

The Order 9721

Chapter: 9721

Everyone looked at Chen Ping.

Chen Ping remained calm, exchanged a few breaths of eye contact with Yan Lie, and slowly nodded: "It's fine."

"Chen Ping..." the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord tried to dissuade him.

"It's alright."

Chen Ping replied, "I also want to observe the canyon environment up close."

A hint of triumph flashed in Yan Lie's eyes, and he added, "Since it's about clearing a path, the number of people shouldn't be too large, lest the noise disturb the Flame Dragon. Fellow Daoist Chen, you can choose two or three more to accompany you."

This was to isolate him.

Chen Ping glanced at the guard team; most of them lowered their heads, not daring to meet his gaze.

Only a tall, thin middle-aged cultivator carrying a longbow, and a short, stocky man wielding two hammers stepped forward.

"My name is Lin Feng, a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal. I excel at long-range attacks and reconnaissance, and I'm willing to accompany Fellow Daoist Chen to clear the way."

The bow-wielding cultivator clasped his hands in greeting.

“My name is Shi Meng, a fifth-grade Celestial Immortal. I’m tough and can be of help too.”

The short, stocky man said in a deep voice.

Chen Ping nodded to the two: “Thank you for your trouble.”

“I’ll go too!”

A clear voice rang out.

Huo Ling’er stepped out from among the disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion and ran to Chen Ping’s side. “I haven’t really had any real training yet. This is a good opportunity to see for myself.”

“Nonsense!”

Yan Lie’s expression changed. “Junior Sister Ling’er, clearing the way is dangerous. How can you risk your life? Come back!”

Elder Yan Xin also frowned. “Ling’er, don’t be willful. Stay with me; safety comes first.”

“But...” Huo Ling’er wanted to argue.

Chen Ping spoke up, “Your Highness, your status is indeed too noble for it to be risky. Leave the clearing the way to us.”

Huo Ling’er looked at Chen Ping’s calm and resolute eyes, bit her lip, and ultimately retreated, but didn’t forget to remind him, “Then be careful... Wangcai, you must protect Chen Ping!”

Wangcai growled and nuzzled Chen Ping, indicating it understood.

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Yan Lie watched this scene, his eyes growing even more sinister.

“Chen Ping, I’ll go with you!” said the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord.

“Senior, we can’t both risk our lives. If we both die, there won’t even be anyone to deliver the message.”

“Just follow behind. If there’s any danger, you can come to my rescue in time!”

Chen Ping said!

The reason he didn’t choose the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord was because he was afraid the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord would be in danger.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord looked at Chen Ping, his eyes filled with gratitude.

Once upon a time, even when he was just a wisp of a soul, he was willing to help Chen Ping, completely disregarding him.

But now, his physical body has recovered, yet Chen Ping is an existence he can no longer reach.

Now, he himself needs Chen Ping’s protection.

“Since the choice has been made, we will depart in half an hour.”

Elder Yan Xin said in a deep voice, "Chen Ping, the three of you and the beast will lead the way, maintaining a distance of a thousand feet. If you notice anything unusual, immediately warn them. Do not act recklessly."

"Understood."

Half an hour later, the group began to head towards the canyon.

Chen Ping, leading Lin Feng, Shi Meng, and Wang Cai, was the first to step onto the path leading to the bottom of the canyon.

This path, carved out by predecessors, was narrow and steep, allowing only two people to walk side by side.

The lower they went, the higher the temperature rose.

The pervasive smell of sulfur in the air was almost suffocating, and the scorching air burned the skin.

Ordinary mortals would probably be instantly dried out upon reaching this point.

However, for cultivators, as long as they circulate their immortal power to protect themselves, they can withstand it.

Chen Ping walked at the front, his chaotic immortal power flowing quietly within him, not only isolating him from the high temperature and poisonous gas, but also continuously absorbing the pure fire-attribute spiritual energy around him.

He could even feel that cultivating fire-based techniques in this environment would be twice as effective.

"Watch out!"

Lin Feng suddenly shouted, his longbow already in hand, a cyan arrow nocked on the string.

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At the bend in the path ahead, a dozen crimson lizard-like creatures clung to the rock wall.

Each one was about three feet long, covered entirely in crimson scales, almost blending into the color of the rock wall, making them difficult to spot without close inspection.

“Red Fire Lizards are social creatures, skilled at spitting poisonous fire and launching surprise attacks.”

Lin Feng said quickly, “I’ll handle this.”

He drew his bow to its fullest extent, and a cyan arrow shot out with a “whoosh,” splitting into three in mid-air, then nine, transforming into nine streaks of cyan light that accurately struck the nine Red Fire Lizards.

“Pfft! Pfft! Pfft!”

The sounds of arrows piercing scales rang out one after another, and the nine Red Fire Lizards died instantly.

But the remaining few were enraged, hissing and lunging forward, spewing dark red poisonous fire from their mouths.

Shi Meng roared, swinging his twin hammers, their earthen-yellow light surging forth, forming a barrier to block the poisonous fire.

Wangcai transformed into a golden-red afterimage, its sharp claws slashing, tearing several Red Fire Lizards to pieces.

The battle ended in a few breaths.

Chen Ping didn't even make a move, merely observing the characteristics of these ferocious beasts and his companions' fighting style.

Lin Feng's archery was precise and efficient, his arrows incredibly fast and penetrating.

Shi Meng possessed solid defense and astonishing strength, making him well-suited for close combat.

Wang Cai's speed and attack power were even more remarkable, comparable to a sixth-grade Celestial Immortal cultivator.

"Cleared, let's continue," Chen Ping said.

The three continued downwards.

The deeper they went into the canyon, the more numerous and stronger the ferocious beasts they encountered.

There were "magma worms" that spewed corrosive lava, "shadow fire leopards" that lurked in the shadows and launched sudden attacks, and swarms of fearless "fire ants" ...

Chen Ping gradually revealed his strength.

Faced with an attack from dozens of fire ants, he pointed his fingers like a sword, unleashing a sweeping gray sword aura that instantly pulverized all the fire ants upon contact.

Ambushed by three "Lava Giant Lizards" comparable to fifth-grade Celestial Immortals, he pressed down with his left hand, his chaotic immortal power transforming into an invisible force field, imprisoning the three giant lizards in place, allowing Lin Feng and Shi Meng to kill them.

On one occasion, a "Fire Dragon" lurking in the lava river, suddenly leaping up to ambush him, was struck on the head by Chen Ping, its skull shattered, and it plummeted back into the lava.

Lin Feng and Shi Meng's initial caution gradually turned to admiration, and then to shock.

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They finally understood why Chen Ping, with only a superficial first-grade Celestial Immortal cultivation, could pass such a monstrous test.

His strength was definitely at the eighth grade of the Celestial Immortal realm, or even higher!

A thousand feet behind, the large group from the Earth Fire Pavilion advanced along the safe path cleared by Chen Ping and his group, making their progress much easier.

Yan Lie watched as Chen Ping effortlessly dealt with one ferocious beast after another, his expression growing increasingly grim.

He had originally intended for Chen Ping to suffer as a trailblazer, even hoping he would be severely injured or killed by the ferocious beast.

Unexpectedly, Chen Ping not only emerged unscathed but also displayed incredible power, stealing the spotlight from the disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion.

"Damn it..." Yan Lie muttered through gritted teeth.

Huo Ling'er's eyes shone brightly. Every time she saw Chen Ping make a move, she couldn't help but whisper cheers, "So amazing! Chen Ping took down another one!"

"Wangcai is great too! Tear it to pieces!"

She even wanted to run ahead to watch more closely, but Elder Yan Xin sternly stopped her.

"Ling'er, do not stray from the group. Crimson Flame Canyon is fraught with danger at every turn; we must not be careless," Elder Yan Xin said gravely.

Huo Ling'er had no choice but to suppress her excitement, but her gaze remained fixed on the azure figure ahead.

After traveling for about an hour, the group reached the middle level of the canyon.

The environment here was even more treacherous.

The ground was riddled with crisscrossing cracks, from which surged crimson magma, radiating terrifying heat.

Visible particles of fiery toxicity floated in the air; inhaling too much would damage one's meridians.

On the surrounding rock walls, strange crimson plants began to appear: "Crimson Flame Grass" swaying like flames, "Flame Crystal Vine" bearing fiery red fruit, and "Earth Fire Mushrooms" radiating intense fire elemental energy...

But these were not their target.

"The Flame Spirit Basin is just five miles ahead," Lin Feng pointed to an area shrouded in crimson mist in the distance. "The concentration of fire elemental energy there is ten times higher than outside, but it's also far more dangerous. According to intelligence, 'Flame Bats' and 'Lava Giant Apes' are active within the basin."

Chen Ping nodded and continued leading the team forward.

However, just as they were about to reach the edge of the Flame Spirit Basin, a sudden change occurred!

"Rumble—!"

The ground ahead suddenly trembled violently, and a huge crack abruptly opened, scorching lava shooting into the sky like a fountain!

Immediately afterwards, three enormous creatures crawled out of the crack.

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They were three five-zhang-tall monsters, Lava Giant Apes, their bodies composed entirely of black rock and crimson lava! Each one exuded an aura that reached the peak of the seventh rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm!

Even more terrifying was that they didn't appear alone. Each giant ape was accompanied by hundreds of densely packed, crimson bats—Fire Bats!

These bats were only the size of a palm, but their fangs were sharp, their wings were edged with flames, and they flew at incredible speed.

Most troublesome of all, they could spew a special kind of "Spirit-Corroding Fire," specifically designed to corrode a cultivator's protective immortal aura and the spiritual light of their magical artifacts!

"Not good! It's three Lava Giant Apes and a swarm of Fire Bats!"

Lin Feng's expression changed drastically. "How did they gather together? The intelligence didn't mention it!"

Shi Meng gripped his twin hammers tightly, sweat beading on his forehead: "We're doomed. The three of us can't handle this... Quick, send a signal for backup!"

Chen Ping, however, narrowed his eyes, staring at the three Lava Giant Apes.

He noticed that the three giant apes' eyes were flashing with an abnormal crimson light, and their behavior was somewhat sluggish, as if they were being controlled by something. "Someone's sabotaging things..." The thought flashed through Chen Ping's mind.

A thousand feet behind, the Earth Fire Pavilion team also saw the sudden change ahead.

“Three Lava Giant Apes? And a swarm of Flame Bats?”

Elder Yan Xin’s face darkened. “This doesn’t make sense. These two kinds of ferocious beasts have different habits and rarely act together.”

Huo Ling’er cried urgently, “Chen Ping and the others are in danger! Quickly send reinforcements!”

She was about to lead several Earth Fire Pavilion disciples to rush over.

“Halt!”

Yan Lie flashed to block her path. “Junior Sister Ling’er, don’t be impulsive! The situation ahead is unclear; it’s too dangerous to rush forward!”

“But Chen Ping and the others...”

“They’re just hired guards.”

Yan Lie said coldly, “Since we accepted the mission to clear the way, we should bear the risks. The lives of us Earthfire Pavilion disciples are precious; how can we risk them for a few guards?”

He then turned to Elder Yan Xin: “Elder, I think we should postpone our advance and observe the situation. If Chen Ping and the others can handle it, that would be best. If not... it will buy us time to find another path into the Flame Spirit Basin.”

These words sounded noble, but in reality, they were ruthless; they were using Chen Ping and the others as cannon fodder to draw the beasts’ fire, allowing the Earthfire Pavilion to take a detour or retreat.

Huo Ling’er was stunned, exclaiming incredulously, “Senior Brother Yan Lie, how could you say that? They’re our companions!”

“Companions?”

Yan Lie chuckled. “Junior Sister Ling’er, you’re too naive. They’re only here for the reward. If they were truly in a life-or-death situation, they’d be the first to run. It’s just an employment relationship, why take it so seriously?”

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He looked at the other guards: “Don’t you agree?”

The other guards remained silent.

Although they were indignant, they dared not contradict Yan Lie.

After all, they were indeed here for the reward; there was no need for them to risk their lives for the Earth Fire Pavilion.

Elder Yan Xin pondered for a moment, then slowly nodded: “Yan Lie is right. Our primary task is to collect the Flame Spirit Grass; we shouldn’t cause any unforeseen complications. Since Chen Ping and the others accepted the path-clearing mission, they should be prepared.”

He looked ahead: “Observe for a while. If they’re outmatched, we’ll decide whether to provide support or retreat.”

“Elder!” Huo Ling’er stamped her foot anxiously.

Elder Yanxin had already made his decision; the disciples of the Earthfire Pavilion remained on guard, showing no intention of advancing to provide support.

The battlefield ahead.

Chen Ping heard the conversation behind him, his expression remaining calm.

Lin Feng and Shi Meng, however, looked grim.

“Damn it, they really are using us as cannon fodder!”

Shi Meng spat, “I shouldn’t have taken this mission!”

Lin Feng smiled bitterly: “It’s too late to say that now. Fellow Daoist Chen, what do we do? Fight or retreat?”

Chen Ping looked at the three approaching Lava Giant Apes and the swarms of Fire Bats flying overhead, and said calmly: “You all retreat and protect yourselves. I’ll handle this.”

“You alone?” Lin Feng was shocked.

“Yes.”

Chen Ping took a step forward, his body surging with a hazy, chaotic immortal power.

Faced with such a formidable force, he held nothing back.

The first Lava Giant Apes had already charged forward, their millstone-sized rock fists, carrying a scorching heat wave, slamming down towards Chen Ping!

Chen Ping neither dodged nor evaded, his right fist clenched, meeting the attack head-on.

The two fists, one large and one small, collided.

“Boom—!”

With a deafening roar, the Lava Giant Ape's incredibly hard rock arm, starting from its fist, shattered inch by inch!

The cracks spread all the way to its shoulder, and the entire arm exploded, sending debris and lava flying everywhere!

The giant ape roared in pain, its massive body staggering backward.

Chen Ping's figure flashed, appearing above the giant ape's head, his right foot slamming down heavily.

"Crack!"

The giant ape's head was crushed by the stomp, its massive body crashing to the ground, turning into a pile of rubble and cooled lava.

All of this happened in the blink of an eye.

The other two Lava Giant Apes and the swarm of Firebats hadn't even reacted yet.

"Roar—!"

The remaining two giant apes roared furiously, pouncing simultaneously. Countless fire bats swooped down, screeching and spewing out countless fireballs that seemed to corrode spirits, like a crimson rain!

Chen Ping formed hand seals and softly uttered, "Chaotic Domain, open."

Within a thirty-foot radius centered on him, space abruptly distorted.

A hazy gray mist spread out, and all the fireballs that entered this area slowed abruptly, then vanished silently like melting snow.

The fire bats that swooped down, upon entering the gray mist, seemed to lose their sense of direction, spinning in place before plummeting to the ground, their lives extinguished before they even hit the ground.

The Chaotic Domain—this was a rudimentary form of a domain that Chen Ping had created by combining his chaotic immortal power with his limited understanding of space and time.

Although still imperfect, it was sufficient to deal with these lowly, ferocious beasts.

Two giant lava apes charged into the area, their movements instantly slowing as if struggling in mud.

Chen Ping, moving like a ghost, appeared beside one of the giant apes, his fingers forming a sword shape, unleashing a burst of gray sword energy.

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“Swoosh!”

A sword aura pierced the giant ape’s temple and exited through the back of its head, killing it instantly.

Seeing the situation was dire, the other giant ape turned to flee.

Chen Ping raised his hand, his chaotic immortal power transforming into a large gray hand that grabbed the giant ape and slammed it to the ground!

“Bang!”

The ground trembled, and the giant ape was thrown around, dazed and confused.

Wangcai seized the opportunity, transforming into a golden-red lightning bolt, piercing through the giant ape's eye and exiting through the back of its head, drawing out a spray of lava-like blood.

The battle was over.

From beginning to end, less than twenty breaths had passed.

Three Lava Giant Apes at the peak of the seventh rank of the Celestial Immortal Realm, along with hundreds of troublesome Flame Bats, were completely annihilated.

Lin Feng and Shi Meng were dumbfounded, forgetting even to breathe.

A thousand feet behind, everyone in the Earth Fire Pavilion was also petrified.

Huo Ling'er stared wide-eyed, mouth agape, before finally stammering, "This...this is too..."

Yan Lie's face was ashen, his fists clenched so tightly they cracked.

He never imagined Chen Ping's strength would be this formidable!

Three peak seventh-grade ferocious beasts, dealt with so easily?

This is a first-grade Celestial Immortal?!

Elder Yan Xin's eyes flashed with a sharp light as he stared at Chen Ping's figure, as if trying to see right through him.

"A nascent form of a chaotic attribute domain... This boy is no ordinary person."

He muttered to himself, "No wonder the spirit-testing crystal couldn't accurately determine his cultivation level. Chaos encompasses all things, its changes are endless, truly difficult to fathom."

Then he looked at Yan Lie and said calmly, "It seems you underestimated him."

Yan Lie gritted his teeth and said, "Elder, the stronger he is, the more suspicious he becomes! How could a rogue cultivator possess such strength and inheritance? He might be a spy sent by another force!"

Elder Yan Xin remained noncommittal: "Complete the mission first. We'll discuss other matters back at the border."

Ahead, Chen Ping withdrew his domain, and the gray mist dissipated.

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He walked to the corpse of a giant lava ape and examined it carefully.

Sure enough, on the back of the giant ape's neck, he discovered a tiny, almost imperceptible crimson rune.

The rune was slowly dissipating, but the lingering aura...

Chen Ping's eyes turned cold.

The aura of this rune was seven or eight parts similar to the Evil Path Hall cultivator he had encountered in Black Wind Valley! "The Evil Path Hall...has it infiltrated this far?"

A warning bell rang in his mind.

“Fellow Daoist Chen, are you alright?” Lin Feng and Shi Meng stepped forward, their attitude even more respectful.

“I’m fine.”

Chen Ping shook his head. “Continue onward, reach the Flame Spirit Basin as soon as possible.”

He glanced back at the Earth Fire Pavilion group, his gaze lingering on Yan Lie for a moment, then turned and continued leading the way.

Yan Lie felt a chill run down his spine from that glance, but then a deeper hatred welled up within him: “What are you looking at! Wait until we get back to the Earth Fire Pavilion, and I’ll see how I deal with you!”

The group continued onward.

With Chen Ping’s terrifying strength, the journey became much smoother.

Occasionally, ferocious beasts appeared, but they were quickly dealt with.

Half an hour later, the group finally arrived at the Flame Spirit Basin.

This was a circular basin about three miles in diameter, surrounded by mountains on all sides, with only one narrow entrance.

The basin was extremely hot, its ground a dark red, crystallized soil that crackled underfoot.

In the center of the basin lay a lava lake, a hundred feet in diameter, with a small, crimson island at its core.

On the island grew a patch of crimson spiritual herbs. The leaves were slender, edged with golden veins, and crimson light flowed faintly within the stems, like flowing flames.

This was their target—the Flame Spirit Grass!

A cursory glance revealed at least forty or fifty plants, more than thirty of which were mature, their tips blooming with pale golden, flame-like flowers.

“Found it!”

The disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion exclaimed excitedly.

Elder Yan Xin’s expression turned grave: “Be careful, the Flame Dragon might be nearby.”

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He looked at Chen Ping and the guards: “Gentlemen, as agreed, you are responsible for guarding and defending against possible attacks from ferocious beasts. The harvesting will be done by the disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion.”

“The reward will be doubled upon completion of the task.”

The guards nodded and dispersed at the basin entrance and around it, becoming vigilant.

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord chose a high rocky spot overlooking the entire basin.

Under Elder Yan Xin’s direction, the Earth Fire Pavilion disciples carefully entered the basin and began harvesting the Flame Spirit Grass.

Huo Ling'er followed suit. She seemed quite skilled at harvesting spirit herbs, her movements gentle and swift, quickly gathering three mature Flame Spirit Grasses.

Yan Lie followed beside her, harvesting while cautiously observing their surroundings.

Everything seemed to be going smoothly.

However, just as the disciples of the Earthfire Pavilion harvested their twentieth Flame Spirit Grass—

“Roar—!!!”

A deafening dragon's roar erupted from the depths of the lava lake!

The entire basin trembled violently, the lava lake churning as if boiling, unleashing towering waves of lava several meters high!

A colossal, breathtaking figure slowly rose from the lava lake.

It was a dragon over thirty zhang long! Its entire body was covered in crimson-gold scales, each the size of a washbasin, with edges as sharp as knives.

Its head was ferocious, its horns like forged crimson gold, and its eyes burned with tangible golden flames.

The terrifying dragon's might swept across the entire basin like a tsunami; all cultivators below the seventh rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm felt difficulty breathing, and their immortal energy flow sluggish.

Peak ninth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm—the Flame Dragon!

“Not good! We've alerted it!”

Elder Yan Xin's expression changed drastically. "Retreat!"

The disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion rushed towards the edge of the basin.

But it was too late.

The Flame Dragon opened its massive maw, spewing out a torrent of golden flames over three zhang in diameter!

Where the flames passed, even space itself was scorched and distorted!

"Form a defensive array!" Elder Yan Xin shouted.

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The disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion quickly formed a crimson defensive array, barely managing to withstand the first wave of flame attacks.

However, the array's protective barrier fluctuated violently, clearly unable to hold for long.

"All guards, advance to assist!"

Yan Lie shouted to the guards on the outer perimeter while maintaining the array.

However, facing a Flame Dragon at the peak of the ninth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm, how could these guards, whose highest rank was only sixth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm, dare to step forward?

“Damn it, this is beyond our capabilities!”

One guard turned and ran. “Is money more important than my life? I quit!”

With one taking the lead, the other guards scattered like birds.

They were only hired; there was no need for them to risk their lives for the Earth Fire Pavilion.

Faced with the invincible Flame Dragon, running away was the most rational choice.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord looked at Chen Ping: “Shall we retreat too?”

Chen Ping stared at the Flame Dragon, then looked at the Earth Fire Pavilion disciples still struggling in the basin, especially Huo Ling’er, pale-faced and protected by Yan Lie...

“You go first, wait for me in a safe place,” Chen Ping said.

“You want to save her?”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord frowned. “That’s a Flame Dragon at the peak of the ninth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm! Even if you unleash your full power, you might not be a match for it!”

“I know,” Chen Ping said calmly, “but I promised to protect her.”

“Her” naturally referred to Huo Ling’er.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord glanced at him for a few seconds, then sighed, “Alright, be careful. If things get too tough, run. Don’t be reckless.”

With that, he turned and retreated—he wasn't a member of the Earth Fire Pavilion, there was no need for him to take risks.

In the basin, the Earth Fire Pavilion's defensive array was already on the verge of collapse.

"Crack!"

The first crack appeared in the array's protective barrier.

"Elder, we can't hold on any longer!"

A disciple coughed up blood and collapsed.