

## **The Order 10761**

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Chen Ping walked to her side and stood beside her.

“I promised you three things. Giving my blood counts as one, accompanying you to the ancient battlefield is another. And the last one, have you thought it through?”

Jiang Xuelan finally turned to look at him.

Something flickered slightly in those deep eyes.

There was hesitation, struggle, and a hint of... an emotion Chen Ping couldn't quite decipher.

“I've thought it through,” she said.

“Speak.”

Jiang Xuelan took a deep breath, turned around, and faced Chen Ping directly.

“Help me restore the Ice God lineage.”

Chen Ping was stunned: “What?”

“The Ice God lineage is now reduced to just me.”

Jiang Xuelan's voice was soft, yet each word was clear. “The remnant soul of Bei Mingyuan resides within you. You are the only person in this world with a deep connection to the Ice God's bloodline. If you don't help me, the Ice God lineage is truly finished.”

Chen Ping frowned: “How can I help you? I'm not a member of the God race.”

“You possess the Ice God’s bloodline.”

Jiang Xuelan stared into his eyes. “After our dual cultivation, the power of the Ice God lineage has fused into your chaotic energy. If you wish, you can use this power to awaken more people with the latent genes of the Ice God’s bloodline, allowing them to reawaken.”

Chen Ping was silent for a moment.

“What do you mean by awakening?”

Jiang Xuelan took out an ice-blue jade slip from her sleeve and handed it to him.

“This is the Bloodline Sensing Technique of the Ice God lineage. After cultivating it, you can sense all those within a radius of ten thousand miles who possess the latent genes of the Ice God bloodline.

These people are scattered throughout the Celestial Realm, and they themselves are unaware that the blood of the Ice God lineage flows within them. As long as you find them and activate their bloodline with the power of chaos, they can awaken again.”

Chen Ping took the jade slip but didn’t immediately examine it.

“Even if I find these people and awaken them, so what?”

“The Ice God lineage declined not because it lacked talent, but because of the targeting by other races within the God Clan. Now that the God Clan is ruled by the God Emperor lineage, will they sit idly by and watch the Ice God lineage rise again?” Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan’s expression changed slightly.

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Chen Ping was right.

The decline of the Ice God lineage, on the surface, was due to the dilution and degeneration of its bloodline, but the fundamental reason was the power struggle within the God Clan.

Years ago, a female cultivator from the Ice God lineage eloped with an outsider, violating the ironclad laws of the divine race. The Divine Emperor lineage seized this opportunity, uniting with other races to suppress the Ice God lineage for thousands of years.

Experts were assassinated, resources were cut off, and their lineage was destroyed... This is how the Ice God lineage gradually marched towards its demise.

Now, the Divine Emperor lineage has ruled the divine race for tens of thousands of years, its power deeply entrenched.

Even if Chen Ping helps her awaken countless more Ice God bloodline awakeners, as long as the Divine Emperor lineage exists, the Ice God lineage will never be able to hold its head high.

“I know,” Jiang Xuelan’s voice lowered, “but I don’t care.”

Chen Ping looked at her.

“The glory of the Ice God lineage cannot be revived by hiding.”

Jiang Xuelan’s gaze hardened, even becoming somewhat stubborn. “If the God Emperor lineage tries to stop us, then destroy the God Emperor lineage. If the divine alliance system targets the Ice God lineage, then let that system collapse.”

Chen Ping gasped.

“Do you know what you’re saying? Destroy the God Emperor lineage? Let the divine alliance system collapse? That’s tantamount to waging war against the entire divine race.”

“I know.”

Jiang Xuelan’s tone was terrifyingly calm. “I’ve waited all these years, not to keep waiting. Chen Ping, you carry the remnant soul of Bei Mingyuan within you, the power of the Ice God lineage flows through you, you are a part of this. You cannot stand idly by.”

Chen Ping remained silent for a long time.

He remembered Jiang Xuelan kneeling before him, remembered her vulnerability as she spoke, her eyes reddening, saying, “The Ice God lineage cannot be severed in my hands.”

He remembered her desperate protection of him on the ancient battlefield, remembered the relief she felt when she gave him the Heart of Bei Mingyuan.

This woman had already sacrificed too much for her race.

“What do you intend to do?” Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan’s eyes brightened.

“I’ll go with you.”

Chen Ping was taken aback: “With me?”

“You go back to Yunxian City, and I’ll go with you.”

Jiang Xuelan said, “Didn’t you say Yunxian City is facing a threat from the Demon Clan? I’ll help you defend the city. In exchange, you help me find awakened individuals of the Ice God’s bloodline in the various heavens of the Celestial Realm.”

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“What about the Divine Palace?”

Jiang Xuelan glanced at the Tree of Life behind her, a hint of reluctance flashing in her eyes, but it quickly disappeared.

“The Divine Palace existed to protect the last spark of the Ice God’s lineage. Now that the spark resides within me, the Divine Palace has no need to exist.”

She turned around, facing the direction of the Divine Palace, and raised her right hand.

Icy blue divine light surged from her palm, transforming into countless strands of light that extended towards every palace and every stone chamber of the Divine Palace.

The instant the threads of light touched the building, everything within—books, elixirs, magical artifacts, spirit stones—was swept up by the light, transforming into streams of light that disappeared into Jiang Xuelan’s sleeves.

In mere moments, the entire divine palace was completely emptied, leaving only the empty stone walls and the Tree of Life.

“Where are the disciples of the divine palace?” Chen Ping asked.

“The divine palace only has twelve disciples, all orphans I picked up from various places,” Jiang Xuelan said calmly. “I’ve already arranged for them to be placed in a safe place. The disbandment of the divine palace is actually a relief for them.”

Chen Ping looked at this decisive woman, a complex emotion welling up within him.

She had prepared for everything long ago.

Not today, not yesterday, perhaps from the moment she decided to cultivate with him, she had already been planning all of this.

“Aren’t you afraid I’ll refuse?” Chen Ping asked.

Jiang Xuelan looked at him, a slight smile playing on her lips.

“Can you?”

Chen Ping smiled bitterly.

He couldn’t.

Not because of the promise, but because he could no longer treat the woman before him as an insignificant passerby.

The life-and-death struggle on the ancient battlefield, the side-by-side battle beneath the Ruins of Return, and that night under the Tree of Life... some things, once they happen, can never be undone.

“Let’s go.”

Chen Ping sighed. “But before we leave, I need to try that bloodline sensing technique you mentioned. It would be troublesome if you realized you’d forgotten something after we left and had to come back.”

Jiang Xuelan chuckled and handed him the jade slip.

Chen Ping sat cross-legged, pressed the jade slip to his forehead, and closed his eyes.

The bloodline sensing technique wasn’t complicated; essentially, it was the ability to perceive bloodline fluctuations.

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Chen Ping already possessed the Ice God's bloodline, and with the power of chaos as a medium, his cultivation was twice as effective.

In less than the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, he mastered this secret technique.

He activated the Ice God bloodline within him, spreading his perception in all directions.

Within a radius of a thousand miles, there was no reaction.

Two thousand miles.

Three thousand miles.

When his perception range expanded to five thousand miles, Chen Ping's brow suddenly furrowed.

He sensed something.

In the southeast, about four thousand seven hundred miles away, there was a faint signal.

The signal was very weak, almost drowned out by the surrounding spiritual energy, but it definitely existed; it was the faint fluctuation emitted by the latent genes of the Ice God bloodline in its dormant state.

"There is someone," Chen Ping said to Jiang Xuelan, opening his eyes. "Southeast, four thousand seven hundred miles away."

A hint of surprise flashed in Jiang Xuelan's eyes, but she quickly suppressed it.

"Only one person?"

Chen Ping nodded. "Only one person. However, my perception range is only five thousand miles; I can't sense anything further. Perhaps when my strength increases, the range will be larger."

Jiang Xuelan was silent for a moment, then sighed softly.

"One is good. At least it proves that the flame of the Ice God lineage hasn't been completely extinguished."

She raised her head, glanced at the Tree of Life, then turned and walked towards the outside of the Divine Palace.

"Let's go."

Chen Ping stood up and followed behind her.

The two passed through the Ice Pillar Forest, through the Gale Zone of the Ruins, heading south.

Chen Ping looked back at the hidden place covered in ice and snow, a feeling of being in another world welling up inside him.

When he came, he was alone, exhausted, and on the verge of death.

When he left, there were two of them, his strength greatly increased, and a woman by his side who wanted to rebuild a race with him.

Fate is truly unpredictable.

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The two traveled south for about two days. Chen Ping's injuries had completely healed, and Jiang Xuelan had almost recovered from her exhaustion.

The two traveled together, exchanging cultivation insights—more precisely, Jiang Xuelan was guiding Chen Ping on how to better utilize the Ice God bloodline within him.

“Your chaotic power is too domineering. Every time you use the Ice God bloodline, you unconsciously mix other powers into it,” Jiang Xuelan frowned.

“While this increases its power, it greatly diminishes the tempering effect on the Ice God bloodline.”

“Then how should I do it?” Chen Ping humbly asked.

“Pure.”

Jiang Xuelan only said one word. “The core of the Ice God lineage's power is ‘purity.’ You must learn to strip away the other components from your chaotic power, leaving only the purest Ice God power.”

Chen Ping tried to follow her method, and the results were indeed much better.

Although he couldn't achieve complete “purity,” it was already much stronger than before.

On the third day at noon, the two arrived at an open plain.

Chen Ping suddenly stopped.

“What’s wrong?” Jiang Xuelan asked.

Chen Ping didn’t speak, but simply looked up towards the north.

A familiar aura was rapidly approaching from that direction.

That aura was scorching, domineering, and filled with a mad, destructive force.

It was Ning Zhi.

“What’s wrong?”

Jiang Xuelan asked again; she had already sensed Chen Ping’s unusual behavior.

“A guest has arrived,” Chen Ping’s voice was calm, but his eyes sharpened like knives. “An old friend.”

As soon as he finished speaking, a black dot appeared on the northern horizon.

The dot grew larger and closer, like a black meteor, trailing a long, fiery tail, hurtling towards the two of them.

In just a few breaths, the black streak of light landed a hundred feet in front of them.

The light dissipated, revealing two figures.

Ning Zhi.

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And Su Yuqi.

Ning Zhi was still the same, dressed in jet-black robes, hands clasped behind his back, a faint demonic aura surrounding him.

His aura was even stronger than when they last met, clearly indicating he hadn't been idle during this time.

And beside him was Su Yuqi...

Chen Ping's gaze fell on Su Yuqi, his heart feeling as if gripped by an invisible hand.

She wore a fiery red dress, her long hair cascading down, her features exquisitely beautiful.

A faint glow of fire surrounded her, warm and bright, yet possessing a chilling aloofness.

Her eyes... were the same as when they last met, empty and indifferent, as if looking at a stranger.

No, even less than a stranger.

A stranger would at least attract her attention, but Chen Ping, in her eyes, wasn't even worth a second glance.

"Chen Ping."

Ning Zhi spoke, a hint of surprise in his voice, "What are you doing here?"

Chen Ping didn't answer his question, his gaze fixed intently on Su Yuqi. "Yuqi..."

Su Yuqi frowned slightly, glancing at him.

Her gaze held no hatred, no love, not even a trace of emotion, like looking at a roadside stone.

“You know me?” Her voice was as cold as ice.

Chen Ping’s heart felt as if it had been slashed by a dull knife.

Know her?

He knew her more than just.

She was the woman he loved most, the one he was willing to protect with his life.

But she didn’t remember him.

She remembered nothing.

“Yuqi, come back with me.” Chen Ping’s voice was hoarse. “I’ll find a way to help you regain your memory.”

Su Yuqi’s brows furrowed even more, taking a half-step back behind Ning Zhi.

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“Junior brother, this person is so strange,” Su Yuqi said.

Chen Ping's fists clenched so tightly they cracked, his nails digging into his palms, blood dripping from between his fingers.

He didn't know what Ning Zhi had done to Su Yuqi this time, that she had completely forgotten him again.

Back in Yunxian City, Su Yuqi seemed to have recovered somewhat; at least she hadn't attacked Chen Ping again and had left.

But now, Su Yuqi seemed to be as indifferent as if she were seeing Chen Ping for the first time.

Ning Zhi looked at Chen Ping's reaction, a playful smile playing on his lips.

"Chen Ping, you're still so persistent."

He shook his head. "I've told you, Senior Sister Yuqi has woken up. She's no longer fooled by you. The more you pester her, the more ridiculous she'll find you."

Chen Ping took a deep breath, forcibly suppressing his anger.

"Ning Zhi, what are you doing here?"

Ning Zhi's gaze passed over Chen Ping and landed on Jiang Xuelan.

"Palace Master of the Divine Palace?"

His eyes narrowed slightly as he sized Jiang Xuelan up and down. "It seems my information was correct; the Divine Palace is indeed here."

Jiang Xuelan looked at him expressionlessly: "Who are you?"

“Ning Zhi.”

Ning Zhi announced his name, a hint of arrogance in his voice. “You may have heard of me. I destroyed the Divine Temple, and I destroyed the Divine Hall. Today I’m here to destroy the Divine Palace as well.”

His tone was casual, as if he were discussing a trivial matter.

“I’ve long been disgusted by the arrogant attitude of the Divine Race. Each one of them thinks they are superior, of noble blood, and invincible. In reality? A bunch of self-satisfied, corrupt, and decadent trash.”

He looked at Jiang Xuelan, his eyes full of disdain. “You’re lucky you met Chen Ping. Without him, your Divine Palace would be ruins by now.”

Jiang Xuelan’s face darkened.

She had lived for tens of thousands of years and had never been so openly humiliated. “You’re Ning Zhi?”

Her voice was icy. “I’ve heard of you. A human cultivator who has fallen into demonic ways, relying on devouring the cultivation of others to improve himself. Does someone like you even have the right to judge the Divine Race?”

Jiang Xuelan had heard about Ning Zhi from Chen Ping; after all, the Divine Temple and Divine Hall were essentially destroyed by Ning Zhi.

Ning Zhi’s smile froze for a moment.

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Then, he smiled.

That smile was even brighter and more dangerous than before.

“Right? Of course. Strength is qualification. When your Divine Race was high and mighty, did you ever imagine that one day you would be trampled underfoot by a human cultivator who has fallen into demonic ways?”

His gaze shifted from Jiang Xuelan to Chen Ping.

“Chen Ping, I’ll give you a chance. Leave now, and I won’t make things difficult for you. My target today is the Divine Palace, not you.”

Chen Ping shook his head. “The Divine Palace no longer exists. Jiang Xuelan is with me now. If you touch her, you’re touching me.”

Ning Zhi’s eyes narrowed slightly.

“So, you want to protect her?”

“Yes.”

Ning Zhi was silent for a moment, then sighed, looking at him like he was looking at a stubborn child.

“Chen Ping, you’re always like this. You sacrifice yourself for others. Last time it was for those two ants of the divine race, this time it’s for this woman of the divine race. When will you ever learn to live for yourself?”

“You don’t understand.” Chen Ping’s voice was calm and firm.

“I understand.” Ning Zhi’s smile turned bitter. “You think you’re doing the right thing, that you’re protecting something important. But have you ever thought about whether what you’re protecting is worth your life?”

He didn’t wait for Chen Ping’s answer, giving a self-deprecating laugh.

“Forget it, there’s no use talking to you. You’re just this kind of person, you can’t change.”

He raised his right hand, black demonic energy gathering in his palm.

“Then come on. Let me see how much you’ve improved these past few days.”

Ning Zhi moved.

His speed was incredible; his black figure left a blur in the air as his fist slammed into Chen Ping’s face.

This punch was even more ferocious than their last encounter. Demonic energy condensed at the tip of his fist, forming a rapidly spinning vortex that sucked in the surrounding air with a piercing shriek.

Chen Ping didn’t dodge.

He also wanted to see just how much his strength had increased after absorbing the Heart of the Northern Abyss.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword was drawn.

Golden sword light intertwined with purple chaotic power, transforming into a sharp sword beam that met Ning Zhi’s fist head-on.

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Boom!

Fist and sword collided, unleashing a deafening roar.

A terrifying shockwave spread outwards, turning the ground upside down as if plowed by a giant plow. Soil, rubble, and vegetation were all hurled into the air, only to be shredded into pieces by the violent energy.

Chen Ping remained unmoved.

Ning Zhi was forced back seven steps. His expression changed.

Last time they clashed, he could easily suppress Chen Ping.

But this time, Chen Ping's strength was clearly several levels higher.

The feeling... was like facing a completely different person.

"You've broken through?" Ning Zhi's voice was hoarse.

Chen Ping didn't answer, thrusting his sword forward.

This sword strike was incredibly fast, the sword light like lightning slicing through the night sky, aimed straight for Ning Zhi's throat.

Ning Zhi gritted his teeth, throwing both fists simultaneously, demonic energy condensing into a black shield in front of him.

The sword light struck the shield, producing a piercing scraping sound. Dense cracks appeared on the shield, and Ning Zhi was pushed back repeatedly by the force of the sword.

“Impossible...” Ning Zhi’s eyes were filled with resentment, “You weren’t even my match last time...”

“People always improve.” Chen Ping’s voice was calm, but his attack showed no mercy.

The second sword followed immediately.

This sword strike was faster, more ruthless, and more decisive than the first.

The sword light ripped through the void, leaving a jet-black rift.

Fragments of space at the rift’s edge shattered and annihilated under the impact of the sword energy, emitting a piercing shriek.

Ning Zhi desperately channeled the demonic energy within his body, black demonic flames erupting forth and coalescing into a ferocious black fire dragon before him.

The fire dragon roared as it charged towards Chen Ping, scorching the ground in its wake, creating a trench several meters deep, melting the soil into dark red magma.

Chen Ping neither dodged nor evaded, unleashing a single sword strike.

The golden sword light collided with the black fire dragon, unleashing a deafening roar.

The fire dragon struggled for less than a breath under the sword light before being cleaved in two. Black demonic flames scattered in all directions, blasting countless large craters into the surrounding ground.

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Ning Zhi was struck by the aftershock of the sword's edge, and a deep gash was torn open in his chest, exposing the bone, from which blood gushed out.

He staggered backward, kneeling on one knee, gasping for breath.

"Junior Brother!" Su Yuqi exclaimed, rushing to Ning Zhi's side and helping him up.

Ning Zhi pushed her hand away and struggled to his feet.

His face was covered in blood, but the fighting spirit in his eyes burned even brighter.

"Good...very good..." His voice was hoarse, yet carried an almost manic laugh, "Chen Ping, you truly haven't disappointed me."

He turned to look at Su Yuqi.

"Senior Sister, help me."

Su Yuqi hesitated.

"Help me kill him." Ning Zhi's voice was calm, yet carried an undeniable command.

Su Yuqi hesitated.

Her hand tightened on the fiery red longsword at her waist, but she didn't immediately draw it.

Her gaze darted back and forth between Chen Ping and Ning Zhi, a complex emotion flashing in her eyes.

The emotion was faint, almost imperceptible, but Chen Ping caught it.

That was... a struggle.

A struggle between the subconscious and brainwashing.

“Yuqi...”

Chen Ping called her name softly, his voice as gentle as if coaxing a lost child, “You don’t recognize me, that’s alright. But I beg you, don’t let him use you. You are Su Yuqi, you are not anyone’s tool.”

Su Yuqi’s body trembled slightly.

The tremor was so slight that Chen Ping wouldn’t have noticed it if he hadn’t been watching her closely.

But Ning Zhi noticed.

A shadow crossed his eyes, his voice becoming even softer, yet carrying an irresistible allure.

“Senior Sister, do you remember Master’s instructions? Don’t be deceived by any man.”

Su Yuqi’s eyes became confused.