted expression. Just as he thought to look towards Cheng Shiyuan to say something,

he turned his head and saw Cheng Shiyuan staring past him with a slight frown, his hand reaching out to shield him and pull him back to safety.

Cheng Guang looked puzzled as his gaze followed the direction Cheng Shiyuan was looking.

Suddenly, Cheng Guang felt as though he saw something terrifying and his eyes involuntarily widened.

He saw a small figure in a red Daoist robe, with a body so thin that the bones were vaguely discernible, a Daoist child's corpse, looking back at him with eyes flickering with ghostly will-o'-the-wisps.

"Senior brother... Red Robe has seen senior brother."

The sight of this corpse, which after so many years could still move, brought a tremendous shock to Cheng Guang's worldview.

Cheng Shiyuan was also startled.

Facing a situation that would turn other people's faces pale, even he showed a slight change of expression at the sight of this Red Robe Daoist child.

The Red Robe Daoist child bowed slightly to Cheng Guang and Cheng Shiyuan, then gestured towards the pill furnace behind him.

"Senior brother, Red Robe has been tending the fire for a very, a very long time. When will master return?"

The Red Robe Daoist child said cutely.

His eyes seemed to twinkle as he watched Cheng Guang.

Anticipating the news from Cheng Guang's mouth that his master would return.

Cheng Shiyuan protected Cheng Guang behind him, opened his mouth, but was at a loss for words.

He didn't know what to say in the face of this eerie Red Robe Daoist child.

The Red Robe Daoist child looked at Cheng Guang as well as Cheng Shiyuan, waiting for their answer.

But neither of them spoke.

As if hurt, the Red Robe Daoist child's body began to tremble, and cries emerged from his throat.

"Senior brother, why aren't you talking to me?"

"Master said he would be back soon. I have been tending this fire for so long, and he still has not returned. How much longer must I tend this, this Burning Dan Furnace?"

"Douluo Palace has run out of firewood, all the other junior brothers and sisters are gone, and master has not returned."

"Has Red Robe been abandoned?"

"Senior brother, why won't you speak?"

Hearing the words of the Red Robe Daoist child, Cheng Guang felt that the scene before him was deeply horrifying.

The Red Robe Daoist child in front of him appeared to believe...

that he...

was still alive.

Chapter 285: Red Robe No Longer Wants to Tend the Fire (Seeking Subscriptions)

The spacious hall echoed with the cries of the Red Robe Daoist boy.

Cheng Guang, faced with the slightly sinister corpse of the Red Robe Daoist boy, was so shocked that he felt somewhat numb and didn't know what to say.

At the same time, even Cheng Shiyuan, who was experienced and knowledgeable, showed a similar reaction.

The Red Robe Daoist boy, receiving no response from Cheng Guang, cried louder, his voice becoming so shrill that it pierced Cheng Guang's ears, causing a stinging pain in his eardrums.

Cheng Guang frowned slightly, a sense of foreboding in his heart. He was about to say something when he saw the shoulders of the Red Robe Daoist boy in front of him shuddering as he sobbed quietly.

"Enough is enough, even if Brother does not speak, I also know that Master is probably not coming back."

"Red Robe was abandoned, but even though Red Robe was abandoned, he cannot leave this Dao Palace nor go against Master's commands."

"Red Robe doesn't know what to do, Brother."

The Red Robe Daoist boy sobbed, speaking in a low voice, and after a moment, his crying gradually subdued.

His vacant eyes fixed on Cheng Guang.

"Brother..."

"Are you back to burn the fire with Red Robe?"

Cheng Guang's lips moved slightly, feeling a dryness in his throat, and he responded with a forced laugh, "Without any wood, how could we burn anything?"

The Red Robe Daoist boy's sadness briefly subsided, a faint smile appearing on his pale face: "There will be a way."

"The fire of the Pill Furnace cannot be extinguished; even without wood, we can throw some useless things into it to serve as firewood."

"Useless things?" Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang seemed to realize something, and his gaze fell into the roaring flames beneath the Pill Furnace.

The flames burning under the large Pill Furnace were extremely hot. Even at a great distance and with the furnace as a barrier, Cheng Guang still felt the intense heat of the flames inside the furnace.

Even though his Spirit Dao and Martial Cultivation had both reached fourth rank, if he were to be thrown into this Pill Furnace, he would be instantly incinerated into a pile of ashes.

Cheng Guang's gaze turned to the orange flames leaping within the blast of heat, where he could vaguely make out the outline of humanoid shapes in the orange flames in the furnace.

However, those figures appeared more twisted than a normal person, emaciated and eerie.

At first, Cheng Guang just glanced at the human shapes in the furnace's flames and quickly looked away without giving it much thought. But after the reminder from the Red Robe Daoist boy before him, he suddenly realized that the entities being used as firewood in the furnace, which the Red Robe Daoist boy referred to as "useless things," might actually be living people.

Unwittingly caught up in the Secret Realm.

Upon this realization, Cheng Guang felt his scalp tingle.

He suddenly understood why Douluo Palace seemed so quiet, why there were so few dangers as he walked through it, and why the system task notification indicated Qin Yanqiu had died here.

It turns out that all of this was the handiwork of the Red Robe Daoist boy before him.

Captured by him, used as firewood, and thrown into the Pill Furnace.

Cheng Guang realized this, and so did Cheng Shiyuan standing next to him. The latter's aged face slightly tensed as he looked at the Red Robe Daoist boy, his eyes filled with increasing wariness.

His aura began to surge, ready to whisk Cheng Guang out of the Secret Realm at the first sign of something amiss or if the Red Robe Daoist boy showed any indication of aggression.

Cheng Guang looked at the Red Robe Daoist boy in front him, feeling the hairs on his body stand on end.

For so many years, the Red Robe Daoist boy had been burning fire.

One could imagine how many people who had inadvertently come here over the years had been used as firewood by the Red Robe Daoist boy and thrown into the Pill Furnace.

Many of these people had powerful cultivation, and it was possible that some of them had even reached the Heavenly Human Realm, yet they could not cause any disturbance within Douluo Palace.

The Red Robe Daoist boy in front of him was very strong!

His strength was extraordinary and terrifying!

At that moment, Cheng Guang even doubted whether Cheng Shiyuan could match the Red Robe Daoist boy.

Moreover, a sense of inexplicable worry started to creep into Cheng Guang's mind; he wondered how Qin Yanqiu was faring. If Red Robe Daoist boy had captured her and thrown her into the Pill Furnace, under such intense and scorching high temperatures, there was almost no chance she could survive.

With this thought in mind, Cheng Guang asked, "Where did you find these useless things you speak of and have they all been thrown into the Pill Furnace by now?"

The Red Robe Daoist boy tilted his head slightly to one side in thought upon hearing Cheng Guang's question, then shook his head and replied, "Most of the useless things I threw into the Pill Furnace are mortals who stumbled into Douluo Palace. I don't know where those mortals came from. Logically, mortals shouldn't be able to enter Master's Douluo Palace."

"However, I did not directly throw all those mortals into the Pill Furnace."

"Most were imprisoned; it's enough to burn a little each day. Right now, with Master absent and no Alchemy being performed, there's no need for a larger fire, so just keeping the flames alive is sufficient."

"Brother, you've become slow-witted."

As the Red Robe Daoist boy spoke, he pointed at Cheng Guang and chuckled.

Upon hearing this, Cheng Guang realized that the mortals the Red Robe Daoist boy was referring to might be the people taken by the Secret Realm, including Qin Yanqiu and her companions.

Chapter 286: Red Robe No Longer Wants to Tend the Fire _2

Qin Yanqiu and his companions might not have the highest level of cultivation, but it was definitely not low either. However, Cheng Guang hadn't expected that in the eyes of the Red Robe Daoist, they could still be referred to as mere mortals.

At this moment, Cheng Guang was even less able to see through the true strength of the Red Robe Daoist.

Cheng Guang took a deep breath, trying to calm his emotions. After a short pause, he asked, "Then... where have you imprisoned all those mortals?"

Although the Red Robe Daoist was terrifyingly powerful, he seemed to be quite simple-minded. Faced with Cheng Guang's question, he didn't hide anything. Instead, with a hint of childlike pride, he took Cheng Guang by the hand, grabbed the hem of his robe, and proudly led him towards the inner room.

"Senior Brother, come with me, they're all here."

The moment the Red Robe Daoist's hand reached towards Cheng Guang, Cheng Shiyuan's scalp tingled with numbness, and he immediately wanted to pull Cheng Guang back and retreat.

But seeing Cheng Guang shaking his head, his expression calm and without a trace of panic,

Cheng Shiyuan's heart settled down slightly.

He inexplicably felt that his own child seemed to be very familiar with this Secret Realm. First, he had him wear this odd clothing, then he repeatedly told him not to use his Qi.

Despite not fully understanding all these actions, Cheng Shiyuan could sense that perhaps because he was wearing this odd attire, the Red Robe Daoist merely glanced at him when he appeared and displayed very little hostility.

Otherwise, he would already be gone by now.

As for why this Red Robe Daoist was calling his grandson Senior Brother, Cheng Shiyuan was completely perplexed.

Even if he, as a Sky-Man, wasn't using his Qi, the strength he possessed was probably not something he could conceal from the eyes of the Red Robe Daoist.

Yet even so, the Red Robe Daoist did not spare him more than a few glances, focusing all his attention on Cheng Guang instead.

This sequence of events almost defied being described as mere coincidence.

With his mind in turmoil, Cheng Shiyuan decided not to say much, planning to ask his grandson for a thorough explanation once they were out of here.

Cheng Shiyuan tried to keep his composure, his aged face intently watching the figure of the Red Robe Daoist, and then he followed Cheng Guang at a slow pace.

Faced with such a strange, ancient Daoist's corpse, even Cheng Shiyuan, in the realm of Heavenly Human, had to be cautious.

If an accident occurred, Cheng Shiyuan thought to himself that, even at the cost of his life, he would rescue Cheng Guang.

With this thought in mind, Cheng Shiyuan's aged face revealed a trace of bitterness. Initially, he had come intending to rescue Qin Yanqiu and to also show off in front of his grandson.

Who could have expected that instead, it was his grandson who had shown his prowess before him?

Cheng Shiyuan looked at Cheng Guang's calm and composed demeanor, feeling a wave of emotion within his heart.

His own mental state, even with a cultivation realm reaching Heavenly Human, seemed less stable than that of his grandson, Cheng Guang.

At this time, Cheng Guang didn't pay much attention to Cheng Shiyuan following behind. His gaze was fixed on the Red Robe Daoist in front of him.

Right from the beginning, Cheng Guang vaguely felt that the Red Robe Daoist seemed to be mistaking him for someone else.

Perhaps it was because of the Daoist robe he wore, but it was definitely not just that.

Because the Red Robe Daoist saw both him and Cheng Shiyuan.

Cheng Shiyuan was also wearing a Daoist robe, so why did he call him Senior Brother while disregarding Cheng Shiyuan?

Keep in mind that Cheng Shiyuan's cultivation was far more powerful than his own.

Could it be the appearance, or was there some other reason?

Cheng Guang pondered, his mind suddenly lightening as if he had thought of something.

A Different Treasure appeared in his mind.

The Restraint Pearl.

The Restraint Pearl could conceal one's aura and hide one's life pattern.

That's why the Red Robe Daoist was unable to see through his depth and subconsciously mistook him for someone who somewhat matched with his memory.

The person addressed as Senior Brother by the Red Robe Daoist.

What kind of being was he?

Thoughts churned in Cheng Guang's mind, but he couldn't figure out the reason for now, so he chose not to dwell on it any longer.

After all, being mistaken by the Red Robe Daoist for an unknown Senior Brother was definitely not a bad thing.

If an ordinary person entered this Douluo Palace, they would probably have already been used as firewood for imprisonment. The fact that he could be treated so reverently by the Red Robe Daoist, regarded as an honored guest, was already like a dream.

As Cheng Guang pondered, the Red Robe Daoist's steps came to a slight pause.

He led Cheng Guang to a side room not far from the main hall where the Pill Furnace was located, pushed open the door, and the scene inside came into view.

Cheng Guang saw numerous figures bound tightly against the high beams and pillars, hanging upside down like a string of gourds.

These people were tied up securely, their complexions pale and looking somewhat weak, yet all of them were still alive.

When the door was opened and the Red Robe Daoist stepped in,

many figures instinctively trembled as if they had seen some terrifying monster. Their eyes widened in panic, and muffled cries could be heard from their throats.

Many of them knew that every time the Red Robe Daoist visited this room, he would take one person to throw into the Pill Furnace.

Although they had not witnessed it, they could hear it.

Even through the thick walls and heavy doors, they could still hear the chilling and agonizing screams.

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So, when they saw the eerie Red Robe Daoist again, all of them were reminded of the scene to come, fear creeping over their hearts like spiders.

Just as they braced themselves for fate's judgment, they suddenly saw the Red Robe Daoist gesturing invitingly towards the door, with hands on hips and pride, as if boasting to an elder about their achievements.

"Brother, come look."

Could this Red Robe Daoist speak?

Many were seeing this for the first time, their eyes widening further.

The Red Robe Daoist was terrifyingly powerful, but to also possess spiritual wisdom?

Inside the hall, the faint sounds of crying that had been audible suddenly vanished, and silence fell.

Cheng Guang followed the Red Robe Daoist into the room, surveying the surroundings.

This side room wasn't large, perhaps previously used for storing miscellaneous items, with numerous locked storage chests placed around. But now, it was completely empty.

Tall jade pillars carved with various mythical creatures and Exotic Beasts supported the ceiling, from which numerous figures dangled, like inverted calabashes, hanging in mid-air.

Complex ropes wrapped them densely, leaving only their heads exposed.

Cheng Guang quickly glanced over and realized there were quite a number of people here, at least over a hundred.

There were members of the Human Race, the Devil Clan, and some creatures of strange appearance, belonging to races unknown.

All of them watched him with eyes filled with fear and shock.

Their expressions were complicated and filled with despair.

Cheng Guang had no idea what they were thinking and didn't care, his gaze scanning the hall again to see if Qin Yanqiu was among them.

At that moment, the hanging figures began to feel like crying upon laying eyes on Cheng Guang.

They noticed the Daoist Robe he wore, identical to the Red Robe Daoist's.

And Cheng Guang... had been respectfully addressed as 'Brother' by the Red Robe Daoist.

Many began to think that Cheng Guang might be an existence even more fearsome and strange than the Red Robe Daoist.

Among the dangling crowd, a pair of eyes as radiant as stars gazed at Cheng Guang with indifferent coolness.

When she caught sight of Cheng Guang, her gaze flickered with recognition.

She was momentarily stunned.

Because she found Cheng Guang's appearance oddly familiar.

But then again, it seemed unlikely.

The Town-Nation Duke's Heir she was familiar with had indeed been coming to North City during this period to marry her, but there was no reason for him to appear in this Secret Realm.

And it certainly didn't seem likely for him to be called 'Brother' respectfully by the Red Robe Daoist.

She reasoned it was not the same person.

They merely bore some resemblance.

As she comforted herself with this thought, she saw another aged figure emerge from behind Cheng Guang. At the same time, his solemn and authoritative gaze swept over her.

Qin Yanqiu only needed to glance at the elder to freeze in place.

Was this...?

This was the Duke...?

Qin Yanqiu, having recognized Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan's features, felt as if she were dreaming.

Previously, she had envisioned that someone might come to rescue her after she had unintentionally been dragged into the Secret Realm.

But she had not expected the Duke himself to come.

If the Duke had arrived, did that not prove that the person resembling the Town-Nation Duke's Heir, called 'Brother' by the Red Robe Daoist, was indeed the Town-Nation Duke's Heir?

Confused and feeling as though she were caught in a storm, Qin Yanqiu struggled to comprehend the situation unfolding before her.

While Qin Yanqiu observed Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, and Cheng Guang, Duke Zhen Guo, upon entering the hall, also immediately directed his gaze toward Qin Yanqiu.

Seeing Qin Yanqiu unharmed, he sighed with relief.

Qin Yanqiu was a woman of startling talent and beauty, destined to be his future granddaughter-in-law. If something had gone wrong with her in this Secret Realm, Cheng Shiyuan felt he would regret it for the rest of his life if he couldn't save her.

Meanwhile, Cheng Guang also spotted Qin Yanqiu. Seeing her tied up from head to toe with ropes, looking disheveled and embarrassed, he couldn't help but find it amusing.

It was unexpected that their first encounter would be under such awkward circumstances.

After a brief look at Qin Yanqiu, Cheng Guang's attention returned to the Red Robe Daoist beside him.

The Red Robe Daoist's stiff mouth twitched as if trying to smile, "Brother, we have so many people here, we can keep the fire going for a long time, so there's no need to worry about the furnace dying out."

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

He had already witnessed the Red Robe Daoist's obsession with the furnace fire.

Cheng Guang looked at the Red Robe Daoist and tentatively asked, "Can I take a few people away from here?"

In Cheng Guang's view, it was best to avoid conflict with the Red Robe Daoist if possible, so he began by tentatively asking, which should not lead to error.

The Red Robe Daoist was taken aback by Cheng Guang's words, hesitating for a moment before nodding slightly.

"There's no problem if Brother wants to take away these mortals, though aside from serving as firewood, they have no other use. Brother, what do you need these people for?"

Cheng Guang laughed then, unsure of how to explain.

Seeing Cheng Guang remain silent, the Red Robe Daoist seemed to have an epiphany and tugged at his sleeve, whispering, "Brother, I got it, you probably want to cultivate some Human Pills. Such things are better left untouched. It's still okay to use Devils for alchemy since it has merit to offset the sin, but using humans for alchemy, if Master finds out, I'm afraid it's unavoidable punishment..."

With a worried expression, the Red Robe Daoist paused and then sighed.

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"But it doesn't matter anymore, Master disappeared without a trace and has yet to return; now only Red Robe remains by my side," he said. "Brother, do whatever you want."

As he spoke, the Red Robe Daoist waved his hand, releasing a mysterious and slightly decaying aura from his palm, which gently shook the ropes binding everyone.

"Brother, which mortal do you want for refining pills?"

The Red Robe Daoist, with eyes gleaming like ghost flames, looked towards Cheng Guang.

Feeling intimidated under the Red Robe Daoist's gaze, Cheng Guang managed a stiff smile and pointed at Qin Yanqiu.

"That one."

For now, he had to rescue Qin Yanqiu.

He couldn't be concerned with the life or death of the others.

Though the Red Robe Daoist had agreed to let him take a few mortals out, that didn't mean he placed no value on these mortals.

Everyone here was potential fuel for his future needs; he couldn't allow Cheng Guang to take people away indiscriminately.

If possible, he would rescue a few more later, but if not, then let it be.

Acknowledging Cheng Guang's choice, the Red Robe Daoist nodded slightly, gesturing with his hand. The ropes around Qin Yanqiu unwound like a delicate serpent, coming to life as they loosened their hold.

Qin Yanqiu fell to the ground weakly, landing in front of Cheng Guang.

Her stunning face was slightly pale, her expression still in a panic, as she gasped for air.

Qin Yanqiu calmed her breathing and, looking up at Cheng Guang, her cold eyes showed a hint of gratitude.

Cheng Guang simply glanced at Qin Yanqiu briefly before withdrawing his gaze.

The Red Robe Daoist then looked at Cheng Guang again, asking, "Brother, do you need anyone else?"

The moment these words were spoken...

Excitement filled the expressions of some people in the hall.

Although many had heard the terrifying term "refining Human Pill" from the Red Robe Daoist, they now saw Qin Yanqiu's expression and felt that Cheng Guang, whom she knew, was not like the Red Robe Daoist.

Their eyes turned to Cheng Guang, pleading for rescue.

Cheng Guang, however, ignored these desperate looks from the hall and turned to Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan.

His gaze inquiring whether there were any members of the Northern Expedition Army here.

If there were, he could try to save them as well.

Just a brief exchange of looks was enough for Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan to understand Cheng Guang's intention and shake his head slightly.

Cheng Guang was slightly startled. Was Qin Yanqiu the only one to be drag into the Secret Realm alone?

Or had all the soldiers following her already met with disaster?

Several thoughts flashed through Cheng Guang's mind, but he did not dwell on them and smiled back at the Red Robe Daoist, "It's fine, just this one person is enough."

The Red Robe Daoist nodded slightly, "Alright then."

With that, he led Cheng Guang out of the side room.

The door to the side room closed tight once again.

Quietness returned to the hall.

The Red Robe Daoist walked in front, chatting idly with Cheng Guang, almost like a chatterbox.

"Brother, these mortals are quite weak, not worth mentioning compared to us back in the day, but they are still much stronger than the mortals of the past."

"Using these mortals as fuel, the Pill Furnace can burn for a long time."

"If you use these mortals to refine the Human Pill, the effects should be quite good."

"But then again, Brother, if you want to practice alchemy, I'm afraid you can't use the Pill Furnace I've heated up. It's only for Master's use, did you bring your own Pill Furnace back with you?"

At this point, the Red Robe Daoist turned his gaze to Cheng Guang.

After pondering for a moment, Cheng Guang replied, "Not yet, I will have to go out and fetch it later."

The Red Robe Daoist nodded slightly and sighed, "Red Robe cannot leave this place, otherwise I could have accompanied you, Brother."

"Brother, where did you disappear to all these years, along with Master? You didn't take Red Robe with you. It's really lonely here by myself."

"Brother, when you go to fetch the Pill Furnace, make sure to come back."

Hearing this, Cheng Guang did not know what to say and chose not to respond.

At the same time, Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, quietly checked Qin Yanqiu's condition, noticing that aside from drained Qi, she was unharmed, and he heaved a sigh of relief.

After confirming Qin Yanqiu was fine, he indeed felt like leaving with Cheng Guang and Qin Yanqiu.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan did not need to

signal it; Cheng Guang also felt the need to leave.

But before leaving, Cheng Guang still couldn't let go of the Nine-Turn Golden Pills contained in the gourds hanging from the pillars in the Pill Furnace hall.

According to the system mission hint, the Douluo Palace's Secret Realm would only appear once in a short period, and after this occurrence, it was uncertain when it would appear next.

For now, the Red Robe Daoist seemed to have a favorable impression of him and was not planning to attack him.

Cheng Guang decided to take a chance; maybe he could turn 'a bicycle into a motorcycle'.

When they reached the Pill Furnace hall, Cheng Guang paused his steps and looked at the Mysterious Jade Gourd hanging on the pillar. Even from a distance, he could smell the faint fragrance wafting from the gourd.

Streaks of pale golden light shone through the surface of the Mysterious Jade Gourd and into Cheng Guang's eyes.

Moved by the sight, Cheng Guang asked, "Can the pills in these gourds still be used?"

When the Red Robe Daoist heard Cheng Guang's words, he stopped and turned his gaze to the Mysterious Jade Gourd hanging on the pillar, laughing, "What are you talking about, Brother? You must not recognize them anymore after being away for so long; these are not just any pills."

"It's just some auxiliary materials for alchemy that the Master has refined,"

"Ah, that's right." Seeing the gourd, the Red Robe Daoist seemed to suddenly remember something. He reached out, grabbed one of the gourds from midair, and handed it to Cheng Guang.

"If Senior Brother wishes to refine elixirs, these auxiliary materials may come in handy. Here, take these."

"Using a few won't be a problem, but if you use too many, Red Robe will have trouble explaining when Master comes back,"

Cheng Guang took the gourd from the Red Robe Daoist's hand, and the faint scent that wafted into his nostrils caused his cultivation to increase a little.

At the same time, his heart was greatly shaken upon hearing the words of the Red Robe Daoist.

The Divine Elixir mentioned in the system task prompt, the Nine Turn Golden Pill,

turned out to be the auxiliary material used by the Red Robe Daoist's Master for alchemy.

Who was this Red Robe Daoist's Master?

Was he the same person as the Supreme Old Monarch in the myths in his memory?

Cheng Guang couldn't figure it out and decided not to dwell on it.

Now that he had acquired these Nine Turn Golden Pills, his cultivation could greatly advance.

To know that these pills, even for warriors of the Heavenly Human Realm, hold tremendous efficacy.

Using them on himself was almost extravagantly wasteful to the point of indecency.

Cheng Guang put away the Mysterious Jade Gourd and nodded slightly toward the Red Robe Daoist, saying, "Thank you, Junior Brother."

The Red Robe Daoist shook his head and did not say much.

Cheng Guang was already thinking of leaving.

All his objectives had been achieved, and there was no need to stay in this Secret Realm.

The Red Robe Daoist seemed to sense something and his expression became inexplicably sad.

"Is Senior Brother leaving?"

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

The Red Robe Daoist lifted his hand to wipe the corner of his eyes and started to sob softly, "Senior Brother has just come back and is leaving again, leaving Red Robe all alone. Will you come back?"

"Or will you, like Master and the other Senior Brothers and Sisters, all be big liars, leaving Red Robe abandoned here all by himself?"

Seeing the Red Robe Daoist like this, Cheng Guang was deeply moved. After all, this Red Robe Daoist was just a child, and who knew how many years he had silently guarded the Douluo Palace.

And even...

He had already died...

Not realizing that he had already passed away...

How profound was this loneliness?

After a moment of silence, Cheng Guang said, "I will come back."

Upon hearing Cheng Guang say this, the face of the Red Robe Daoist no longer appeared sad but instead smiled.

"Since Senior Brother said so, then you won't deceive Red Robe."

"Senior Brother is not a liar like Master."

"If Senior Brother is going to fetch the Pill Furnace, you should hurry. When you come back, Junior Brother will stoke the fire for you."

After saying that, the Red Robe Daoist just stood quietly in place, waving at Cheng Guang.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, at this moment pulled Cheng Guang aside and whispered, "It's time to go."

Cheng Guang nodded slightly.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan stepped forward, pulling Cheng Guang and Qin Yanqiu along as their figures vanished from the spot.

After Cheng Guang disappeared,

the smile on the Red Robe Daoist's face slowly faded, and his entire demeanor became lifeless.

The eyes that once sparkled with lively spirit, dancing with ghostly flames, gradually dimmed, and he sat woodenly next to the Pill Furnace, watching the orange flames flickering within it.

"Master, you big liar, you said that if I tended the furnace fire for a hundred years, I could become someone like Senior Brother..."

"But Red Robe has been stoking it for so many years, and you still haven't returned."

"Red Robe doesn't want to stoke the fire anymore, doesn't want to..."

.....

The figure of Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, appeared above a pitch-black abyssal ravine, with Cheng Guang and Qin Yanqiu standing beside him.

When Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, accompanied by Cheng Guang and Qin Yanqiu, emerged above the chasm, the soldiers of the Northern Expedition Army guarding the surroundings immediately spotted them.

"The Duke has come out!"

"Miss Qin is unharmed too!"

"That's great, it's good that she's safe. Who knows how dangerous it is inside that Secret Realm; luckily, the Duke took personal action. If it were us, we might not have been able to save Miss Qin."

The many soldiers discussed in hushed tones.

Amidst the soldiers' murmurs, Qin Beifeng was the first to perceive the figure of Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan. His figure turned into a streak of light, and he swiftly made his way over.

Standing before Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, and seeing Qin Yanqiu unharmed and without injury, he immediately let out a sigh of relief.

Then Qin Beifeng's gaze turned to Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, and noticing the strange robes on both him and Cheng Guang, he was momentarily taken aback.

But without dwelling on it, he bowed respectfully to Cheng Shiyuan.

"Many thanks to the Duke. If it weren't for the Duke's intervention, I dread to think what might've happened to my daughter."

Cheng Shiyuan, upon hearing Qin Beifeng's words, felt his face grow warm with modest embarrassment.

He waved his hand dismissively.

"This time, I haven't played much of a role; it was all thanks to the efforts of my grandson."

When Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, said this, he nearly startled Qin Beifeng into an outrage.

He couldn't understand how Cheng Guang entering the Secret Realm to save his daughter, Qin Yanqiu, was related.

In Qin Beifeng's view, Cheng Guang joining Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, in entering the Secret Realm was at best a curiosity, unlikely to offer any help or make a difference.

Although Qin Beifeng didn't quite grasp why Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, said such a thing, he still bowed to Cheng Guang as well.

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"Thank you, Princely Heir,"

Cheng Guang nodded slightly in response.

Qin Beifeng pulled Qin Yanqiu aside and, looking at his daughter's pale complexion, found that the reprimand he had intended to give didn't quite make it to his lips.

"Yanqiu, rest well in the city for some time, and don't come to the Border Area battlefield anymore. You're about to get married to the Crown Prince. Calm your mind."

Qin Yanqiu's brows knitted slightly, wanting to retort, but under the watchful eyes of Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, and Cheng Guang, she couldn't find the words to speak.

The embarrassing scene she had just been through was even witnessed by her future husband, making Qin Yanqiu feel as if her whole life's reputation was almost completely ruined.

If it weren't for the circumstances, Qin Yanqiu truly wanted to find a hole to crawl into.

Cheng Shiyuan lowered his eyes to glance at the slowly fading, and gradually disappearing spacetime rift within the canyon, feeling a lingering sense of trepidation.

"This Secret Realm is far from simple. My grandson, we owe you a great deal this time. Without you, even if I could have brought you back, I might not have been able to save Yanqiu,"

"Let's head back first. I need to check some information to see what is actually going on here,"

Having said that, Cheng Shiyuan took hold of Cheng Guang and leapt toward North City.

In just a moment, Cheng Shiyuan and Cheng Guang's figures had vanished from the spot.

Qin Beifeng, who remained on-site, was momentarily taken aback by Cheng Shiyuan's parting words.

Why would the Duke say such a thing again?

Could it be that this Secret Realm had a significant connection to the Princely Heir?

Did the Princely Heir play a great role in it?

Qin Beifeng turned to his daughter with a questioning look.

Faced with Qin Beifeng's doubts, Qin Yanqiu was also perplexed.

After all, she still felt as if everything that had happened inside the Secret Realm was like a dream.

Yet at the same time, she could sense that the Red Robe Daoist held considerable respect for Cheng Guang, but didn't seem to care much for Cheng Shiyuan of the Heavenly Human Realm.

Although Qin Yanqiu did not know the reason, she could guess.

Their safe and undisturbed return from the Secret Realm, without any conflict with the Red Robe Daoist, was indeed largely due to Cheng Guang.

"Father, we really owe a lot to the Princely Heir this time,"

Qin Yanqiu sighed in relief and slowly spoke out.

Upon hearing his daughter confirm this, Qin Beifeng finally felt assured that the Princely Heir had indeed exerted much effort in the Secret Realm.

After listening to Qin Yanqiu recount their experiences in the Secret Realm, including the appearance of the Red Robe Daoist, Qin Beifeng's eyes involuntarily tightened, and a wave of fear washed over him.

If it weren't for the Princely Heir's timely arrival, with only the Duke himself, perhaps he would not have been able to rescue Qin Yanqiu from the enigmatic Red Robe Daoist.

"No, once we return, I must properly thank both the Duke and the Princely Heir,"

After saying this, Qin Beifeng turned his gaze to Qin Yanqiu, saw her wearing the Silvermoon Battle Armor, and felt a headache coming on.

"Yanqiu, when you get back, take off that battle armor and change into the clothes other normal women wear,"

"I observed just now that the Princely Heir looks at you with as much interest as he would a piece of pork. With you looking like this, how are you supposed to make the Princely Heir take an interest in you?"

"You are soon to be married, and if the Princely Heir is dissatisfied with you, you won't be favored at Duke Zhen's Mansion, and ultimately, you will be the one to suffer,"

Qin Yanqiu, upon hearing these words, showed little change in expression, simply saying indifferently, "Father, I don't mind. Anyway, even after getting married, I won't just be some noble daughter in Duke Zhen's Mansion."

Qin Beifeng's brow furrowed slightly, and his lips moved as if he wanted to say something, but he kept it to himself. His own family knew their own affairs; Qin Yanqiu was bound to take over his position in the future, to stand on her own in the Northern Expedition Army, and she couldn't possibly stay away.

Thus, he didn't speak further, only sighing.

With his daughter looking the way she did, how could she win the heart of the Princely Heir? If the Princely Heir were to marry more concubines in the future, Qin Yanqiu might not even have a place in Duke Zhen's Mansion.

Qin Beifeng, heavy with concerns, led Qin Yanqiu and a group of soldiers back to North City.

Along the way, he occasionally looked at Qin Yanqiu, wanting to say something, but each time he was about to speak, he swallowed the words back down.

In the end, he said nothing.

— The worries of a concerned father.

.....

Cheng Guang was taken back to Duke Zhen's Mansion in the center of North City by Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan.

The residence of Duke Zhen's Mansion in North City was much simpler than that in the Capital city, with far fewer flowers, trees, rockeries, and water features, and was mostly equipped with just the necessities of life.

Although Cheng Guang had not often come to North City, there was always a room reserved for him at Duke Zhen's Mansion there.

Perhaps because Cheng Guang was soon to marry Qin Yanqiu in North City, the interior and exterior of Duke Zhen's Mansion were already being decorated with red lanterns and the character for happiness.

The air inside and out was filled with a festive atmosphere.

"Grandson, you rest well. I will take care of the wedding preparations. Rest assured and wait until the wedding day, when I'll come to summon you. You need not worry about other matters,"

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, brought Cheng Guang into a room, gave him a brief reminder, and then turned to leave.

He had quite a few things to do at the moment.

Apart from helping Cheng Guang arrange his marriage, he also needed to investigate the identity of the Red Robe Daoist in the Secret Realm.

And, why by wearing the slightly odd clothes could Cheng Guang avoid the hostility of the Red Robe Daoist.

What those slightly odd clothes symbolized, he still needed to thoroughly investigate.

He could have directly asked Cheng Guang, which would have saved a lot of trouble, but the dignity uniquely belonging to an elder, and the pride of a grandfather, stopped him from stooping to inquire.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, planned to ask his grandson what was going on when he really could find no other way to figure it out.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, had left.

Qing Luan walked over unhurriedly, she had already tidied up the bedding for Cheng Guang, and asked him if he was all right.

"Qing Luan, I'm going to cultivate for a while. Unless there's something important, don't let anyone disturb me,"

Cheng Guang said.

Qing Luan nodded gently, didn't ask further, and slowly withdrew, closing the door behind her as she left.

Once Qing Luan had closed the door, Cheng Guang eagerly took out the Mysterious Jade Gourd from his Storage Jade Ring.

This Mysterious Jade Gourd was the greatest gain of Cheng Guang's trip to the Secret Realm, aside from saving Qin Yanqiu.

Duke Zhen Guo, Cheng Shiyuan, could probably feel that the medicinal pills inside the Mysterious Jade Gourd were not simple, but he didn't ask further or say anything about it.

After all, it was something his grandson had obtained, no matter how valuable, he would just be happy for Cheng Guang, rather than envious.

As soon as Cheng Guang took out the Mysterious Jade Gourd, a faint fragrance unique to medicinal pills filled the room.

Simply by smelling it, Cheng Guang's cultivation seemed to advance slightly.

He couldn't wait to open the Mysterious Jade Gourd, and beams of golden light emerged from it.

Cheng Guang peered into the Mysterious Jade Gourd.

There were about ten pills inside the Mysterious Jade Gourd.

The pills were full and golden, each covered in patterns, and upon counting them closely, there were nine layers.

Cheng Guang took out one Nine Turn Golden Pill, slowly placed it into his mouth, and then carefully stored the Mysterious Jade Gourd away.

Cheng Guang began cultivating in the lotus position.

The Nine Turn Golden Pill he had just placed in his mouth melted rapidly into a warm stream that surged into his abdomen not long after consuming it.

The Qi of the heaven and earth around him seemed to sense a call.

It rushed toward Cheng Guang like it was free, surging toward him and into his body.

Cheng Guang didn't even need to run the God Emperor Cultivation Method; the Heavenly and Earthly Qi howled as they rushed towards him, pouring into his body.

At the same time.

Some previously unknown information appeared in Cheng Guang's mind.

His Martial Cultivation, which had just broken through to the Divine Power Realm, was now rapidly rising.

The Divine Power Marks were growing quickly, becoming perfect.

At the same time, his Spirit Dao cultivation was also growing rapidly.

His Primordial Spirit instantly became more solid.

Mysterious Divine Power Marks began to emerge on the pure and flawless Primordial Spirit.

In just a moment.

Cheng Guang felt that his Primordial Spirit had become more in tune with the heaven and earth.

Spirit Dao fifth rank, Destiny Realm!

In addition, a stirring sensation from deep within his bloodline began to faintly transmit.

Cheng Guang's eyes flickered slightly, somewhat stunned.

"This is... Bloodline Divine Powers..."

Cheng Guang realized.

His eyes revealed joy.

I knew it, how could I not have awakened Bloodline Divine Powers!

So, they were waiting here for me!