

The Order 9741

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Yan Lie said, a glint of satisfaction flashing in his eyes—it would be best if Chen Ping died here, saving him the trouble of doing it himself.

While Chen Ping was locked in fierce combat with Elder Blood Soul, battles elsewhere were also incredibly brutal.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, transformed into a hundred-foot-tall demonic body with three heads and six arms, wielding six demonic weapons, fought against Elder Bone Demon of the Evil Path Hall.

Lin Feng and Shi Meng, back to back, fought against dozens of cultivators from the Evil Path Hall.

Lin Feng's arrows never missed, each one claiming a life; Shi Meng wielded his twin hammers like a war god, smashing approaching enemies into mincemeat.

But the Evil Path Hall's forces were too numerous; the two had already sustained over a dozen wounds, bleeding profusely.

The Earth Fire Pavilion's defensive formation, besieged by hundreds of Evil Path Hall cultivators and countless vengeful spirits, was on the verge of collapse. Cracks covered the protective shield, threatening to shatter at any moment.

"Elder, we can't hold on!"

An Earth Fire Pavilion disciple collapsed, coughing up blood, and the formation dimmed further.

Elder Yan Xin gritted his teeth, took out a crimson jade slip, and crushed it—it was the Earth Fire Pavilion's emergency distress signal, but the distance to Crimson Flame City was too great; reinforcements couldn't arrive quickly.

"Hold on!" Elder Yan Xin roared, "We can't die here!"

But reality was cruel.

“Crack—!”

The Earth Fire Profound  Formation finally shattered!

Dozens of Evil Path Hall cultivators and hundreds of vengeful spirits, like sharks smelling blood, swarmed in, attacking the Earth Fire Pavilion disciples and the carriage.

Screams of agony rang out.

In just a few breaths, three Earth Fire Pavilion disciples were killed by the Evil Path Hall cultivators, and two others had their consciousness invaded by vengeful spirits, turning them into walking corpses.

Huo Ling'er was targeted by two Evil Path Hall deacons, who, recognizing her special status, wanted to capture her alive.

“Princess, be careful!”

Yan Lie stood in front of her, brandishing a crimson longsword, and engaged the two deacons in battle.

But Yan Lie's performance was strange.

He seemed to be fighting desperately, but his swordsmanship was always slightly off, unable to truly harm his enemies.

And the attacks of the two Evil Path Hall deacons were always narrowly dodged by him, or accidentally blocked by other Earth Fire Pavilion disciples.

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Chen Ping caught a glimpse of this scene out of the corner of his eye during the fierce battle, and suspicions arose in his heart.

However, he had no time to think further, for Elder Blood Soul had recovered and attacked again.

“Boy, you have indeed surprised this elder.”

Elder Blood Soul wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, his eyes growing even more greedy. “But this is enough! The Myriad Ghosts Devouring Soul Formation, activate at full power!”

He raised his hands high, chanting obscure incantations.

The entire ghastly green formation of the Burial Dragon Ravine suddenly shone brightly, all the runes igniting simultaneously!

At the center of the formation, a ghastly green sphere of light, three zhang in diameter, condensed, within which countless twisted ghost faces could be faintly seen wailing.

“Soul-Devouring Ghost King, appear!”

Elder Blood Soul spat out a mouthful of blood essence, merging it into the sphere of light.

“Roar—!”

The sphere of light exploded, and a ghost king phantom, ten zhang tall, with three heads, six arms, a blue face, and fangs, emerged from it!

The Ghost King opened all six of its eyes simultaneously, its ghastly green gaze sweeping across everyone. Everyone felt a piercing pain in their souls, as if their very being was being ripped from their bodies!

This was the most powerful killing move of the Myriad Ghosts Devouring Soul Formation—using the power of ten thousand ghosts to condense the Ghost King, specifically targeting the soul!

Even a ninth-grade Celestial Immortal cultivator would suffer soul damage if locked onto by the Ghost King's gaze!

The Ghost King raised all six arms at the same time, six ghastly green beams of light shooting towards Chen Ping!

It was a pure soul attack, ignoring physical defenses and striking directly at the soul!

Chen Ping's expression changed drastically.

In this critical moment, the Dragon-Patterned Bell on his chest suddenly flew out automatically, hovering above his head.

“Clang—!”

A melodious bell sounded, and the Dragon-Patterned Bell emitted a soft golden light, enveloping Chen Ping.

Within the golden light, a true dragon vaguely moved, forming a barrier around his soul.

The six soul beams struck the golden light, erupting with blinding brilliance, but were ultimately blocked.

The Dragon Pattern Bell trembled violently, several fine cracks appearing on its surface; the bell itself was damaged.

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“Another treasure?!”

Elder Blood Soul’s eyes turned red. “Good, good, good! They’re all mine!”

He frantically activated the formation, the Ghost King’s six arms flailing, unleashing a torrent of soul light.

Chen Ping, protected by the Dragon Pattern Bell, barely managed to hold on, but his face grew increasingly pale, blood seeping from his seven orifices—although the Dragon Pattern Bell blocked the soul light, the impact still reached his consciousness.

On the other side, Crimson Cloud Demon Lord was besieged by Elder Bone Demon and three Evil Path Hall deacons, already in dire straits, his demonic body riddled with holes.

Lin Feng, having exhausted his arrows and broken his longbow, was hacked to death by several Evil Path Hall cultivators. Before dying, he detonated all the explosive talismans on his body, perishing together with his enemies.

Shi Meng’s twin hammers shattered, his body covered in blood, yet he fought on relentlessly until Elder Bone Demon pierced his heart with a bone spike, dying a heroic death.

The Earth Fire Pavilion disciples suffered even heavier casualties. Of the original ten or so, only five remained, all wounded, surrounded by dozens of Evil Path Hall cultivators, like lambs to the slaughter.

Elder Yan Xin was besieged by three Evil Path Hall deacons. Although he killed one, he was struck by the evil weapons of the other two, suffering two deep, bone-revealing wounds in his chest, and was on the verge of death.

Huo Ling’er, protected by Yan Lie, was unharmed, but seeing her fellow disciples fall one by one, she wept uncontrollably.

Despair enveloped everyone.

“Chen Ping...we might die here.”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord transmitted his voice weakly.

Chen Ping gritted his teeth, gazing at the horrific battlefield around him, at his fallen comrades, at the dying Elder Yan Xin, at the weeping Huo Ling'er...

He couldn't die here.

So many promises remained unfulfilled.

So many enemies remained unslain.

“Ah—!!!”

Chen Ping roared to the heavens, his last vestiges of life force and immortal power burning fiercely within him!

His right hand wielded the Dragon-Slaying Sword, his left formed a hand seal, and he chanted ancient dragon language: “With my blood, I summon the dragon's soul; with my life, I open the gates of heaven!”

“Forbidden: Dragon Blood Burns the Heavens!”

This was a forbidden technique Chen Ping had inherited from the Golden Dragon bloodline—burning his own essence and lifespan in exchange for a temporary surge in power!

As the incantation was recited, golden flames erupted around Chen Ping. These were no ordinary flames, but true dragon blood fire forged from his Golden Dragon essence!

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“Break!!!”

Chen Ping gripped his sword with both hands, the Dragon-Slaying Sword merging with the Dragon Blood True Fire, transforming into a golden-red sword aura that pierced the heavens and earth, slashing fiercely down at the Ghost King and Elder Blood Soul!

This sword drained all his power!

The Ghost King raised all six arms, attempting to block.

“Swoosh—!”

Like a hot knife through butter, the golden-red sword aura cleaved the Ghost King’s phantom in two from head to toe! Its momentum undiminished, it slashed towards Elder Blood Soul!

Elder Blood Soul’s expression changed drastically, and he retreated frantically, simultaneously summoning three defensive evil artifacts.

“Bang bang bang!”

The three evil artifacts shattered one after another, finally weakening the sword aura, but it still struck Elder Blood Soul’s chest.

“Pfft—!”

Elder Blood Soul spat out a mouthful of black blood, a huge wound running from his shoulder to his abdomen, deep enough to expose bone, almost as if he had been disemboweled!

He screamed and flew backward, crashing heavily against the cliff wall, his life force utterly depleted.

With Elder Blood Soul, who was presiding over the formation, severely injured, the Myriad Ghosts Devouring Soul Formation immediately became unstable, the light barrier fluctuating violently, revealing several weak points.

“Now!”

Chen Ping roared, his voice hoarse, “Charge out!!!”

He mustered his last bit of strength and charged towards the weakest point of the light barrier in the formation, unleashing the Dragon-Slaying Sword once more!

“Crack!”

The light barrier was cleaved open, creating a three-zhang-wide gap!

“Go!” Chen Ping shouted back.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord was the first to react, transforming back into human form, grabbing the dying Elder Flame Heart, and rushing towards the gap.

The remaining five disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion also reacted, protecting Huo Ling’er as they rushed out.

Yan Lie’s eyes flickered; after a moment’s hesitation, he followed.

“Stop them!” Elder Bone Demon roared.

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Dozens of Evil Path Hall cultivators rushed towards the breach, attempting to close it again.

“Get out of here!!!”

Chen Ping stood before the breach, covered in blood, like a war god crawling out of hell.

He held the Dragon-Patterned Bell in his left hand and the Dragon-Slaying Sword in his right. Though his aura was weak, the determination and madness in his eyes instilled fear in all the Evil Path Hall cultivators.

The Dragon-Patterned Bell rang again, the sound waves sweeping across, sending the first dozen or so Evil Path Hall cultivators flying backward, bleeding from all seven orifices.

The Dragon-Slaying Sword slashed repeatedly, each strike claiming a life.

He stood there alone, sword and bell, blocking the breach, buying time for his companions to escape.

One, two, three... the Evil Path Hall cultivators fell like wheat being harvested, but Chen Ping's wounds multiplied. A bone spur pierced his left shoulder, a bloody blade slashed his right abdomen, and three evil weapons struck his back, leaving it a bloody mess.

But he did not retreat an inch.

"Chen Ping!"

Huo Ling'er cried out, wanting to return to help him.

"Go!!!"

Chen Ping didn't turn back, roaring hoarsely, "Go!!!"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord gritted his teeth, forcibly pulling Huo Ling'er out of the gap. Yan Lie and the other Earth Fire Pavilion disciples followed closely behind.

The moment the last person rushed out of the gap, Chen Ping finally couldn't hold on any longer, kneeling on one knee, using the Dragon-Slaying Sword to support himself, barely managing not to fall.

"Kill him!" Elder Bone Demon roared.

The remaining Evil Path Hall cultivators swarmed forward.

Chen Ping looked at the charging enemies, a cold smile curving his lips.

He had one last move.

"Explode!"

He detonated the remaining Dragon Blood True Fire within his body.

"Boom—!!!"

A terrifying golden flame erupted from Chen Ping, engulfing the entire gap area!

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Dozens of Evil Path Hall cultivators who rushed forward were instantly engulfed by the flames, turning to ashes before they could even scream!

Elder Bone Demon was also caught in the flames, screaming as he retreated, half his body charred.

The shockwave from the explosion sent Chen Ping flying, landing right through the gap on the mountain path outside.

"Chen Ping!"

Huo Ling'er, who had already escaped to safety, rushed back frantically, embracing the blood-covered, unconscious Chen Ping.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord examined him and breathed a sigh of relief: "He's alive, but severely injured. He needs immediate treatment."

He looked into the Burial Dragon Ravine—the gap in the formation was slowly closing. The Evil Path Hall cultivators, stunned by the explosion, dared not pursue.

Elder Blood Soul was seriously injured, and Elder Bone Demon was also badly wounded. The Evil Path Hall had temporarily lost its ability to pursue.

"Quick, let's go, before they catch up!"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord carried Chen Ping on his back, Elder Flame Heart was carried by a disciple of the Earth Fire Pavilion, and the group fled in panic.

They dared not take the main road, and could only venture into the mountains and forests, taking a long detour back to Crimson Flame City.

The atmosphere along the way was terrifyingly heavy.

The group that arrived with over twenty people was now reduced to nine: Chen Ping, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, Elder Yan Xin, Huo Ling'er, Yan Lie, and four wounded disciples of the Earth Fire Pavilion.

The rest had all perished in battle.

Huo Ling'er held the unconscious Chen Ping, tears streaming down her face, constantly feeding him healing pills and using her immortal power to heal his wounds.

Yan Lie stood by, his expression shifting between anger and uncertainty. He tried to speak several times, but seeing the sorrowful yet wary look in Huo Ling'er's eyes, he swallowed his words.

Several days later, the group finally returned to Crimson Flame City, utterly exhausted, and went directly to the Earth Fire Pavilion.

The entire Earth Fire Pavilion was shaken.

The Pavilion Master, Huo Fentian, personally emerged from seclusion. Seeing his daughter unharmed but weeping uncontrollably, seeing Elder Yan Xin critically wounded and on the verge of death, and seeing the heavy casualties among his disciples, he was enraged.

“What’s going on?! How did the Evil Path Hall know your whereabouts?! And how did they manage to ambush you so precisely in the Burial Dragon Ravine?!”

He glared at the survivors, his aura as a peak ninth-grade Celestial Immortal causing the entire hall to vibrate.

Elder Yan Xin, after receiving emergency treatment, barely regained consciousness and weakly said, “Sect Master... something’s fishy about this. The Evil Path Hall’s ambush... was too precise... as if... they knew our route all along...”

Huo Fentian’s eyes were sharp as knives, sweeping over everyone: “Did one of you leak our whereabouts?”

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The crowd exchanged glances, the same question rising in their minds.

Yes, how did the Evil Path Hall know their exact route and time of return from the Crimson Flame Canyon?

And how did they set up such a large formation in the Burial Dragon Ravine beforehand?

There must be a traitor!

Yan Lie suddenly stepped forward and knelt on one knee: "Sect Master, this disciple believes the traitor is likely among those hired guards! Their origins are unknown, and they'll do anything for profit!"

"Moreover... those who escaped were all from our Earth Fire Pavilion; all the guards died in battle, leaving no way to verify anything!"

This seemed reasonable, but Huo Ling'er abruptly looked up, glaring at Yan Lie: "Senior Brother Yan Lie, what do you mean?! Chen Ping was also a hired guard! He risked his life to cover our retreat, almost dying in battle! And now you suspect him?!"

Yan Lie hurriedly said, "Junior Sister Ling'er, you misunderstand. I don't suspect Fellow Daoist Chen. We all saw Fellow Daoist Chen risk his life to save us."

"But the other guards are a different story... for example, Lin Feng and Shi Meng, who knows if they weren't spies from the Evil Path Hall, deliberately dying to clear their names?"

"And that cultivator named Chi Yun, he's also a demonic cultivator, it's entirely possible he's colluding with the Evil Path Hall."

Yan Lie desperately tried to smear them.

"You!" Huo Ling'er trembled with rage.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord coldly spoke, "You can suspect me of being a traitor, but right now, the one you should suspect most is you."

"What do you mean?" Yan Lie frowned.

"The Evil Path Hall's ambush was so precise; this isn't information that ordinary hired guards could possess. Only the management of the Earth Fire Pavilion knew the retreat route, and..."

"And what?" Huo Fentian pressed.

“And,” the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord slowly said, “during the battle at Burial Dragon Ravine, I noticed a detail: the Evil Path Hall cultivators seemed to intentionally avoid Deacon Yan Lie, rarely striking him deadly. And Deacon Yan Lie’s attacks were always intentionally or unintentionally a beat slow, more like a performance.”

Upon hearing this, the hall fell silent.

Everyone looked at Yan Lie.

Yan Lie’s face paled, then he roared in fury, “Bullshit! What do you mean?! Are you saying I’m a traitor?! I, Yan Lie, am utterly loyal to the Earth Fire Pavilion, how dare you slander me!”

“Pavilion Master, please understand! This disciple risked his life to protect Junior Sister Ling’er, and was injured in the process! This Chi Yun is clearly sowing discord and trying to exonerate himself!”

Huo Ling’er was also stunned.

She had only been focused on Chen Ping and her father at the time and hadn’t noticed Yan Lie’s actions.

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Huo Fentian’s eyes were deep as he looked at Yan Lie, then at the unconscious Chen Ping, and slowly said, “I will personally investigate this matter. Until the truth is revealed, no one is allowed to leave the Earth Fire Pavilion for questioning.”

“Yan Lie, go back and recover. Ling’er, stay and recount the details again.”

“The rest of you, go back and rest!”

“Yes.” Everyone responded.

Yan Lie glared fiercely at Chi Yun Demon Lord, then turned and left, his eyes filled with malice.

Carrying Chen Ping on his back, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, led by his disciple, led him to a quiet room.

After closing the door, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord set up a soundproof barrier. Looking at the unconscious Chen Ping, he sighed, “Boy, you’ve really messed up this time. You’re badly injured.”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord felt a pang of heartache; after all, Chen Ping had approached the Earth Fire Pavilion for his sake.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord took out several precious healing pills, fed them to Chen Ping, and then used his internal energy to heal his injuries.

Chen Ping’s injuries were extremely severe: his body was riddled with holes, and many of his meridians were severed.

If it weren’t for his profound foundation and the Golden Dragon bloodline that kept him alive, he would have died long ago.

Chen Ping remained unconscious for three days and three nights!

When he slowly opened his eyes, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord was still by his side.

“Awake?” The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord breathed a sigh of relief upon seeing Chen Ping awake. “How are you feeling?”

Chen Ping tried to speak, but his body ached terribly, his throat was dry, and he couldn’t utter a sound.

“Don’t move, you’re badly injured.”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord helped him sit up and fed him some water. “We’ve returned to the Earth Fire Pavilion, we’re safe for now. But...”

“Senior, how long have I been unconscious?”

Chen Ping asked after taking a couple of sips of water.

“Three days and three nights...” the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord said.

“That long?” Chen Ping frowned. “No, we need to leave the Earth Fire Pavilion and find a secluded place to recuperate.”

Chen Ping planned to leave the Earth Fire Pavilion and find a place to recuperate inside the Demon Suppression Tower.

This would save time.

Three days and three nights is equivalent to a year in the Demon Suppression Tower.

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His injuries had long since healed.

But in this real world, it would take Chen Ping at least several months to fully recover!

“We can’t leave. The Pavilion Master of the Earthfire Pavilion said that no one can leave the Earthfire Pavilion until the traitor is found.”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord revealed Huo Fentian’s suspicion of a traitor!

Chen Ping frowned slightly and nodded. "It is indeed strange. How did the Evil Path Hall know where we would retreat from after harvesting the Flame Spirit Grass?"

"If the two of us leave now, it will only make us seem guilty. Even if we aren't traitors, we'll become traitors," the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord said helplessly.

Chen Ping was silent for a moment, then nodded.

Feeling his nearly depleted immortal energy and shattered meridians, he smiled bitterly, "If I stay in the Earthfire Pavilion, my injuries... it'll probably take several months to heal."

"Several months?"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord frowned. "The Evil Path Hall won't give us that much time. Although Elder Blood Soul is seriously injured, the Evil Path Hall is powerful, and stronger people will soon come to hunt him down."

"I know."

Chen Ping's eyes deepened. "So we must find a way to recover as quickly as possible."

Just as the two were talking, light footsteps came from outside the door.

"Who is it?" The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord stood up warily.

"It's me, Huo Ling'er."

A clear female voice sounded from outside the door, tinged with weariness and worry.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord opened the door, and Huo Ling'er stood outside holding a jade plate.

On the jade plate were several exquisite jade bottles and a few crimson spiritual fruits.

Seeing Chen Ping sit up, her eyes lit up with surprise: "Chen Ping, you're awake!"

She quickly entered the room, placed the jade plate on the table, and carefully examined Chen Ping: "How are you feeling? Still in pain? I brought the best healing pills from the Earth Fire Pavilion, the 'Nine-Turn Crimson Flame Pill,' and the 'Earth Fire Spirit Fruit,' which will greatly help restore your qi and blood."

Chen Ping looked at Huo Ling'er's swollen eyes and slightly haggard face, and felt a warmth in his heart: "Thank you, Princess. Although my injuries are severe, I can still bear it."

"Don't call me 'Princess,' just call me Ling'er."

Huo Ling'er pursed her lips, "Chen Ping, this time... thank you. If it weren't for you, none of us would have come back."

"Lin Feng, Shi Meng, and the others... are all dead. And so many of my fellow disciples from the Earth Fire Pavilion... it's all my fault, I insisted on going..."

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Hearing Huo Ling'er's words, Chen Ping's expression became dazed for a moment. He suddenly thought of Gu Ling'er.

Then, a series of women's figures flashed rapidly through his mind.

However, it was only a fleeting thought, for Chen Ping knew this wasn't the time to dwell on matters of the heart.

"Princess, there's no need to blame yourself."

Chen Ping smiled slightly. "The Evil Path Hall planned this all along. Even if you hadn't gone, they would have found another opportunity to strike. The most urgent task is to find the traitor and avenge the dead."

Huo Ling'er nodded emphatically, wiping away her tears. "Father is investigating with all his might. But... Senior Brother Yan Lie..."

She hesitated, clearly harboring suspicions about Yan Lie, but unwilling to believe it.

Chen Ping glanced at her, changing the subject. "Princess, I have a favor to ask."

"Tell me! I'll do whatever I can!" Huo Ling'er said immediately.

"I need a completely secluded place, where no one will disturb me, to recuperate."

Chen Ping said slowly, "While this place is safe, the constant flow of people isn't conducive to recovery. Besides... I have some secret techniques that I can't use in front of outsiders."

Huo Ling'er paused, then understood.

Chen Ping possesses the bloodline of the Golden Dragon and harbors many secrets; therefore, he certainly needs a secluded place.

She bit her lip, pondering for a moment, then her eyes suddenly lit up: "There's a place! It's the forbidden area of the Earthfire Pavilion. No one except Father and a few core elders can enter. I can take you there!"

"The forbidden area?"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord frowned. "Is this...appropriate? If the Pavilion Master finds out, he might blame the princess."

“We can’t worry about that now!”

Huo Ling’er said firmly, “Chen Ping saved our lives. Father won’t say anything even if he knows. Besides, the forbidden area is deserted year-round, very secluded, perfect for recuperating.”

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord exchanged a glance and nodded: “Then we’ll trouble the princess.”

“Let’s not delay, let’s go now.”

Huo Ling’er looked out the window. “It’s late at night, the guards are relatively lax. I’m familiar with the patrol routes of the forbidden area; we can avoid everyone.”

She took out a black cloak and handed it to Chen Ping: “Wear this; it will conceal your presence.”

The three quietly left the room, led by Huo Ling’er, avoiding the layers of guards of the Earthfire Pavilion, heading deeper into the back mountain.

Behind the Earthfire Pavilion lies a crimson mountain range shrouded in restrictions.