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It looked at the sword in Chen Ping's hand, its indifferent voice ringing out again: "Merging of different forces, chaos as the foundation... interesting. First test, you pass."

As its voice fell, the two shadows attacking the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord and maintaining the gravity field simultaneously ceased their attacks, their figures slowly fading away.

The starry sky vanished like a faded painting, and the two returned to the jade bamboo forest, as if everything that had just happened was an illusion.

But the depleted power within them and the bloodstains on Crimson Cloud Demon Lord's arm testified to the reality of the battle.

"We passed that?"

Crimson Cloud Demon Lord shook his slightly numb arm, still shaken. "Those three guys were truly wicked. If it weren't for your final sword strike..."

"It was just a trick."

Chen Ping shook his head, his face showing no joy, but rather a deeper seriousness. "The way they used power gave me a lot of inspiration. Our path might have been too unrestrained."

"True strength perhaps lies in the ultimate control and fusion of the essence of power. This is only the first test; the ones ahead will likely be even more difficult."

The two paused to catch their breath before continuing deeper.

Sure enough, they hadn't gone far when the second test arrived.

This time, they arrived at the summit of a solitary peak shrouded in mist.

At the summit stood only a simple stone pavilion, within which sat the phantom of an old man with white hair and a youthful face, dressed in coarse linen.

Before him lay a chessboard, its pieces not ordinary, but mysterious runes formed from black and white energies, constantly shifting and changing.

“Sit.”

The phantom of the old man gestured, his voice calm. “The second trial will not test combat, but only ‘Daoist comprehension.’ This is the ‘Qi Mechanism Chess Game,’ containing the ancient Qi cultivators’ principles of absorbing heaven and earth, harmonizing Yin and Yang.”

“Playing black, you will move first, placing your piece at the point where the Qi converges on the board, influencing the changes in the game. If you can make this old man rise, or cause the game to evolve into the image of ‘the beginning of chaos,’ then you will pass.”

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord exchanged a glance, both somewhat astonished.

Playing chess?

This method of testing was truly unexpected.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord scratched his head. “I can’t handle this stuff. Chen Ping, it’s your turn.”

Chen Ping pondered for a moment, then walked to the stone table and sat down.

He looked at the chessboard and immediately felt dizzy.

The chessboard seemed ordinary, but upon closer inspection, black and white energy flowed endlessly across it. Each area seemed like a miniature world, containing infinite variations and profound principles.

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The so-called “points where energy converged” were even more elusive and difficult to find, requiring extremely high spiritual perception and insight into energy flow.

He tried to use his divine sense to perceive it, but found that his divine sense was like a mud ox sinking into the sea, easily dissolved by the profound energy on the chessboard.

Clearly, this test wasn't about the strength of divine sense, but rather a more fundamental “comprehension” and “compatibility.”

Chen Ping closed his eyes, no longer using his eyes to see, nor his divine sense to explore.

He calmed his mind completely, recalling his insights into the essence of power during the first trial, and the subtle, primordial state of chaos and undifferentiated yin and yang when the four forces within him merged.

Gradually, he entered a state of emptiness and tranquility.

On the back of his hand, the patterns of the Five Elements and Earth Fire warmed slightly.

In his dantian, the four primordial stars of different colors slowly rotated, emitting a unique rhythm.

After an unknown amount of time, Chen Ping suddenly had a flash of inspiration. He raised his hand, without using any spiritual power, but relying solely on a kind of inexplicable sense, and gently touched a seemingly ordinary spot on the chessboard with his index finger.

Buzz!

The moment his fingertip touched the board, the black and white energy at that point suddenly became active, rippling outwards like a stone thrown into a lake.

A gray light point, spontaneously emanating from his body and infused with the energy of the four forces, slowly condensed at his fingertip, then lightly landed on the chessboard.

This “chess piece” was neither black nor white, but a chaotic gray.

The gray piece fell, like a boulder thrown into a calm lake!

The entire chessboard’s energy was instantly stirred!

The black and white energies surged, collided, and merged wildly. The originally profound yet orderly chess game began to evolve in an unpredictable direction.

The illusory figure of the old man in coarse clothes, whose face had always been calm and unwavering, showed a noticeable change for the first time.

His eyes flashed with astonishing brilliance as he stared intently at the gray piece and the dramatic changes it had caused.

On the chessboard, the black and white energies were no longer distinct, but began to permeate and transform into each other.

Sometimes black gave birth to white, sometimes white gave birth to black, gradually evolving into illusory forms of basic elements such as earth, fire, water, and wind, which then annihilated and regenerated... Finally, in the center of the chessboard, a small area of black and white completely disappeared.

Only the most primordial, fundamental chaotic mist remained, slowly swirling. Though its range was extremely small, it exuded a soul-stirring ancient aura.

“The beginning of chaos...it’s truly the image of the beginning of chaos!”

The old man’s illusory figure murmured to himself, his tone filled with unbelievable shock.

He raised his head, giving Chen Ping a deep look, as if trying to see right through him. “A cultivator from later generations has actually been able to touch such primordial power...Well then, you’ve passed this test.”

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The old man’s illusory figure, along with the stone pavilion and the solitary peak, slowly dissipated.

Chen Ping opened his eyes and found himself still standing by the stream in Peach Blossom Spring. Everything that had just happened seemed like a dream.

But he could feel that his understanding of the fusion of the four forces within him had deepened slightly. That sense of the beginning of chaos was deeply imprinted in his soul.

“What happened just now? I only saw you stand there with your eyes closed for a moment, and that old man let you pass?” the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord asked curiously.

“I can’t quite explain it, it’s just a feeling.”

Chen Ping didn’t elaborate. His gaze turned to the deepest part of Peach Blossom Spring, where clouds and mist shrouded the area, and the outline of an ancient cave was faintly visible.

“Ahead, that should be the final cave dwelling. The third trial is probably right at the cave entrance.”

The two quickened their pace.

Soon, a naturally formed cave, about ten zhang high, came into view.

The cave entrance was sealed by a layer of shimmering, multicolored light, flowing like waves. Countless ancient runes, far more complex and profound than the previous chessboard, flowed across the light.

On either side of the cave entrance stood two stone statues. The one on the left had a human head and a snake's body, holding a ruler, its eyes wise, as if measuring the heavens and earth.

The one on the right had a tiger's head and a human body, holding a giant axe, its expression fierce, as if about to cleave the world. Both statues were ancient and weathered, yet they exuded a chilling, ancient pressure.

As Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord approached within a hundred feet of the cave entrance, the eyes of the two stone statues suddenly lit up!

Not the gleam of gemstones, but a vibrant, almost lifelike light!

"Life of the future, halt."

The human-headed, snake-bodied statue spoke in a gentle yet undeniably authoritative voice, "This is the place of my lord's secluded cultivation; only those with destiny, virtue, and ability may enter."

"The first two trials tested your strength and comprehension. The third trial will test your heart, will, and capacity."

The tiger-headed, human-bodied statue's voice boomed like thunder: "Break through our protective bodies, or gain our approval, and you may enter. However, this trial is unlike the previous two; the slightest mistake will result in annihilation, body and soul, and eternal damnation from the cycle of reincarnation! Do you dare to try?"

The powerful aura pressed down like a mountain, and Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord simultaneously felt their breath catch in their throats.

The oppressive aura emanating from these two stone statues far surpassed that of the three lingering images and the old man with the chessboard!

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord's demonic eyes blazed with battle fire. He licked his lips: "Finally, something tough! Chen Ping, what do we do? Force our way in or...?"

Chen Ping's gaze swept over the two stone statues, then back to the seven-colored light barrier, his mind racing.

Force our way in?

These two stone statues were connected, subtly forming a formation. They were no pushovers. Even if he could win, it would likely be a pyrrhic victory, and he might not even be able to break through the seemingly formidable seven-colored barrier.

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Gain their approval?

How?

He recalled Mu Sha's words: "The methods of ancient Qi cultivators are vastly different from our current cultivation methods. Their tests often directly target the source."

Origin...heart, will, capacity...

A bold conjecture gradually formed in Chen Ping's mind.

He stepped forward, cupped his hands to the two stone statues, and said neither humbly nor arrogantly, "Seniors, I am Chen Ping. I have come seeking to fuse my own unique power and enhance my cultivation to resist evil spirits, and have no intention of offending the ancient sages."

"I was fortunate enough to pass the first two trials, and I deeply understand the ancient way of Qi cultivators—profound and extensive, emphasizing origin and merging with the Dao. For the third trial, I wish to offer my own Dao for your evaluation!"

Having said this, he did not assume a fighting stance, but instead slowly closed his eyes.

Within his body, the primordial star in his dantian was fully activated, slowly rotating, emitting increasingly stronger light and fluctuations.

At the same time, he unreservedly transmitted his experiences, beliefs, and perseverance along the way—especially his will to fight for protection, to stand firm for revenge, and to unyieldingly seek the Dao—outward through the fluctuations of this fused power.

This was not an attack, but a “demonstration,” a “communication.”

A hazy, chaotic aura first spread, carrying with it a vastness encompassing all things and the evolution of all existence.

Then, the light of the five elements flowed, interacting and restraining each other, illustrating the foundations of the world.

The true flames of the earth rose, containing the dual essence of destruction and creation.

A pale golden dragon’s long cry proclaimed unyielding pride and the courage to conquer.

The four forces were not clearly distinct, but under the rule of chaos, they struggled but resolutely to merge and resonate, forming a unique “force field”—imperfect yet brimming with infinite possibilities.

The lines on the back of Chen Ping’s hand shone brightly, and even a faint, mysterious mark outlined by four colors of light appeared on his forehead.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord watched in stunned silence. He could sense an increasingly profound aura emanating from Chen Ping, an aura that drew ever closer to some primal source—a power unlike any cultivation system he knew.

The two stone statues, their once cold and imposing eyes now shimmering with intense divine light.

They seemed to have witnessed everything Chen Ping had displayed.

That complex yet boundless power, that unwavering will, that protective heart that remained despite the carnage, and that courage to attempt to fuse different sources and forge a new path.

After a long silence, the human-headed, snake-bodied stone statue slowly spoke, its voice tinged with an indescribable complexity: "Using chaos as a guide, the four forces initially merged... Your path is rugged and perilous, unlike anything seen before."

"However, the 'change' and 'creation' contained within it subtly align with the profound principle of 'all things returning to their origin, the origin giving rise to all things,' which my lord contemplated in his later years..."

The tiger-headed, human-bodied stone statue continued: "A resolute will, unswayed by external evils, possessing both a protective spirit and the courage to pave the way... Capacity... is acceptable."

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The two statues exchanged a glance and nodded simultaneously.

"You may enter," said the human-headed, snake-bodied stone statue.

"Within the cave, each relies on their own destiny; do your best," added the tiger-headed, human-bodied stone statue.

As the words fell, the divine light in the eyes of the two statues slowly faded, returning them to their cold, lifeless state.

Meanwhile, the seven-colored light curtain at the cave entrance, like ripples spreading across water after a pebble has been thrown in, vanished silently, revealing the deep cavern behind.

"This...that's it?"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord was somewhat incredulous; the earth-shattering battle he had anticipated hadn't occurred.

Chen Ping slowly opened his eyes. The illusory mark on his forehead faded, and his face was slightly pale. The all-encompassing display had taken a heavy toll on his mental energy.

He let out a long sigh: "Looks like I made the right bet. Ancient Qi cultivators sought the Dao by aligning their character with the path, rather than simply relying on brute force. Let's go in."

The two stepped into the cave, one after the other.

The cave wasn't as glittering as he had imagined; instead, it was unusually simple. The passageway was wide, the stone walls smooth, and occasionally, ancient murals, long since lost their luster, depicted scenes of ancient people performing sacrifices, observing the heavens and surveying the earth, and breathing in the clouds.

The spiritual energy here was far more concentrated and purer than outside, and the ancient, profound feeling was even stronger.

After walking for about the time it takes for an incense stick to burn, the view suddenly opened up, revealing a huge natural cave.

In the center of the cave was a small pool of water, its crystal-clear surface seemingly containing endless starlight, flowing gently. Above the pool, three objects floated in mid-air:

On the left was an ancient bamboo scroll, neither silk nor leather, its color a dark yellow, tied with some unknown black thread, radiating an aura of vast, boundless knowledge.

On the right was a palm-sized, strangely shaped, grayish-brown pottery jar, its mouth sealed, yet faint sounds of wind and thunder and the pulse of the earth could be heard emanating from it.

In the very center was a fist-sized sphere of light, constantly shifting chaotic colors. Within the sphere, glimpses of galaxy creation and destruction, of the creation of the world, seemed to flash by, radiating the most primal and captivating aura that drew Chen Ping in.

Beside the pool sat a lifelike skeleton, draped in hemp cloth, with white hair and beard.

The skeleton was devoid of any life, yet it maintained a posture of towering stature, one with the Dao, inspiring awe. On the ground in front of the skeleton were several lines of ancient characters.

Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord held their breath, approaching for a closer look.

The characters were not the commonly used script of the Immortal Realm; they were more archaic and ideographic. Strangely, when Chen Ping's eyes met them, he immediately understood their meaning:

"I, the Qi Refiner 'Hongyuan,' feel my lifespan is nearing its end, and leave my legacy here, awaiting a destined one."

"On the left is the *Primordial Qi Refining Treatise*, the general outline of my life's Qi refining, elucidating the principles of primordial differentiation and the Qi mechanism of all things."

"On the right is the 'Mountain and River Cauldron,' containing a wisp of primordial mountain and river essence, capable of suppressing demons, nourishing spiritual veins, and aiding..." "Grateful for the Earth's profound virtue."

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"The central one is the 'Current Source Seed,' condensed from a wisp of primordial energy I obtained by observing the edge of the Chaos Sea for ten thousand years. It contains infinite possibilities, but also unpredictable risks. Only those with great perseverance, great fortune, and a foundation in chaos can touch it. Be careful!"

"Those who inherit this legacy in later generations, I hope you will use it wisely and not tarnish the name of us Qi Refiners. The world is vast, the path is endless, may you..."

The remaining characters seemed somewhat blurred due to time or other reasons.

Chen Ping's heart surged. This was the legacy of the ancient Qi Refiners! The *Primordial Qi Refining True Scripture* was clearly a supreme technique pointing directly to the Great Dao, perfectly capable of solving his fundamental problem of merging the four forces!

The Mountain and River Cauldron was also an extraordinary treasure. But what attracted him most was undoubtedly the "Current Source Seed"!

He could clearly feel that the Chaos Immortal Power and the four-colored primordial stars within his body were experiencing an unprecedented yearning and resonance with the Current Source Seed!

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord showed little interest in the cultivation techniques and the source seed. His gaze swept across the cave, and suddenly, his nose twitched, his demonic eyes fixing on an inconspicuous crevice in a corner of the cave.

There, a strange, translucent herb with nine orifices, emitting a nourishing fragrance for the soul, swayed gently!

"Nine-Aperture Soul Grass!"

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord exclaimed, his voice filled with excitement and unbelievable joy!

He hadn't expected to find the Nine-Aperture Soul Grass he needed here.

Chen Ping was equally astonished!

"Senior, it's truly a case of finding something you've been searching for without even looking for it."

Suppressing his excitement, Chen Ping said to the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord, "You go and get the herb; I'll take the inheritance. We shouldn't linger here; let's leave as soon as we get it."

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord nodded emphatically, approaching the crevice with both eagerness and caution.

Chen Ping first respectfully bowed three times to the ancient Qi Refiner's skeleton named "Hongyuan": "Senior, I am Chen Ping. Having been fortunate enough to arrive here, I will certainly not fail your expectations, make good use of the inheritance, and strive forward."

After bowing, he first approached the bamboo scroll, *The Primordial Qi Refining True Scripture*.

The moment his fingers touched the bamboo scroll, it automatically unfolded, and countless ancient pieces of information flooded into his consciousness like a torrent!

It was not merely simple text; it contained the essence of the Great Dao, the trajectory of energy flow, and countless visualization diagrams!

The sheer volume of information was so immense that even with his current spiritual strength, he felt dizzy and had to sit cross-legged to fully digest it.

After a long while, Chen Ping opened his eyes, his gaze filled with shock and enlightenment.

"So that's how it is... The 'Qi' that Qi cultivators refer to isn't just spiritual energy, but the fundamental state of all energy, matter, and even rules... Chaos transforms into one Qi, one Qi gives rise to Yin and Yang, Yin and Yang evolve into the Five Elements... The key to harmonizing different forces lies in finding their common 'source of Qi,' using chaos as a catalyst and one's own will as a furnace to 'refine' them anew..."

This *Primordial Qi Refining Manual* seemed to have opened a completely new door for him, resolving many of his previous confusions about power fusion, and even pointing him to the path ahead!

He carefully stored the bamboo slips into his storage ring, then looked at the Mountain and River Cauldron.

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When he tried to take it, the small cauldron trembled slightly, seemingly resisting, but when Chen Ping circulated a trace of the newly comprehended “Primordial Qi” essence around his palm, the small cauldron quieted down and was successfully stored away.

Finally, his gaze fell on the “Current Chaos Seed.”

This was the thing that attracted him the most, and also the most dangerous.

He took a deep breath, following the method of calming his mind and connecting with his origin as recorded in the *Primordial Qi Refining Manual*.

Slowly, he extended his hand, his palm radiating his own primordial aura—a hazy gray aura tinged with four-colored starlight—aura fused with the four forces, cautiously approaching the Chaos Source Seed.

The instant his aura touched the Source Seed...

Boom!!!

A deafening roar, as if the heavens and earth were splitting apart, exploded in Chen Ping’s sea of consciousness!

The Chaos Source Seed suddenly erupted with indescribably brilliant light, instantly engulfing Chen Ping entirely!

A pure, ancient, supreme, yet incredibly violent primordial power of chaos, like a flood bursting its banks, surged wildly into his body!

“Ugh!”

Chen Ping let out a roar of pain and ecstasy. Countless bloody gashes instantly appeared on his body, only to be rapidly healed by the power of chaos, before bursting open again!

His dantian felt as if it were about to explode; the four-colored primordial star was completely submerged and washed away by the surging chaotic primordial energy!

This was not a gentle fusion, but a domineering devouring and reshaping!

Chen Ping felt his consciousness floating in the boundless chaos, as if he had become a speck of dust at the beginning of the universe, witnessing the gathering and dispersing of nebulae, the birth and death of galaxies, and feeling the surge of the most primal power.

His physical body, meridians, bones, internal organs, even every drop of blood and every cell, were being frantically washed away, transformed, and sublimated by this most primordial power!

The chaotic immortal power within him, as if encountering a king, cheered and leaped for joy, rapidly assimilating and strengthening itself.

The power of the Five Elements, the true essence of earth fire, and the golden dragon bloodline, under this absolute primordial impact, had their original repulsion and barriers forcibly broken down, and began to merge with the central chaotic primordial energy at a faster speed and in a deeper manner!

The four-colored primordial star, far from collapsing amidst the chaotic torrent, seemed to receive the most precious nourishment, its volume expanding once more, its light growing ever brighter, while its four colors faded.

Gradually, it transformed into a hazy, indistinct gray, its internal structure becoming increasingly complex and profound, as if truly evolving into a miniature chaotic world!

His cultivation, originally firmly locked at the peak of the fifth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm, was shattered one after another under the impetus of this terrifying power, as if made of paper!

Sixth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm!

Mid-stage of the sixth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm!

Late-stage of the sixth rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm!

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Seventh rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm!

Ultimately, his cultivation settled at the early stage of the seventh rank of the Heavenly Immortal Realm!

But this was merely an increase in energy.

The true transformation lay in the leap in his life essence, the essence of his power, and his comprehension of the Great Dao!

After an unknown amount of time, the light of the chaotic primordial seed gradually receded, finally merging completely into Chen Ping's body and disappearing.

The strange phenomena on Chen Ping's body gradually subsided.

He remained standing in the same spot, eyes closed.

But his entire demeanor had undergone a complete transformation.

His former sharpness had become restrained and profound, like an unfathomable ancient pool.

His skin was as translucent as jade, with a faint, chaotic radiance flowing within it.

The five elements of earth fire patterns on the back of his hands had vanished, replaced by an extremely faint, almost imperceptible, slowly rotating chaotic vortex mark on his palm.

His hair moved without wind, the ends seemingly tinged with a chaotic hue.

When he opened his eyes, a fleeting vision of creation and the annihilation of galaxies flashed before his eyes, quickly returning to a deep, calm stillness.

He gently clenched his fist; without using any spiritual power, the sheer force of his physical body caused the surrounding space to hum uncontrollably.

Within his body, the primordial essence, now transformed into a “chaotic star,” slowly rotated, radiating a boundless yet perfectly unified power.

The four forces—chaos, the five elements, earth fire, and the golden dragon—had now completed their initial “refinement,” perfectly merging with chaos as their foundation, without any barriers, and circulating at will.

An unprecedented sense of power filled his entire body.

“Hoo...”

Chen Ping exhaled a long breath of turbid air, the aura itself carrying a faint chaotic hue that lingered for a long time.

He knew that this trip to the cave had yielded far more than expected!

Not only had he obtained the inheritance of an ancient Qi cultivator that pointed directly to the Great Dao, but he had also fused with the “Chaotic Origin Seed,” completing the initial qualitative change in his power, and breaking through two cultivation realms!

At this moment, the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord carefully carried a Nine-Aperture Grass radiating a soft soul light as he approached, his face filled with barely suppressed excitement: “I got it! I really got it! With this, I can save her!”

When he saw Chen Ping's transformation, he was even more astonished, "You...you seem like a completely different person? Your cultivation is...a seventh-grade Celestial Immortal?! What exactly is that ball of light?"

Chen Ping smiled slightly, his smile now carrying an inexplicable air of authority and tranquility: "A stroke of good fortune. Senior, congratulations on achieving your wish. We should also leave. The inheritance here has been obtained; the cave will likely close or become unstable soon."

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As if confirming his words, the entire cave began to tremble slightly, and the ancient murals on the stone walls rapidly dimmed.

The skeleton of the Qi Refiner named Hongyuan also turned into crystalline dust in a gentle breeze, dissipating into the world, leaving only a faint mark in its place.

"Let's go!"

The two dared not delay and swiftly returned along the same route. The journey there was arduous, but the return was far smoother; the trials and tribulations did not reappear.

When they emerged from the cave and returned to their idyllic paradise, they found the entire space unstable. Cracks appeared in the sky, vegetation withered rapidly, and spirit beasts vanished as specks of light.

They dared not linger. Relying on their enhanced strength and heightened spatial awareness, they located the now extremely unstable spatial node they had entered from and leaped forward!

Another dizzying teleportation ensued.

When their feet touched solid ground again, and they felt the chaotic energy at the edge of the familiar Void Gale, they both breathed a sigh of relief.

Looking back, the distorted area where the Eye of Return to Nothingness had been located had completely disappeared, as if it had never existed.

“It’s over.”

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord looked at the Nine Aperture Divine Soul Grass he had carefully protected, filled with emotion.

Chen Ping, feeling the surging new power within him, gazed towards the direction of the Evil Path Palace, his eyes sharp as knives, the chaotic stars slowly rotating in his dantian. “Time to go back. And then... settle the score with the Evil Path Temple!”

The two exchanged a smile, transformed into streaks of light, and sped off towards the valley where the Alliance was hiding.

Chen Ping was now brimming with confidence. He believed that with his strength, he could easily annihilate Zhan E and Xue Youming!

When Chen Ping and the Crimson Cloud Demon Lord reappeared above the valley where the alliance was hiding, the entire valley erupted in cheers.

“It’s Fellow Daoist Chen Ping!”

“They’re back!”

“They’re back!”

Jin Buhuan, Li Baichuan, Dugu Ao, and the others rushed out of their temporary cave immediately. When they sensed the unfathomable yet perfectly balanced aura emanating from Chen Ping, they were all stunned.

“Fellow Daoist Chen Ping...you...”

Jin Buhuan's eyes widened, his voice trembling slightly, "Seventh Grade Celestial Immortal?! How is this possible!"

In just over a month, he had leaped directly from the peak of the fifth grade to the early stage of the seventh grade—this was unheard of in the history of the Twelfth Heaven!

More importantly, Chen Ping's aura wasn't the kind of forced breakthrough with a weak foundation; instead, it was as deep and profound as an abyss, exuding a palpable pressure that made them all feel a sense of unease. Li Baichuan circled Chen Ping twice, clicking his tongue in amazement: "Kid, what kind of elixir did you take? Or did you receive some heaven-defying fortune? This rate of improvement, I've never seen anything like it in my tens of thousands of years!"

Dugu Ao's hand gripping his sword trembled slightly, a sword cultivator's instinctive reaction to a powerful aura.

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He could sense that Chen Ping, even just standing there casually, was like an unsheathed, peerless divine weapon, its sharpness restrained yet capable of cleaving the heavens.

"Your sword intent... has changed," he said in a deep voice.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord grinned, his scarlet demonic eyes gleaming with smugness: "You all didn't see this kid's performance in the ancient Qi Refiner's cave. It would scare you to death if I told you! His current strength, hehe..."

Chen Ping smiled slightly and cupped his hands towards the crowd: "I was fortunate enough to obtain some fortuitous opportunities. Seniors, how are everyone's injuries recovering?"

Jin Buhuan suppressed his shock and said seriously: "Thanks to the resources you left behind and Senior Mu Sha's guidance, most of the seriously injured disciples are out of danger, and those with minor injuries have recovered to about 70-80%."

"However... the fall of the Earth Fire Ancestor and True Person Xuanwei was a huge blow to morale."

Mentioning the Earth Fire Ancestor, a trace of pain and coldness flashed in Chen Ping's eyes, but he quickly regained his composure: "A blood debt must be repaid in blood. Gentlemen, I intend to go to the Evil Path Hall to settle this grudge."

"Now?"

Li Baichuan frowned. "Although your strength has greatly improved, the Evil Path Hall has a deep foundation, and the Gate of Reincarnation is unpredictable. Shouldn't you make further preparations?"

"No need."

Chen Ping shook his head, his tone calm yet carrying an undeniable resolve. "Zhan E and Xue Youming's injuries will never fully heal, and the Gate of Reincarnation's gifts have their limits. Now is the best time."

He paused, looking at everyone: "In this battle, I will be the main force. You seniors can provide support from the rear, ready to assist if anything unexpected happens. But the direct confrontation is mine."

His words were calm, yet they exuded absolute confidence.

Jin Buhuan and the others exchanged glances, finally nodding emphatically.

They could sense the transformative change within Chen Ping, a metamorphosis stemming from the very essence of his power.

"Alright! Since Fellow Daoist Chen Ping is so confident, we'll accompany you!"

Jin Buhuan gritted his teeth and said, "We must avenge the grudges of Ancestor Earthfire and True Person Xuanwei!"

"Count me in!" Li Baichuan roared.

Dugu Ao simply uttered two words coldly: "Together."

Chen Ping said no more, his figure slowly rising into the air.

The Crimson Cloud Demon Lord followed closely behind, followed by Jin Buhuan, Li Baichuan, Dugu Ao, and dozens of elite disciples of the alliance who were still capable of fighting.

The group transformed into streaks of light, speeding towards the location of the Evil Path Palace.

Three days later, outside the Evil Path Palace.

The mountain range, which was originally gloomy and eerie, shrouded in gray mist year-round, was now unusually bustling.