

The Order 10671

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His eyes were no longer merely watching Ning Zhi's movements, but sensing his every action, every flow of demonic energy within him.

The golden dragon patterns on the Dragon-Slaying Sword grew brighter, as if they were about to leap from the blade.

The sword's cry grew more rapid and piercing, responding to its master's will, burning with all its power.

Ning Zhi's punches grew heavier.

His fists were covered in a layer of black demonic flames, not ordinary flames, but condensed from the purest demonic energy, so hot that even space itself was slightly distorted by the heat.

Each punch left a jet-black trail in the air, lingering for a long time.

"Boom—!"

Another violent collision.

Chen Ping was blasted back dozens of feet, his feet carving deep furrows in the ground, his hands numb, the Dragon-Slaying Sword nearly slipping from his grasp.

A trickle of blood escaped from the corner of his mouth, and the golden light around him dimmed slightly.

Ning Zhi took three steps back, regaining his footing, his chest heaving slightly.

Several cuts from sword energy ripped his black robes, revealing lean yet powerful muscles beneath.

He didn't pursue, but coldly stared at Chen Ping. "Admit defeat, Chen Ping. You are no match for me now. Continuing will only lead to your death."

Chen Ping steadied himself, wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, and smiled.

That smile held no fear, no retreat, only an indomitable fighting spirit.

"Admit defeat? Ning Zhi, when have you ever seen me admit defeat?"

He took a deep breath, the dragon blood within him boiling once more.

He could feel that in those hundreds of exchanges, the bottleneck that had stagnated for so long was beginning to loosen.

That was the threshold of the fifth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, the breakthrough opportunity he had been searching for.

He gripped the Dragon-Slaying Sword tightly and charged forward again.

This time, his sword was faster, more ruthless, and more decisive.

Yunxi stood at a distance, watching the battle, her brows furrowing deeper and deeper.

She could see that although Chen Ping fought fiercely and relentlessly, Ning Zhi clearly still had energy to spare.

Every attack Chen Ping launched was precisely neutralized by Ning Zhi; every burst of energy from Chen Ping was calmly dealt with by Ning Zhi.

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If this continued, Chen Ping would eventually exhaust himself, and then it would be a matter of life and death.

She gripped her sword tightly, her ghostly energy surging around her, preparing to intervene.

“Yunxi, don’t.”

Chen Ping’s voice suddenly rang out, his tone firm and unwavering, “This is between him and me, don’t interfere.”

Yunxi bit her lip, her eyes filled with resentment, but ultimately she didn’t move.

She knew Chen Ping’s temperament.

When he said she couldn’t interfere, he really meant it.

If she forced her way in, Chen Ping wouldn’t be grateful; he would be angry.

This was his pride, and also his stubbornness.

The battle continued.

Chen Ping fought with increasing ferocity, his golden dragon bloodline boiling to its limit.

He felt like a piece of steel thrown into a furnace, being forged and tempered by fire. Every strike carried the resolute determination of burning life itself.

The dragon patterns on the Dragon-Slaying Sword shone with unparalleled brilliance, the entire sword emitting a blinding golden light, as if it might explode at any moment.

Every line on the sword pulsed and burned, the divine weapon, passed down for countless years, responding to its master's will.

Ning Zhi gradually abandoned his frivolous expression, a hint of solemnity creeping into his eyes.

He could sense that Chen Ping's strength was still increasing during the battle, seemingly without limit.

Each sword strike was heavier than the last, each attack more ferocious than the last.

This terrifying talent of growing stronger with each battle filled Ning Zhi with dread.

"This guy..."

A trace of resentment flashed through Ning Zhi's mind.

He had sacrificed so much.

He fell into the demonic path, enduring the agonizing backlash of demonic energy;

He devoured the cultivation of countless powerful beings, bearing a sin that could never be washed away;

He abandoned his former self, becoming an entity even he himself was unfamiliar with.

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All of this was to gain his current strength.

But what about Chen Ping?

He had just reached the fourth rank of the Upper Immortal Realm, yet his combat power was no less than his.

What gave him the right?

What gave him the right to always be one step ahead?

A ruthless glint flashed in Ning Zhi's eyes.

"Chen Ping, you are indeed strong," he said coldly, "but not enough."

Before his words finished, the demonic energy around him surged violently.

That demonic energy was no longer the faint, almost imperceptible form it had been before; it erupted from his body like a volcanic eruption, blotting out the sky and turning the entire sky black.

Within the demonic energy, faint cries of ghosts and wolves echoed—the resentment left behind by the powerful beings he had devoured, the sins he bore.

He unleashed a punch.

This punch was unlike any he had ever thrown before.

The fist's energy was as black as ink, yet no longer simply black.

Within that ink, a dark red light swirled, countless twisted faces wailed, and a terrifying power capable of destroying everything coalesced.

It was his full-force attack, a strike capable of leveling a mountain.

Chen Ping gritted his teeth and swung his sword to meet the punch. He knew he couldn't withstand it, but he couldn't retreat.

Once he retreated, his momentum would dissipate, and there would be no chance of a comeback.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword let out a mournful cry, as if it too knew this was the final clash.

“Boom—!”

This attack was ten times more powerful than any before.

The golden light and demonic energy exploded simultaneously upon collision, transforming into a visible shockwave that spread outwards at supersonic speeds.

Where the shockwave passed, the ground was ripped apart, rocks were pulverized, and the air was compressed into a tangible mass, emitting a piercing shriek.

The protective array of Holy Light Peak trembled violently under this attack; countless cracks appeared on the golden shield, like an eggshell about to shatter.

The spirit stones at the array's core were instantly drained of all their spiritual power, turning into grayish-white powder. Dozens of elders maintaining the array simultaneously coughed up blood and collapsed to the ground.

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Chen Ping was blasted away like a golden meteor, crashing heavily onto the ground hundreds of feet away.

The impact created a crater several feet deep, its bottom filled with scorched earth and shattered rocks.

He struggled to his feet, but every bone in his body groaned, every muscle trembled.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword lay embedded in the ground beside him, its light dimmed to a mere groan.

Blood seeped from his mouth, nostrils, and ears—a sign of internal organ damage.

He knelt on one knee, gasping for breath, his vision blurring.

Ning Zhi wasn't in much better shape.

He was forced back more than ten feet by the recoil, his feet carving two deep furrows in the ground.

His black clothes were torn in several places by the sword energy; one blade even grazed his arm, blood dripping from his fingertips.

He glanced down at his wounds, a flicker of surprise in his eyes.

How long had it been since he'd been injured?

Since falling into the demonic path, since gaining his current power, he hadn't tasted the bitterness of injury in a long time.

“Chen Ping...”

He murmured, a complex emotion in his voice.

On Holy Light Peak, Yao Chen watched this scene, a glint of light flashing in his eyes.

The opportunity had arrived.

Chen Ping was seriously injured, and Ning Zhi had also expended considerable energy.

This was the perfect moment for him to strike.

If he could eliminate both of them now, the Divine Hall could completely remove two major threats and rest easy.

He calculated in his mind: Chen Ping had a grudge against the Divine Hall; keeping him alive would only bring trouble sooner or later.

Although Ning Zhi seemed uninterested in the Divine Hall, who knew if he might change his mind?

Rather than waiting for Ning Zhi to free up his hands, it was better to act now, help Ning Zhi deal with Chen Ping first, and then find an opportunity to strike at Ning Zhi.

The enemy of my enemy is my friend; Ning Zhi surely understood this principle.

As long as he showed enough sincerity, Ning Zhi shouldn't refuse.

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"Pass down the order: activate the mountain-protecting formation," Yao Chen said in a deep voice.

The guardian elder was shocked: "Hall Master, what are you doing?"

Yao Chen didn't answer. With a flash, he led several True Immortal Realm elders away from the protective array and flew towards the battlefield.

Yun Xi was the first to spot them, shouting sharply, "Chen Ping, be careful!"

Chen Ping was struggling to his feet from the pit. Hearing Yun Xi's warning, he tried to retreat, but it was too late.

Yao Chen struck out with a palm.

The golden palm print, carrying the terrifying power of a True Immortal Realm expert, descended like a mountain from the sky, aiming straight for Chen Ping's back.

This palm strike was as fast as lightning, extremely ruthless, showing no mercy. Wherever the palm print passed, the air was compressed into a tangible form, emitting a piercing shriek.

Caught off guard, Chen Ping barely managed to dodge the fatal blow, but the palm wind still struck his shoulder.

"Bang!"

The sound of bones cracking was clearly audible.

His shoulder caved in instantly, and he was sent flying like a kite with a broken string, crashing heavily to the ground dozens of feet away, blood gushing from his mouth.

"Chen Ping!"

Yun Xi roared in fury, drawing her sword to charge at Yao Chen, but Chen Ping stopped her with a raised hand.

Chen Ping struggled to his feet, his left arm hanging limply at his side. The bones in his shoulder were shattered, and every movement brought excruciating pain.

He looked at Yao Chen, his eyes filled with coldness, but a mocking smile played on his lips. "The head of the Divine Hall? Is this how your Divine Hall behaves? Taking advantage of someone in distress?"

Yao Chen's expression remained unchanged. He said calmly, "There's no need for rules when dealing with an arrogant fool like you. You destroyed my Holy Light Domain's Holy Purity Sect and insulted the dignity of my Divine Race; you deserve to die."

He turned to Ning Zhi, his face instantly plastered with a smile. He cupped his hands and said, "Senior Ning Zhi, I am Yao Chen, the head of the Divine Hall.

I have long admired your name, and meeting you today, I can see it is indeed well-deserved. Senior has a grudge against Chen Ping, and so do I.

I am willing to lend you a hand to deal with this fiend. As the saying goes, the enemy of my enemy is my friend. What do you say, Senior?"

Ning Zhi looked at him, without speaking.

His gaze was terrifyingly calm, as if he were looking at a dead man.

Yao Chen was overjoyed, thinking Ning Zhi was considering it, and quickly continued, "Senior, the Divine Hall has operated in the Holy Domain of Light for tens of thousands of years, possessing profound resources. If we can join forces, the Divine Hall is willing to provide full assistance to you in your future endeavors within the Holy Domain of Light. Whether it's resources, intelligence, or manpower, please don't hesitate to ask."

He paused, then added, "Senior, rest assured, I have no ulterior motives; I simply sincerely wish to befriend you. This Chen Ping is ruthless and indiscriminately kills innocent people; everyone has the right to punish him. It is perfectly reasonable for me to join forces with you, Senior."

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Yao Chen spoke eloquently, his eyes filled with anticipation.

In his mind, Ning Zhi had no reason to refuse.

The Divine Hall was one of the oldest forces in the Holy Domain of Light; with their assistance, Ning Zhi's actions in the Holy Domain of Light would be much more convenient.

Moreover, he had taken the initiative to show goodwill, adopting such a humble posture; Ning Zhi surely wouldn't refuse him.

But he was wrong.

Ning Zhi looked at him and suddenly laughed.

The smile was faint, yet it carried undisguised mockery and disdain, as if he were looking at a clown.

"Yao Chen?"

He repeated the name softly, his tone playful, tinged with nonchalance. "You just said, 'The enemy of my enemy is my friend'?"

Yao Chen nodded hastily, his face beaming. "Exactly, exactly. Senior has a grudge against Chen Ping, and I also have a grudge against Chen Ping. It's only natural that we join forces."

Ning Zhi shook his head, looking at him like he was looking at an ignorant child.

"Yao Chen, haven't you misunderstood something?"

He slowly stepped forward, each step leaving a deep footprint in the ground. The soil at the edges of the footprints was corroded by demonic energy, instantly turning into charred powder.

“You think you’re worthy to be my friend?” Ning Zhi’s face was full of sarcasm.

Yao Chen’s smile froze instantly, as if a bucket of ice water had been poured over him.

Ning Zhi continued, “Your Divine Hall, claiming to be the righteous path, secretly capture demonic cultivators and rogue cultivators, conducting those shameful bloodline experiments. For your own selfish gain, you turn living people into monsters, letting them die in agony. Such behavior is even worse than that of the demon race.”

His voice wasn’t loud, but every word was like a hammer blow to Yao Chen’s heart.

“With your kind of trash, you dare to talk to me about cooperation? You dare to call yourselves ‘enemies of my enemies’?” Ning Zhi’s mockery deepened.

Yao Chen’s face turned deathly pale, cold sweat pouring down his forehead. He hurriedly said, “Senior, there must be some misunderstanding! Our Divine Hall...”

“Misunderstanding?”

Ning Zhi sneered, interrupting him, “I saw it with my own eyes, I heard it with my own ears, and you call it a misunderstanding?”

He raised his right hand, and a wisp of black demonic flame silently appeared in his palm.

Though small, the demonic flame emitted a chilling temperature, distorting and scorching the surrounding air. “How many demonic cultivators has your Divine Hall captured? How many have you killed? Those demonic cultivators you captured, those rogue cultivators you used as experimental subjects—their wronged souls are still wailing in that dense forest. Do you think I don’t know?”

Yao Chen trembled, instinctively taking a step back, his voice trembling: “Senior, I...I’m doing this for the future of the Divine Race...If we don’t become stronger, the Divine Hall will eventually follow in the footsteps of the Divine Temple...”

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“The future of the Divine Race?”

Ning Zhi interrupted him again, his eyes full of disdain.

“Do you think I don’t know what you’re plotting? You want to use me against Chen Ping, and then reap the benefits after we’ve both been weakened.

Or, you want to use my influence to strengthen your Divine Hall, and then find an opportunity to kick me aside. Yao Chen, I can see through your scheme at a glance.”

Yao Chen’s face changed drastically, his lips trembling as he tried to explain, but Ning Zhi didn’t give him the chance.

“Yao Chen, the worst thing you could have done was treat me like a fool.” Ning Zhi’s voice was terrifyingly calm, but beneath that calm lay a murderous intent capable of destroying the world.

“You think I would cooperate with you? You’re not even worthy to carry my shoes.”

Ning Zhi sneered.

Yao Chen finally panicked, utterly panicked.

His legs went weak, he almost knelt down, his voice trembling as he pleaded, “Senior, I had no such intention! I just... I just...”

Ning Zhi wouldn’t listen to his nonsense.

He raised his hand and struck out with his palm.

The black demonic flames that had been churning in his palm erupted at that moment!

This wasn't the casual flame he'd used against the divine power before, but a true, all-out, world-destroying flame.

Demonic flames erupted from his palm, initially a thin pillar of fire, but in an instant, it expanded to tens of meters thick, transforming into a ferocious black fire dragon, baring its fangs and claws as it lunged at Yao Chen!

Where the fire dragon passed, space was torn open by a massive rift, revealing the pitch-black void within.

Fragments of space at the rift's edge melted and evaporated in the demonic flames, emitting piercing shrieks.

The ground was scorched, carving a trench several meters deep. The soil at the trench's edges melted under the intense heat, turning into dark red magma, bubbling and gurgling.

Yao Chen was terrified, desperately channeling all the spiritual power within him.

His holy light shield was like paper before the demonic flames, shattering to pieces the moment it touched it.

He summoned his protective artifact, the golden mirror that had accompanied him for thousands of years, but it only withstood the demonic flames for less than a breath before cracking and shattering into countless fragments.

He turned to flee, but the fire dragon was too fast, too fast for him to even react.

The demonic flames instantly devoured his protective holy light, his physical body, and his soul.

"No—!"

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Yao Chen let out a bloodcurdling scream, his voice filled with resentment, confusion, and despair.

He died without understanding why Ning Zhi would kill him.

He was clearly helping Ning Zhi, clearly trying to cooperate with him, clearly having lowered his stance and abandoned his dignity, why...

The demonic flames dissipated.

Yao Chen's body turned to ashes, vanishing into the world.

The elders who had followed Yao Chen didn't even have time to scream before being caught in the demonic flames and instantly killed.

Their bodies burned in the demonic flames for less than a breath before completely turning to nothingness, leaving not even bones behind.

But the demonic flames did not stop there.

After devouring Yao Chen, the fire dragon continued forward, crashing directly into the protective array of Holy Light Peak.

Boom—!

The entire Holy Light Peak trembled.

The protective array, blessed by countless ancestors of the divine halls over tens of thousands of years, was as fragile as paper before Ning Zhi's demonic flames, instantly torn open with a massive gash.

The golden light shield rapidly melted and evaporated under the scorching heat of the demonic flames, transforming into countless golden specks, like a golden rain.

Cracks spread outwards from the breach, densely packed like a spiderweb.

Within mere breaths, the entire array collapsed with a deafening roar, the golden light shield completely dissipating, revealing the trembling Holy Light Peak within.

The buildings on the mountain swayed precariously in the aftershocks of the demonic flames; countless palaces and pavilions collapsed with a crash, sending debris flying and dust billowing.

The disciples of the Divine Hall scattered and fled, their cries, screams, and pleas for mercy mingling and echoing across the entire mountain.

Ning Zhi withdrew his hand, observing the scene before him with a calm expression, as if he had merely performed a trivial act.

The entire area fell silent.

On Holy Light Peak, the surviving disciples of the Divine Hall collapsed to the ground, trembling uncontrollably, lacking even the courage to flee.

They stared at the black-clad figure at the foot of the mountain as if looking at an invincible demon god.

Yun Xi looked at Ning Zhi, her eyes filled with apprehension, instinctively shielding Chen Ping behind her.

Ming Li gripped his Ghost Blade tightly, standing in front of Liu Qianqian, his palms drenched in cold sweat.

Yun Yao hid behind Chen Ping, trembling uncontrollably, unable to utter a word.

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Chen Ping calmly looked at Ning Zhi, a complex expression flashing in his eyes.

Ning Zhi turned to Chen Ping. "What, are you surprised?"

Chen Ping didn't answer.

Ning Zhi said calmly, "People like Yao Chen deserve to die. They claim to be righteous, but behind the scenes they do despicable things. I may not be a good person myself, but at least I despise this kind of scum."

He paused, his gaze turning icy.

"That's enough for today. We'll fight again when we have another chance."

With that, he turned and transformed into a black streak of light, disappearing into the distance.

The streak of light tore through the sky, leaving a long gash in the clouds that took a long time to heal.

Ning Zhi wasn't stupid. He knew that in a life-or-death situation, Yun Xi would definitely intervene. If Chen Ping and Yun Xi joined forces, he would be no match for her.

Furthermore, Ning Zhi wasn't worried about Chen Ping running away. As long as Su Yuqi was with him, Chen Ping wouldn't give up.

Ning Zhi even wanted to see Chen Ping die at Su Yuqi's hands. Chen Ping stood there, watching Ning Zhi's departing figure, speechless for a long time.

Yun Xi walked to his side and whispered, "Who exactly is this Ning Zhi?"

Chen Ping was silent for a moment, then slowly spoke.

“A madman.”

He turned around and looked towards Holy Light Peak.

That once majestic and sacred mountain now had its protective array broken, most of its palaces and pavilions collapsed, and disciples of the Divine Hall were fleeing everywhere. It was no longer a sacred place.

“Let’s go, I still have things to discuss with the Divine Hall.”

He strode towards Holy Light Peak.

Although his left arm still hung limply at his side, although blood still clung to the corner of his mouth, although every step aggravated his wound, his back was ramrod straight, like a drawn sword.

Yun Xi followed behind him, and Ming Li and Liu Qianqian also caught up.

Yun Yao wiped away her tears, mustered her courage, and followed as well.

Five figures walked towards the dilapidated mountain peak.

Chen Ping quickly found a guardian elder trying to escape within the ruined palace of the shrine!

Upon seeing Chen Ping approach, the guardian elder immediately knelt on the ground, weeping bitterly.

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“Grandpa, spare me! Grandpa, spare me!” Having witnessed Chen Ping’s power, the guardian elder was terrified.

“Do me a favor now, and I’ll let you go,” Chen Ping said to the guardian elder.

“Grandpa, just say it, I’ll do anything...”

The guardian elder nodded repeatedly.

Chen Ping took out a soul crystal containing the remnants of Mu Sha and his wife’s souls, saying, “This is a soul crystal refined by the shrine. It contains two remnant souls. I know your shrine has the ability to release the remnant souls within the crystal and directly shape them into physical forms, thus restoring their physical bodies.”

Hearing Chen Ping’s words, the guardian elder was slightly taken aback.

His body, kneeling on the ground, trembled violently, cold sweat mixed with dust streaming down his forehead, leaving dark streaks on his face.

His name was Zhou Yuanlang. He had served as a guardian elder in the Divine Hall for three thousand years, his cultivation barely touching the threshold of the True Immortal Realm. He was usually a respected figure in the Divine Hall.

But at this moment, he didn’t even have the courage to look Chen Ping in the eye.

He subconsciously swallowed.

The Divine Hall did indeed possess this secret technique.

That was the Soul Return Technique, one of the most core inheritances of the Divine Hall for tens of thousands of years.

Through special methods, it releases the remnant soul sealed within a soul crystal, then uses the unique bloodline power of the divine race to reshape its physical body.

This secret technique is extremely complex, requiring specific arrays, precious materials, and the combined efforts of at least three elders at the True Immortal realm or above.

Moreover, the success rate is not high.

But he dared not deny it.

Chen Ping's eyes told him that if he uttered a single "no," his head would be separated from his body in the next instant.

"Yes...yes."

Zhou Yuanlang nodded repeatedly, his voice trembling, "The Divine Hall does indeed possess this secret technique, called the Soul Return Technique. However...it requires a specific place to perform..."

"What place?" Chen Ping pressed.

Zhou Yuanlang hesitated for a moment, then gritted his teeth and said, "In the forbidden area behind the Divine Hall... there's an ancient Soul Returning Formation there, the only place in the entire Holy Light Domain where the remnant soul of a Soul Crystal can be safely released.

Ordinary formations that forcibly release a Soul Crystal will cause the remnant soul to dissipate the moment it's released; only that formation can guarantee the remnant soul's integrity..."

Chen Ping put the Soul Crystal back into his robes and said coldly, "Lead the way."

Zhou Yuanlang trembled, a barely concealed glint of something strange flashing in his eyes, but it was quickly masked by fear.