

The Order 10741

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A burst of icy blue divine light erupted, instantly covering the skeletal hand's wrist with a thick layer of ice, its movement momentarily halted.

Chen Ping seized this opportunity, drawing his Dragon-Slaying Sword and striking the skeletal hand's knuckles.

The golden sword light collided with the eerie green necromantic fire, erupting in blinding sparks.

The finger snapped off, crashing heavily to the ground, kicking up a cloud of dust.

But more skeletons had already surrounded them.

A skeleton of a demon ancestor opened its gaping maw, spewing forth a torrent of black flames that swept towards the two.

The flames were so intense that even the air itself seemed to burn; wherever they passed, the ground melted into dark red magma.

Jiang Xuelan formed hand seals, and an icy blue light shield materialized before them.

Boom...

The black flames struck the light shield, the collision of ice and fire creating a deafening roar.

Cracks appeared densely on the light shield, and Jiang Xuelan was forced back several steps, a trickle of blood escaping from the corner of her mouth.

“This way!” Chen Ping grabbed her, rushing towards what appeared to be a weak opening.

A three-headed, six-armed skeleton blocked their path.

Its six bony arms swung simultaneously, each wielding a massive bone blade, hacking down at the two of them.

Chen Ping gritted his teeth, his golden dragon bloodline surging to its fullest extent.

Golden dragon energy burned fiercely on his body, and the Dragon-Slaying Sword erupted with blinding golden light.

He slashed out with his sword, colliding with the six bone blades simultaneously.

Clang! C ... “Quick!” Jiang Xuelan grabbed Chen Ping and rushed through the gap created by the skeleton.

The two sprinted with all their might towards the depths of the battlefield.

Behind them, dozens of enormous skeletons pursued relentlessly, each step shaking the earth.

After running for an unknown amount of time, the pursuers finally began to recede into the distance.

The skeletons seemed to have their own territories, ceasing their pursuit once they reached a certain boundary.

They stood on that unseen boundary line, the eerie green flames in their eye sockets flickering a few times, then slowly turned and returned to their original resting place.

Chen Ping and Jiang Xuelan stopped, panting heavily.

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Both were injured. Chen Ping's left arm was slashed by a bone blade, blood dripping from his wrist;

Jiang Xuelan had blood at the corner of her mouth, her face paler than usual.

"You're injured," Chen Ping said, his brow furrowed as he looked at the blood at her mouth.

"It's just a minor injury, nothing serious." Jiang Xuelan wiped the blood from the corner of her mouth, her gaze fixed on the distance. "We're almost there."

Chen Ping followed her gaze.

The terrain ahead had changed; it was no longer a flat plain, but a vast basin.

The basin's edge was a steep cliff, riddled with countless cracks, like marks left by the fingers of a giant.

And at the bottom of the basin...

Chen Ping gasped.

At the bottom of the basin was a sea.

A sea composed of necromantic fire.

The eerie green flames surged, burned, and roared at the bottom of the basin, covering the entire area, stretching as far as the eye could see.

The temperature of those flames was extremely high; even from thousands of feet away, Chen Ping could still feel the scorching heat emanating from them.

And in the very center of the Sea of the Dead, there was a solitary island.

The island was small, only a few hundred feet in circumference.

There were no skeletons or weapon fragments on the island, only a stone platform.

On the platform lay a bead the size of a fist.

The bead's color constantly changed, sometimes gold, sometimes black, sometimes ice blue, sometimes transparent and colorless.

With each change, a visible ripple spread from the bead, sweeping across the entire Sea of the Dead.

Wherever those ripples passed, the necromantic fire would be temporarily extinguished, then reignited.

"What is that?" Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan stared at the bead, her gaze burning like two flames.

"The root of the Ice God lineage, the Heart of the Northern Abyss."

Her voice trembled, a surge of excitement suppressed for millennia.

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“The Ice God lineage’s bloodline originates from the Northern Abyss. And the core of the Northern Abyss’s power is this bead he left behind after his death.

If we can obtain it, the Ice God bloodline will be truly strengthened, no longer needing any external force to sustain it.”

She looked at Chen Ping, a pleading glint in her eyes.

“Help me get it.”

Chen Ping looked at the sea of necromantic fire, his brow furrowed.

“How do we get across that sea of fire?”

Jiang Xuelan took out an ice-blue talisman from her bosom. The talisman was covered with densely packed runes, radiating a chilling aura.

“This is an Ice-Sealing Talisman left behind by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage. It can be used to create a passage through the sea of deathly flames. But it can only last for thirty breaths. Within thirty breaths, we must cross the sea of fire and reach that island.”

“Thirty breaths?”

Chen Ping estimated the distance.

From the cliff edge to the island, it was at least several thousand feet.

Crossing several thousand feet of deathly flames within thirty breaths, and facing the potential dangers within the sea of fire...

“That’s enough.” He took a deep breath. “Let’s go.”

Jiang Xuelan threw the Ice-Sealing Talisman into the sea of deathly flames.

The talisman exploded above the sea of fire, transforming into a dazzling pillar of ice-blue light.

The pillar of light shot straight into the sea of deathly flames, parting the eerie green flames to reveal a narrow passage.

The passage’s floor was charred rock, with walls of fire tens of feet high on either side.

The temperature of the fire walls was extremely high; even through the protection of the Ice-Sealing Talisman, Chen Ping could still feel the suffocating heat. “Go!”

The two leaped into the passage, sprinting at full speed.

The charred rocks beneath their feet were as hot as branding irons, sizzling with every step.

The walls of fire on either side writhed, as if they might close at any moment.

Ten breaths.

They had covered a third of the distance.

Twenty breaths.

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The island was now in sight.

The stone platform and the bead on the island were clearly visible.

But just then, the Sea of the Dead suddenly churned.

A gigantic skeletal hand emerged from the sea of fire, reaching for the two.

The skeletal hand was larger than any skeleton they had encountered before, each finger tens of feet long, its tips burning with eerie green flames.

“Don’t stop!” Jiang Xuelan shouted, striking out with her palm.

The icy blue divine light collided with the skeletal hand, instantly covering its surface with a layer of ice, slowing its speed.

The layer of ice lasted less than a breath before being melted by the necromantic fire on the bone hand.

The bone hand continued its grabbing towards the two.

Chen Ping gritted his teeth, drew his Dragon-Slaying Sword, and unleashed a full-force strike.

The golden sword light transformed into a phantom of a five-clawed golden dragon, roaring as it crashed into the bone hand.

Boom!

The bone hand was forced back several feet, but the force of the impact caused Chen Ping’s blood to churn, and a trickle of blood spilled from the corner of his mouth.

“Ten breaths left!” Jiang Xuelan shouted.

The two continued their charge.

The bone hand caught up again, this time faster and more ferocious.

At the same time, a second and a third bone hand emerged from the sea of fire, surging in from all directions and completely blocking the passage.

“It’s too late!” Jiang Xuelan’s voice carried a hint of despair.

Chen Ping watched the approaching skeletal hands, then glanced at the beads on the island not far away, a ruthless glint in his eyes.

“You go first.”

He grabbed Jiang Xuelan by the shoulder and hurled her violently towards the island.

“Chen Ping!” Jiang Xuelan’s voice drifted in the wind. She tried to turn back, but she was already thrown into the air above the island.

At the same time, Chen Ping turned around, facing the three enormous skeletal hands.

Within his body, chaotic power began to boil.

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Purple light surged from his body, condensing into a thin layer of armor on his skin.

The armor was neither golden nor ice-blue, but a deep purple, like the first ray of light before the chaos was created.

The three skeletal hands reached for him simultaneously.

Chen Ping raised his hands, palms facing outward.

Purple light erupted from his palms, colliding with the three skeletal hands.

Boom!

The entire Sea of the Dead trembled.

Under the impact of the purple light, the eerie green flames on the three skeletal hands instantly extinguished, and countless cracks appeared on their bones.

They let out a silent roar and slowly retreated back into the sea of fire.

But Chen Ping paid a price.

Bleeding from all seven orifices, his meridians felt like they were being burned by flames, the excruciating pain almost causing him to faint.

While the power of chaos was immense, its consumption was also staggering; this attack had almost exhausted all his strength.

The passage began to collapse.

The walls of fire on both sides rapidly closed, and eerie green flames surged in from all directions.

Chen Ping mustered his last strength and rushed towards the island.

Ten zhang.

Five zhang.

One zhang.

His feet finally touched the island's ground.

The passage behind him roared shut the moment he stepped ashore, and the fires of the dead once again engulfed the entire basin. Chen Ping's legs buckled, and he collapsed to his knees, gasping for breath. Blood seeped from his mouth, nostrils, and ears, dripping onto the charred rock.

Jiang Xuelan rushed over and caught him.

"You're crazy!" Her voice trembled, her eyes reddening. "Do you know how dangerous that was? If you had been a step slower, you would have..."

"I'm not dead," Chen Ping forced a smile, wiping the blood from his mouth. "Where's the bead?"

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, her lips trembling slightly, wanting to say something, but ultimately said nothing.

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She stood up, walked to the stone platform, and reached out to take the bead that had been changing color.

The bead trembled slightly in her palm, then fell silent.

Its color finally stabilized at a pale gold, the color of the fusion of the Ice God's bloodline and the Golden Dragon's bloodline.

Jiang Xuelan held the bead, silent for a long time.

Then, she turned around, walked to Chen Ping, and knelt down. "Here you go."

Chen Ping was taken aback: "What?"

"The Heart of the Northern Abyss."

Jiang Xuelan placed the bead in Chen Ping's hand. "Your chaotic power can contain it. Integrate it into your body, and your strength will experience a qualitative leap."

Chen Ping looked at the bead in his hand, then at Jiang Xuelan.

"Isn't this what you wanted? The root of the Ice God lineage..."

Jiang Xuelan shook her head, a slight smile playing on her lips. Her smile held a sense of relief, and an indescribable gentleness.

"I no longer need it."

She stretched out her hand, palm up.

A pale golden light appeared in her palm, more solid and brighter than before, the dimness at the edges completely gone.

“Our dual cultivation, coupled with the battle in the Sea of the Dead, has sufficiently tempered my bloodline. The bloodline of the Ice God lineage has been revitalized.”

“Most importantly, the bloodlines we’ve fused through dual cultivation now possess mutual affection.”

She looked at Chen Ping, her gaze gentle.

Chen Ping understood Jiang Xuelan’s meaning. If their initial dual cultivation was merely a transaction, now Jiang Xuelan definitely felt affection for Chen Ping.

“Right now, the Heart of the Northern Abyss is just icing on the cake for me. But for you... it’s a lifeline. Your chaotic power is still too weak; it needs more nourishment.

The Heart of the Northern Abyss contains the essence of the Northern Abyss’s life’s power. If you can absorb it, your strength will rise to a whole new level,” Jiang Xuelan said.

Chen Ping fell silent.

He looked down at the bead in his hand, feeling the immense power contained within.

The power was ancient, pure, and mighty, like a slumbering ocean awaiting awakening.

“Then I won’t stand on ceremony.” He didn’t mince words, pressing the bead directly against his chest.

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The moment the bead touched his skin, it transformed into a pale golden liquid, seeping into his chest.

Then...

An unprecedented power exploded within him.

That power surged wildly through his meridians like a flood bursting its banks, like a volcanic eruption.

His dantian swelled violently under the impact of this power, his meridians nearly shattering.

“Ah!”

Chen Ping roared to the sky, his purple light surging, enveloping the entire island.

His cultivation broke through at that moment.

Sixth Rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Seventh Rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

Only at the peak of the seventh rank of the Upper Immortal Realm did the power gradually subside.

He was only one step away from the True Immortal Realm.

Chen Ping gasped for breath, his entire body drenched in sweat.

He looked down at his hands, feeling the terrifying power flowing through his body, a sense of unreality washing over him.

Peak of the seventh rank of the Upper Immortal Realm.

His combat power was already enough to instantly kill a fourth-rank True Immortal Realm cultivator.

If Ning Zhi were to appear before him again, he could easily defeat him.

“How do you feel?” Jiang Xuelan’s voice came from beside him.

Chen Ping looked up at her.

A trace of confusion and doubt flickered in his eyes.

“I feel... there’s more than just power within the Heart of the Northern Abyss.”

Jiang Xuelan’s brow furrowed slightly: “What else?”

Chen Ping closed his eyes, carefully sensing the changes within his body.

Deep within that vast power, he vaguely sensed an extremely faint aura.

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That aura was unimaginably ancient, terrifyingly powerful, yet incredibly weak, like a flickering candle in the wind, ready to be extinguished at any moment. The aura was conveying a message to him.

A fragmented, indistinct message.

“Save me...”

Chen Ping abruptly opened his eyes, his face changing drastically.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Xuelan asked anxiously.

Chen Ping looked at her, his voice hoarse.

“Bei Mingyuan... is still alive.”

Jiang Xuelan’s pupils contracted sharply.

The two stared at each other, the surrounding necromantic flames surging silently, as if responding to a slumbering being.

The three moons still hung in the sky, one blood-red, one pitch-black, one half-broken.

The tricolored moonlight spilled down, dyeing the entire battlefield in an even more eerie hue.

And in the deepest part of the battlefield, something that had slumbered for countless millennia seemed to stir slightly.

“Alive!” Chen Ping nodded.

Chen Ping’s words instantly turned Jiang Xuelan’s face deathly pale.

“Bei Mingyuan...is he still alive? Still alive?” Her voice trembled, her gaze fixed on Chen Ping’s chest, as if something terrifying might emerge from there at any moment.

Chen Ping closed his eyes, carefully sensing the faint aura within his body.

The aura indeed originated from the Heart of Bei Mingyuan—no, from a wisp of remnant soul deep within the Heart of Bei Mingyuan.

It was so weak, almost imperceptible, yet it undeniably existed, like a spark buried in ashes, ready to reignite at the slightest disturbance.

“Not fully alive.”

Chen Ping chose his words carefully. “It’s a wisp of remnant soul, sealed within the Heart of Bei Mingyuan. When I absorbed the bead, it merged into my body.”

Jiang Xuelan placed her hand on Chen Ping’s chest, icy blue divine light surging into his body, attempting to locate the remnant soul.

But her divine light circled Chen Ping’s meridians, finding nothing.

“I can’t find it.” Jiang Xuelan’s brows furrowed. “It’s hidden very well.”

Chen Ping opened his eyes, his gaze grave.

“It’s lurking near my dantian. It poses no immediate threat, but I can sense... it’s waiting for something.”

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“Waiting for what?” Jiang Xuelan pressed.

Chen Ping shook his head.

He didn’t know.

But his intuition told him that what that remnant soul was waiting for was definitely not good news.

“We must leave this place.”

Chen Ping stood up, stretching his still somewhat stiff body.

After absorbing the Heart of the Northern Abyss, his injuries had mostly healed, and the power flowing within him was significantly stronger than before.

Jiang Xuelan also stood up, her gaze sweeping over their surroundings.

The Sea of the Dead was still churning, and eerie green flames roared at the bottom of the basin.

The three bony hands were severely injured by Chen Ping's chaotic power and temporarily retreated into the depths of the sea of fire, but who knew when they would break out again?

"Go back the way we came?" Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan shook her head: "The Ice Sealing Talisman has been used up; we can't cross the Sea of the Dead anymore. And..."

She looked up at the three moons in the sky, her voice low, "I can feel this battlefield awakening. The longer we stay here, the more dangerous it will be."

She took out the jade slip and projected the map again.

This time, her finger pointed to a spot on the edge of the map.

"There's a secret passage here. Records left by the ancestors of the Ice God lineage say this passage leads directly to the bottom of the Lake of Return to Nothingness, without needing to cross the Sea of the Dead."

Chen Ping glanced at the route marked on the map and nodded.

"Let's go."

The two left the isolated island and hurried along the edge of the basin in the direction marked on the map.

The surrounding skeletons began to stir again.

The bone dragons, the skeletons of the divine ancestors, and the skeletons of the demon progenitors, which had previously retreated, seemed to sense the change in the aura emanating from the two and awoke from their slumber once more.

They didn't attack immediately, but followed at a distance behind the two, the eerie green flames in their eye sockets flickering, as if hesitating about something.

"They fear the Heart of the Northern Abyss within you,"

Jiang Xuelan said softly. "The Northern Abyss is one of the most powerful beings on this battlefield; his aura has a natural suppressive effect on these skeletons."

Chen Ping didn't speak, but quickened his pace.

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He could sense that although the skeletons dared not approach for the time being, they wouldn't hesitate indefinitely.

Once they overcame their fear of the Northern Abyss's aura, they would swarm forward.

The two traversed the skeletal mass for about half an hour before finally finding the entrance to the secret passage marked on the map.

It was a hidden cave, its entrance concealed by a massive skeleton.

Jiang Xuelan pushed aside the skeleton, and a putrid stench filled the cave. In the darkness, a stone staircase leading downwards was faintly visible.

“This is it,” Jiang Xuelan said, stepping into the cave first.

Chen Ping followed closely behind. The moment they entered, a low rumble came from behind them, and the skeleton they had pushed aside miraculously moved back to its original position, sealing the entrance once more.

The cave was pitch black.

Jiang Xuelan’s white jade hairpin emitted a faint light, barely illuminating the area a few steps ahead.

The stone staircase was narrow, allowing only one person to pass at a time. The cave walls on either side were covered with ancient runes, which shimmered faintly under the light of the white jade hairpin, emitting a ghostly blue glow.

“These runes...” Chen Ping reached out and touched the carvings on the cave wall.

“They are sealing runes of the Ice God lineage,” Jiang Xuelan said without turning her head. “Our ancestors used these runes to seal the secret passage, preventing anything from the battlefield from escaping through here.”

The two descended the stone steps for about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, until they reached the end.

Ahead lay a stone door.

The door was also covered in runes, even denser and more complex than those on the cave walls.

In the very center of the door was a palm-shaped indentation, its edges still gleaming with a faint icy-blue light.

Jiang Xuelan placed her hand on the indentation.

Icy-blue divine light surged from her palm, resonating with the runes on the door.

One rune after another lit up, like lamps being lit, their light growing ever brighter.

Rumble...

The stone door slowly opened.

Outside the door lay a deep blue lake.

The bottom of the Lake of Return to Nothingness.

The two stepped out of the stone door, which closed silently behind them. The light of the runes gradually dimmed, and the entire door merged with the surrounding rock, leaving no trace.

The Water-Repelling Pearl was still in Chen Ping's mouth, and the blue light membrane once again covered his body.