

The Order 10251

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But she was outnumbered and outmatched, on the verge of being captured.

Just then...

A gray sword light descended from the sky, like a thunderclap, aimed directly at the burly, bearded man!

“Who goes there!”

The burly man was shocked and hurriedly raised his sword to parry.

Clang!

The metal clashed, sparks flew. The burly man felt an overwhelming force from the sword; his hand instantly split open, and the sword flew from his grasp!

He staggered back in horror, and looked closely. He saw a man in a blue robe standing with a sword, its tip pointing diagonally at the ground, surrounded by a gray mist, like a god or a demon.

It was Chen Ping.

“You...who are you?!”

The burly man stammered, “You dare interfere in the affairs of the temple? You’re tired of living?”

Chen Ping didn't answer, only giving him a dismissive glance.

With just one glance, the burly, bearded man felt as if he had fallen into an ice cave.

He had seen countless powerful figures, and quite a few ninth-rank elders, but he had never encountered such a calm yet chilling gaze. It wasn't murderous intent, but a kind of indifference, as if in the man's eyes he was nothing more than an ant.

"People from the Temple?"

Chen Ping spoke, his voice calm. "Perfect, I have a score to settle with you."

He took a step forward.

A gray sword light flashed across the sky like a bolt of lightning, instantly slicing through the throats of three divine race cultivators.

The three didn't even have time to scream before they collapsed, lifeless.

The remaining two, their souls scattered, turned and fled.

But Chen Ping was faster.

The sword light flashed again, and two more fell.

In less than three breaths, all five divine race cultivators at the fifth and sixth ranks of the Upper Immortal Realm were dead.

The burly man with a thick beard knelt on the ground, clutching his bleeding throat, his eyes filled with resentment and fear.

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With all his might, he forced out a few words: "You...you are...Chen..."

Before he could finish speaking, he breathed his last.

Chen Ping sheathed his sword and turned to look at the woman in white.

The woman in white stared at him blankly, as if she hadn't yet recovered from the shock she had just witnessed.

Her lips trembled slightly, and after a long pause, she managed to squeeze out a single sentence:

"You...you're Chen Ping? The Chen Ping who destroyed the Path to Heaven, killed the Great Venerable, and just now caused such a ruckus on the Holy Mountain?"

Chen Ping raised an eyebrow: "You know me?"

"Now, who in the entire Fourteenth Heaven doesn't know you?"

The woman in white smiled bitterly, "The Divine Temple issued its highest-level warrant, offering a reward of fifty thousand bottles of immortal elixir for your life. Although I was hiding deep in the mountains cultivating, I heard the news."

As she spoke, she suddenly knelt down and kowtowed heavily: "My benefactor, please accept this bow from Liu Qianqian! I will never forget your life-saving grace today!"

Chen Ping reached out to help her up: "No need for that. The Divine Temple's evil deeds deserve everyone's condemnation. Please rise."

Liu Qianqian shook her head, insisting on kowtowing three times before standing up.

This movement aggravated the wound on her left shoulder; she groaned softly, her body swaying slightly.

Ming Li stepped forward and offered a healing pill: "Take this first to stop the bleeding and heal your wounds."

Liu Qianqian took the pill, hesitating slightly.

Ming Li said calmly, "A Ghost Clan pill, non-toxic."

A hint of surprise flashed in Liu Qianqian's eyes, but she didn't ask further and swallowed the pill.

The medicinal effects took hold, and the wound on her left shoulder healed at a visible speed, her pale complexion regaining some color.

"Thank you both, my benefactors."

Liu Qianqian clasped her hands in a fist salute, "May I ask your honorable names?"

"Chen Ping."

Chen Ping pointed to Ming Li, "Ming Li."

Liu Qianqian nodded, her gaze sweeping over the two men, hesitating to speak.

Chen Ping noticed her hesitation and asked directly, "Miss Liu, you just said the Temple wants to use you as a sacrifice. Do you know why they want to capture you?"

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Liu Qianqian's face darkened. After a long silence, she whispered, "Because I know their secret."

"What secret?"

"The Divine Race is building sacred mountains in various parts of the Fourteenth Heaven, not just this one."

A flash of hatred crossed Liu Qianqian's eyes. "I was originally a disciple of the Azure Phoenix Sect. Three years ago, a group of Divine Race cultivators broke into my sect, saying they wanted to requisition Azure Phoenix Mountain as a branch of their sacred mountain."

"When the sect leader refused, they... they slaughtered all 378 disciples of my Azure Phoenix Sect, draining their life essence and souls to sacrifice to a bizarre eight-armed, snake-tailed statue!"

Her voice trembled, but she forced back tears: "I happened to be out training at the time and escaped the calamity. When I returned, I saw mountains littered with corpses, even the sect leader... had been turned into a dried corpse, hanging around the statue..."

Chen Ping remained silent.

Ming Li clenched his fists, the innate hatred for the gods within his ghost bloodline almost uncontrollable.

Liu Qianqian took a deep breath and continued: "Over the years, I've been hiding from the gods' pursuit while secretly investigating.

I discovered that the temple has built at least nine sacred mountains, distributed throughout the fourteenth heaven. Each sacred mountain contains the corpse of a powerful ghost, all sacrificed using the same blood sacrifice method, attempting to turn them into ghost corpses!"

"Nine?!" "Ming Li was speechless.

When the Ghost Clan was wiped out, many of the powerful Ghost Clan members' corpses were preserved, intended to be refined into ghost corpses.

Ming Li's body trembled slightly; their Ghost Clan had truly suffered too much.

"Yes."

Liu Qianqian gritted her teeth, "The Temple Master, Shen Tong, is extremely ambitious. He not only wants to refine the Ghost Weeping Saint Venerable, but also the corpses of eight other ancient Ghost Clan powerhouses. Once all nine ghost corpses are refined, forming the 'Nine Netherworld Purgatory Array,' the Temple's strength will be enough to crush the Divine Hall and Divine Palace, and even... he even wants to become the ruler of the entire Divine Clan!"

Chen Ping's pupils contracted slightly.

This Shen Tong is far too ambitious.

You must know that the Divine King of the Divine Clan, that is, the patriarch, is a Golden Immortal, far beyond what Shen Tong, a mere Upper Immortal, can compare to.

Unexpectedly, this Shen Tong even wants to become the patriarch of the entire Divine Clan.

No wonder he wants to refine so many ghost corpses!

"Have you said these things to anyone else?" "Chen Ping asked.

Liu Qianqian shook her head: "No. I dare not say, and no one dares to believe me. If it weren't for my benefactor saving my life today, I would have intended to perish together with those divine pursuers, taking these secrets to my grave."

She looked at Chen Ping, her eyes pleading: "Benefactor, I know you are an enemy of the Temple, and I know you possess the bloodline of the Golden Dragon and the power of Chaos. I do not ask you to avenge my Azure Phoenix Sect, I only ask that when you deal with the Temple, you destroy those sacred mountain altars as well. Even if you only destroy one, it will save countless lives from suffering."

Chen Ping looked at her and slowly nodded: "I will."

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Liu Qianqian felt relieved and bowed deeply again.

Chen Ping waited until her emotions calmed down before asking: "Miss Liu, do you know how to get to the Temple?"

Liu Qianqian was startled: "The Temple? My benefactor wants to go to the Temple?"

"Yes." "The Temple wants to kill me, so I'll go find their enemy."

Chen Ping said, "Moreover, I need the Temple's experts to help rescue the souls of a couple."

Liu Qianqian pondered for a moment: "The Temple's Bright Sacred Domain is about 600,000 li from here. Even with your cultivation level, it would take more than a month to fly there, day and night."

"That long?" Ming Li frowned.

"The Fourteenth Heaven is vast and boundless, each domain comparable to the Thirteenth Heaven."

Liu Qianqian explained, "Moreover, the journey is fraught with danger, inhabited by demonic beasts, spatial rifts, and ancient restrictions... ordinary cultivators dare not fly such long distances."

She paused, then added, "However, my benefactor need not worry. All the major immortal cities in the Fourteenth Heaven are connected by teleportation arrays. By using a teleportation array, you can reach the Bright Sacred Domain within a day."

Chen Ping's eyes lit up: "Teleportation arrays? Where can I use them?"

"The closest is Cloud Immortal City, about 3,000 li from here." "That's the largest immortal city within a radius of ten thousand miles, with a large teleportation array that leads directly to the Holy Domain of Light."

"Alright, let's go to Cloud Immortal City." Chen Ping decided immediately.

Just as the three were about to set off, Liu Qianqian hesitated, her face showing difficulty. "My benefactor, there's something... I don't know if I should say it."

"Speak freely."

"The teleportation array... requires immortal liquid as payment."

Liu Qianqian said softly, "At least one hundred bottles per person. That's three hundred bottles for the three of us."

"Immortal liquid?"

Chen Ping frowned slightly. "What is that?"

Liu Qianqian took out a palm-sized white jade bottle from her bosom and handed it to Chen Ping.

Chen Ping took it and uncorked the bottle.

The bottle contained about half a bottle of pale golden liquid, radiating a rich immortal aura, more than a hundred times purer than ordinary spirit stones or immortal crystals.

"This is immortal liquid." "..."

Liu Qianqian said, "Spirit stones and immortal crystals are not circulated in the Fourteenth Heaven; all transactions are priced in immortal liquid.

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This is because although the spiritual energy here is abundant, it contains a special kind of turbid energy that cannot be directly absorbed for cultivation.

The spiritual energy must be purified and condensed into immortal liquid through a special method before it can be absorbed."

"And this condensation method can only be performed in the condensation chambers of the major immortal cities."

She added, "Cultivators can input their own immortal power into the array of the condensation chamber. The array will draw in the spiritual energy of heaven and earth, combine it with the cultivator's immortal power, and condense it into drops of immortal liquid. The person who condenses the liquid receives 30% as payment."

Ming Li suddenly understood: "No wonder when we entered the Fourteenth Heaven, although we felt the spiritual energy was abundant, there was always a sense of stagnation, as if the air we breathed contained grit. I see."

Chen Ping pondered: "In other words, immortal liquid is both a resource that can be absorbed for cultivation and a currency for transactions."

"Exactly." "

Liu Qianqian nodded. "Moreover, each bottle of immortal liquid has a unique spiritual rune mark, uniformly refined by the city lords' mansions of the major immortal cities, making it impossible to counterfeit. The marks differ between immortal liquids from different cities, but their value is equal, and they are all interchangeable."

She paused, a look of shame on her face: "I'm so incompetent. For three years I've been fleeing everywhere, and I have very little immortal liquid left. There are only eight bottles here, not even enough for one person to teleport..."

Chen Ping waved his hand: "No need to blame yourself. You just saved my life and Ming Li's life; we should be thanking you."

Liu Qianqian was taken aback: "I saved my benefactor?"

"If you hadn't been being hunted, we wouldn't have met you."

Chen Ping rarely joked, "If we hadn't met you, we would still be wandering aimlessly in the wilderness like headless flies, never finding the Divine Hall."

Liu Qianqian paused, then chuckled, the gloom in her eyes dissipating considerably.

Ming Li also smiled, saying, "Mr. Chen is right." "Miss Liu, don't worry about the Immortal Elixir. We'll find a way to earn it."

Liu Qianqian nodded: "Ruyan is willing to accompany my benefactor to Yunxian City, and along the way, I can explain the customs and culture of the Fourteenth Heaven to him."

"Alright." Chen Ping didn't refuse.

The three transformed into streaks of light and flew towards Yunxian City.

The three thousand li journey was only an hour for cultivators at the Upper Immortal Realm.

On the way, Liu Qianqian gave Chen Ping and Ming Li a detailed introduction to the basic situation of the Fourteenth Heaven.

It turned out that the Fourteenth Heaven consisted of thirty-six cities, each governed by a main city, and under each main city were dozens or even hundreds of small and medium-sized immortal cities.

The Divine Temple occupied seven cities, the Divine Hall occupied six cities, the Divine Palace occupied five cities, and the remaining eighteen cities were controlled by various neutral forces, ancient families, and alliances of rogue cultivators.

Yunxian City was a medium-sized border immortal city with complex power dynamics.

Nominally under the jurisdiction of the Divine Temple, but in reality... In reality, the temple's control over this area was very weak.

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Just then, the clouds and mist ahead gradually dissipated, and a majestic city came into view.

Cloud Immortal City.

The city walls were a hundred feet high, entirely constructed of azure-gold immortal stone, gleaming faintly in the sunlight.

Every hundred paces along the city walls stood a watchtower, its tip hovering with a fist-sized orb of light—a detection array. Any concealment technique would be completely exposed under the light of the orb.

The city gates were even more magnificent, standing thirty feet high, with lifelike carvings of cloud-shrouded immortal mountains on the two doors.

Four golden-armored guards stood on each side of the city gates, all at the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, their eyes sharp as eagles.

“Entry requires an offering of immortal liquid,”

Liu Qianqian whispered. "One bottle per person, allowing a seven-day stay in the city. For long-term residence, a separate identity token is required." "

She took out the white jade bottle from her bosom, about to take out the immortal liquid, but Chen Ping stopped her.

"No need."

Chen Ping took out a storage ring from his bosom, which he had obtained when he killed a Grand Venerable of the Divine Race in the Thirteenth Heaven, and hadn't had time to examine it until now.

Probing it with his divine sense, he discovered that besides a large number of magical treasures, pills, and cultivation manual jade slips, there was also an exquisite crystal bottle containing about thirty bottles of pale golden liquid.

It was indeed the immortal liquid!

Chen Ping took out three bottles and handed them to Liu Qianqian: "Use these first."

Liu Qianqian took them, her eyes flashing with surprise: "Benefactor, you... how do you have immortal liquid?"

"I killed a Grand Venerable of the Divine Race, and took it on the spur of the moment." "Chen Ping said calmly.

Liu Qianqian gasped.

A Grand Venerable of the Divine Race—that's an existence above the eighth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, second only to an Elder in status.

Chen Ping's ability to kill a Grand Venerable indicates his strength far exceeds his apparent realm; she already knew this from the wanted poster.

But hearing it from the person himself still shocked her.

She gave Chen Ping a deep look, asked no further questions, and handed the three bottles of immortal liquid to the city gate guard.

The guard took the immortal liquid, carefully examined the spiritual runes on the bottom of the bottles, and after confirming their authenticity, handed the three of them three jade tokens.

“Keep these tokens safe; you must return them when you leave the city.”

The guard said officially, “Flying is prohibited within the city; fighting is forbidden. Violators will be severely punished.” ”

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Chen Ping accepted the token and entered the city with Ming Li and Liu Qianqian.

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Upon entering Cloud Immortal City, the scene before them opened up dramatically.

A main street, ten zhang wide, stretched straight ahead, lined with shops on both sides.

Some sold magical artifacts, some bought materials, some refined pills, and there were even shops catering to cultivators’ banquets... The place was bustling with activity, ten times more prosperous than any immortal city in the Thirteenth Heaven.

The cultivators passing by on the street were of various appearances. Their cultivation levels ranged from the fourth to the ninth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, but the ninth rank was extremely rare.

Occasionally, one or two would pass by, and the surrounding cultivators would automatically make way and respectfully bow.

“The Fourteenth Heaven truly is a place where the strong are respected,” Ming Li remarked.

Liu Qianqian nodded: “The ninth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm is already top-tier combat power in the Fourteenth Heaven. Most of the elders of the major forces are at this level.” “As for the Upper Immortal Realm, those are all city lords or sect leaders, but these people rarely appear on the streets.”

She paused, then pointed to a five-story pavilion at the end of the street: “That’s the teleportation hall. The teleportation array to the Holy Land of Light is on the top floor.”

Chen Ping looked over and saw that the pavilion was entirely silver-white, with a huge spatial array floating on its ceiling, flashing with spiritual light from time to time, clearly in operation.

“Let’s go ask about the teleportation fee first,” Chen Ping said.

The three arrived at the teleportation hall, which was bustling with people.

They went straight to the third floor and found the steward in charge of the Holy Land of Light teleportation array.

The steward was a middle-aged man, fair-skinned and beardless, with a cultivation level of the seventh rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

He glanced at the three of them, seeing that Chen Ping and Ming Li were unfamiliar faces, and Liu Qianqian looked tired, assuming they were ordinary rogue cultivators, so his attitude became somewhat cold.

“To the Holy Land of Light? One hundred and twenty bottles of immortal liquid per person.” ”

Chen Ping frowned slightly: “I just heard it was a hundred bottles, why the price increase?”

The steward said impatiently: "That happened an hour ago. The temple just issued a notice to increase the Holy Mountain repair tax, and all teleportation array fees will increase by 20%. Think it's too expensive? If you think it's too expensive, then don't go."

Ming Li's eyes flashed coldly, about to explode, but Chen Ping stopped him.

"Excuse me, where in the city can I earn Immortal Elixir?"

Seeing Chen Ping's calm attitude, the steward didn't dare to be cold anymore and casually said: "Earn Immortal Elixir? Simple. Either go to the Treasure Pavilion to sell treasures, or go to the Mercenary Guild to take on missions, or go to the City Lord's Mansion's Elixir Condensation Room to do manual labor. Judging from your appearance, you probably don't have any valuable treasures, go to the Elixir Condensation Room, you can earn two or three bottles a day."

Chen Ping nodded: "Thank you." "

The three left the teleportation hall, Liu Qianqian's expression somewhat grim.

"One hundred and twenty bottles... that's three hundred and sixty bottles for the three of us."

She said softly, "I thought three hundred bottles would be enough, but I didn't expect the temple to be so greedy, suddenly raising the price."

Chen Ping, however, remained calm: "It's alright. Three hundred and sixty bottles is nothing, we'll make a profit eventually."

The three left the teleportation hall and walked along the main street.

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The streets were bustling with people, a cacophony of hawkers' cries, bargaining, and laughter.

Chen Ping pondered how to raise the three hundred and sixty bottles of immortal liquid. Selling treasures was one option, but most of the divine race spoils in his storage ring were of questionable origin; rashly selling them might expose his whereabouts.

Just then, a commotion arose ahead.

“Quick, look! A martial arts contest for marriage!”

“Really? Which fairy is seeking a husband?”

“The eldest daughter of the Chen family in the east of the city! You know the Chen family, right? One of the most prominent families in Yunxian City!”

“Let’s go, let’s go see what’s going on!”

A group of cultivators excitedly surged towards the east of the city.

Chen Ping paused, his gaze following the flow of people.

“A martial arts contest to choose a husband?”

He raised an eyebrow. “Such things exist in the Fourteenth Heaven?”

Liu Qianqian also looked in that direction, a hint of realization flashing in her eyes: “It’s the Chen family. The Divine Palace in Yunxian City is relatively weak, and the city’s affairs are mostly managed by two major families. The Chen family is one of them, mainly engaged in the pill business, and they are very wealthy.”

She paused: “The eldest daughter of the Chen family, Chen Wanqing, is said to be exceptionally talented, but she has been stuck at the eighth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm for many years without breaking through. It seems she’s looking for a Daoist partner to help her break through using the dual cultivation method.”

Ming Li suddenly understood: "I see."

After he finished speaking, he suddenly noticed Chen Ping's thoughtful expression and immediately became alert.

"Mr. Chen," Ming Li said cautiously, "you wouldn't be thinking of..."

Chen Ping withdrew his gaze, his expression calm: "Three hundred and sixty bottles of immortal liquid is no small sum. Selling treasures is risky, the condensation chamber is too slow, and mercenary missions will take an unknown amount of time."

He paused: "But if I could become the son-in-law of the Chen family, three hundred bottles of immortal liquid should be no problem."

Ming Li's eyes widened.

Liu Qianqian was also stunned.

"Mr. Chen,"

Ming Li said with difficulty, "You...you're going to a martial arts contest to find a husband?"

"Is there a problem?"

"Of course there's a problem!"

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Ming Li was unusually anxious. "Although the temple's jurisdiction here is relatively weak, it's still within the temple's sphere of influence. We're wanted by the temple!"

“If you go to a martial arts contest to find a husband, what if you get recognized? Wouldn’t that be very troublesome? We might not be able to leave.”

“She’s just a female cultivator. If Mr. Chen wants a woman, he can just spend money to find one in the city to satisfy his desires.”

Chen Ping glanced at Ming Li: “.....”

He was helpless. He wasn’t looking for a woman, yet Ming Li thought this way.

Did others see him as someone who loved playing with women?

Chen Ping couldn’t understand. Although he had a few women, most of the time it was passive of him!

Liu Qianqian looked at Chen Ping, remained silent for a moment, and then whispered, “My benefactor, a martial arts contest for marriage isn’t so easy. Miss Chen has very high standards. Even if you win the contest, if she doesn’t like you, it’ll be a waste of your effort.”

She bit her lip, her cheeks slightly flushed. “If...if you only want women, you don’t need to take this risk. I...”

She lowered her eyes, her voice barely audible, “I’m willing to offer myself to my benefactor, to let him have some fun...”

Chen Ping was speechless!

“That’s not what I meant.”

Chen Ping interrupted her, explaining, “Miss Liu misunderstands. I’m participating in the martial arts contest for marriage only for the elixir, not for women.”

“If I could marry into the Chen family, I’d naturally have over three hundred bottles of elixir.”

“Besides, if I wanted to play with women, they would come to me willingly. Why would I need to personally participate in a martial arts contest for marriage?”

Chen Ping wasn’t lying. All the dozens of women he had been with had approached him willingly; Chen Ping had never actively pursued any of them! “That’s the charm!”

Besides, if he wanted to play with women, he had the sword spirit Zhongli; he could summon her anytime for a good, unrestrained battle.

“Oh, I misunderstood my benefactor!”

Liu Qianqian lowered her head.

“Let’s go...” Chen Ping walked towards the arena!

Ming Li hesitated for a moment, then quickly followed.

Liu Qianqian stared blankly at Chen Ping’s retreating figure. After a long while, she sighed softly and hurried after him.

The three of them walked towards the martial arts tournament arena.

The three of them weaved through the bustling crowd and soon arrived at the East City Square.

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In the center of the square stood a arena about ten feet high, its surface paved with lapis lazuli, polished smooth as a mirror.

At each of the four corners of the arena stood a white jade pillar over ten feet tall, its shaft carved with intricate array patterns, faintly shimmering with spiritual light.

To one side of the arena, a magnificent glazed sedan chair stood, its curtains drawn low, obscuring the face of the person inside.

Beside the chair stood eight maidservants in green robes, each with a beautiful face and a cultivation level around the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

The area below the arena was already packed with at least three or four hundred cultivators.

There were independent cultivators, scions of noble families, and passing merchants, all craning their necks to look at the arena.

“Why hasn’t anyone gone up yet?” someone asked impatiently.

“What’s the rush? The stage’s only just been set up. The Chen family’s eldest daughter is holding a marriage contest; any courageous and capable hero needs to carefully consider their options.”

“Considerate what? Those four pillars are the first test. I heard the Chen family set up these testing pillars to assess real ability; there’s no room for faking it.”

“Indeed. Immortal power strength, immortal power limit, physical strength, bloodline strength—only those who pass two-thirds of all four tests are qualified to invite the eldest daughter to alight from her sedan chair. This one test alone will probably eliminate 99% of the candidates.”

Chen Ping stood in the crowd, his gaze fixed on the four white jade pillars.

Ming Li leaned closer and whispered, “Mr. Chen, can those four pillars really detect these things?”

“Yes,” Chen Ping said calmly.

“The pillars are engraved with a spiritual resonance array, which can convert the immortal power injected by cultivators into light. The brighter the light, the stronger the aptitude in that area. When the entire pillar is lit, it means that this aptitude has reached its peak.”

Liu Qianqian nodded, “My benefactor has excellent eyesight. These four pillars are testing artifacts that the Chen family purchased from the Divine Hall at great expense. It is said that there are only three sets in the entire Yunxian City.

The eldest daughter of the Chen family has extremely high standards; ordinary cultivators are not worthy of her attention. Therefore, she set up this first test to prevent those who overestimate themselves from harassing her.”

Just then, a commotion arose in the crowd.

A burly man with broad shoulders and a thick waist pushed through the crowd and leaped onto the arena.

He was shirtless, his muscles bulging, and the veins on his arms standing out; he was clearly a cultivator specializing in physical cultivation.

“I’ll give it a try!” the burly man said in a deep voice. The audience immediately perked up.

“It’s Iron-Armed Hermit Zhou Meng! A sixth-grade Upper Immortal! I heard he can shatter a small mountain with a single punch!”

“Iron-Armed Hermit? The one who fights in underground boxing matches? Interesting.”

Zhou Meng strode to the first stone pillar, took a deep breath, and placed his large, fan-like hand on it.

The array patterns on the pillar lit up one by one, the light slowly rising from the bottom.