

## **The Order 10711**

Chapter: 10711

He stumbled to a corner of the cave and sat down against the wall.

The stone wall was cold and hard, yet it gave him a strange sense of peace.

He looked at Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin on the stone platform, at their peaceful sleeping faces, and a slight smile appeared on his lips.

Senior Mu Sha, Senior Liu Qingyin, you've finally come back to life.

He closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep.

When Chen Ping woke up again, it was the next day.

Sunlight streamed in through the cracks in the tree hollow, golden spots of light dancing on the cave walls like countless tiny fireflies.

The air was filled with the fragrance of the Tree of Life, a scent that soothed and refreshed him.

He stretched his body and found that his vitality had recovered to about 50-60%. Although still somewhat weak, it no longer hindered his movements.

On the stone platform, Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin were still asleep. However, their complexions were better than yesterday; no longer deathly pale, they had regained a faint hue.

Jiang Xuelan was not in the tree hollow.

Chen Ping stood up, walked out of the tree hollow, and descended the steps along the tree roots.

On the lake, Jiang Xuelan stood by the water's edge, her back to him.

Her white robes fluttered slightly in the morning breeze, her long hair as black as ink, creating a breathtaking scene against the backdrop of ice, snow, and golden light.

She seemed to be looking at something beneath the lake's surface, her expression focused and serene.

"Awake?" She didn't turn around, but she accurately sensed Chen Ping's arrival.

"Yes." Chen Ping walked to her side, following her gaze to the lake.

In the dark blue water beneath the surface, something was slowly moving.

It was a gigantic fish—no, not a fish, a dragon?

No, that thing was enormous, tens of meters long, its body covered in dark blue scales, swimming silently in the water.

Two curved horns were faintly visible on its head, and its eyes were golden, emitting an eerie glow in the darkness.

"What is that?" Chen Ping asked in surprise.

"The guardian of the Tree of Life," Jiang Xuelan said calmly. "It's called 'Gui Xu,' a creature that has lived in this lake since ancient times. It was here before the Divine Palace was built."

The gigantic creature seemed to sense Chen Ping's gaze, slowly swimming to the vicinity of the lake's surface, its golden eyes glancing at him through the water.

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That glance gave Chen Ping the feeling of being watched by an ancient, primordial beast.

There was no hostility, no kindness, only an indifference that transcended time. In its eyes, Chen Ping was merely an insignificant passerby in the vast expanse of time.

Then, it turned and swam away, disappearing into the darkness at the bottom of the lake.

Chen Ping withdrew his gaze and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

"Your two friends should wake up this afternoon," Jiang Xuelan said.

"Their recovery is faster than I expected, probably because your golden dragon life force is so abundant, making their physical bodies stronger than those of ordinary reconstructed bodies."

Chen Ping was delighted: "When will they regain their mobility?"

"As for mobility, they can slowly move around after waking up today." Jiang Xuelan paused, her tone becoming more serious, "But they can't stay in the Fourteenth Heaven for long."

Chen Ping was taken aback: "Why?"

Jiang Xuelan turned to look at him, her gaze calm but serious.

"The laws of the Fourteenth Heaven are far stronger than those of the Thirteenth Heaven. Their current condition is unsuitable for them to remain in the Fourteenth Heaven."

Chen Ping frowned slightly. "I can create a small world for them."

Jiang Xuelan shook her head. "With your strength, even if you could create a small world in the Fourteenth Heaven, how long could it exist?"

The two of them can't withstand the laws of the Fourteenth Heaven right now. It's like... a fish being thrown from a stream into the ocean. The ocean is vast, but the water pressure is also much greater. If the fish doesn't have strong enough scales and bones, it will be crushed to death by the water pressure."

"You mean, they'll be in danger if they stay in the Fourteenth Heaven?" Chen Ping asked.

"It's not just that there will be danger, it's that there will inevitably be danger."

Jiang Xuelan's tone left no room for argument. "With their current physical strength and cultivation level, the laws of the Fourteenth Heaven will begin to erode their bodies within three days.

On the first day, they will feel chest tightness and shortness of breath, and their spiritual energy will stagnate;

On the second day, blood will begin to seep from their seven orifices, and cracks will appear in their meridians;

On the third day... their bodies will be crushed into dust by the power of the laws, like a crushed egg."

Chen Ping clenched his fists.

He had expended so much effort, traversing tens of thousands of miles of the Guixu Gale, sacrificing nearly half his life force, to save Mu Sha and his wife from the brink of annihilation.

If they were to perish again simply because they remained in the Fourteenth Heaven, what would be the point of everything he had done?

“Then what should we do?” he asked in a deep voice. “Send them back to the Thirteenth Heaven?”

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Jiang Xuelan nodded: “The laws of heaven and earth in the Thirteenth Heaven are much weaker than those in the Fourteenth Heaven. With their cultivation level, they won’t be suppressed in the Thirteenth Heaven; on the contrary, the quality of their reconstructed physical bodies will far surpass that of ordinary cultivators, allowing them to thrive. Once they return to the Thirteenth Heaven, they will recover quickly, and their cultivation might even advance to a higher level.”

“Then let’s send them back,” Chen Ping said without hesitation.

Jiang Xuelan glanced at him: “Do you know how to open a void passage between the two heavens?”

Chen Ping remained silent.

He knew.

Opening a void passage from the Fourteenth Heaven to the Thirteenth Heaven requires extremely immense power.

Ordinary Upper Immortal Realm cultivators simply cannot do it; only True Immortal Realm experts and above possess this ability.

Although his current strength is enough to challenge a True Immortal Realm Rank 3 cultivator, opening a void passage requires not combat power, but an understanding and control of the laws of space.

“I can try,” Chen Ping said through gritted teeth.

Jiang Xuelan said nothing, only nodded slightly.

That afternoon, Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin indeed woke up.

When Chen Ping entered the tree hollow, Mu Sha was struggling to sit up from the stone platform.

Liu Qingyin leaned against him, her face pale, but her eyes were open, and she was looking around with a blank gaze.

“Senior Mu Sha!” Chen Ping quickly went over and supported Mu Sha’s shoulders. “Don’t rush to get up, you’re still too weak.”

Mu Sha raised his head and looked at Chen Ping.

That face, once so full of vigor in the Xuanhuang Realm, was now filled with weakness and exhaustion, but his eyes were still as bright as ever.

“Mr. Chen...” His voice was hoarse, yet carried a sense of relief at surviving a near-death experience, “I... I thought I was going to die.”

Chen Ping smiled: “Senior, you’re lucky. It’s hard for you to die even if you wanted to.”

Mu Sha gave a bitter smile and turned to look at Liu Qingyin beside him.

Liu Qingyin looked at Chen Ping with a complicated expression, her eyes slightly red.

“Mr. Chen... thank you.” Her voice was very soft, almost inaudible. “Musa and I... we owe you one life, no, Musa owes you two lives.”

Chen Ping shook his head: “What are you saying, senior? Back in the Twelfth Heaven, you helped me. If it weren’t for you, I would have died long ago. Besides, if you hadn’t been tainted by the chaotic energy on my body, you wouldn’t have been refined into soul crystals by the temple.”

Liu Qingyin wanted to say something, but Mu Sha gently grasped her hand.

“Alright, Qingyin.” Mu Sha’s voice was weak, but it carried a reassuring steadiness. “Mr. Chen isn’t the kind of person who likes to hear thanks. We’ll just remember it in our hearts.”

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Liu Qingyin nodded, saying nothing more, simply resting her head gently on Mu Sha’s shoulder.

Chen Ping watched this scene, a warmth welling up in his heart.

They had finally come back to life.

Footsteps sounded outside the tree hollow, and Jiang Xuelan entered.

She glanced at Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin’s condition and nodded slightly. “They’re recovering well. At this rate, with another two or three days of rest, they should regain basic mobility.”

She paused, then looked at Chen Ping. “However, I suggest we send them away today.”

Chen Ping was taken aback. “Today? They haven’t recovered yet...”

“The slower they recover, the longer they stay in the Fourteenth Heaven, and the greater the risk of being corrupted by the laws.”

Jiang Xuelan’s tone was calm and firm. “While their physical condition is still relatively stable, send them away as soon as possible. The longer we delay, the more variables will arise.”

Chen Ping was silent for a moment, then looked at Mu Sha.

Although Mu Sha didn't quite understand what was happening, he gleaned some clues from their conversation.

He looked at Chen Ping, then at Jiang Xuelan, and slowly nodded.

"I'll listen to you. As long as I can live, and stay with Qingyin, I'm fine anywhere," Mu Sha said.

Chen Ping took a deep breath and stood up.

"Alright, today it is."

He walked to the open space outside the tree hollow, looked up at the golden canopy and pale aurora above, and took a deep breath.

Then, he raised his right hand.

Golden dragon energy surged from his palm, condensing into a phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon before him.

Although the phantom was much dimmer than in its prime, it still radiated a chilling dragon's might.

Chen Ping closed his eyes, focusing all his attention on the void.

He could sense that the spatial barrier of the Fourteenth Heaven was much thicker than he had imagined.

That barrier was like an invisible wall, separating the Fourteenth Heaven from the Thirteenth Heaven below.

To open a void passage to the Thirteenth Heaven, he needed to first find the weak point of the spatial barrier and then tear it apart with sufficient power.

He found it.

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The weak point was in the void a few dozen feet in front of him, like a faint crack, emitting a weak spatial fluctuation.

Chen Ping unleashed his full power, his golden dragon energy transforming into a sharp sword beam, slashing fiercely towards the weak point!

Boom!

The sword beam struck the void, unleashing a deafening roar.

The space trembled violently, rippling outwards like the surface of a lake after a boulder has been thrown in.

But the crack... only opened slightly, less than a foot wide, before quickly closing again.

Chen Ping's expression changed. He activated his dragon energy once more, unleashing another sword strike.

This time, he used all his strength; the golden sword beam was even sharper and more ferocious than before.

The sword beam struck the same spot, the space trembled again, and the crack widened to two feet, but it still wasn't enough.

A person needs a crack at least ten feet wide to pass through a void passage.

Two feet was far from enough.

Chen Ping gritted his teeth and activated his dragon energy a third time.

This time, however, his body shuddered violently; the aftereffects of excessive life force depletion erupted at that moment.

A sharp pain shot through his dantian, and the golden dragon energy surged wildly through his meridians, nearly spiraling out of control.

He groaned, kneeling on one knee, large beads of cold sweat dripping from his forehead.

“Mr. Chen!” Mu Sha called from inside the tree hollow, trying to stand, but Liu Qingyin pressed him down.

“Don’t go,” Liu Qingyin’s voice was soft, yet firm. “Going there now will only cause him trouble.”

Mu Sha gritted his teeth, ultimately remaining still.

Chen Ping struggled to his feet, took a deep breath, and prepared to attack again.

A hand pressed down on his shoulder from behind.

The hand was cold, yet carried a strange power.

That power flowed into his body through his shoulder, calming the raging dragon energy within him, and the excruciating pain in his dantian gradually subsided under the soothing touch of this power.

“Enough.” Jiang Xuelan’s voice came from behind him, calm and even. “You’ve done your best. Leave the rest to me.”

Chen Ping turned around and saw Jiang Xuelan standing behind him, her gaze calm.

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“But...”

“No buts.”

Jiang Xuelan interrupted him. “Your life force is nearly half depleted, and you have internal injuries. Forcibly opening a void passage now will only worsen your condition.

Moreover, even if you exert all your strength, with your current understanding of spatial laws, you might not be able to open a passage wide enough.”

Jiang Xuelan walked in front of Chen Ping, facing the void.

“Step back.”

Chen Ping hesitated for a moment, then stepped back a few paces.

Jiang Xuelan raised her right hand, the movement as casual as shooing away a passing mosquito.

She didn’t even activate any spiritual power; she simply waved her hand lightly.

That one wave.

The void seemed to be torn apart by an invisible giant hand, and a massive crack, three zhang wide, burst open before Chen Ping! The edges of the crack were smooth as a mirror, without a trace of spatial tremor or a piercing shriek.

It appeared there quietly, like a sheet of white paper sliced open with a paper cutter—clean, crisp, and composed.

On the other side of the crack, a vast, desolate land could be vaguely seen—the Thirteenth Heaven.

Chen Ping stared blankly at the crack, his mind a complete blank.

He had exerted all his strength, making three attempts, but could only open a crack at most two feet wide, and it closed again in less than a breath.

Jiang Xuelan, however, opened a passage three zhang wide with a casual wave of her hand, stable, wide, and composed, as if tearing apart spatial barriers was as easy as breathing for her.

The difference... wasn't just a factor of two, but a world of difference.

"Let's go," Jiang Xuelan turned to Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin in the tree hollow, "The passage can only last for thirty breaths."

Mu Sha and Liu Qingyin, supporting each other, walked out of the tree hollow and came to the crack. Mu Sha glanced back at Chen Ping, his eyes filled with complex emotions.

"Mr. Chen..." his voice choked slightly, "I can't thank you enough. Once we get back, we'll cultivate diligently and repay you in the future."

Chen Ping shook his head: "Senior, don't say that. Take good care of your injuries after you get back, and don't take any more risks."

Mu Sha nodded, helped Liu Qingyin, and stepped into the crevice.

The two figures rapidly disappeared into the crevice, growing smaller and smaller until they vanished from the land of the Thirteenth Heaven.

The crevice slowly closed, and the void returned to calm.

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It was all over.

Chen Ping stood there, silent for a long time.

Then, he turned and looked at Jiang Xuelan.

“Just how strong... are you?”

Jiang Xuelan didn't answer, only giving him a faint glance.

That gaze was calm as still water, yet it gave Chen Ping the feeling that he had been seen through.

“You don't need to know,” she said calmly.

Chen Ping was silent for a moment, then asked, “Who exactly are you?”

Jiang Xuelan raised an eyebrow slightly. “Don't you already know? I'm the Palace Master of the Divine Palace.”

“No, that's not what I'm asking.” Chen Ping stared into her eyes. “I'm asking about your identity. Palace Master is just your title. I'm asking about your origins, your bloodline. Who exactly are you?”

Jiang Xuelan's gaze changed slightly.

The change was subtle, almost imperceptible, but Chen Ping noticed it.

It was... a hint of surprise, and a hint of wariness.

“Why are you asking these questions?” Her voice remained calm, but carried a subtle distance.

Chen Ping didn’t answer immediately.

He suddenly remembered something.

Back in the Tenth Heaven, he had met someone.

It was a woman, a woman equally aloof, equally powerful, equally unfathomable.

The Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace.

The woman who called herself the “Holy Maiden of the Divine Race.”

Her eyes were very similar to Jiang Xuelan’s.

Not in appearance, but in temperament—that innate aloofness, that profound depth honed by countless years, that detached indifference overlooking all living beings.

Chen Ping took out the Beiming Token from his robes.

It was a palm-sized token, entirely ice-blue, with the characters “Beiming” engraved on the front and a blooming snow lotus on the back.

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The token emitted a faint chill; even on this island warmed by the Tree of Life, the biting cold was palpable.

“When I was in the Tenth Heaven, I met someone,” Chen Ping said slowly, his gaze fixed on Jiang Xuelan, “The Palace Master of the Beiming Palace. She called herself the Holy Maiden of the Divine Race.”

Jiang Xuelan’s gaze fell on the Beiming Token, her pupils slightly contracting.

The change was extremely subtle, yet Chen Ping saw it clearly.

“She gave me this Northern Netherworld Token, saying that if I ever need help, I can take it to the Ice God lineage,” Chen Ping said.

Jiang Xuelan remained silent.

Chen Ping put the Northern Netherworld Token back into his robes, stared into Jiang Xuelan’s eyes, and asked the question, word by word.

“Jiang Xuelan, are you a member of the Ice God lineage of the Divine Race?”

The air seemed to freeze.

The breeze on the lake stopped, the leaves of the Tree of Life ceased swaying, and even the enormous creature called “Return to the Void” deep within the lake stopped swimming, as if the entire world was waiting for Jiang Xuelan’s answer.

Jiang Xuelan looked at Chen Ping, her eyes filled with shock, scrutiny, and a very subtle... apprehension.

“How do you know about the Ice God lineage?”

Her voice remained calm, yet beneath that calmness lay an uncontrollable undercurrent of emotion. "Very few people know about the branches of the Divine Race. Even the major sects of the Fourteenth Heaven have no idea that the Divine Race has even more intricate branches. Did the Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace tell you?"

She stared into Chen Ping's eyes, her gaze sharp as a knife. "Who exactly are you?"

Chen Ping felt somewhat uncomfortable under her gaze, but he didn't back down. "I'm just an ordinary rogue cultivator."

"As for the branches of the Divine Race, it was indeed the Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace who told me. She not only told me that the Divine Race has branches, but also that there are distinctions of rank and status among these branches. She said that the Ice God lineage is one of the oldest and most noble bloodlines in the Divine Race, and that it has produced Divine Emperors in the past."

Jiang Xuelan's pupils contracted again.

This time, the contraction was much greater than before.

"The Northern Underworld Palace..." she murmured, repeating the three words softly, almost to herself, "That branch of the Tenth Heaven God Clan... how could they know about the Ice God lineage?"

She remained silent for a long time.

So long that Chen Ping thought she wouldn't answer, she suddenly spoke.

"You're right."

Her voice was lower than before, carrying an emotion Chen Ping had never heard from her before, "I am a member of the Ice God lineage. To be precise, I am the last descendant of the Ice God lineage."

Chen Ping's heart skipped a beat, "The last descendant?"

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Jiang Xuelan turned around, her back to him, her gaze fixed on the enormous Tree of Life on the lake's surface.

"The history of the gods is far longer than you imagine."

Her voice was calm, yet beneath that calm lay endless vicissitudes. "In the most ancient times, the gods were the most powerful race in the world. The entire god race was composed of an alliance of the most elite bloodline cultivators. These cultivators of different bloodlines jointly ruled the god race, each fulfilling their duties and guarding their respective territories."

"And then?" Chen Ping asked.

"Then..."

Jiang Xuelan's voice paused slightly, "Then too many things happened. Because of the inherent pride of the gods, they couldn't cultivate with cultivators of other bloodlines, causing their bloodlines to become increasingly fragile over hundreds of thousands of years."

Hearing Jiang Xuelan's words, Chen Ping instantly thought of the royal families of the mortal world. Wasn't it because they couldn't intermarry with outsiders that the probability of inbreeding increased, leading to genetic mutations over time?

It seemed the gods were facing the same situation now. No wonder both the temples and the shrines were secretly engaging in bloodline fusion.

She turned to look at Chen Ping.

For the first time, a vulnerable look appeared in those deep eyes, fleeting yet clearly visible to Chen Ping.

“Our Ice God lineage, once one of the noblest bloodlines, slowly declined. Then, because a female cultivator from our lineage was chosen as a Holy Maiden but eloped, it ultimately implicated the entire Ice God lineage.” As Jiang Xuelan spoke, a flicker of hatred crossed her eyes, but it quickly vanished.

“This is the Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace?” Chen Ping asked, startled.

“You’re right. This Palace Master of the Northern Underworld Palace should be the female cultivator who eloped. Because of her, our Ice God lineage was completely destroyed, leaving only me as her successor.” Jiang Xuelan nodded.

“Then do you hate her?” Chen Ping asked.

“I hate her, and I don’t hate her anymore. I used to hate her, but now, she’s just pursuing her own love, what’s wrong with that?”

“It’s all because of the corrupt system of the gods, the oppressive class system, that caused all this.”

Jiang Xuelan’s eyes were filled with relief; it seemed she no longer hated him.

“Are you satisfied now?” Jiang Xuelan looked at Chen Ping with a bitter smile.

Chen Ping remained silent.

He hadn’t expected that this woman, powerful enough to tear through the void with a flick of her wrist, this Palace Master of the Divine Palace who had lived for countless millennia, was actually a descendant of a race.

Alone, guarding this ancient tree, guarding this cold lake, guarding the last glory of a long-extinct race.

“I’m sorry,” Chen Ping whispered, “I shouldn’t have asked.”

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, the bitter smile gradually fading, replaced by a sense of relief.

“There’s nothing I shouldn’t ask.”

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She said calmly, “These things will be known sooner or later. Rather than letting others find out through other channels, I’d rather you ask me directly.”

She paused, her gaze lingering on Chen Ping’s face for a moment.

“You have the bloodline of the Golden Dragon Royal Family, you can produce the Northern Underworld Token, you know about the Ice God lineage, and most importantly, you’re a Celestial Realm cultivator... Chen Ping, you’re far more complex than you imagine.”

Chen Ping smiled bitterly: “I was just lucky.”

“Lucky?”

Jiang Xuelan chuckled softly, a light laugh tinged with amusement. “You traveled all the way to the Fourteenth Heaven, traversed the fierce winds of the Void to find this secluded place, and have both the bloodline of the Golden Dragon Royal Family and human blood flowing through your veins—and you call that luck?”

Chen Ping opened his mouth, wanting to explain, but found himself speechless.

Jiang Xuelan didn’t press further.

She turned and walked towards the Tree of Life.

“Let’s go.” Her voice returned to its usual calm. “Your friend has left safely; it’s time you fulfill your promise.”

Chen Ping was taken aback. “What promise?”

Jiang Xuelan stopped and glanced back at him.

That glance held a hint of cunning, a touch of mockery, and a smile she herself didn’t even realize.

“You promised me you’d stay in the Divine Palace and do three things for me. What, you’ve forgotten?”

Chen Ping: “...”

He had indeed forgotten.

Or rather, he thought Jiang Xuelan was just saying it casually and wouldn’t really take it seriously.

“You’re not joking?” Chen Ping asked tentatively.

Jiang Xuelan’s expression instantly turned cold, like a lake frozen solid by a cold wind.

“I never joke.”

Her tone was icy and serious, making Chen Ping immediately realize that this woman was serious.

Very serious.

“What are those three things?” Chen Ping resigned himself to his fate.

Jiang Xuelan thought for a moment, then held up three fingers.