

The Order 8741

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Her body began to tremble violently, veins bulging beneath her skin, and she seemed to be enduring immense torture.

Nan Batian watched anxiously from the side, but he could do nothing to help. He could only clench his fists and silently cheer her on.

Chen Ping was completely focused, not daring to slack off even a moment.

He constantly adjusted the amount and direction of the celestial energy, carefully guiding the fusion and neutralization of the two forces.

As time passed, the atmosphere in the secret room grew increasingly tense.

One hour, two hours, three hours...

When the first rays of sunlight of the next day shone through the cracks in the secret chamber, a miracle finally occurred.

The violent aura emanating from the fat woman gradually subsided, replaced by a gentle and pure fluctuation of spiritual energy.

Her once bloated body was shrinking at a visible speed!

The excess fat gradually disappeared, her skin became firm and smooth, and her facial features, once almost invisible due to the fat, gradually emerged, becoming clear and soft.

Another hour passed, and Chen Ping finally finished his practice, exhausted and nearly collapsing.

He looked at the people in the formation and smiled with relief.

Nan Batian rushed forward impatiently.

In the formation, a woman with a well-proportioned figure and delicate features slowly opened her eyes.

Her eyes were clear and gentle. Though her complexion was still a little pale from the recent transformation, she still vaguely recalled the "A Cui" of yesteryear, even possessing a more mature charm thanks to the passage of time.

"A Cui..." Nan Batian's voice trembled. He reached out, wanting to touch her, but feared it was all a dream.

The woman looked at him with a shy, sweet smile, just like the little girl she had been back then: "Brother Batian..."

Nan Batian could no longer contain himself and pulled her tightly into his arms, tears welling in his eyes: "It's me, A Cui, I'm here..."

Years of estrangement, misunderstanding, and avoidance vanished in that moment.

The tight embrace seemed to make up for the decades they had missed.

Chen Ping watched the two weeping in each other's embrace and quietly exited the secret room, leaving them alone.

He knew that these lovers could finally start over.

A day later, A Cui's condition had completely stabilized.

Although her strength had indeed declined significantly, returning to the level of a newly entered Nascent Soul stage, she smiled more and more, radiating a lightness and happiness.

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Nan Batian also completely let go of his burdens and remained by A Cui's side. The two were inseparable, like a newlywed couple.

A Cui and Nan Batian specially hosted a banquet to thank Chen Ping.

During the meal, Ah Cui raised her glass and bowed respectfully to Chen Ping. "Mr. Chen, I cannot thank you enough for your kindness! Not only did you restore my original appearance, but you also reconciled me with Brother Batian. I, Ah Cui, will never forget this kindness!"

Nan Batian also raised his glass: "Mr. Chen, you are our great benefactor. If I can be of any use to you in the future, I will go through fire and water for you!"

Chen Ping quickly waved his hand: "You are too polite. It was just a small favor. I am very happy to see you two finally get married."

A Cui put down her glass, her expression becoming serious. "Mr. Chen, you said before that you have been tracking the Evil Dao Hall, is that correct?"

Chen Ping nodded: "That's right."

A Cui said: "My Information Building's intelligence network is spread all over the country. Over the years, I've gathered quite a bit of information about the Evil Path Hall.

They operate in secret, and the location of their headquarters is unknown, but we do have some leads regarding their various branch halls.

She paused, pulled a map from her storage bag, spread it out on the table, and pointed to a marker. "This branch hall, in particular, is located beneath an abandoned ancient battlefield deep within the Black Wind Mountains.

This branch hall is incredibly powerful, and its leader is a highly skilled demonic master. It's said that he holds many of the Evil Path Hall's core secrets.

Before, I was too preoccupied with my own affairs to attend to them. Now, I'm sharing this exact address with you, hoping it will be helpful."

Chen Ping's eyes flashed as he gazed at the clear marker on the map.

He knew this was a crucial step in his pursuit of the Evil Path Hall.

"Thank you, sir!" Chen Ping solemnly put the map away. "This gift is truly precious!"

A Cui smiled. "I'm glad I could help you, but be careful. That demon in the branch temple is formidable. Feel free to contact us if you need help."

Nan Batian nodded. "Yes, Mr. Chen. Be careful. I'll accompany you if needed."

A warm feeling welled up in Chen Ping's heart, and he nodded. "Okay, I'll definitely come find you if you need me."

Chen Ping didn't want to bother Nan Batian too much. Nan Batian and A Cui had just reconciled, and they needed more time together.

Nan Batian had agreed to be his servant for three hundred years, but Chen Ping wouldn't actually let him.

In the afternoon of Sword Saint City, sunlight filtered through the layered sword-shaped window lattices, casting dappled shadows on the bluestone pavement.

Chen Ping and Hu Mazi sat in the room. A map of the Black Wind Mountains lay spread out on the table, and scattered nearby were several yellowed pieces of talisman paper. These were pathfinding talismans Hu Mazi had just drawn, their patterns still lingering with faint spiritual energy.

“Chen Ping, the Black Wind Mountains are filled with intense malevolence. My ‘Evil-Clearing Talisman’ can only protect us for three miles at most.”

Hu Mazi tapped the talisman with his fingertips, his rough fingertips brushing against the edges of the patterns.

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The two were discussing their plans to find the Evil Dao Temple branch when a sudden, crisp sound of metal breaking erupted outside, followed by the exclamations of the monks in the market.

Hu Mazi abruptly stood up and tucked the talisman paper into his arms. “Damn it! Is this another scene?”

Chen Ping had already reached the outside of the room and saw five silver-armored figures approaching on flying swords. The leader’s golden robe was embroidered with ferocious animal patterns, and the sword-shaped mark between his brows shone brightly in the sunlight. It was the Sixth Palace Master of the Temple.

The four guards behind him each wielded a long halberd, its tips radiating golden spiritual energy. They were clearly the temple’s elite “Golden Armor Guards.”

“Chen Ping! Finally, this Palace Master has found you!”

The Sixth Palace Master’s voice boomed like thunder, its spiritual energy carrying the sound waves as it crashed against the inn’s archway.

With a crack, the bluestone archway shattered.

The nearby cultivators dodged in fear, but no one dared to intervene.

“Who are you?” Chen Ping asked the Sixth Palace Master coldly!

“The Temple, Sixth Palace Master...”

As soon as he finished speaking, the nearby cultivators retreated even further.

Everyone knew that the Temple was a major force within the God Clan, and that these God Clan members were arrogant and prone to violence at the slightest disagreement.

“Those bastards from the Temple!”

Hu Mazi roared, and with a wave of his hand, three yellow talismans instantly transformed into three fire crows, flapping their wings and charging towards the Sixth Palace Master. “Chen Ping, I’ll meet him!”

“Master Hu, stop it! Your strength...” Before Chen Ping could finish his words, Hu Mazi had already struck.

The Sixth Palace Master sneered, his right hand forming a claw. Five golden claw shadows shot out from the air, tearing the fire crows into a blazing fireball as they approached.

“A casual cultivator playing with talismans, you dare to be so presumptuous in front of this Palace Master?”

The Sixth Palace Master flashed, appearing above the stone pavilion like a ghost. His God-Locking Claws, with a sharp, air-tearing whistle, struck directly at Chen Ping’s crown.

The shadow of these claws was tinged with a hint of blood, and their power was terrifying.

Chen Ping dared not delay, and he used his Fire Control Step to its fullest extent, his figure drifting backward like willow catkins in the wind, while simultaneously summoning the Dragon Slaying Sword in his right hand.

“Swish!”

The moment the sword light and claw shadow collided, a sharp hissing sound emanated.

Chen Ping felt a chilling force spread through his fingertips, his arm instantly paralyzed, and he was sent flying backwards, slamming into the stone pavilion’s pillar before stabilizing himself. A sweet, fishy taste ran through his throat, and he forced himself to swallow the blood that surged to his lips.

“Seventh-rank Loose Immortal Realm? You’ve improved a bit compared to before, but unfortunately, you’re still just an ant.”

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The Sixth Palace Master grinned grimly, waving his left hand. Four golden-armored guards immediately formed a battle formation. Their long halberds intersected, weaving a vast net of golden halberd shadows, trapping Chen Ping and Hu Mazi in the center.

These guards were all fifth-rank Earth Immortal Realm. With the blessing of the battle formation, their auras faintly reached the sixth-rank Earth Immortal Realm. The divine power contained in the halberd shadows had a natural restraining effect on Hu Mazi’s talismans.

It’s undeniable that the strength of the temple’s branch halls increases with rank.

The four golden-armored guards were all fifth-grade Earthly Immortals. This Sixth Palace was likely a formidable force within the Sixth Heaven.

“Let’s go...” Chen Ping knew he and Hu Mazi were no match for the Sixth Palace Master, so he tried to pull Hu Mazi along and escape.

The Sixth Palace Master’s claws were already in pursuit, blood-red daggers piercing their backs.

“Be careful!”

Chen Ping shoved Hu Mazi away, taking the blow himself.

With a “puff,” his clothes on his back were instantly stained red with blood. Five deep wounds, visible to the bone, etched black evil energy into his flesh.

“Chen Ping!”

Hu Mazi’s eyes were bloodshot, and he rapidly formed seals with his hands. Dozens of talismans flew in front of him, some transforming into earth walls, some into ice cones, and some into vines. For a moment, they managed to halt the attacks of the Sixth Palace Master and the Golden Armored Guards.

But he was only a First-Rank Earth Immortal after all, and his reincarnated strength hadn’t fully recovered. His spiritual energy was greatly depleted, and soon he was panting, beads of sweat forming on his forehead.

The Sixth Palace Master sneered, and his claws suddenly accelerated. The moment they tore through the vines, one claw struck Hu Mazi’s chest.

Hu Mazi, as if struck hard, spat out a mouthful of blood and flew backwards to fall beside Chen Ping, his talismans scattering to the ground.

“Who can save you now?”

The Sixth Palace Master approached, the pressure of an Eighth-Rank Earth Immortal crashing down like a tide, nearly suffocating Chen Ping and Hu Mazi.

At this critical moment, a gruff shout rang out from the street corner: “Who are you, bastard? Don’t harm my benefactor!”

Nan Batian, wielding a heavy black iron axe, sped towards him, his axe swirling with crimson spiritual energy.

Following closely behind him, Ah Cui wielded a sapphire-encrusted dagger, faint runes swirling across it. It was the "Spell-Breaking Dagger," a secret weapon crafted by the Information Building, specifically designed to break through the protective spiritual energy of cultivators.

"Nan Batian!" Hu Mazi, startled and delighted, struggled to get up.

"I am the Sixth Lord of the Temple. Anyone uninvolved, get out of here, or I'll be rude."

Seeing Nan Batian and Ah Cui approach, the Sixth Lord threatened Chen Ping, fearing it would affect his chances of killing him.

"The Sixth Palace Master is nothing! Dare you touch Mr. Chen? Not even the gods can stop you!"

Nan Batian swung his heavy axe with immense force, hurling gravel from the ground into the air.

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"Your Divine Temple is acting recklessly in the Fifth Heaven. Do you really think we, the casual cultivators, are easy prey?"

Now that his inner knot had been resolved, his spiritual energy flowed more smoothly than ever. Though only at the peak of the Seventh Stage of the Earthly Immortal Realm, his valor radiated the strength of an Eighth Stage.

"Hmph, a worthless Seventh Stage Earthly Immortal dares to meddle in the affairs of the Divine Temple?"

The Sixth Palace Master sneered. The moment his God-Locking Claw collided with the heavy axe, he spun violently, his claw tip sliding down the sword's spine, striking Nan Batian's wrist.

This attack was so swift and fierce that Nan Batian had no chance to defend himself. He could only sidestep, the claw tip glancing across his arm, leaving a trail of blood.

"Brother Batian!"

A Cui cried out, the Law-Breaking Dagger in her hand transforming into a streak of blue light, piercing the Sixth Palace Master's ribs with pinpoint accuracy.

Though her cultivation had fallen to the fifth rank of the Earthly Immortal Realm, her movements were agile, and the Law-Breaking runes on her dagger always managed to rip through the Sixth Palace Master's protective spiritual energy at crucial moments, giving Nan Batian a chance to breathe.

For a moment, several men engaged in a fierce struggle on the street.

Nan Batian's heavy axe swung and swung, protecting Chen Ping and Hu Mazi.

A Cui's dagger darted erratically, searching for the Sixth Palace Master's weaknesses.

Chen Ping and Hu Mazi seized the opportunity to recuperate, occasionally launching sneak attacks.

But the Sixth Palace Master was too powerful. His eighth rank of Earthly Immortal Realm spiritual power was like the abyss of the ocean, and his God-Locking Claw was sometimes as fierce as thunder, sometimes as gentle as a venomous snake, gradually gaining the upper hand.

"Dang!"

Nan Batian's heavy axe was swept by a claw shadow, a crack appearing instantly on the blade. He groaned and was thrown back repeatedly, his shirt stained red with blood.

A Cui rushed to defend him, but the Sixth Palace Master seized the opportunity and kicked her in the stomach, sending her stumbling into Nan Batian's arms.

"You two losers, dare you stand in my way?"

The Sixth Palace Master smirked, turning and lunging at Chen Ping again. "Today I'll show you the consequences of provoking the Temple!"

A flash of determination flashed in Chen Ping's eyes. Just as he was about to ignite his blood and energy to fight the Sixth Palace Master to the death, a cold female voice suddenly echoed from the sky: "Sixth Palace Master, bullying the weak is your claim to be the Temple Master?"

Before the words were out, a white figure darted past like a startling wild goose. With a flick of the whisk in his hand, thousands of silver threads instantly transformed into a shower of light.

Those silver threads, seemingly soft, cut through the Golden Armored Guards' battle formation like sharp blades. Four guards screamed as they were sent flying, hitting the ground and unconscious.

The Sixth Palace Master's pupils shrank as he stared at the suddenly appeared maid in plain clothes, exclaiming in shock, "Yunxiu? How dare you be here!"

Yunxiu stood before Chen Ping, the crescent jade pendant on her waist gleaming in the sunlight. She glanced at the fallen men, her gaze as cold as ice as it fell on the Sixth Palace Master. "I'm here to protect Chen Ping by order of the Fourth Palace Master. Sixth Palace Master, you disobeyed the Fourth Palace Master's orders and secretly mobilized the Golden Armored Guards to surround and kill Chen Ping. Are you trying to provoke civil unrest?"

The Sixth Palace Master, as if hearing a monstrous joke, pointed at Chen Ping and roared, "He killed people from my temple and destroyed its dignity! I think you've been brainwashed by the Fourth Palace Master. How dare you shield a rebel!"

He changed the subject, a fierce glint in his eyes. "Yunxiu, I'm here on the orders of the Third Palace Master! You've ruined my plans today. If the Third Palace Master investigates, even the Fourth Palace Master will be punished." "I can't protect you!"

Yunxiu flicked her whisk, silver threads weaving a barrier in front of her. The ninth-grade spiritual power of the Earthly Immortal Realm erupted unreservedly, cracking the entire street. "Third Palace Master, if you have the ability, feel free to go to the Divine King Palace and file a complaint.

But if you wish to touch Mr. Chen, consult the 'Dust-Purifying Whisk' in my hand first!"

She took a step forward, the invisible pressure so intense that even the Sixth Palace Master could not help but step back. “The Fourth Palace Master has the Divine King’s order; even a Divine King must show respect.

It’s one thing for you to rely on the Third Palace Master’s power to bully others in the Sixth Heaven, but you dare to come to the Fifth Heaven and act so presumptuously. Do you really think the Fourth Palace is deserted?”

The Sixth Palace Master’s face paled. He could sense that Yunxiu’s spiritual power was even more profound than rumored. The silver threads of the whisk held the power of the laws of space, and a single strand could rip through his protective spiritual energy.

But thinking of the Third Palace Master’s tactics, he steeled himself again: “Yunxiu, don’t push me! If I let Chen Ping go today, the Third Palace Master will never let me go!”

“That’s your business.”

A wisp of silver-white spiritual energy gathered at Yunxiu’s fingertips, twisting in strange arcs in the air, clearly the prototype of a spatial blade. “Either take your men and leave now, or I’ll clean up the mess for the Fourth Palace Master. Your choice.”

The Sixth Palace Master saw the undisguised murderous intent in Yunxiu’s eyes, then glanced at Chen Ping, who was being helped to his feet by Nan Batian. Finally, he gritted his teeth and said, “Alright! I’ll give the Fourth Palace Master face today!”

He roared at the unconscious golden-armored guard, “Useless! Get out of here!” With that, he glared at Chen Ping with resentment, turned around, and led his men into a panicked flight towards the sky.

Only after the Sixth Palace Master’s aura completely vanished did Yunxiu gather her spiritual energy and retrieve four jade bottles from her storage bag, handing them to Nan Batian. “This is ‘Spirit Condensing Powder’ and ‘Fissure Regenerating Ointment.’ Use them to heal their wounds first.”

Nan Batian took the bottles, his eyes filled with gratitude. “Thank you, Miss Yunxiu, for your help. Otherwise, we would all have perished here today.”

He distributed the pills to everyone and fed one to Ah Cui first. Seeing her pale face, his eyes filled with heartache.

After Chen Ping took the pills, the sharp pain in his chest gradually eased. He bowed to Yunxiu and said, "Thank you for saving me. I have no way to repay you."

Yunxiu watched him bandage the wound and spoke slowly, "The Fourth Palace Master asked me to tell Mr. Chen that the Divine Temple has no deep hatred against you. I hope you will forgive any offenses the previous Palace Masters may have caused.

If you are willing to bury the hatchet, the Fourth Palace is willing to form an alliance with you. We will be happy to assist you in any future troubles."

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Chen Ping was silent for a moment. He understood the implications of the Fourth Hall Master's overtures. With the support of the four halls of the Divine Temple, tracking down the Evil Path Hall would be much smoother.

But he also knew that the Divine Temple was rife with factions, and the Third and Sixth Hall Masters would never give up.

"I can agree to a settlement."

Chen Ping finally nodded, his eyes sharpening. "But if anyone else in the Divine Temple were as aggressive as the Sixth Hall Master, I, Chen Ping, would not sit idly by and wait for death."

"Of course."

Yun Xiu nodded in agreement. "The Fourth Hall Master has issued an order. If any hall master dares to privately provoke you again, they will be enemies of the Fourth Hall.

Also, the Fourth Hall Master knows you're tracking down the Evil Path Hall. The branch hall in the Black Wind Mountains is indeed a thorny issue. If you need intelligence or manpower, simply inform the Fourth Hall Master, and he will surely assist you."

Chen Ping's heart trembled. While Ah Cui's intelligence network was extensive, it ultimately lacked the depth of the Divine Temple's foundation.

He bowed and said, "In that case, I thank the Fourth Palace Master and Miss Yunxiu."

Yunxiu smiled faintly. "Mr. Chen, take care of your injuries. I'll take my leave now."

With that, she vanished into the sky in a flash, like a wisp of smoke.

Hu Mazi stared at Yunxiu's departure, exclaiming in amazement. "This maid is truly formidable. Ninth-rank Earthly Immortal, right? Even stronger than the Sixth Palace Master. Chen Ping, is this Fourth Palace Master reliable?"

Chen Ping gazed at Yunxiu's back and said, "At least for now, it seems to be in our favor."

He glanced at Nan Batian and A Cui, his eyes filled with apology. "I'm sorry for getting you into trouble today."

Nan Batian waved his hand and fed the last pill to A Cui. "Mr. Chen, what are you talking about? You're our benefactor, and it's our duty to protect you. That Evil Dao Hall branch is dangerous. How about I go with you?"

A Cui nodded. "The Information Building has a secret presence in the Black Wind Mountains. I can have them pick you up."

A warm feeling welled up in Chen Ping's heart, and he shook his head. "You just reconciled, so rest up first. I can handle the Evil Dao Hall situation myself."

“If Mr. Chen needs any help, just ask...” Nan Batian said!

Chen Ping nodded, then left with Hu Mazi!

Chen Ping and his companions didn't seek out the Evil Dao Hall's branch. With their current strength, Chen Ping knew that even if they did, they wouldn't be able to rescue the Hu family's souls.

Now Chen Ping needed to improve his strength, and quickly.

But to do so, Chen Ping had to stay in the Demon Suppression Tower, where the flow of time would allow him to increase his strength in the shortest possible time.

But using the Demon Suppression Tower in the inn, leaving Hu Mazi alone to protect the Dharma, made Chen Ping somewhat uneasy.

After all, many people were targeting him. If someone attacked him while he was training, it would be troublesome.

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So Chen Ping took Hu Mazi to Mo Chen. Now that he was the Sword Sect's senior disciple, it was natural for him to stay in Mo Chen's residence.

Chen Ping's days recuperating at Mo Chen's residence were peaceful yet fulfilling.

Mo Chen's residence lies deep in the bamboo forest west of Sword Saint City. Within its courtyard, an ancient sword hut perpetually wafts the fragrance of swords. In the open space before the hut, hundreds of rusted ancient swords lie embedded in the soil, forming a unique sword forest.

It is said that these are discarded swords Mo Chen collected from battlefield ruins and ruined sects during his early travels. He said, “A sword can be discarded, but its spirit cannot be shattered. By observing a discarded sword, one can understand the sword spirit of the predecessors and thus attain enlightenment.”

Every morning, Chen Ping would breathe in the sword forest to heal his wounds.

The elixir left by Yun Xiu was so potent that the claw wound on his back scabbed over in three days. The cold and evil aura that had invaded his body gradually dissipated under the warmth of the “Warm Jade Talisman” gifted by Mo Chen.

Even more to his surprise, nourished by the rich sword energy of the sword forest, his spiritual energy flowed more smoothly, and the bottleneck that had previously held him at the peak of the seventh rank of the Loose Immortal Realm was even beginning to show signs of loosening.

“Your foundation is good, but your swordsmanship relies too heavily on bursts of spiritual energy, lacking the agility a swordsman should possess.”

Mo Chen would instruct Chen Ping in the Sword Pavilion every afternoon.

He never demonstrated himself, but instead sat on a bamboo couch, stroking a jet-black wooden sword, occasionally pointing out flaws in Chen Ping’s practice.

“Look at this old bamboo.”

Mo Chen pointed out the window at a swaying bamboo, bent by the strong wind. “It bends when the wind blows, and straightens when the wind leaves. It appears fragile, but in reality, it is remarkably resilient. The same should apply to swords: rigidity cannot last long, and softness cannot be defended. Only by combining rigidity and softness can one achieve unparalleled maneuverability.”

Chen Ping gazed intently, observing that the bamboo, blasted by the wind, seemed poised to snap at any moment, yet it always managed to bend slightly at the peak of the force, dissipating much of the force.

A sudden inspiration struck him, and the Dragon Slaying Sword in his hand hummed. His previously powerful and domineering sword moves suddenly became agile, the sword light flickering like the shadow of a swaying bamboo, sometimes piercing straight ahead like a bamboo shoot breaking through the earth, sometimes slashing horizontally like a bamboo leaf sweeping the wind.

“Hmm, that’s getting interesting.”

A flicker of approval flashed in Mo Chen’s eyes. “The way of the sword has no fixed rules. Those who are trapped in the techniques are craftsmen, while those who fully understand the principles of the sword are masters. Your previous swordsmanship was too focused on ‘slashing,’ forgetting that the sword can also ‘entangle,’ ‘circle,’ and ‘remove.’”

With a flick of his finger, a bronze sword beside the bamboo couch soared into the air, transforming into a stream of light and shooting towards Chen Ping.

The strike seemed slow, but it blocked all of Chen Ping’s angles for evasion.

Chen Ping’s heart trembled, and he instinctively tried to block with brute force. But then he suddenly remembered Mo Chen’s words. He twisted his wrist sharply, and the Dragon Slaying Sword wrapped around the bronze sword like a spirit snake.

With a gentle slide along the sword’s spine, he managed to deflect the sword’s force to the side. As the two swords clashed, he twisted his wrist again, bringing the blade directly to bear on the bronze sword’s hilt.

“Ding!” The bronze sword fell to the ground with a crisp sound.

Chen Ping stood there stunned. The realization he had just experienced was like a revelation. He felt his spiritual energy surge through his body, and the bottleneck of the Seventh Stage of the Loose Immortal Realm was shattered. An even more powerful force filled his limbs and bones—the Eighth Stage of the Loose Immortal Realm!

“Breakthrough?” Hu Mazi watched from the side, astonished. “It’s only been a few days, and Chen Ping, your cultivation speed is simply inhuman!”

Mo Chen stood up and walked over to Chen Ping, smiling with satisfaction for the first time. “Not bad, you’ve grasped it instantly. Your comprehension is much better than mine back then.”

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Just then, a Sword Sect disciple hurried into the courtyard, excitedly calling out, "Senior Brother! Master Mo Chen! The once-a-century Sword Saint City Sword Tournament is about to begin! All the major sects are signing up!"

Chen Ping's mind stirred, and he asked, "What is this Sword Tournament?"

The Sword Sect disciple explained the tournament to Chen Ping.

"Sword Tournament?" Hu Mazi rubbed his hands. "Sounds exciting, Chen Ping, shall we go?"

Chen Ping looked at Mo Chen, but saw that his brows were slightly furrowed, as if he wasn't enthusiastic. He didn't know why.

A few days later, news of the Sword Competition spread throughout Sword Saint City. Major sects signed up, and even some sword-cultivating families thousands of miles away sent representatives to participate.

The Sword Sect's disciples couldn't contain their excitement. Ling Xue and several other core disciples even approached Mo Chen, begging him to participate.

"Master, this is a once-in-a-century opportunity. Even if we don't win a place, we can at least witness the swordsmanship of other sects!" Ling Xue said earnestly.

Mo Chen was silent for a long time, then finally shook his head. "Your strength is still limited. This competition is full of hidden talents. Many sects will do anything to vie for a place. Going there will only mean you'll die in vain."

"But..." Ling Xue wanted to argue, but Mo Chen interrupted her.

"Especially the Divine Sword Villa," Mo Chen's voice deepened. "They have a long-standing grudge against our Sword Sect, and their disciples are known for their ruthlessness. If we encounter them at the conference, they will show no mercy."

Chen Ping, hearing about the Divine Sword Villa, knew that when he entered the city, Ling Xue and Qin Feng from the Divine Sword Villa had engaged in a duel of swordsmanship, a life-or-death battle.

If he hadn't intervened, one of them would have surely died.

"Master," Chen Ping stepped forward, his gaze firm. "Disciple is willing to represent the Sword Sect in the competition."

"You?" Mo Chen looked at him. "Although you've reached the eighth level of the Loose Immortal Realm, the core disciples of Divine Sword Villa are at least fourth level in the Earthly Immortal Realm. If you go..."

"Disciple understands the danger, but that's precisely why we should go," Chen Ping said sincerely. "If we simply retreat, people will think the Sword Sect is cowardly and vulnerable. Besides, I want to use this tournament to hone my swordsmanship."

Ling Xue chimed in. "Yes, Master, Senior Brother Chen is making rapid progress. He might even be able to perform a miracle! We're willing to go too. Even if we can't compete, we can still cheer him on!"

The other disciples nodded, their eyes filled with anticipation.

Mo Chen looked at the eager eyes of the crowd, then at Chen Ping's confident expression, and finally relented. "Well, since you insist on going, then it's up to you. But remember, safety comes first."

He turned to Chen Ping and solemnly instructed, "I'll register you, but listen, there are three ironclad rules for the competition: First, you may only use swordsmanship; no magic, magical weapons, or external forces are permitted. Second, you must bring your own weapons, but they must be swords. Third, once you take the stage, life and death are left to fate, and no one is allowed to interfere."

"Especially if you encounter someone from the Divine Sword Villa," Mo Chen emphasized. "Their 'Sky-Splitting Sword Technique' is incredibly powerful, and every move is lethal. If you feel you can't defeat them, surrender immediately. Don't try to be stubborn! Saving your life is paramount."

Chen Ping nodded in agreement, "Disciple, understand."

Looking at Chen Ping's calm demeanor, Mo Chen felt a sense of relief, yet a lingering worry remained.

He knew this sword competition was far from being as simple as it appeared.

The people at Divine Sword Villa were likely already waiting to deliver a fatal blow to the Sword Sect at the convention.

A few days later, the sword tournament began.

The Sword Saint City's martial arts square was already packed.

In the center of the bluestone-paved square, a white jade arena, a hundred feet in diameter, hovered in mid-air, its edges inscribed with dense sword patterns.

A faint golden glow shone in the sunlight. This was the "Soul Locking Formation," painstakingly laid by successive lords of Sword Saint City. It prevented the aftermath of the fight from harming the spectators and confined all magical and spiritual energy, ensuring that the contestants could only determine victory through swordplay.

Surrounding the square, dozens of viewing platforms were built into the hillside, and the flags of the major sects fluttered in the wind.

At the top VIP stage, the head of Sword Saint City sat in the center, clad in a purple robe. To his left sat several white-haired elders, all highly respected sword masters in the city.

To his right sat the heads and elders of the major sects. The most eye-catching of them all was Qin Lie, the owner of Divine Sword Villa. He wore a crimson python robe, a jet-black longsword dangling from his waist. His gaze was as sharp as an eagle's as he chatted and laughed cheerfully with the elders beside him, his brow brimming with pride.

“Have you heard? This time, Divine Sword Villa has sent three core disciples. The leader, Zhao Jingfeng, is said to have mastered the ‘Sky-Splitting Sword Technique’ to the seventh level, reaching the sixth level of the Earthly Immortal Realm. He’s practically unmatched among the younger generation!”

“Not only that, there’s also Li Hanjiang of the Seven Star Sword Sect. He wields the ‘Seven Star Linking Sword’ to such mastery that it’s said he once severed a thousand-year-old pine tree with a single strike!”

“I bet Zhao Jingfeng will be the champion this time! Look at his imposing presence. Just standing there, no one dares to look directly at him!”

The audience’s chatter surged, and the eyes of thousands of cultivators were fixed on the eastern entrance to the arena, where the contestants from various sects were preparing to enter.

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Chen Ping, dressed in a washed-out blue cloth, stood out among the group of Sword Sect disciples, looking somewhat out of place.

Ling Xue and the others were all dressed in the Sword Sect’s standard white robes, but he remained in his usual attire. The seemingly ordinary Dragon Slaying Sword at his waist stood out against the backdrop of the various ornate swords around him, appearing even more plain and unpretentious.

“Senior Brother Chen, look over there!” Ling Xue quietly nudged Chen Ping’s arm, pointing to the nearby Divine Sword Villa group.

Three young men in silver armor surrounded a man in red. The man had sharp eyebrows and a gleaming gaze, a haughty smile playing on his lips. It was Zhao Jingfeng.

He seemed to sense Ling Xue’s gaze and turned, his eyes sweeping over Chen Ping as if he were examining an insignificant object. Then, with a scornful smile, he said to his junior fellow disciple, “The Sword Sect actually sent a worthless wretch from the Loose Immortal Realm to fill the ranks this time? It seems they truly are out of resources.”

The junior fellow disciples nearby burst into laughter. The laughter wasn’t loud, but it reached the Sword Sect disciples clearly.

Ling Xue's face turned pale with anger, and her hand gripping the hilt of her sword trembled slightly. "That's too much!"

Chen Ping, however, remained calm and simply said, "They have the right to speak. Let them say whatever they want."

Chen Ping noticed that at the Divine Sword Villa, Qin Feng, who had challenged Ling Xue in a duel of sword spirit, wasn't in the line of disciples, but was seated in the front seat.

"Senior Brother Chen, Qin Feng is the manor owner's son, so he holds a high status. He wouldn't step on the stage for a duel like this. He's probably afraid of getting hurt."

Ling Xue followed Chen Ping's lead.

Chen Ping nodded. A second-generation brother who was always afraid of this and that wouldn't amount to anything in the future.

Just then, a bell rang out in the center of the square, three long and two short, signaling the start of the competition.

The leader of Sword Saint City slowly stood up, his voice carried across the square through spiritual energy: "Once a century, the Sword Saints' Sword Contest! We have gathered here today to exchange sword skills and sharpen our skills!

I hereby reiterate three iron laws: First, no magic spells or magical weapons, only the sword will determine the winner; second, the battle ends when it's called, and life and death are your own; third, on the stage, the winner is king!"

"Now, please enter, contestants from all sects!"

As the City Lord finished speaking, the light curtain at the entrance slowly opened, and disciples from each sect took to the stage one by one.

A total of sixty-four contestants, divided into thirty-two groups, would face off in pairs, with the winner advancing to the next round.

Chen Ping's name was placed in group ten, his opponent a disciple from the Flowing Cloud Sect, a third-grade Earthly Immortal Realm cultivator.

"Chen Ping, be careful. The Liuyun Sect's 'Liuyun Thirteen Styles' are known for their speed." Mo Chen had unknowingly reached Chen Ping's side and whispered a warning.

Chen Ping nodded, "Don't worry, Master."

As he stepped onto the stage, a flurry of murmurs erupted from the audience.

"Is that the contestant from the Sword Sect? He looks so young."

"I heard he's an eighth-rank Loose Immortal. Among the sixty-four, his cultivation level is probably at the bottom, right?"

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"Wang Chong from the Liuyun Sect is a third-rank Earth Immortal. This round is a sure win."

Seeing Chen Ping take the stage, Wang Chong's face lit up with a confident smile. He bowed and said, "I am Wang Chong from the Liuyun Sect. May I ask your name, brother?"

"Chen Ping."

Two simple words, neither humble nor overbearing.

A flicker of displeasure flashed in Wang Chong's eyes. He felt Chen Ping was too arrogant. Without further ado, he unsheathed his longsword, transforming it into a streak of light and thrusting it towards Chen Ping's heart: "Take it!"

The sword's light was like water, elusive and unpredictable. It was the opening move of the "Thirteen Forms of Flowing Clouds," "Clouds Rolling in the Setting Sun."

The audience watched as a white shadow flashed by. Wang Chong's sword was already in front of Chen Ping, but Chen Ping remained standing, seemingly unresponsive.

"It's over! Chen Ping is probably going to lose!"

"Too arrogant! He didn't even draw his sword?"

Ling Xue closed her eyes in nervousness.

Just as the tip of his sword was about to touch Chen Ping's clothes, Chen Ping moved.

He didn't draw his sword, but simply tilted his body slightly, like a willow in the wind. Seemingly slow, it just happened to avoid the fatal blow.

At the same time, he brought his right index and middle fingers together and lightly tapped the spine of Wang Chong's sword.

"Ding!"

After a crisp sound, Wang Chong felt a strange force radiate from the sword. His wrist suddenly went numb, and the sword rose uncontrollably.

This sudden change startled Wang Chong. He quickly drew back his sword and defended himself, only to see Chen Ping approaching like a ghost. His fingertips, gleaming with a faint golden light, pointed at his wrist, where he held the sword.

Wang Chong's heart trembled. This seemingly simple gesture blocked all his possible moves.

He could only abruptly release the hilt, letting the sword drop to the ground while retreating rapidly, trying to gain distance.

But would Chen Ping give him the chance?

Chen Ping took a half step forward with his left foot, and followed with his right foot. His entire body seemed to be right behind Wang Chong, his left hand gently resting on his shoulder.

“Thank you.”

A calm voice echoed in Wang Chong’s ears. He felt a gentle yet irresistible force, and his body stumbled forward a few steps, nearly falling off the stage.

Only after regaining his balance did he regain his composure. He looked at Chen Ping, the Dragon Slaying Sword still tucked away at his waist, his face draining of all color.

I hadn’t even forced the opponent’s sword to strike, and I’d already lost?