

## The Order 10561

Chapter: 10561

Shen Tong took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing the anger, shock, and unease within him. His gaze fixed on Long Yuan, he said in a deep voice, "Long Yuan! Your Demon Dragon lineage is no longer content to remain peaceful in the Demon Realm. Why have you suddenly led a large army to Yunxian City? What exactly do you mean by this?"

Long Yuan looked at him, a smug smile playing on his lips. His tone was indifferent and arrogant: "Shen Tong, don't you know what I mean?"

You led the entire Temple army, launching a full-scale attack on Yunxian City. It's quite a spectacle, so naturally I had to join in the fun. How could I miss such a good show?"

Anger flashed in Shen Tong's eyes, almost bursting forth, but he forcefully restrained himself.

His gaze swept over Long Yuan, then landed on Ning Zhi beside him. The young man in black seemed unassuming, yet he gave Shen Tong an unprecedented sense of danger, like facing a slumbering primordial beast, making him hesitant to act rashly.

A strong sense of unease welled up within him, and he secretly wondered: Could it be that the Grand Elder and several core elders of the Divine Temple had died at the hands of this seemingly young man in black?

Suppressing his suspicions and murderous intent, Shen Tong said in a deep voice, "Long Yuan, although there are grudges between your Demon Dragon lineage and the Divine Temple, today's events are a dispute between my Divine Temple and Chen Ping and the Heavenly Dragon Clan, and have nothing to do with your Demon Dragon lineage.

Today, I only want to capture Chen Ping and do not wish to become enemies with your Demon Dragon lineage and add fuel to the fire. If you immediately lead your men and leave the Demon Realm, I can forgive and forget about the Grand Elder's matter and settle it another day!"

Upon hearing this, Long Yuan was slightly taken aback, then threw his head back and burst into laughter. His laughter, filled with mockery and disdain, resounded throughout the entire Cloud Immortal City.

“Let bygones be bygones?”

Long Yuan’s laughter abruptly ceased, his face turning cold. He looked at Shen Tong with utter contempt, his tone dripping with sarcasm. “Shen Tong, have you been blinded by war? Have you misunderstood something?”

“I’ve led the entire Demon Dragon army here today, not to negotiate or settle scores. You have no right to negotiate with me.”

He pointed at Shen Tong, each word deliberate, his voice icy and domineering: “I now order you to immediately take your temple scum and get out of Yunxian City. Get as far away as possible. Otherwise...”

A cruel and vicious smile curled at the corner of his lips: “Don’t blame me for showing no mercy and leaving you all here in Yunxian City!”

With Ning Zhi present, Long Yuan’s arrogance swelled. Without Ning Zhi, Long Yuan wouldn’t have dared to come.

Upon hearing this, the temple elders were instantly enraged, shouting in fury.

“Insolence! You treacherous demon dragon, how dare you be so arrogant!”

“Palace Master, no need for further words. Give the order! Let’s join forces to annihilate the Demon Dragon lineage first, then capture Chen Ping!”

“A bunch of remnants of the Demon Realm, daring to act so recklessly in the Fourteenth Heaven! Today, we will completely eradicate them!”

Shen Tong’s face was ashen, his aura surging, and he raised his hand to quell the commotion and agitation of the crowd.

He stared at Long Yuan, his eyes brimming with killing intent, almost overflowing, yet he still restrained himself from making a move. What he truly feared was that young man in black, whose aura was restrained yet extremely dangerous.

“Long Yuan,”

Shen Tong spoke again, his voice suppressing his anger, “I’ll say this one last time: our grudges can be settled another day. Today, I’m only arresting Chen Ping; this matter has nothing to do with you.

Get out of my way, and I won’t make things difficult for you. Otherwise, don’t blame me for being impolite!”

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Long Yuan scoffed, about to retort, when Ning Zhi beside him gently raised his hand and patted his shoulder.

Long Yuan was startled, instantly understanding the meaning. He immediately shut his mouth, respectfully stepping aside to give Ning Zhi the space in front of him, his posture humble and showing utmost respect.

Ning Zhi stepped forward slowly, his steps light and deliberate, each step seeming to tread upon the hearts of everyone present. His gaze calmly fell upon Shen Tong, and he spoke softly, his voice not loud, yet clearly carrying to every corner: “You are Shen Tong, the Temple Master?”

Shen Tong’s brows furrowed tightly as he sized up the unbelievably young man in black. His unease grew stronger, and he coldly replied, “Indeed, it is I. Who are you? Why are you allied with the Demon Dragon lineage?”

Ning Zhi did not answer his question, seemingly disdainful of responding. His tone was calm, yet carried an overwhelming domineering air: “I will give you three breaths. Take your men and get out of Yunxian City immediately, or you will bear the consequences.”

His voice was flat and emotionless, yet carried an undeniable and irresistible authority, shocking everyone present.

Shen Tong was completely stunned. Then, a surge of boundless rage erupted from the depths of his heart, rushing straight to his mind.

He, the dignified Palace Master, a peak True Immortal Realm Second Rank expert, one of the overlords who had stood firm in the Fourteen Heavens for tens of thousands of years, had never before been treated with such contempt and disregard.

What's more, the other party was merely a mere youth who looked to be in his early twenties!

"You brat!"

Shen Tong laughed in fury, his voice icy and chilling, filled with boundless killing intent. "What are you? How dare you spout such nonsense before me?"

"I'll give you one last chance, considering your youth and ignorance. Kneel down and beg for mercy immediately, cripple your cultivation, and perhaps I can spare your corpse. Otherwise, today I will annihilate your soul, condemning you to eternal damnation!"

Ning Zhi looked at him, a faint, contemptuous smile playing on his lips. His gaze was as if he were looking at a clown seeking attention, utterly devoid of emotion.

"One breath."

He slowly uttered the first word.

Shen Tong's expression changed drastically. He could no longer suppress his rage and roared, "Arrogant brat! You think you're qualified to contend with me just because you killed a few elders of my temple?"

Today, I'll show you what true strength is, what the difference in realms is!"

As his words fell, his aura exploded. The terrifying pressure of a peak second-grade True Immortal, like a towering mountain, bearing boundless weight, crushed down upon Ning Zhi.

The space itself was slightly distorted by this pressure, and the buildings of Cloud Immortal City below creaked under its weight.

“Two breaths.”

Ning Zhi remained calm and composed, his posture upright, standing motionless. It was as if the crushing pressure was merely a gentle breeze to him, having no effect whatsoever. His aura remained restrained, yet a more terrifying power was subtly awakening within him.

Shen Tong was utterly enraged, his anger overwhelming him, and he refused to utter another word.

“You’re courting death!”

He roared, raising his hand to unleash a full-force palm strike towards Ning Zhi!

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The palm wind howled, its golden light dazzling to the extreme, condensing his life’s cultivation and the supreme laws of the Divine Temple, containing world-destroying power. Wherever it passed, space shattered, and air currents reversed, heading straight for Ning Zhi’s chest.

A hint of disdain flashed in Ning Zhi’s eyes. His tone was calm as he uttered the last word: “Three breaths.”

The instant his words fell, he slowly raised his right hand.

The movement was slow and light, as if it were merely a casual wave, without the slightest deliberate effort, without the slightest gathering of power.

But the instant he raised his hand, the world instantly changed color!

A fierce wind arose, demonic energy churned, and dark red demonic clouds in the sky surged wildly. An aura far more terrifying, more domineering, and more ancient than any divine power erupted from Ning Zhi's body.

Like a primordial beast awakening after billions of years of slumber, like a demon god descending from the heavens, this aura instantly crushed the divine power's oppressive force, reducing it to nothingness!

The divine power's all-out attack, the dazzling golden palm print, was like ice meeting the blazing sun, like an ant encountering a mountain, melting away instantly before Ning Zhi. It didn't even cause a ripple before completely vanishing into nothingness.

The divine power's pupils constricted, his face turning deathly pale, devoid of any color. His eyes were filled with extreme fear and disbelief as he cried out in shock, "This...this is impossible! What level has your cultivation reached?!"

He had lived for thousands of years, traversing the Fourteen Heavens, and had never seen such a terrifying existence. The strength of this young man far exceeded his comprehension. He couldn't believe that there was someone so much more powerful than him in the Fourteen Heavens!

Ning Zhi gave him no time to react or escape.

He raised his hand, his index finger lightly tapping the surface—a seemingly effortless movement, yet containing earth-shattering power.

A pure black light shot out from his fingertip, its speed unbelievable, transcending the limitations of space, instantly piercing through Shen Tong's shoulder!

"Pfft!"

Blood splattered, and Shen Tong let out a shrill scream. His massive body flew backward like a kite with a broken string.

He then crashed heavily into the hull of the golden warship, shattering the sturdy frame. He spat out a mouthful of blood, his life force instantly weakening to its lowest point.

“Palace Master!”

The elders of the Pantheon were terrified, crying out in alarm. They rushed forward, shielding Shen Tong in the center, their faces filled with fear and panic. They had never seen their Lord so disheveled, so vulnerable.

Shen Tong clutched his pierced shoulder, blood gushing forth, his face deathly pale, his eyes filled with lingering terror. He stared at the black-clad figure in the sky, only one thought in his mind: Escape! Escape immediately! This person was far beyond their ability to contend with!

“What are you all standing there for? Retreat! Attack! Fight your way out!”

Shen Tong roared, his voice hoarse, filled with utter panic.

Although the elders of the Pantheon were already consumed by fear, their souls nearly leaving their bodies, they had no choice but to obey their Lord’s order.

Gritting their teeth, suppressing their fear, they attacked, unleashing their divine weapons and spells, trying to buy time for their retreat.

Ning Zhi didn’t even glance at them, his gaze indifferent, as if these people were nothing more than dust and weeds, unworthy of his attention. He merely waved his hand lightly, the movement casual and natural.

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Instantly, black demonic flames erupted from his palm, raging fiercely, their temperature terrifyingly high, containing the power to purify everything. They transformed into a vast sea of fire, sweeping towards the temple’s followers, distorting and scorching the space in their wake.

“Ah—!”

Screams rose and fell, utterly shrill. The temple elders and elites at the forefront were instantly engulfed by the black demonic flames, without even a chance to resist. Not even a trace of their bodies remained; they were reduced to ashes and vanished into the world.

The remaining temple disciples were terrified, losing all will to fight. They turned and fled in panic, their formation completely collapsing, scattering in all directions like stray dogs.

Seeing this, Long Yuan’s eyes flashed with a fierce light. He waved his hand and shouted, “Demonic Dragon lineage, follow me and kill! Leave no one alive! Sweep away the remnants of the Temple!”

The crimson army of demonic dragons surged like a tidal wave towards the fleeing Temple forces. The dragons roared, demonic flames surged—this was no longer a battle, but a one-sided massacre.

The Temple army utterly collapsed. Countless lives were lost; corpses littered the sky and the ground. The golden light dissipated, and demonic energy filled the air.

Shen Tong, protected by several loyal elders, desperately fled into the distance. His golden warship, riddled with damage, hastily turned and fled Cloud Immortal City in a desperate escape.

He glanced back one last time in the direction of Yunxian City, his gaze settling on Ning Zhi. His eyes were filled with resentment, fear, and unwillingness, but he dared not linger any longer, roaring, “Retreat! Retreat now!”

Seeing this, Long Yuan was about to lead the Demon Dragon army in pursuit to completely annihilate the Divine Power and eliminate future threats, but Ning Zhi gently stopped him with a raised hand.

“No need to pursue.”

Ning Zhi spoke calmly, his tone even. His gaze swept across the battlefield, landing on the blood-soaked figure atop the city wall.

Long Zhan, covered in blood, leaned on a broken sword, standing atop the ruined city wall, his gaze on Ning Zhi complex, filled with doubt and awe.

He didn't know who this terrifyingly powerful young man was, or why he had suddenly intervened to help the Heavenly Dragon Clan repel the Temple army, but he knew that this person's strength was unfathomable, far beyond his ability to contend with.

Ning Zhi looked at him and spoke calmly, his voice clear: "Are you Long Zhan, the patriarch of the Heavenly Dragon Clan?"

Long Zhan nodded, suppressing his shock and unease, and clasped his hands in thanks: "Thank you for your help, senior, in saving my Heavenly Dragon Clan and protecting my Cloud Immortal City. The Heavenly Dragon Clan will never forget your great kindness. May I ask your name, senior, and what brings you here?"

Ning Zhi did not answer his question. His gaze swept past Long Zhan's body, landing on the direction of the secret chamber of the City Lord's Mansion below. A complex emotion flashed in his eyes—expectation, fervor, and a barely perceptible ripple.

"Chen Ping, in the secret chamber below?"

Long Zhan's expression changed instantly. He became alert, instinctively stepping forward to block Ning Zhi, gripping his broken sword tightly. Although he knew the difference in strength between himself and Ning Zhi was vast, he still did not want anyone to disturb Chen Ping's seclusion.

Seeing his wary expression, Ning Zhi's lips curled into a gentle smile, allaying his concerns: "Don't be nervous. I won't kill him while he's injured. I'll wait until he's fully healed, making him die a truly worthy death."

Ning Zhi was at the height of arrogance...

He seemed to have forgotten the countless times Chen Ping had defeated and humiliated him, from the mortal realm to the celestial realm, and now to this celestial realm.

Now, Ning Zhi felt incredibly powerful, so he wanted to repay all the humiliation and hatred he had suffered.

If he simply killed Chen Ping easily while he was injured, Ning Zhi felt that wouldn't make up for the suffering he had endured over the years, and it would be too easy on Chen Ping.

He wanted to toy with Chen Ping, like toying with an ant, leaving Chen Ping with no say in his own life or death.

Only that feeling of controlling Chen Ping's life and death would bring him some peace of mind.

"Senior, are we really going to wait for Chen Ping to fully recover and emerge from seclusion?"

Long Yuan was somewhat puzzled. If Ning Zhi had a grudge against Chen Ping, he could take advantage of his illness to kill him.

Why wait until the enemy becomes powerful before seeking revenge?

Ning Zhi didn't speak, but merely gave Long Yuan a cold glance, which immediately frightened Long Yuan into taking several steps back, not daring to utter a sound.

Meanwhile, Ning Zhi waited quietly outside Yunxian City, waiting for Chen Ping to fully recover and emerge from seclusion.

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Outside Cloud Immortal City, the world changed color.

The once majestic celestial city, shrouded in celestial energy and surrounded by auspicious clouds, had long since lost all its peace and tranquility.

Thick, inky demonic energy poured down from the heavens like a raging black torrent, frantically washing over the entire city.

The dark red demonic energy intertwined and swirled with the clouds, churning and rolling across the sky, transforming into countless hideous, terrifying faces that roared silently, completely obscuring the once clear and bright heavens.

Sunlight was utterly blocked out, leaving only an oppressive, dark crimson hue between heaven and earth, as if the end of the world had arrived, even the air filled with a chilling aura of destruction.

Above, a dense army of demonic dragons stretched across the sky like a dark cloud that blotted out the sun, hovering over Cloud Immortal City.

Each demonic dragon was enormous, its scales forged from blood-red iron, gleaming with a cold and ferocious light. On its monstrous head stood pairs of scarlet eyes fixed intently on the ruined city below, their mouths spewing black dragon breath. Each flap of their massive wings stirred up howling winds, swirling up rubble and ashes from the ground.

Thousands of demonic dragons stood in orderly ranks, their imposing aura sweeping across the heavens and earth, forming a terrifying force capable of crushing all living beings.

Just their presence alone instilled a tremor deep within the very souls of every living being in Cloud Immortal City, making even breathing incredibly difficult.

Long Yuan stood at the very forefront of the demonic dragon army, his figure as straight as a spear, his demonic energy surging and boiling around him, transforming into black waves of energy that swirled around him.

He raised his head, his gaze sharp as a hawk's, vigilantly and solemnly scanning every corner of Cloud Immortal City below, from the crumbling city walls to the desolate streets, and even the still stubbornly standing City Lord's Mansion, not missing a single detail.

As a top expert of the Demon Dragon Clan, he knew very well what today's confrontation meant.

The black-clad youth beside him was a being capable of overturning the entire Celestial Realm's 格局 (geju, a concept encompassing overall situation, overall structure, and overall dynamics), while the

young man in the city about to emerge from seclusion was none other than Chen Ping, the Dragon Emperor who had once dominated an era.

The enmity between the two had been intertwined for countless lifetimes, an irreconcilable feud.

He dared not be careless in the slightest. His demonic energy was constantly on the verge of exploding, his hands clenched silently, and the demonic essence within his body circulated wildly, ready to deal with any possible contingency.

Even if the people in the city were already exhausted, he would never underestimate anyone protecting Chen Ping. Each of them had displayed astonishing ferocity and courage on the battlefield.

Not far from Long Yuan, Ning Zhi stood with his hands behind his back. His long, pure black robe billowed without wind, fluttering gently amidst the raging wind and demonic energy, yet remaining untouched by a speck of dust.

He was tall and slender, his demeanor detached and aloof, as if he were outside the tumultuous upheaval of the world.

The surging demonic energy, the ferocious demonic dragons, the despair pervading the city—none of these could stir a ripple in his heart. It was as if all the strife, the killing, the life and death of this world were utterly irrelevant to him.

Yet, his eyes, as deep and cold as an ancient abyss, never left the direction of the City Lord's mansion below, his gaze piercing through the layers of demonic energy and ruins, firmly fixed on that tightly closed chamber.

Deep within his eyes, a burning anticipation he had forcibly suppressed for so long lurked, along with a simmering resentment and a sense of triumph.

He had waited for this day for far too long.

From the fierce confrontations of the mortal realm to the chaotic escape of the celestial realm, and now to the celestial realm's resurgence, he endured humiliation and hardship, cultivating in seclusion, even falling into the demonic path to gain supreme power, all for this moment.

He would wait for Chen Ping to emerge from seclusion, then personally trample him underfoot, making him experience all the pain and humiliation he had endured.

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Su Yuqi stood quietly beside Ning Zhi, her purple robes fluttering, like a solitary orchid in a secluded valley, pure and ethereal, like a celestial being banished from the heavens.

Her skin was as white as snow, her features exquisite, her aura ethereal, standing out starkly against the surrounding ferocious demonic energy and monstrous dragons, like a snow lotus blooming in the darkness, pure and dazzling.

Her gaze also fell upon the ruined city below, her delicate brows slightly furrowed, her beautiful face bearing an indescribable confusion and unease.

For some reason, from the moment she arrived in Yunxian City, a strange, inexplicable feeling lingered in her heart.

Her heart burned faintly, as if an invisible thread extended from the city, tightly binding her heart and constantly pulling at her.

It was a familiar yet strange palpitation, a call etched deep within her soul, yet shrouded in a thick fog, impossible for her to touch or see clearly.

She tried to find the source of this strange feeling, but her mind was blank, only a faint throbbing pain remained, as if some crucial memory had been forcibly sealed deep within her soul.

She turned her head, glanced at Ning Zhi beside her, whose expression remained indifferent, and spoke softly, her voice as cold as a spring: "Junior Brother, why are we waiting here? What do the people in the city have to do with us?"

Ning Zhi's lips curled into a faint smile, his gaze still fixed on the City Lord's Mansion, his tone calm and unwavering: "Senior Sister, we're not waiting for the people of this city, but for one person. Someone... someone very important to me, and very important to you."

Su Yuqi's brows furrowed even more: "An important person? But I have no recollection of this city, of anything here."

"It's alright."

Ning Zhi spoke calmly, his voice gentle yet carrying an undeniable certainty, "You'll understand when he comes out."

Su Yuqi asked no more questions, only turning her gaze back to Yunxian City, the strange feeling in her heart growing stronger.

On the city walls of Yunxian City, the atmosphere was extremely oppressive.

Long Zhan was covered in blood, golden dragon blood soaking through his clothes and dripping from the seams of his armor, forming glaring puddles on the city bricks beneath his feet.

His longsword was broken, only half of its cracked blade remaining, which he desperately used to prop up his swaying body.

His injuries were severe; his meridians were badly damaged, and his Heavenly Dragon bloodline was in turmoil. The once brilliant golden dragon energy within him was now dim and weak.

Each breath aggravated his wounds, bringing excruciating pain. Cold sweat seeped from his forehead, mingling with the blood and streaming down his face.

Yet he remained upright, his gaze blazing, fixed on the black-clad figure in the sky, showing no sign of retreat.

He knew very well that the black-clad youth before him possessed a terrifyingly powerful strength.

Even the powerful experts of the temple were severely injured by his attack and forced to flee in disarray. In the entire Heavenly Realm, almost no one could withstand his might.

Such an existence, even if the Heavenly Dragon Clan mobilized its entire strength, in its current weakened state, would be utterly powerless to resist Chen Ping. They would be instantly crushed and reduced to ashes.

What puzzled Long Zhan was that Ning Zhi, despite possessing the power to annihilate the entire Cloud Immortal City, had not made a move.

He stood quietly in the sky, neither ordering the demonic dragon army to attack, nor destroying the city lord's mansion, nor taking advantage of Chen Ping's seclusion to kill him. He simply waited patiently, waiting for the moment Chen Ping emerged from seclusion.

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Long Zhan couldn't understand what deep-seated grudge existed between this terrifying young man and Chen Ping.

Why wait until Chen Ping recovered and returned to his peak before making a move?

This defied the code of conduct for any martial artist; it seemed more like a deliberate humiliation and torture. He dared not ask, nor did he have the right to. He could only muster his last ounce of strength, holding fast to the city wall, making himself the last line of defense.

He silently prayed again and again, praying that Chen Ping would find some good fortune in the Demon-Suppressing Tower, that he would emerge stronger than before, possessing the power to contend with the terrifying being before him, protecting the city, protecting all those who followed him.

Behind him, the remaining Cloud Immortal City defenders and Heavenly Dragon Clan warriors were equally wounded, each leaning on their weapons, their faces pale, yet their gazes remained resolute as they stared at the sky, not one retreating.

They knew they were protecting not only the City Lord's Mansion, but the hope of the entire Cloud Immortal City, the belief of Dragon Emperor Chen Ping.

Outside the City Lord's Mansion, in the secret chamber.

Ming Li, Liu Qianqian, Yun Yao, and Chen Wanqing stood like four statues, steadfastly guarding the tightly closed door of the secret chamber, not daring to leave.

The relentless battle had long since exhausted them; each was severely wounded, their breaths faint, yet not one showed the slightest fear.

Ming Li's left arm was grievously injured by demonic energy, the wound deep enough to expose bone. Although it had been hastily bandaged with strips of cloth, the dark demonic poison continued to erode his body, blood constantly seeping through the cloth and dripping onto the ground.

His right hand gripped the ghostly blade tightly, the blade stained with blood. His ghostly aura was dim, yet he remained in a fighting stance. If the demonic dragon in the sky dared to set foot in the City Lord's mansion, he would charge without hesitation and fight to the death.

Liu Qianqian's face was ashen, devoid of any color. Her lips were cracked and chapped, her once bright eyes now bloodshot. Completely exhausted, she could only barely stand by leaning against the cold wall.

Her spiritual power was almost depleted, her internal energy chaotic and disordered. Each heartbeat was weak and trembling, yet her gaze remained fixed on the door of the secret chamber, her eyes filled with worry and determination. Yun Yao was utterly exhausted, her slender body swaying precariously. She could barely hold onto her longsword, yet she gripped the hilt tightly, her knuckles white.

Her clothes were stained and disheveled with blood and dust, cold sweat beading on her forehead, yet she refused to retreat an inch. She was Chen Ping's maid, and more importantly, a warrior who followed

the Dragon Emperor; even if she were to be shattered to pieces, she would stand guard before her master.

Chen Wanqing stood at the forefront of the four, her blood-stained white robes fluttering gently in the wind, like a flickering candle, yet possessing an unwavering beauty.

She looked up at the black-clad figure in the sky, her exquisite face filled with solemnity and worry, her eyes deep with an unyielding unease.

She was one of the very few among them who had truly witnessed Ning Zhi's terrifying strength.

It was a power that transcended everything, crushed everything, and was unmatched. It contained no element of luck, relied on no external aids; it was pure suppression of realm and strength.

Before such power, all struggle and resistance seemed pale and powerless.

Could Chen Ping truly contend with him after emerging from seclusion?

This question repeatedly surfaced in Chen Wanqing's mind, yet she remained unanswered.

She didn't know, and dared not delve into it.

She only knew that no matter the outcome, no matter what lay ahead—a mountain of knives, a sea of fire, or a deadly predicament—she would stay by Chen Ping's side, never abandoning him.

Live together; die together.

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“Sister Wanqing, you say... Young Master Chen will be alright after emerging from seclusion, right?”

Yun Yao's voice trembled, tinged with a sob, as she softly asked.

Chen Wanqing lowered her head, looking at the little girl beside her, already trembling with fear yet still unwilling to leave. Her heart softened, and she reached out her slightly trembling hand to gently stroke the girl's head.

Then, her tone was firm: "Yes, we will. Chen Ping is safe and sound, and we will all be alright."

Though her words fell, her heart remained suspended in mid-air, clenched tightly, her gaze once again fixed on the sky, on the black-clad figure who had filled everyone with despair.

Within the secret chamber, however, lay a completely different scene.

Inside the Demon-Suppressing Tower, a world unto itself existed, where time flowed drastically differently from the outside.

While only a few days passed outside, within the Demon-Suppressing Tower, a full several years had passed under its time-laws.

Several years was enough for a sapling to grow into a towering tree, enough for a weakling to refine their cultivation and undergo a complete transformation.

Chen Ping sat cross-legged in the core of the Demon-Suppressing Tower, his eyes closed, his expression serene, golden dragon energy flowing ceaselessly around him, like a small sun illuminating the entire space within the tower.

His body shimmered with golden light, the phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon flickering behind him, its roar echoing faintly, majestic and sacred.

Having undergone the accelerated tempering of the Demon-Suppressing Tower and been nourished by countless rare and precious herbs, the severe injuries he sustained in his battle with the powerful figures of the Divine Temple had completely healed. He was not only fully recovered but even stronger than before.

His aura became increasingly solid and profound, like a towering mountain, unfathomable.

His already awakened five-clawed golden dragon bloodline, nurtured over the past few years, had been further sublimated. The power of his bloodline surged and roared like a vast ocean, raging through his limbs and bones.

Each flow of his bloodline cleansed his meridians, expanding and reshaping them, making them even more resilient and expansive, capable of containing even more terrifying spiritual energy.

The spiritual energy within his body was no longer a trickle, but had transformed into a raging torrent, vast and boundless, each strand containing terrifying power.

His cultivation, through years of accumulated experience, had already quietly broken through the bottleneck of the third rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, like a flood bursting its banks, sweeping into the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm with unstoppable momentum.

Moreover, it wasn't a mere entry into the fourth rank, but a meteoric rise, directly reaching the peak of the fourth rank, only one step away from the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

This step, seemingly insignificant, was an insurmountable chasm that countless cultivators could not cross in their entire lives.

But for Chen Ping now, it was already within reach; all he needed was a trigger to naturally achieve another breakthrough.

Years of seclusion, a blessing in disguise.

Chen Ping slowly opened his eyes.

Two dazzling golden beams shot from his eyes, like two golden divine swords, instantly illuminating the entire Demon-Suppressing Tower. The demonic energy within the tower vanished instantly under the golden light, completely purified.

He slowly stood up, his aura subtly concealed, not leaking out in the slightest. Yet, the domineering majesty emanating from his very bones was enough to make heaven and earth tremble.

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“Peak of the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm...”

Chen Ping murmured to himself, his voice calm, yet tinged with satisfaction.

He slowly raised his right hand, gently clenching his fist, feeling the surging, seemingly inexhaustible power within him, feeling the dragon’s might coursing through his blood. A faint smile played on his lips.

This severe injury, seemingly fraught with danger and a near-death experience, had also allowed him to thoroughly refine his cultivation, break through his bottleneck, and reach a new level.

Every cloud has a silver lining; after hardship comes fortune.

He waved his hand, and the Demon-Suppressing Tower, suspended in mid-air, instantly transformed into a streak of light, precisely entering his storage ring and disappearing.

Then, he turned around, his gaze calmly fixed on the door of the secret chamber. He took a light step and slowly walked towards the door.

He was completely unaware of everything that had happened in the outside world these past few days.

Chen Ping reached out and gently placed his hand on the stone door of the secret chamber.

“Creak...”

The heavy stone door slowly opened with his gentle push.

Blinding light shone in from outside, carrying a strong, pungent stench of blood, mixed with the smell of gunpowder and dust.

Chen Ping frowned slightly, a cold glint flashing in his eyes, and stepped out of the secret chamber.

When he saw what was before him, he was instantly stunned.

The City Lord's Mansion before him was no longer the same as it had been before his seclusion.

Pavilions and towers were reduced to charred ruins, carved beams and painted rafters were broken and collapsed, gardens and trees were reduced to ashes, the ground was covered with cracks and bloodstains, and everywhere was a scene of devastation.

The once bustling and ethereal city lord's mansion was now a desolate ruin, scarred and utterly bleak.

The air was thick with the stench of blood, gunpowder, and demonic energy, a pungent, oppressive smell that made it hard to breathe.

But what truly made his pupils constrict was the endless, overwhelming army of dark red demonic dragons in the sky. Their surging demonic energy nearly blotted out the entire heavens, their ferocious aura sweeping across the land.

Chen Ping's gaze first fell upon Long Zhan, covered in blood and barely breathing, atop the city wall.

Seeing Long Zhan's near-exhausted state, yet his unwavering resolve, the still-wet blood on his body, the weariness and determination in his eyes, a chilling killing intent instantly surged within Chen Ping.

Long Zhan was his brother, his comrade-in-arms.

Now, he had been wounded to this state while protecting him, protecting the City Lord's Mansion.

All of this was a gift from the heavens.

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Chen Ping's heart felt as if it were being gripped tightly by an invisible hand. Anger, heartache, and killing intent intertwined, threatening to burst from his chest.

Then, his gaze slowly moved upwards, past the army of demonic dragons, finally settling on the black-clad figure in the sky.

In that instant, Chen Ping's body jolted violently, as if struck by lightning, frozen in place.

That face, that face etched into his very being, unforgettable for a lifetime.

That faint, mocking smile at the corner of his mouth, those deep, cold, venomous eyes, that familiar aura lurking within the demonic energy, the aura he hated to the core...

There was no mistake.

Absolutely no mistake!

Ning Zhi!

It was Ning Zhi!

Chen Ping's pupils contracted sharply, his eyes instantly surging with overwhelming hatred and killing intent, almost materializing to devour Ning Zhi completely.

The pursuit from the mortal realm, the grudges between the celestial and human realms, and especially the fact that Ning Zhi was with Su Yuqi—Chen Ping had worried countless times that if Ning Zhi defiled Su Yuqi, he wouldn't want to live anymore.

Now, seeing Ning Zhi, he wanted nothing more than to rush forward and tear him to pieces to vent his hatred.

But just then, his gaze inadvertently fell on the purple figure beside Ning Zhi.

In that instant, time seemed to stand still, and all sound in the world vanished.

Chen Ping was struck dumb, as if by a thunderbolt, completely frozen in place, forgetting even to breathe.

A figure in flowing purple robes, ethereal and aloof, with a slender figure and an exquisitely beautiful face.

That face, the face he had dreamt of countless days and nights, the face he thought he would have to cross countless heavens and face countless life-and-death experiences to see again...

Su Yuqi.

It's Su Yuqi! Chen Ping's heart pounded wildly, almost bursting out of his chest.

His eyes instantly reddened, tears welling uncontrollably, blurring his vision.

He opened his mouth, wanting to call out the name etched deep in his soul, but found his throat felt like it was blocked by something, dry and tight, unable to utter a sound.

Years of longing, years of worry, years of torment, years of being lost in thought—at this moment, like a flood breaking its banks, all surged into his heart, drowning all reason and composure.

He thought Su Yuqi had disappeared deep within the Heavenly Realm, her fate unknown.

He thought he would have to ascend to a higher realm, traversing every corner of the Heavenly Realm, to find her trace.