

The Order 9701

Chapter: 9701

“What kind of place is Crimson Flame Canyon? The dwelling place of the Flame Dragon! Even a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal wouldn’t dare say they could escape unscathed. What’s a first-grade cultivator doing there? Becoming snacks for the Flame Dragon?”

“Probably some hothead from some small place, thinking the Earth Fire Pavilion’s guard duty is an easy job.”

“Tch, ignorant of the immensity of heaven and earth.”

The discussions rose and fell, their tone filled with sarcasm. In the eyes of these cultivators, at least fifth-grade Celestial Immortals, a first-grade Celestial Immortal was no different from an ant.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord stood behind Chen Ping, his expression slightly grim, but Chen Ping gestured with his eyes for him to remain calm.

Chen Ping remained calm and said to the young deacon, “Although my cultivation level is not high, I believe I possess some protective techniques that might come in handy. Since I’m here, may I be allowed to give them a test?”

The young deacon hesitated, about to speak, when a gruff voice interrupted:

“Try? Kid, what do you think this place is? Playing house?”

The speaker was a burly man, nine feet tall with a face full of scars, carrying two cartwheel-sized axes on his back, his aura at the peak of the sixth rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm.

He walked up to Chen Ping, looking down at him condescendingly, and sneered, “Guard missions are for risking your life, not for newbies like you to broaden your horizons. If you know what’s good for you, get lost and don’t delay our legitimate cultivators from registering.”

A burst of laughter erupted around them.

Chen Ping looked up at the burly man, his tone still calm: "Fellow Daoist, the test hasn't even started yet, how can you be so sure I'm no good?"

"Ha! Do I even need to be sure?"

The burly man seemed to have heard a joke. "With your cultivation level, I could crush ten of you with a single finger! Kid, stop making a fool of yourself here, hurry up..."

His words trailed off.

Because Chen Ping suddenly moved.

Not an attack, not a defense.

He simply took a step forward.

But in that instant, a trace of Chen Ping's aura leaked out.

It wasn't a fifth-grade Celestial Immortal, nor a sixth-grade one.

It was an indescribable, boundless aura, seemingly encompassing all things yet transcending them!

Although it was only fleeting, the burly man closest to Chen Ping felt as if he had instantly been placed in endless chaos, all the laws around him trembling and submitting!

The raging spiritual energy within him suddenly became stagnant and dormant, as if it had encountered its natural enemy!

The burly man's expression changed drastically. He staggered back three steps, cold sweat instantly beading on his forehead. His eyes were filled with suspicion and uncertainty as he looked at Chen Ping.

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The surrounding laughter also abruptly ceased.

Those cultivators who had been mocking Chen Ping now felt a strange unease.

Although they didn't know exactly what had happened, the burly man's reaction and the fleeting, strange aura were enough to explain things.

This young cultivator who seemed to be only at the first rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm... was probably not simple!

The young steward also noticed the abnormality. He re-examined Chen Ping, his attitude becoming much more cautious: "Fellow Daoist, since you insist, then participate in the test. The test consists of three parts: cultivation level test, attack test, and defense test. Please follow me."

Chen Ping nodded and followed the steward to the testing area.

The first part: cultivation level test.

A spirit-testing crystal sat on the testing platform. Cultivators placed their hands on it, infusing their immortal power. The crystal would then display a rough estimate of their cultivation level based on the quality and quantity of the immortal power.

Some cultivators deliberately concealed their cultivation level or used drugs to enhance their aura.

If one relied solely on aura to determine someone's cultivation level, there would be errors.

This would be considered cheating, but it was impossible to cheat with this spirit-testing crystal.

The crystals of the cultivators tested previously mostly glowed with red, orange, and yellow light, corresponding to the fifth, sixth, and seventh ranks of the Celestial Immortal Realm, respectively.

When it was Chen Ping's turn, he placed his hand on the crystal and slowly channeled his chaotic immortal power into it.

The crystal first emitted a faint white light, indicating the weakest level of the Celestial Immortal Realm, the first rank.

Seeing this light, the young deacon's eyes filled with disdain.

The others also began to point and whisper.

The burly man, who had been frightened by Chen Ping, now gleamed with a fierce light upon seeing this scene.

This spirit-testing crystal couldn't be faked; it seemed Chen Ping's cultivation level truly was at the first rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm.

In that case, he no longer needed to fear him.

That terrifying aura just now was probably created using some kind of magical artifact.

Thinking this, the burly man wanted to step forward and teach Chen Ping a lesson, to vent his anger.

But just as the burly man was about to step forward, the spirit-testing crystal changed.

The white light began to shift, turning gray, and then within the gray, seven halos of red, orange, yellow, green, cyan, blue, and purple emerged. The seven colors flowed and eventually intertwined into a chaotic, undefined gray hue!

“What...what’s going on?”

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The young deacon was stunned.

He had presided over tests for many years and had never seen the spirit-testing crystal react like this.

The surrounding crowd whispered among themselves, bewildered.

The burly man’s eyes widened in shock, and he stopped in his tracks.

Chen Ping understood.

The Chaotic Immortal Power encompassed all things, not to mention the baleful aura, the power of the divine dragon, the power of the three races, and the power of various supreme fires within Chen Ping’s body. This mixture of powers made it impossible for the Spirit Testing Crystal to accurately determine his cultivation level, hence the abnormal reaction.

“Perhaps there’s something wrong with the crystal,” Chen Ping said calmly.

“Why don’t we proceed to the next test?”

The young deacon hesitated for a moment, then glanced at an elderly man not far away, who was meditating with his eyes closed. This was an elder sent by the Earth Fire Pavilion to supervise the recruitment.

The old man opened his eyes, gave Chen Ping a deep look, and slowly nodded: “Continue.”

The second item: the attack test.

Three specially made test pillars stood in the testing area, corresponding to the defensive strength of the fifth, sixth, and seventh ranks of the Celestial Immortal Realm.

Cultivators needed to launch an attack from ten zhang away, and the attack power was judged by the degree of damage to the test pillar.

Most of the cultivators who had passed before could only leave deep marks on the fifth-rank test pillar, and a few sixth-rank cultivators could leave shallow marks on the sixth-rank test pillar.

As for the seventh-rank test pillar, no one had been able to budge it yet.

Chen Ping walked to the testing position, not taking out the Dragon-Slaying Sword, but instead forming a sword shape with his fingers, and pointed at the sixth-rank test pillar in the middle from a distance.

A hazy gray sword aura shot out from his fingertip, silent and not particularly fast.

“That’s it?”

Someone muttered under their breath, “So weak, not even a peculiar sound...”

Before the words were finished, the gray sword energy had already lightly landed on the sixth-grade testing pillar.

There was no earth-shattering explosion, no ear-piercing clang of metal.

Only a soft “swoosh,” like a red-hot iron rod piercing through snow.

Under everyone’s stunned gaze, the testing pillar, capable of withstanding a full-force attack from a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal, was easily pierced by the gray sword energy!

Leaving a thumb-sized hole, smooth as a mirror, completely transparent!

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Even more bizarrely, the material around the hole wasn't violently destroyed, but rather seemed... to have been directly erased from the world by some force!

The entire arena fell silent.

You could hear a pin drop.

A few breaths later, gasps of astonishment rose and fell.

"This...how is this possible?!"

"The sixth-grade trial pillar...it's been pierced through?!"

"What kind of supernatural power did he use? I didn't even see it!"

"That sword energy is strange! It's definitely not ordinary sword energy!"

The burly man who had mocked Chen Ping the most earlier was now deathly pale, filled with lingering fear.

He secretly rejoiced that he hadn't actually attacked; otherwise, he would probably be the one with a hole in his body now.

The young deacon opened his mouth, but couldn't utter a word for a long time.

In all his years of presiding over tests, he had seen even the strongest Celestial Immortal cultivators leave only a half-inch-deep slash mark on the sixth-grade trial pillar.

To pierce through it like this...unheard of!

The supervising elder opened his eyes again, his eyes flashing with a sharp light, staring intently at Chen Ping, as if trying to see right through him.

Chen Ping, however, acted as if he had done something insignificant, turning to the third test.

The third test: defense test.

Within the testing area, three puppets stood, each capable of unleashing attacks equivalent to those of a fifth, sixth, or seventh-grade Celestial Immortal.

Cultivators were required to stand in designated positions, neither dodging nor evading, and withstand three blows from the puppets. Their defensive strength was assessed based on the degree of injury sustained.

Chen Ping walked to the testing position.

“Please select the puppet level.”

The young deacon’s voice carried a hint of respect.

“Seventh grade,” Chen Ping said calmly.

“Seventh grade?” Another gasp rippled through the crowd.

The attack of a seventh-grade puppet was the undisputed power of a seventh-grade Celestial Immortal!

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Even a seventh-grade Celestial Immortal cultivator wouldn't dare claim they could withstand three blows unscathed!

This young man, possessing only the aura of a first-grade cultivator, was actually challenging a seventh-grade puppet?

"Fellow Daoist, the power of a seventh-grade puppet is immense, perhaps..." the young deacon kindly advised.

"It's alright, let's begin," Chen Ping interrupted him.

The young deacon looked at the supervising elder, who nodded slightly. "Activate the seventh-grade puppet, first strike!" the young deacon announced loudly.

A three-zhang-tall, crimson metal puppet's eyes glowed red. Its right arm rose, and a blinding crimson light condensed on its fist, emanating a scorching and violent aura.

"Boom!"

The puppet unleashed a punch, the crimson fist shadow tearing through the air, carrying a scorching shockwave, heading straight for Chen Ping's face!

Chen Ping neither dodged nor evaded, not even bothering to condense any protective immortal light; he simply stood there calmly.

"He's gone mad?!" someone exclaimed in shock.

Just as the fist shadow was about to strike Chen Ping—

Chen Ping raised his right hand, fingers spread, and gently clenched it against the astonishingly powerful crimson fist shadow.

“Pfft.”

As if popping a bubble.

The fist shadow, powerful enough to severely injure a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal cultivator, suddenly dissipated and vanished into primordial fire-elemental spiritual energy three feet from Chen Ping’s palm, dissipating into the air.

Chen Ping’s hand didn’t even tremble slightly.

“This...” The young deacon’s eyes nearly popped out of their sockets.

The onlookers were completely petrified.

To withstand a blow from a seventh-grade puppet, not only unscathed but also crushing it so effortlessly?

What kind of monster is this?!

“The second strike!”

The young deacon’s voice trembled slightly.

The puppet’s eyes glowed even redder, its arms rising simultaneously, its fists colliding, condensing into a violently spinning crimson fireball about a foot in diameter!

Cracks danced across the fireball’s surface, radiating destructive energy, at least 30% stronger than the first strike!

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“Go!”

The puppet thrust its arms forward, sending a fireball hurtling out, scorching the air and distorting its path!

Chen Ping still didn't dodge.

This time, he didn't even raise a hand.

With a mere thought, golden light instantly enveloped his entire body; his Indestructible Golden Body activated.

“Boom!”

The crimson fireball slammed into the golden light membrane, erupting with blinding light and a deafening roar!

The dust settled.

Chen Ping stood motionless.

The golden light membrane around his body rippled slightly, completely undamaged.

Even the ground beneath his feet didn't crack—all the impact had been completely absorbed and neutralized by that thin layer of light!

“Impossible...”

Someone murmured, as if their faith had crumbled.

“The third strike!”

The young deacon practically roared, completely stunned by the scene before him, unable to think straight.

The puppet’s eyes blazed with an intense red light, its entire body trembled violently, and a complex array of runes lit up on its chest, frantically drawing in the surrounding fire-elemental spiritual energy!

“Buzz—!”

A giant sword, entirely formed from crimson flames, slowly materialized above the puppet’s head!

The sword was three zhang long, its blade wreathed in crimson dragon shadows, radiating a terrifyingly high temperature and sharp sword aura that sent shivers down one’s spine!

This was the seventh-grade puppet’s ultimate killing move—the Flaming Dragon Slash!

Its power was comparable to the full-force attack of a peak seventh-grade Celestial Immortal!

“Slash!”

The puppet slashed downwards with both arms, the flaming giant sword carrying the force to cleave everything in its path, crashing down on Chen Ping!

This single strike caused many fifth and sixth-grade Celestial Immortal cultivators in the vicinity to feel breathless, instinctively retreating.

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Chen Ping finally moved.

He raised his left hand, his index and middle fingers together, and gently pinched the descending flaming giant sword. Yes, a pinch.

Using two fingers to pinch the three-zhang-long flaming giant sword.

To everyone, this was suicidal.

However—

“Clang!”

A crisp metallic clang rang out.

Chen Ping’s two fingers firmly gripped the tip of the flaming giant sword!

The giant sword’s downward momentum abruptly halted. The crimson dragon shadow coiled around its blade roared in frustration, yet it could not advance an inch further!

Chen Ping slightly increased the pressure on his fingers.

“Crack...”

Fine cracks appeared on the flaming giant sword, starting from the tip.

The cracks spread rapidly, covering the entire giant sword in the blink of an eye!

“Shatter.”

Chen Ping uttered a single word.

“Bang—!”

The three-zhang-long flaming giant sword shattered with a deafening roar, transforming into a rain of fire that fell in a flurry, only to be repelled and annihilated by the golden light covering Chen Ping’s body as it approached.

Within the testing area, only a puppet, its energy depleted and dimming, remained, along with a blue-clad figure standing with hands behind his back, robes fluttering in the wind.

Dead silence.

A deathly silence that lasted for more than ten breaths.

Then, a deafening roar of exclamations and discussions erupted!

“My god! What did I just see?!”

“He caught a seventh-grade puppet’s Flaming Dragon Slash with his bare hands?! And crushed it?!”

“He...he’s really a first-grade Celestial Immortal? You’re kidding me!”

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“This strength...at least an eighth-grade Celestial Immortal...no, a ninth-grade! He might even have touched the threshold of an Upper Immortal!”

“The Earthfire Pavilion has struck gold this time!”

The cultivators who had previously mocked Chen Ping were now flushed with embarrassment, wishing they could disappear into the ground.

Especially the burly man, who had quietly retreated to the back of the crowd, afraid of being noticed by Chen Ping.

The young deacon took several deep breaths to barely calm his agitated emotions.

He approached the supervising elder and bowed, saying, “Elder, what do you think...”

The supervising elder slowly rose, walked to Chen Ping, and carefully examined him, his eyes filled with admiration and inquiry: “Young friend, you are skilled. May I ask your master? What is your honorable name?”

Chen Ping clasped his hands in a fist salute: “This junior is Chen Ping, a rogue cultivator with no fixed master.”

“A rogue cultivator?”

A hint of surprise flashed in the elder’s eyes, but he didn’t delve into it. “Young friend Chen’s strength is outstanding, perfectly meeting the requirements for a guard. No, far exceeding the requirements. With you joining this mission, safety will be greatly enhanced.”

“I am an outer sect elder of the Earthfire Pavilion, surnamed Zhao. If you are interested, after the mission, I can recommend you to join the Earthfire Pavilion and become an inner disciple directly.”

Become an inner disciple directly!

A collective gasp of envy rose from the surrounding crowd.

As one of the overlords of the Flame Domain, the Earthfire Pavilion's inner disciples enjoy extremely high status and treatment; ordinary cultivators would fight tooth and nail to get in.

Chen Ping calmly replied, "Thank you for your kindness, Elder Zhao. This junior's trip is solely for the mission rewards and experience. The matter of joining the pavilion can be discussed later."

Elder Zhao didn't press the matter, smiling, "Very well, everyone has their own ambitions. Since you've passed the test, young friend, you'll be a guard for our Earth Fire Pavilion on this mission. And this is..."

He looked at the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord.

"This is my companion, Fellow Daoist Crimson Cloud," Chen Ping introduced.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord stepped forward, releasing the aura of a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal.

While far less impressive than Chen Ping's, it was still respectable.

"Fellow Daoist Crimson Cloud has also passed."

Elder Zhao nodded. "Please register here and receive your guard tokens. Meet outside the South Gate tomorrow at Chenshi (7-9 AM). Don't be late."

"Yes."

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord registered, received two crimson guard tokens, and then left the mission hall.

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Behind them, countless gazes followed for a long time, and the whispers continued.

“Chen Ping... this name is likely to spread throughout Crimson Flame City.”

“Such strength, yet so low-key, this person is definitely not simple.”

“The Evil Path Hall is hunting someone named Chen Ping... could it be him?”

“Shh! Be careful what you say! You can’t say things like that!”

...

After leaving the mission hall, Crimson Cloud Demon Lord whispered, “Chen Ping, the strength you just displayed will probably attract more attention. The Evil Path Hall...”

“It’s alright.”

Chen Ping’s expression was calm. “They’ll come knocking sooner or later anyway. Showing some of my strength will actually deter some villains and save a lot of trouble.”

“Besides, the Earth Fire Pavilion is now interested in me; this connection might provide us with some protection.”

Crimson Cloud Demon Lord thought about it and agreed, so he said no more.

The two returned to the inn to prepare for tomorrow’s mission.

Unbeknownst to them, shortly after their departure, news of what had transpired within the Mission Hall had spread rapidly through various channels to the ears of all the major powers in Crimson Flame City.

A mysterious, powerful, and seemingly concealing young cultivator, Chen Ping, became the focus of attention for many.

This included, of course, the Evil Path Hall, entrenched deep within the Ghost Market.

“The Flame Dragon Slash that crushed a seventh-grade puppet with bare hands?”

Elder Blood Soul listened to his subordinate’s report, a dangerous glint in his crimson eyes. “It seems the Black Wind Valley’s defeat was no accident. This boy does indeed possess some skill.”

“Elder, should we act now?” a subordinate asked.

“No rush.”

Elder Blood Soul shook his head. “He’s currently a guard on a mission for the Earthfire Pavilion. Openly attacking would offend them.”

“Wait until they leave the city and reach Crimson Flame Canyon... the environment there is complex, making it the perfect place to strike. Notify Bone Demon to lead his men ahead and set up the ‘Ten Thousand Ghosts Devouring Soul Array’ around the outer perimeter of Crimson Flame Canyon.”

“This time, I, the elder, will personally take action. We absolutely cannot let him escape again!”

“Yes!”

A murderous intent quietly gathered in the shadows.

Meanwhile, Chen Ping was in his inn room, meditating and making final preparations for the upcoming trip to Crimson Flame Canyon.

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The next day at dawn, outside the south gate of Crimson Flame City.

Chen Ping and Crimson Cloud Demon Lord arrived at the meeting point on time.

More than twenty people had already gathered there: ten recruited guards, and more than ten disciples and stewards from the Earthfire Pavilion.

In front of them, three magnificent carriages pulled by four Crimson Flame Beasts were parked.

The Crimson Flame Beast is a third-tier spirit beast resembling a steed but entirely crimson with flames burning on its hooves. It possesses exceptional endurance, making it well-suited for long journeys across the Flame Domain.

At the quarter-hour of Chen (7:15 AM), an elderly man with white hair and a youthful face, dressed in a crimson robe, emerged from the city gates, surrounded by his disciples.

The old man had a kind face, but a sharp glint flashed in his eyes as he opened and closed them. His aura was as deep as the sea, clearly indicating he possessed the cultivation of a peak eighth-grade Celestial Immortal!

He leaned on a crimson jade cane, the tip of which was inlaid with a fist-sized fiery red gem, radiating a heat that was both intense and gentle.

“Greetings, Elder Yan Xin!” the members of the Earth Fire Pavilion bowed in unison.

The recruited guards also quickly bowed.

This was Elder Yan Xin, one of the three great alchemy masters of the Earth Fire Pavilion.

“No need for formalities, everyone.”

Elder Yan Xin’s voice was gentle. “We will be troubling you all to escort us on this journey to Crimson Flame Canyon to collect Flame Spirit Grass.”

“Before we depart, I have a few words to say: Deep within Crimson Flame Canyon dwells a Flame Dragon, fierce in nature, whose strength is comparable to a ninth-grade Celestial Immortal.”

“Our goal is to quickly collect enough Flame Spirit Grass and retreat before the Flame Dragon notices us. Therefore, speed and safety are paramount on this journey; we must avoid direct confrontation with the Flame Dragon as much as possible. Do you all understand?”

“Understood!” everyone responded.

“Alright, let’s go.”

Elder Yan Xin boarded the central carriage.

The convoy moved smoothly along the wide official road outside Crimson Flame City. Crimson Flame Beasts, their hooves blazing with fire, pulled the carriages at a considerable speed.

The guards followed either on horseback or flew alongside the convoy, vigilantly observing the surrounding environment.

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord chose to fly, as this provided a wider field of vision and allowed them to respond to any unexpected situations.

As Chen Ping flew, he silently sensed the unique fire-attribute spiritual energy of the Flame Domain, his chaotic immortal power quietly circulating within him, adapting to and absorbing this intense yet pure energy.

After traveling for about half an hour, the caravan entered a region of crimson hills.

The temperature here was noticeably higher, and a faint smell of sulfur permeated the air.