

Apocalypse 726

Chapter 726

A ruinous battlefield.

20 minutes have passed.

“If they really were fighting, it wouldn’t have continued for this long, Qing Shan must’ve thought of a way to coexist together with the sinful creature” Su Xue Er concluded.

Anna turned around, fuming: “Damned God, he almost killed my Qing Shan, I’m going to leave the Holy Church of Death right now and find him”

“Wait a minute” Su Xue Er pulled her back.

“Don’t stop me” Anna angrily snapped back.

Su Xue Er wasn’t bothered by her tone and honestly spoke: “That world has already been sealed by the Gods, how are you going to undo the seal by yourself? If a fight breaks out, what are you going to do? Do you have a way to win against the sin?”

Anna froze at first before declaring straight: “I don’t care, I want to go save him”

Su Xue Er once again held her back, speaking with a stern tone of voice: “You acting like this wouldn’t save him at all, instead you might draw the attention of the Gods and cause more trouble for him instead, do you not understand such a simple thing?”

“Do you have any better idea then?” Anna asked.

“Of course” Su Xue Er replied.

She pulled Anna closer and whispered in a low voice: “If Qing Shan is still alive, then nothing will happen to him with his adaptability, you have to believe that he’s capable of that much”

Anna nodded.

Considering what Gu Qing Shan did in the past, that part was quite easy to believe.

Su Xue Er sincerely continued: “In truth, what we really should do right now is to think of a way to eliminate that guy who acts upon the will of the seven Gods”

Anna froze.

She asked back: “You mean that figure of light?”

Su Xue Er softly nodded: “I do. Since it was the one that hurt Qing Shan, I won’t give up until I kill it. If the seven Gods are somehow revived, I’d kill them as well”

“Why can’t we save Qing Shan first then kill it?” Anna asked, a bit unconvinced.

Su Xue Er patiently explained: “If we try to save Qing Shan now, what do you think is going to happen? Between the two of us, who actually has the ability to undo the seal? Even if we happen to undo the seal by chance, if we get caught by the figure of light, the three of us would all be in danger. And even if we

happen to be able to escape, do you want us to be pursued by the people of the 7 Holy Churches as well as everyone in the Strife Zones? Doing that, the only possible outcome is our deaths”

Su Xue Er held Anna’s hand tightly and spoke with conviction: “You can’t leave the Holy Church of Death right now, and I can’t leave the Holy Church of Fate either. We need to use the powers of the Holy Churches to become stronger, to find out more about the figure of light. Ideally, I want to find the figure of light’s weakness, so that the next time it shows up, we can kill it in one fell sweep”

Su Xue Er then looked at Anna: “It will be nearly impossible for me to do this alone, so are you willing to work with me?”

Anna silently listened as she also fell into thought.

Faced with Su Xue Er’s hopeful gaze, she slowly nodded.

...

On the other side.

A few thousand meters away from where they stood.

Two squads of ships had landed.

High-ranking members of both Holy Churches quickly got off the ships.

“Where are they?” a Cardinal from the Holy Church of Death shouted.

“Over there, sir. They stopped fighting just now, but it looks like they’re currently arguing about something” the officers that were here from before quickly pointed towards the girls.

The high-ranking members glanced where they were shown.

And they were stunned.

They saw Su Xue Er and Anna standing side by side, seriously discussing something as they slowly walked back here.

Perhaps they themselves didn’t notice it, but they were still holding each other’s hands tightly.

“They look like they’re getting along to me”

The head knight of the Holy Church of Fate mumbled.

Within the seal.

The drifting sand was obscured by the overflowing darkness.

Countless razor-sharp blades of darkness surrounded Gu Qing Shan, ready to slice him to pieces with just a bit more force.

But all of them have completely stopped around Gu Qing Shan without going any further.

Gu Qing Shan reached his hand out and lightly tapped one of the blades.

“This attitude wouldn’t help me get you out of here you know”

He was speaking using language from the age of Desolation.

In an instant, all the blades of darkness faded away.

A tidal wave of darkness slowly rose from the ground.

A figure slowly stood up from the darkness with light radiating from its body.

As Gu Qing Shan looked at the figure, he was slightly surprised.

Because the figure was the figure of light.

Exactly the same, not even a little bit different.

The figure of light spoke to him with the Desolation language: 「 Can you feel it, Gu Qing Shan, death is coming for your 」

Gu Qing Shan replied: “Really?”

「 You dared to go against Divinity, the results of which is your death 」 the figure of light spoke.

Gu Qing Shan calmly replied: “You are not it”

「 Why? 」 the figure of light asked.

“Because it would not trap itself here, not in front of you” Gu Qing Shan replied.

The figure of light became silent briefly.

Like molten steel, the entire figure collapsed back into the tidal wave of darkness.

A few moments later, another figure stood up from inside the darkness.

It was Gu Qing Shan.

Another Gu Qing Shan.

This Gu Qing Shan closed his eyes, seemingly to feel something.

He spoke with a gradual tone, muttering: “Underneath your cold and calm exterior is hiding unimaginable rage and sorrow”

“You can sense what I feel?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

The other Gu Qing Shan opened his eyes and looked straight at him: “Rage for not being able to stop the scheme of Divinity, sorrow because the Angel of Condemnation was taken away, you feel a sense of urgency to become stronger, you want to kill the Divinity”

He spoke with a pleased tone: “Very good, very good, I agree with your decision, I share half of the emotions you are currently feeling”

“Which half?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

“The first half” the creature answered.

Gu Qing Shan thought briefly and commented: “I heard that Little Dusk is the only thing to not fear you, so you don’t want her to be here”

“Of course, my ability couldn’t affect her”

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought: “You can read my emotions, sensing the deepest desires within my mind, from then turning into the exact same kind of existence I am”

The creature laughed: “Ahahahahaha, if it was so simple, why would the Divinities fear me and try to seal me away?”

“Then why?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

The creature looked at him and grinned: “I’ve never been afraid of others knowing my ability. Because knowing it wouldn’t do you any good”

“All forms of living beings, as long as they have an intense desire, I will be able to seek out and follow that desire into their bodies, seal away their souls and take over their bodies”

“What about Divinities?”

“Divinities are no exception”

Gu Qing Shan quickly spoke: “So that’s the reason why, every living being has some kind of desire or obsession, but Little Dusk is a clean slate, so much so that she doesn’t harbor any desires of her own, so you couldn’t do anything to her”

Gu Qing Shan continued: “If that’s the case, your ability is extremely powerful, perhaps even invincible in one-on-one circumstances, but if there are too many enemies, you don’t have any other way to resolve them either, this was the reason why you couldn’t defend the labyrinth by yourself”

He then spoke with conviction: “Following that vein of thought, your ability couldn’t be the reason why Divinities are so wary of you, you must have been sealed away for another reason entirely”

The other Gu Qing Shan stared straight at him for a long while before sinking back into the tidal of darkness.

A figure of light covered in a glow of darkness appeared.

The dark figure of light spoke with a low and dejected tone of voice.

「 Gu Qing Shan, I know what happened outside 」

「 I also understand that you harbor the same killing intent towards the Divinities that I do 」

「 But I want to see your sincerity regarding the seal, otherwise no matter how much time we spent talking here, if I am still unable to leave, everything will have been for naught 」

Gu Qing Shan carefully listened to its words.

He said nothing in reply, but took out a sword from the void of space.

An autumn-like water-blue steel sword.

The dark figure of light was surprised as it saw the sword: 「 This is a Samsara weapon, you actually obtained a Samsara weapon 」

Holding the sword in his hand, Gu Qing Shan lightly leapt upward and thrust towards the sky.

Golden light illuminated the world of darkness.

Countless layers of dignified Divine Scripts manifested like they were triggered all at once.

These sealing Divine Scripts only manifested briefly, then quickly faded as they found that no further attacks came

A single light thrust of the sword managed to trigger the automatic defense mechanism of the divine barrier, it could easily be seen what kind of power this sword holds.

Or rather, it was because this sword itself contained the power to break all Laws that the barrier reacted so intensely.

“This is my show of sincerity” Gu Qing Shan said.

He let go of the sword, letting it hover next to him.

The dark figure of light went silent briefly.

「 After countless years, being trapped inside this seal since birth, so I can finally leave 」 it muttered in a low voice.

“It’s not a good time to leave just yet” Gu Qing Shan said.

The dark figure of light suddenly looked straight at him and asked: 「 Why not? 」

Gu Qing Shan pointed above his head and spoke: “Isn’t it obvious? It might still be right outside this world, silently observing this place”

The dark figure of light went silent.

Indeed, that guy was impersonating a Divinity.

He was no slouch one either.

Using the power of those three Divine Desolation Armaments, he can seal me again at any time.

Gu Qing Shan continued: “Once it discovers that we escaped, it will kill me first, that way if you’re sealed again, you wouldn’t be able to escape”

The dark figure of light paced back and forth impatiently.

Gu Qing Shan just watched as it do that for a few minutes before speaking up again: “You have to help me, I can’t let it kill me, otherwise everything will really be over”

The dark figure of light suddenly stopped: 「 How do you want me to help you? 」

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“I need to know two things” Gu Qing Shan said, “first of all, that figure of light isn’t any of the seven Daemons, nor is it their combined will, correct?”

The dark figure of light asked him in return: 「 What do you think a God is? 」

“A kind of existence whose power has grown so vast that a mortal can’t comprehend it anymore” Gu Qing Shan replied.

The dark figure of light answered him: 「 That isn’t too far from the truth. According to our categorization, a powerful existence that can create living beings and a world are considered to be a Divinity 」

“Then what is the figure of light?”

「 It is the same kind of existence as a Divinity, the only difference is that it doesn’t have the ability to create living beings or worlds, but it’s more powerful than any Divinity and is much more dangerous 」

“Then why were you so easily sealed by it just now? Divinities should be afraid of you”

「 Because it found those three Desolation Divine Armaments. I have no way to deal with those three things 」

Gu Qing Shan said: “Great, then we’ve identified who the enemy is, next is a more crucial matter”

“When I entered the labyrinth, it gave me a coin. The coin can only be used once, allowing me to travel 5 minutes back in time”

The dark figure of light scoffed in contempt.

Gu Qing Shan acted like he didn’t hear it and continued: “Why did it give me such a thing to go against you? Why not armor, weapon, spell scrolls or anything that affects my offensive or defensive power, why did it give me that coin?”

Gu Qing Shan questioned further: “If the difference in strength is too great, even if I could travel 5 minutes back in time, if I couldn’t beat you before, I still wouldn’t be able to beat you, so why did it give me a coin that allows time travel?”

「 So you want to know? 」 the dark figure of light muttered.

“I have to know, this seems to aim specifically at something you could do that it was wary against, otherwise it wouldn’t have given such a precious thing to me” Gu Qing Shan concluded.

「 Precious? 」 the dark figure of light spoke parroted sarcastically.

“Yes, at the end, it arrived specifically to take that coin back from me. This shows that it felt that coin to be extremely precious” Gu Qing Shan explained.

The dark figure of light went silent for a long while.

「 Because it believes that the coin could prevent me from doing a certain thing 」 it finally said.

“What is it?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

「 Space-time Infiltration, a Mystic-type ability that I can activate only once in my entire life. In fact, it was the reason why the Divinities were so afraid of me in the first place 」 the dark figure of light told him.

“Space-time Infiltration?” Gu Qing Shan still didn’t quite understand.

「 There used to be a prophecy, foretelling that this ability that I can only use once in my entire life will be able to threaten them 」

The dark figure of light then stared closely at Gu Qing Shan, its tone of voice seemed to be anxious and depressed: 「 Now, I have one question for you 」

“Alright”.

「 If you can return to any moment in time within the last 7 days, will you be able to find a way to safely leave this seal? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

Gu Qing Shan froze.

He just realized something.

So...

That’s why...

No wonder the figure of light specifically gave me that coin.

“Are there any restrictions with this return?” Gu Qing Shan’s voice now also became anxious.

His entire body was trembling uncontrollably.

This was an unprecedented emotion for him.

「 Naturally, you can only do things that you did not do in the past, in order to not disturb the flow of space-time and allow you to return here alive 」 the dark figure of light said.

“In other words, I can’t affect what has already happened and only do the things that I plan to do”

「 Correct, secretly go, secretly return, you mustn’t touch anything that already happened to yourself as well, otherwise the Law of Space-time will erase you to calm the dilation in the flow of time 」

“If you have such a great ability, why don’t you use it on yourself?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

「 Because I’ve been inside this seal for my entire life, it would be the same no matter what period of time I return to. In fact, what the Divinities fear the most is that I send their enemies back to the past. So now, I am doing exactly that 」 the dark figure of light explained.

“I understand”

Gu Qing Shan lowered his head in thought for a long while.

“I’ve chosen a point in time I can return to” he muttered.

「 One that will let you leave this seal safely? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

“Yes, definitely” Gu Qing Shan said.

The dark figure of light looked straight at him and silently utter each word: 「 Keep in mind, if you deceive me, I will make you suffer the heaviest eternal torture 」

Gu Qing Shan offered a handshake: “Trust me, I will definitely lead you outside”

The dark figure of light hesitated briefly: 「 I heard those living beings on the surface said before, the promise of a human is the most untrustworthy thing 」

Gu Qing Shan told it: “You already saw my emotions and thoughts, you know what I want to do, so you only need to believe that I also want to leave this place alive”

The dark figure of light thought briefly and shook his hand.

「 Remember, you need to find the way to leave this place alive before you return here 」 it spoke with a stern tone.

“I only have a single extremely dangerous method. So if I still haven’t returned, that means I already died in the past, in that case, I can only apologize to you” Gu Qing Shan said.

「 You can definitely return 」 the dark figure of light told him.

“Why?” Gu Qing Shan asked doubtfully.

The dark figure of light explained: 「 During Space-time Infiltration, you will have 800 tries to do what you plan during the time period you chose, make sure to find a solution within that time 」

800 tries?

Gu Qing Shan smiled.

“Don’t look down on me, I can probably do it on the first try” Gu Qing Shan spoke with confidence.

The dark figure of light just silently stared at him.

Gu Qing Shan hesitated a bit, then add: “Maybe two tries top”

The dark figure of light then continued to explain: 「 Whenever you miss the chance so badly that you can no longer do anything to save it, kill yourself immediately. That way you will return here, and I can send you back into that node of time 」

“Got it”

「 When can we start? 」

“Right now”

Oong.

With a loud echo, the tidal wave of darkness swallowed Gu Qing Shan up.

He slowly fell into an endless abyss of glowing darkness, almost like he was in the middle of a boundless ocean.

There was only darkness here without a way to recognize the concepts of time or space anymore.

Everything that happened in the last 7 days showed themselves as moving pictures to Gu Qing Shan.

The pictures were rewinding themselves.

Gu Qing Shan was immersed in looking at the reversing pictures, all the way until the 7th day.

He suddenly spat up blood and lost his life.

He opened his eyes.

Gu Qing Shan suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

“What happened just now?” he asked doubtfully.

「 You died 」 the dark figure of light replied.

“How?”

「 You went past the 7-day limit, so the Law of Time killed you. You have 799 chances left 」

“I’m sorry, I was too shocked that I made such an elementary mistake, it won’t happen again next time” Gu Qing Shan tried explaining himself.

The dark figure of light shook its head and asked: 「 Again? 」

“Again” Gu Qing Shan gritted his teeth.

Oom.

The tidal wave of darkness swallowed him up again.

Within the boundless tidal wave of darkness, he once again travelled through time.

While travelling, a gigantic jaw the size of a mountain suddenly appeared from the darkness, swallowing him as well as various other inexplicable creatures.

Gu Qing Shan’s eyes went dark.

He opened his eyes.

Gu Qing Shan suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

“What happened just now?” he asked doubtfully.

「 A Space-time Fog monster, you can think of it as a God of your Divinities, it ate you 」 the dark figure of light replied indifferently.

“Can that really be considered a God?” Gu Qing Shan was in disbelief.

「 Living beings always worship things that they don't understand, it has always been that way, never changed 」 the dark figure of light replied.

“I don't think that's the case at all” Gu Qing Shan refuted.

「 You have 798 tries left 」 the dark figure of light curtly said.

Gu Qing Shan gritted his teeth: “Again”

「 Alright 」

Oom.

The tidal wave of darkness swallowed him up again.

Within the boundless abyss of darkness, he once again travelled through time.

Pictures of the past appeared before him one by one.

At a certain point, Gu Qing Shan finally found the crucial moment that he wanted to return to.

Using all this strength, he crashed into the scene.

Bam!

The picture shattered into tiny pieces.

Darkness.

Slowly there was sound, and then there was light.

Thunder was constantly echoing across the sky as lightning strikes illuminated the great hall.

He opened his eyes.

Gu Qing Shan found himself returned to Bai Hua hall.

Bai Hua Fairy was standing across from where he was, slowly sending her voice to him.

“If you want to repair the Earth sword, you must enter the Primordial Heaven realm and find the Earth sword's twin sword”

“The sword's name is Heaven, the Heaven sword”

“The twin swords Heaven and Earth, that which was made to kill the Divine”

Chapter 727

Bai Hua hall.

Bai Hua Fairy was carefully explaining to Gu Qing Shan.

“Qing Shan, I originally didn't want to tell you about this, but I know that for a sword cultivator, their swords are their everything. Instead of allowing you to wander the outside world aimlessly and fail,

falling into dejection while losing the Earth sword in the process, I would rather tell you the truth instead”

“The Earth sword has accompanied me for a very long time, and you’re my direct disciple, so I hope that both of you could be safe”

Hearing these familiar words, Gu Qing Shan felt his emotions welling up in his chest.

If time had stopped here forever, who could’ve known that there would be so many despairing events in the near future.

He spoke with conviction: “Shifu, I want try and repair the Earth sword now”

“Your cultivation is still too low, you wouldn’t be able to live in the Primordial Heaven Realm” Bai Hua Fairy shook her head.

“Shifu, you’ve forgotten that I’m actually a Returnee” Gu Qing Shan said.

This was the excuse he came up with to persuade her.

Bai Hua Fairy was briefly stunned.

She looked at him with a doubtful expression: “But I saw your expression earlier, you didn’t seem to know what a Returnee was?”

“That’s not it, I was surprised that Shifu already knew about Returnees” Gu Qing Shan explained.

“Then tell me, what is a Returnee?” Xie Dao Ling tried asking him.

Gu Qing Shan recalled the words Chen Wang told him in the Profession Committee and answered: “Those who reincarnation themselves from the worlds of the Old Gods in order to help the billions of worlds being caught in the apocalypse and destructions, these people are called Returnee”

Xie Dao Ling shook her head: “You’re not wrong, but your cultivation is still too low, even if you are a Returnee, it’s not yet the time for you to go to the Primordial Heaven Realm”

“Qing Shan, what you should do now is to improve your cultivation, and the best way to do that is to risk yourself in the Strife Zones”

At this point, Gu Qing Shan felt his vision darken.

He opened his eyes.

He suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

“What happened just now?” he asked doubtfully.

The dark figure of light answered: 「 You couldn’t change what happened in that time node, instead, affecting something that would have already happened, causing the flow of time to become turbulent, so you were erased by the Law of Time 」

Gu Qing Shan thought briefly: “What would have happened next is that Shifu insist that I travel to the Strife Zones”

The dark figure of light spoke: 「 Correct, once your master is determined to send you to the Strife Zones, everything that happened later would still happen one by one, leading up to this moment. Before that, try everything you can to make something that never happened occurs, that way you won't be erased by the Law of Time 」

「 By the way, you have 797 tries left 」

Gu Qing Shan took a deep breath and spoke: “Got it, send me back again”

「 Alright 」

Oom.

The tidal wave of darkness swallowed him up again.

Within the boundless tidal wave of darkness, he once again travelled through time.

Bai Hua hall.

“Qing Shan, I originally didn't want to tell you about this”

Bai Hua Fairy's voice came once again.

Gu Qing Shan cut Bai Hua Fairy off and spoke: “Shifu, I have a secret that I must tell you”

“What kind of secret?” Bai Hua Fairy asked.

“In truth, I'm not only just a Returnee, I'm also someone who came back from the future” Gu Qing Shan told her.

Bai Hua Fairy glanced at him from top to bottom and asked: “You're from the future?”

“Yes” Gu Qing Shan replied.

“Then why are you still so weak?” Bai Hua Fairy asked doubtfully.

Gu Qing Shan was speechless.

After some thought, Bai Hua Fairy says: “Qing Shan, it's not that I don't believe you, but no matter what happens, strength is always the basis of all things. I've decided to send you to the Strife Zones to first increase your cultivation”

Gu Qing Shan died.

He opened his eyes.

He suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

「 796 tries left. I seem to recall you telling me that you only needed 2 tries? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

“Do you really have to mention that? Don't you have anything better to do?” Gu Qing Shan asked in annoyance.

「 Being sealed like this, there's never anything to do except sleeping 」 the dark figure of light sighed.

Gu Qing Shan recalled Little Dusk.

He tapped his Devil King Warden Rod and took out a bunch of cooked dishes.

“Learn how to eat then, you'll need it later when you get out” Gu Qing Shan told it.

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The dark figure of light seemed a bit intrigued: 「 That sounds like a crucial survival skill, the people outside are always eating at least once a day 」

Gu Qing Shan recalled how it destroyed the town when it escaped the seal and tried convincing it: “Yeah, also, don't eat people anymore, they carry all sorts of diseases and impurities, not to mention humans aren't very delicious, you can try what I do and eat normal food instead”

The dark figure of light stayed silent briefly before nodding: 「 If I can get out, I would naturally be willing to start a completely new life 」

It then turned into Gu Qing Shan's appearance and sat down in front of the food, thinking about what to eat first.

“Send me back first, you can slowly choose what to eat, no one is going to steal from you” Gu Qing Shan told it.

「 Alright 」

The tidal wave of darkness swallowed him up again.

Bai Hua hall.

“Shifu, I feel that I'm still too weak, so first I should increase my cultivation” Gu Qing Shan said right away.

Bai Hua Fairy agreed: “Hm, strength is the basis of everything, I plan——”

Gu Qing Shan cut her off: “Shifu, I've decided to steel myself in the Strife Zones, but before that, please tell me the way to travel to the Primordial Heaven Realm, that way, when I become strong enough I can head to the Primordial Heaven Realm any time I want”

Bai Hua Fairy briefly thought about that: “That is true, after entering the Strife Zones, you will have to stay there for a long time. Forcing you to return to Shen Wu world specifically for this isn't beneficial to anyone”

She took something out.

It was a 4-directional formation plate made out of bronze.

On each of the four corners of the formation, effigies of the Kirin, the Vermillion Bird, the Spirit Tortoise and the Golden Dragon were carved.

Bai Hua Fairy explained: “You need two things to enter the Primordial Heaven Realm. The first is our sect’s Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation, the second is the Heavenly Palace protective jade disk”

“The first will allow you to travel to that world, while the second will protect your life”

“But the Heavenly Palace protective jade disk has already used up all of its power and crumbled”

“So all I have now is the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate”

“I hereby bestow it to you”

Saying so, Xie Dao Ling lightly tapped the formation plate with her finger.

The Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate hovered in front of Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan received it.

The formation plate felt heavy and cold to the touch, filled with indescribable vicissitudes.

This was a formation plate from the Age of Old, engraved with complicated and mysterious runes, even after staring at it for a while, Gu Qing Shan found himself unable to understand it.

He then realized that the formation depicted on the plate was so advanced that his current understanding of formation arts wasn’t enough to decipher them.

Sure enough, lines of glowing text appeared on the War God UI.

[Item name: Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate]

[Grade: Unique item, no grading]

[Doomsday Chronicles: This item has never appeared within known history]

[War God Skills: This item consists of the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation. To comprehend the structure of this formation, 800,000 Soul Points is required]

[Note: Improving your understanding of formation arts will reduce the Soul Points necessary to comprehend this formation]

Gu Qing Shan sighed.

800,000 Soul Points. This huge amount is already almost enough to upgrade [War God Skills].

So for now, studying formation arts wasn’t his top priority.

Fortunately, now that I have the formation plate, I’ll be able to travel to the Primordial Heaven Realm to find the Heaven Sword.

Gu Qing Shan put the formation plate away and sincerely said: “Shifu, thank you for bestowing me this”

“There is no need to be so formal between us student and teacher” Xie Dao Ling smiled.

Gu Qing Shan also smiled, still feeling grateful.

Shifu is still the same as always, treating her disciples as family.

Xie Dao Ling continued: “Qing Shan, this time I will personally send you to the Strife Zones, that way you will be able to join the novice qualification test and obtain the help of the [Life Order]”

As soon as he heard that, Gu Qing Shan felt his vision darken.

He opened his eyes again.

He suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

He looked towards the dark figure of light.

It had already turned into his appearance, currently holding a chicken drumstick in its hand with its mouth open wide, seemingly about to bite and find out what it tastes like.

Their eyes met.

“...” Gu Qing Shan.

“...” the other Gu Qing Shan.

Chapter 728

Gu Qing Shan stood still within the tidal waves of darkness, silently thinking.

「 You’re feeling the unwillingness to accept, so you still haven’t thought of a solution 」

Another Gu Qing Shan was sitting cross-legged on the ground, trying to learn how to use chopsticks to eat and commented.

Gu Qing Shan looked at him: “You’re reading my emotions”

The other Gu Qing Shan boastfully spoke: 「 Thoughts, desires and the emotions of the living, I can sense these things as easily as I breathe, this is my naturally born talent 」

Gu Qing Shan told it: “If you want to get out of here, stop reading my thoughts”

「 Alright 」 the other him answered.

A few moments later.

Gu Qing Shan looked at the other him with a questioning look.

The other him immediately answered: 「 You’re not wrong, there are only 795 chances left. Sorry, next time I won’t read it 」

Gu Qing Shan scoffed.

“Send me back”

「 Alright 」

The tidal waves of darkness surged and swallowed him whole, sending him back into the abyss of time.

Bai Hua hall.

Bai Hua Fairy briefly thought about that: “That is true, after entering the Strife Zones, you will have to stay there for a long time, and forcing you to return to Shen Wu world specifically for this isn’t beneficial to anyone”

She took the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation out and gave it to Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan put the formation plate away and sincerely said: “Shifu, thank you for bestowing me this”

“There is no need to be so formal between us student and teacher” Xie Dao Ling smiled.

She fell into thought and was about to say her intention when time suddenly froze.

Seven days later in the Strife Zones, Drifting Sand world’s seal, the dark figure of light stopped eating.

It muttered: 「 How impressive, he already figured out a new branching path to avoid being erased by the Law of Time, seems like there’s hope this time 」

Back in Bai Hua hall.

Gu Qing Shan’s figure suddenly twitched.

Waves of spatial power rippled from his body like waves of a silent drop of water, expanding to the entire Bai Hua hall.

Fwoosh!

Being pulled by a spatial force, the Gu Qing Shan who secretly came from the future suddenly disappeared.

Almost at the same moment, time returned to normal.

The original Gu Qing Shan from this timeline appeared.

Returning to Bai Hua hall, he continued his discussion with Bai Hua Fairy.

“Qing Shan, I’ve decided to send you to the Strife Zones to fight with your life on the line” Bai Hua Fairy told him.

“Will this help me save the Earth sword faster?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

“It surely will, only by increasing your cultivation faster can you travel to the Primordial Heaven Realm and find the Heaven Sword to save it” Bai Hua Fairy told him.

Gu Qing Shan allowed the void string to pull him through countless worlds.

The void string that Kitty gave him was carrying him across over a hundred million World Layers.

He already activated the void string ahead of time and counted the time exactly so that it would activate just as Bai Hua Fairy was about to mention the Strife Zones.

A few minutes later.

Gu Qing Shan, now carrying the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate, arrived at the Justice Iron Fist Club.

This way, he managed to avoid everything that happened in Shen Wu world and later on in this timeline.

There was currently no one in the Justice Iron Fist Club.

At this point in time, Barry and Kitty were both still enjoying themselves in his original world.

Since it was being modified by the power of the Old Gods and undergoing heavy spatial interference, no one could enter or leave it.

It could be said that the Club was currently the best possible stop for him, as it wouldn't affect any event that would unfold later on.

Gu Qing Shan took out the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate, feeling a bit emotional.

I can finally go look for the Heaven Sword.

He engraved the various slots on the formation plate with perfect-grade spirit stones.

Then he activated it.

A wave of light slowly became brighter on the formation plate.

Boom!

The wave of light formed a gigantic pillar of light that shot all the way to the sky.

A few moments later, this pillar of light gradually dissipated.

Gu Qing Shan had left together with the formation plate.

...

The Primordial Heaven Realm.

Above a layer of obscure, boundless white fog.

A figure appeared.

It was Gu Qing Shan.

As soon as he appeared, he took out his own formation plate and quickly operated it.

Flashes of light emerged from the formation plate one after another.

He arranged several large-scale war formations in the blink of an eye.

Keeping a pill in his mouth, Gu Qing Shan then grabbed hold of the Chao Yin sword and Six Paths Great Mountain sword.

After everything was done, he cautiously glanced around.

He couldn't be blamed for acting so paranoid.

Bai Hua Fairy informed him that ever since the Primordial Heaven Realm was cut off from the cultivation world, the sect masters of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace could only barely survive thanks to the power of the Heavenly Palace protective jade disk.

It could be inferred that the environment inside Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace would be extremely hostile.

According to Bai Hua Fairy's own words: "As soon as you take a step out of the Heavenly Palace, you can die"

So as soon as Gu Qing Shan arrived at the Primordial Heaven Realm, he exhausted all his power to make sure he stayed alive.

He carefully observed his surroundings.

The sky was vast and gloomy.

A cluster of palace structures resided around a faraway mountain range.

Gu Qing Shan noticed that he was actually standing on a lone cloud.

As he saw this, Gu Qing Shan glanced back at the faraway mountain range.

He found that the mountain range was also being suspended mid-air by a layer of clouds.

Maybe the entire Primordial Heaven Realm is floating above the clouds?

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Gu Qing Shan walked to the edge of his cloud and took a look below.

Below him was vast, solid ground.

Seeing that the ground existed, Gu Qing Shan was a bit relieved.

This place wasn't the same as the Suspended world, since the ground of the Suspended world was the Realm Demon itself, as soon as anyone touched it they would be eaten.

Gu Qing Shan carefully observed the ground.

It was completely desolate and devoid of any life.

The world itself was also deathly silent as if it had been in this deserted state for the last several ten thousand years.

Gu Qing Shan felt a bit emotional.

What could've happened in the Age of Old that there wasn't anyone or anything left in this whole world?

He looked at the cluster of palace structures on the mountain faraway mountain range.

According to what Shifu said, that place should be the main area and structures of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

It was quite a bit away from where he stood.

But this couldn't be helped.

The warp formation could only guarantee that the one being transported would arrive in the vicinity of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, but the exact location would be completely random.

Gu Qing Shan tried sensing around but found no danger.

However, the System said that after going through Tribulation realm, my spirit sense will become a bit dull.

If leaving the area of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace was supposed to be more dangerous, then I should go into the Heavenly Palace and gather some information first.

Making his decision, Gu Qing Shan quickly moved.

His figure flashed again and again as he ran towards the palace.

The wind howled by his ears.

Beside the path made of clouds, there wasn't anything around him at all.

Gu Qing Shan felt more and more doubtful.

There isn't even a single shadow of a creature here, where would danger come from?

After running for a while.

He found a giant stone the size of three people standing alone in the fog.

Gu Qing Shan stopped and looked at the stone.

Two large characters were written on the stone using the cultivation world's language.

[Feeding Ground]

Feeding Ground?

Gu Qing Shan felt even more doubtful.

In the cultivation world, a 'feeding ground' was referred to the area used to raise spirit beasts.

But as Gu Qing Shan looked around, the entire layer of cloud here was completely empty without a single structure or thing.

The only thing written were these two large letters on a stone, signifying that this place was supposedly where spirit beasts were raised.

What does this mean?

A second later, the stone seemed to have sensed his existence and let out a faint light.

Gu Qing Shan quickly took a step back to prevent anything unexpected.

This entire place was completely obscured by fog, both figuratively and literally.

A few moments later.

Nothing happened.

Gu Qing Shan slowly lowered his swords and shook his head.

He was about to continue forward.

But after he took a few steps, he suddenly stopped and looked up at the faraway sky.

“What is that?” he muttered.

Some light finally appeared at the end of the horizon.

The light wasn't constant but rather faintly fluctuating, obscured by the clouds so that he couldn't see what it really was.

As time slowly passed, the light flew towards Gu Qing Shan.

As the light got closer, the sky was visibly getting darker.

Day suddenly turned to night.

Instantly, the weather changed.

Boom!

Thunder cracked.

Rain began to pour.

Intense storm wind howled nonstop.

Standing silently in the storm, Gu Qing Shan focused his gaze.

From this far away, he could finally see what the light was.

The light was still obscured by the dark clouds, still a very long distance away from Gu Qing Shan.

But thanks to his inner sight and his own eyesight, Gu Qing Shan recognized what it was.

It wasn't light.

It was a dragon.

A golden dragon.

Far in the sky, the golden dragon also sensed Gu Qing Shan's existence.

It lowered its head as its gaze fell onto Gu Qing Shan.

Within the storm and heavy rain, the human and dragon silently exchanged looks.

Gu Qing Shan's vision suddenly went dark.

He opened his eyes again.

He suddenly found himself still standing within the tidal wave of darkness.

“Did I die?” he asked.

「 Correct, you have 794 chances left 」 the dark figure of light replied.

The dark figure of light was now carefully sniffing a pill.

Gu Qing Shan yelled out in surprise: “That can’t be right! There wasn’t anything around me just now, that dragon was still so far away in the sky, how did I die?”

The dark figure of light asked: 「 You still don’t get it? 」

“I don’t” Gu Qing Shan replied.

The dark figure of light put down the pill and slowly answered him: 「 The dragon looked at you, so you died 」

Chapter 729

The Spire of Civilization.

The Holy Church of Knowledge.

At this point, the grand acceptance ceremony had ended, and the upper echelons of the Church had already returned to their own businesses.

Only the servants of the church and the low-ranking followers were left to clean up the aftermath.

Despite being so busy, everyone appeared incredibly joyful.

It wasn’t until midnight that the entire aftermath of the ceremony was completely cleaned up.

Immediately after that, under the command of a Cardinal, everyone began to set up the testing area.

It couldn’t be helped, they needed to do this as soon as possible because if they don’t, there wouldn’t be any time to do it later on.

——because from tomorrow onwards, troves of people would flood the gate of the Holy Church, seeking to join them.

This was a simple undeniable truth.

Because during the acceptance ceremony earlier today, the Bramble Bird Empress had just announced publicly that she will donate a large sum of wealth to the Holy Church.

A sum large enough to move the entirety of the Strife Zones.

Even the eternally stern and solemn Pope appeared younger by several dozen years as he heard this.

Now that they thought about it, today seemed to be a very unique day.

In the morning, God descended upon them.

With everyone in the Strife Zones bearing witness, God sealed away a blasphemer.

When the ceremony was conducted in the afternoon, the Bramble Bird Empress suddenly donated an unprecedented amount— in fact, compared to the descent of God, this donation affected the Holy Church a lot more.

— for at least the next 30 years, every person of the Holy Church of Knowledge will not have to worry about their spending what-so-ever.

And every divine officer of the Holy Church of Knowledge will receive a special privilege from the Bramble Bird Kingdom: an honorary Knight rank of the Bramble Bird Kingdom.

Within the 200 million World Layers of the Strife Zones, any honorary Knight of the Bramble Bird can withdraw a total of 10,000 pieces of #500 coins, from any world.

That amount of money was more than enough for any person to live lavishly for the rest of their life!

Furthermore, due to the authority of the Holy Church, even those with eyes clouded by greed wouldn't dare to attack a divine officer and steal this wealth.

No person dared to openly go against a follower of God.

And so, that amount of money was completely safe and cannot possibly be stolen away.

Due to this, quite a few people were openly admitting that the donation of the Bramble Bird Empress had become the biggest headline of today, eclipsing even the descent of God.

You're asking if this is blasphemous?

Of course not! The Empress is actively helping the growth of the Holy Church.

And tomorrow, the Pope will bestow the title of honorary Cardinal to the Empress!

...

Deep inside the Holy Church of Knowledge.

The Pope's reception room.

Although it was late, there were still people here conducting a secret discussion.

The only participants of this discussion are the Pope, the Empress, as well as a General of the Bramble Bird Kingdom.

The Pope smiled amiably: "Empress Laura, the knowledge of the infinite worlds are vast and endless, why are you in so much of a hurry?"

"Because I'm still young, I always want to get what I desire as soon as I can, or you could even say that I'm not a patient person" Laura replied.

While talking, Laura was still searching for something in the void of space.

She suddenly pulled her hand back, taking a certain item out.

It was a pair of metal chain gauntlets, giving off a faint golden glow.

“Hm? An Epic-grade knight gauntlet? I’m quite lucky this time”

Laura was a bit surprised but then randomly tossed the gauntlet behind herself.

Ilya hurriedly caught it.

“Your majesty, the royal vault is already very full, where do you think this gauntlet...” she asked for her orders.

“Didn’t we already donate quite a bit to the Holy Church of Knowledge?” Laura appeared surprised.

“That was just something piling up at the outside of the royal vault...”

“Ah...”

Laura and Ilya quickly exchanged glances.

So we only cleaned up some garbage piling up outside the full royal vault.

This pair of gauntlets is an Epic-grade treasure, so it can’t be randomly thrown onto the pile of garbage.

“Ilya, you can take these gauntlets” Laura said.

Ilya showed Laura the pair of pure white gloves radiating a holy glow that she was wearing: “Did you forget, your majesty? Last time you found already a pair of Divine-grade Holy Apostle satin gloves, I’m currently wearing it now”

Laura appeared a bit troubled: “Hah, then what should I do, oh right—— mister Pope, I would like to donate another pair of Epic-grade knight gauntlet”

She took the gauntlet back and casually put it on the table.

The Pope’s eyes twitched very slightly.

“Laura... your majesty, your generosity will be greatly appreciated by all members of our Holy Church” the Pope arranged his words carefully before speaking.

Laura put her hand up to stop him with a very serious expression.

“Mister Pope, I will be frank with you, I would like to know a certain secret knowledge”

“Your majesty, I will grant you the title of honorary Cardinal tomorrow, allowing you access to the all the knowledge of civilizations that the Holy Church of Knowledge has collected so far”

“No, mister Pope, do you think I spent so much effort only to know the knowledge of the countless races’ civilizations?”

“What do you mean, your majesty?” the Pope asked.

“I want to know the secret of the numbered coins” Laura told him straight.

The Pope’s eyebrows loosen and smiled: “That is also very simple, although some of the coins’ uses are well-kept secrets, our Church has studied the first 700 numbered coins quite thoroughly”

Laura denied it: "What I want to know is not this"

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The Pope still maintained his smile and nodded again and again: "Your majesty, I really didn't think your desire towards the truth and secrets would be so deep-rooted, however, as an honorary Cardinal of our Holy Church of Knowledge, this is exactly how your nature should be"

"The latter 301 numbered coins are forged by the 4 Pillar Gods, I am quite surprised that your majesty would desire to know the secrets that are hidden with them"

The Pope spoke joyfully: "To search for the secret of knowledge, the beginning of all civilizations, looking for the truth of creation that the Gods left within the coins. As long as your majesty can maintain this curiosity, one day very soon, I will be able to remove the 'honorary' part of your title"

Laura coldly replied: "You misunderstand, in truth, I am also not interested in these few hundred numbered coins"

The Pope froze.

He found himself unable to see through this little girl sitting across from him.

The Pope then tried asking: "Then... what exactly do you mean..."

Laura's voice greatly lowered as she spoke in almost a whisper: "Mister Pope, I would like to know the secret of the final three coins"

The Pope's smile completely vanished as his voice became a bit dry and hoarse: "There are only one each of the final three coins, your majesty, the secret you seek might be a bit difficult to track down. The Church will be more than willing to search for them with you"

Laura replied: "You are wrong, I do not need the Holy Church's help in searching for them, as I have my own way to find those three coins"

She looked at the Pope, seeing a clear look of fear within his eyes.

"Mister Pope, you should have already guessed at this point, I know about 'that'" Laura told him.

"About what?" the Pope asked.

"The Saint Tree has told me, it is something that will allow the dead to revive, and all things to go against the flow, but the tree does not know the specifics"

The Pope suddenly stood up and hurriedly spoke: "It is already late, your majesty, please return"

Laura sat still without moving and slowly asked: "But sir, I seem to recall that the items I donated to the Church still haven't arrived yet, are you in so much of a hurry to chase me away?"

The Pope's voice became cold: "Your majesty, our Holy Church of Knowledge does not need your donation. The Holy Church of Knowledge will also never reveal that forbidden 'thing' to anyone, including you"

He opened the door: "Please leave, your majesty, our meeting is over, from now on, do not ever return to the Holy Church of Knowledge again!"

Ilya looked worriedly at Laura and stood in front to protect her.

"It's ok, Ilya, step down, I still have something to say to the Pope" Laura spoke.

She opened her little backpack, took out a small black box from it and lightly placed it on the table.

"Please have a look at this" Laura told him.

She opened the box, then swiftly closed it.

In that split second that the box was open, the Pope saw a piece of bone – a black finger bone – silently sitting inside.

In that split second before the box was closed—

A tiny strand of white-grey flame came out from the black finger inside the box, flew out and hovered in the air like mist or fog, not dissipating even after a while.

The Pope stared closely at the strand of white-grey flame, muttering while at a loss: "My God..."

He subconsciously shut the door.

"What do you think, mister Pope?" Laura whispered.

As the Pope stared more and more at the strand of flame, thick beads of cold sweat formed on his forehead, slowly dripping down his face.

"You Devil" he muttered in a low voice.

"No, this is only a transaction, mister Pope" Laura replied.

"This is blasphemous to God!" the Pope refuted.

"But to which God? This piece of finger bone does not come from any of the 4 Pillar Gods, nor is it from the body of the 7 Daemons, it came from millions of years ago, belonging to a dead, unknown God"

Laura smirked: "I believe this isn't blasphemous to any of the seven Gods, so I intend to gift it to you"

The finger bone of a God.

The finger bone of an unknown God.

The path it took to become God was completely different from the seven known paths, one that contained never-before-seen mysteries and secrets to explore.

The Pope inched closer and closer to the box, gulping.

He took out a white cloth to wipe the cold sweat from his face and neck.

—*should I eliminate her right here?*

He looked at the little girl sitting on the other side of the table.

She smiled.

Glowing green branches and leaves manifested behind her, gently hugging her body.

The Saint Bramble Tree!

Damn it, this is an existence equal to that of a God.

It's protecting her!

The Pope immediately gave up.

He tried his best to keep his calm and grumbled: "Empress Laura, what exactly do you want?"

"Tell me that secret I want to know, the donations I've given to the Holy Church of Knowledge will remain unchanged, and the thing in this box will be my personal gift to you"

"Or you can refuse to tell me the secret, but I trust that there will always be others who know about it"

Laura's voice gradually slowed: "Even if you won't tell me, to obtain this finger bone, there will be others willing to do so, what do you think?"

The Pope remained silent for an entire minute.

He suddenly smiled.

Shaking his head, the Pope sighed emotionally: "Empress Laura, I hereby welcome you as an official Cardinal of the Holy Church of Knowledge"

"Mister Pope, the Saint Tree is here, please go ahead and tell me that secret first. Make sure that you tell no lie, and then you are free to take this box"

"...Your majesty, listen well, as I will only say this once"

"Please"

"It was the era when the Gods were at their strongest. The final three coins are the joint results of 33 different Gods, all forging them at the same time. As the Gods poured everything they had into this, the three coins contain the power that far exceeds that of all the Gods combined"

"Each of the three coins contains only a part of the power. You must collect all of them, and have the three unique existences they represent present to trigger their power in order to achieve 'that'"

"Can 'that' really be achieved?" Laura clenched her fist tightly as her breathing became rapid.

"It certainly can. It is the ultimate power, the power to revive the dead, for all things to go against the flow, and for the fate of all living beings to retreat" the Pope spoke with an extremely low voice.

Chapter 730

Gu Qing Shan stood within thick fog and clouds of this world.

He was carefully observing the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation to carefully study it.

On the formation plate, the Kirin, the Vermillion Bird, the Spirit Tortoise, and the Golden Dragon each took up a corner, looking at the four cardinal directions.

Just now, after being killed by a single look of the Golden Dragon, Gu Qing Shan changed the direction he traveled in.

After running for a long distance, he reached the mountain.

At the foot of the mountain, there was a pavilion.

Mountain Protector Pavillion.

Lying inside the Mountain Protector Pavillion, a Kirin was loudly snoring.

As it discovered someone coming closer, the Kirin lazily opened its eyes and looked at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan's vision went dark.

...

Back inside the tidal waves of darkness, Gu Qing Shan was thinking of a way to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

He noticed that the previous two times, he was running on the ground, which caused the Golden Dragon and Kirin to notice.

Then... what about flying over?

Everything went the same, just as before.

But this time, Gu Qing Shan didn't travel on the ground.

He flew up and turned into a streak of light as he headed for the palace structure on the faraway mountain range.

Flying past the Feeding Ground and Mountain Protector Pavillion, Gu Qing Shan quickly approached the peak of the first mountain.

At this point, he noticed that there was a gigantic parasol tree that grew in between all the mountains.

A large bird with crimson feathers was perching on top of the parasol tree.

As Gu Qing Shan approached from the air, the bird turned to look at Gu Qing Shan.

———this bird looked exactly the same as the Vermillion Bird on the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation.

This isn't any normal bird, it was actually the Vermillion Bird!

Gu Qing Shan sighed helplessly.

Immediately after that, his vision went dark.

Gu Qing Shan once again returned to the tidal waves of darkness.

「 How is it? Not going well? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

Currently, the dark figure of light was using a few jade tags Gu Qing Shan left there to look at the gossips and rumors of the cultivation world.

“A bit, but I’ll think of something” Gu Qing Shan said.

「 Good, this skill of mine can only be used once in my entire life, so make sure you treasure it 」 the dark figure of light reminded him.

“I know, I’ll treasure it” Gu Qing Shan replied.

He lightly stroked the formation plate, silently thinking of how to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

What a hard problem.

I can’t even survive a single look, how am I going to get into the Heavenly Palace?

Even if I turn into a bird, I won’t survive the Vermillion Bird’s gaze.

The Golden Dragon probably protects the entire vicinity of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, the Kirin watches over the path leading into the mountain while the Vermillion Bird watches over the entire palace area of the mountain range— and there’s still the Spirit Tortoise that I haven’t seen.

If I had to fight these unimaginably stronger spirit beasts, I wouldn’t be able to go through even with 800 tries.

Maybe there’s a way to avoid them?

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought.

「 Have you thought of something yet? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

“I’ll try again, send me back” Gu Qing Shan said.

「 Alright 」 the dark figure of light replied.

Oom!

The tidal waves of darkness once again swallowed Gu Qing Shan whole.

He went through the conversation with Bai Hua Fairy, used the void string to travel back to the Justice Iron Fist Club, and activated the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation.

Gu Qing Shan once again arrived at the Primordial Heaven Realm.

This time, he walked to the edge of the cloud and looked down.

Below the gloomy grey sky was the boundless ground.

—this time I won’t go above the clouds.

Gu Qing Shan intended to fly just below the cloud, avoiding both the Feeding Ground and Mountain Protector Pavillion to go straight below the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

As long as the mountain is a normal mountain, I'll be able to use my swords to open a path straight up through the mountain.

This way, I'll also avoid the Vermillion Bird and get inside the Heavenly Palace.

Gu Qing Shan carefully considered this course of action.

It's a good way to do it.

Though maybe I should make less noise as I dig through the mountain.

How about turning into a mole to slowly dig a path up the mountain?

That's doable.

Gu Qing Shan jumped down.

He let himself freefall until he nearly reached the ground before slowing down.

The ground was silent and desolate.

For the sake of safety, Gu Qing Shan decided not to touch the ground or wander around.

He flew straight towards the faraway mountain.

When he looked up from below the layer of clouds, what he saw was clearly different.

The clouds in other places were very thin and faint, but the layer of clouds right below the mountain range was considerably thicker

—or perhaps it had to be that thick, otherwise, it wouldn't be able to uphold an entire mountain range and the palace structures.

As Gu Qing Shan thought about that, he quickly flew faster.

While he hastily flew below the clouds, he safely made it directly below the mountain in the sky.

The Golden Dragon, Kirin, and Vermillion Bird all didn't notice him.

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Gu Qing Shan sent his inner sight into the cloud.

Nothing there.

Seems like this is still a bit away from the bottom of the mountain range.

Gu Qing Shan took a deep breath and flew straight into the cloud.

Bam!

A dull sound came out.

Gu Qing Shan was knocked backward as he crashed into the cloud.

That hurts!

Gu Qing Shan had to grit his teeth for a few minutes before the pain subsided.

He looked above.

Layers of thick grey clouds obscured his vision.

What kind of cloud is this? My inner sight couldn't see what was in there at all.

And what did I crash into?

Gu Qing Shan tried using a wind seal.

This was a very basic spell with a simple effect to summon the wind.

Infusing the seal with spirit energy, and the spell was complete.

A gust of wind was summoned.

Intense wind strong enough to blow away the entire thick layer of clouds!

Since Gu Qing Shan was now a Virtualized realm cultivator, even a simple spell he cast was vastly more powerful than before.

The entire layer of cloud beneath the mountain range was within the range of the wind.

As the cloud layers were blown away, the scenery hidden behind them appeared.

Gu Qing Shan stared blankly at the thing hidden behind the clouds, completely losing his ability to speak.

He finally knew what he crashed into before.

The Spirit Tortoise.

The Golden Dragon, the Kirin, or even the Vermillion Bird wasn't even 1/10th the size of this creature.

This gigantic Spirit Tortoise was carrying the entire mountain range on its back, slowly drifting in the sky.

And yet, the Spirit Tortoise had its eyes closed, seemingly sleeping.

Gu Qing Shan's crash wasn't even enough to tickle or cause it to feel anything at all.

The world was silent.

Time slowly passed.

Gu Qing Shan simply hovered in place, staring at the Spirit Tortoise.

Whenever the Spirit Tortoise breathed, puffs of cloud came out from its nose, slowly filling the space around itself.

The puffs of cloud slowly formed into a layer of cloud, obscuring the Spirit Tortoise's body inside it once again.

Gu Qing Shan closed his eyes and silently sensed it.

He could feel boundless life force radiating from the Spirit Tortoise's body, the life force was not unlike that of a brightly burning flame.

In fact, within Gu Qing Shan's spirit sense, his Virtualized realm life force felt like that of a firefly, while the Spirit Tortoise's life force was like the sun.

How unimaginable.

—wait a minute.

Gu Qing Shan suddenly opened his eyes and muttered: "That can't be right, the Golden Dragon, Kirin, and Vermillion Bird I saw before were also unbelievably strong, but I didn't feel anything like this from them"

Gu Qing Shan tried recalling what happened when he saw the other three ancient spirit beasts for the first time.

Something was definitely strange.

To those three ancient spirit beasts, someone like myself should be like an ant, posing them no threat at all.

But they still killed me.

Without saying anything.

Without warning.

As if they were following a preset program, coldly and mechanically killing him off.

—but the Spirit Tortoise is clearly different.

The Spirit Tortoise is sleeping soundly.

When a spirit beast reaches their level, their natural spirit sense should allow them to easily detect a lot of things.

The Spirit Tortoise didn't sense any danger from Gu Qing Shan so it was still happily sleeping.

At this point, Gu Qing Shan began to suspect that something was wrong with the other three spirit beasts.

All of a sudden, a voice resounded in his mind.

「 You wish to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace? Youngster, present your jade disk 」

Gu Qing Shan looked up.

The Spirit Tortoise had already woken up at some point.

It was staring at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan bitterly smiled and waited.

His vision didn't darken.

I'm not dead.

Yes, finally, this time I'm not dead right away!

He hovered in the air, slowly realizing what was happening.

A creature of the Spirit Tortoise's level would definitely have perfect control over their powers.

When it doesn't want to kill someone, it can definitely control its powers properly.

Gu Qing Shan regained his senses and clasped his fist towards the Spirit Tortoise: "The Heavenly Palace jade disk is already broken, please let me through"

The Spirit Tortoise instantly refused: 「 No jade disk? Then you can't enter the Heavenly Palace 」

The Spirit Tortoise then looked at him sympathetically and spoke: 「 Alright, if you can't enter the Heavenly Palace then you will die anyway, let me send you off 」

Gu Qing Shan's vision went dark.

Chapter 731

He opened his eyes.

Gu Qing Shan found himself still standing in the tidal waves of darkness.

So I died again.

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought.

Just now, the Spirit Tortoise said that if I couldn't go into the Heavenly Palace, I would've died anyway.

Because of this, it killed me in a sympathetic manner.

Is it really that difficult to survive outside of the Heavenly Palace?

But now that the jade disk is completely destroyed, it's impossible for me to even try and use [War God Skills] to replicate and make another disk.

What should I do now?

The dark figure of light told him: 「 You have seven hundred—— 」

Gu Qing Shan cut it off: "I don't want to know how many chances I have left"

「 Alright, suit yourself 」

The dark figure of light replied as it ate another chicken drumstick.

Gu Qing Shan picked up a gourd of liquor on the ground and drank everything at once.

The dark figure of light looked at him and commented: 「 Your taste is very peculiar 」

“Why do you say that?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

「 That thing you just drank tastes too bitter, it’s not delicious at all 」 the dark figure of light replied.

“After you’ve been through enough things, you will come to love the feeling it brings” Gu Qing Shan said.

He placed the gourd back on the ground and took a deep breath before uttering: “Again!”

「 Alright 」 the dark figure of light replied.

The tidal waves of darkness once again surged, swallowed him whole, and brought him to the abyss of time.

Receiving the formation plate at Bai Hua hall.

Teleporting to the Justice Iron Fist Club.

Once again arriving at the Primordial Heaven Realm.

Gu Qing Shan stood on top of the clouds, rethinking the entire process all over again.

He came to the edge of the clouds, let himself free fall and flew along with the wind.

When he reached the underside of the mountain, in front of the thick layer of clouds, Gu Qing Shan stopped.

He formed the wind seal again.

The intense wind blew the layer of clouds away, revealing the gigantic body of the Spirit Tortoise.

As soon as the clouds were scattered, the Spirit Tortoise already noticed him.

It slowly opened its eyes.

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Senior, I am the sect master of this generation of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, please allow me to enter the Heavenly Palace”

The Spirit Tortoise glanced at him: 「 Do you have the Heavenly Palace jade disk? 」

Gu Qing Shan replied: “The Heavenly Palace jade disk was already broken in my generation, but I can prove my identity”

He performed [Sky Fall], [Ground Shrink], then immediately used [Unbreakable Mountain Range]

These were all Divine Skills that originated from Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

Following that, Gu Qing Shan tapped his Inventory Bag to take out a long rectangular jade box.

He carefully opened the jade box to show the Spirit Tortoise the nearly-broken Earth sword.

The Spirit Tortoise stared for a long while at the Earth sword before muttering: 「 I knew it was already heavily damaged, but to think it is broken now...」

“Yes senior, I came to the Primordial Heaven Realm this time in order to search for the Heaven Sword, as I heard only the Heaven Sword can help repair it” Gu Qing Shan told the Spirit Tortoise.

The Spirit Tortoise gave Gu Qing Shan a complicated look: 「 Your cultivation is certainly much higher than the previous ones that came, but you are still too weak. Without the jade disk, your strength alone is unable to help you survive in this place 」

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Please show me the way, senior, I have to save the Earth sword”

The Spirit Tortoise spoke: 「 Return, youngster, I know how hard it is for someone to become a Virtualized realm cultivator in the lower realms, you shouldn’t die here meaninglessly 」

Gu Qing Shan maintained his posture and spoke sincerely: “The demons have invaded, the Divinities are dead, ancient evils are awakening one after another, billions of worlds are being destroyed as we speak. Even if this humble one returns, only death awaits me, so I would rather die here. Please show me a way, senior, even if I have to travel to hell and back, I want to save the Earth sword!”

The Spirit Tortoise sighed: 「 Difficult! Difficult! Difficult! You are sincere, but without the jade disk, you won’t even survive here, let alone find the Heaven Sword 」

Gu Qing Shan doubtfully asked: “Is the jade disk really necessary to survive in the Heaven realm?”

The Spirit Tortoise replied: 「 With the jade disk, you can at least enter the Heavenly Palace and seek shelter there 」

Gu Qing Shan asked: “Are there really no other ways?”

The Spirit Tortoise answered: 「 Even a spirit beast like me has to rely on my natural-born Thaumaturgy in order to survive so far. The Golden Dragon, Vermillion Bird and Kirin have already died one by one, leaving only a strand of their souls left. Your chances of survival are even slimmer than theirs, so it will be wasted effort for me to help you 」

Gu Qing Shan asked doubtfully: “But aren’t I still alive right now?”

The Spirit Tortoise went silent briefly before speaking: 「 It’s coming 」

It gave Gu Qing Shan a look of pity before pulling its head as well as its four limbs back into its shell.

The Spirit Tortoise’s voice resounded in Gu Qing Shan’s mind.

「 You need to survive for 1 more hour, only then can you barely be considered to have the ability to survive outside. At that time, come find me again, I will help you steal a jade disk 」

After saying so, the Spirit Tortoise went silent completely.

Gu Qing Shan was shocked.

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Survive for 1 more hour?

What's going to happen?

Without giving him time to think, an unknown force began to sweep across the entire world.

Gu Qing Shan felt an irresistible level of spirit pressure exerting on him from above.

This spirit pressure forced him down from the sky to the ground before it stopped.

Gu Qing Shan tried moving his body.

He was unharmed.

The spirit pressure was stern but gentle, the only thing it did was force him to land.

Gu Qing Shan sighed helplessly.

According to Shifu, the area outside of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace is tens of thousands of times more dangerous.

The Spirit Tortoise also said that it would be a wasted effort to help me, only if I can live for another hour will I be worthy of its help.

But...

Aren't I standing and living just fine outside of the Heavenly Palace right now?

Maybe, after so much time has passed, the dangerous elements have already died?

While Gu Qing Shan was thinking, he felt his vision becoming blurred.

The desolate landscape disappeared.

He found himself standing among countless others.

Gu Qing Shan stayed still without changing his expression and silently glanced around.

The cultivators around him were all wearing armour with a heavy expression on their faces.

When Gu Qing Shan tried to sense their spirit energy waves, he found that even the weakest of them was more powerful than Shifu.

These people all have terrifying strength.

Is this an illusion?

...no, this is much more realistic than a mere illusion.

Gu Qing Shan silently continued expanding his gaze outward.

He tried looking faraway.

Armoured cultivators stood all over the large hill and mountains around here.

They all had weapons at the ready, some with spirit beasts by their sides, neatly and orderly lined up in a battle formation.

The entire ground was covered in cultivators.

In the sky, the glow of airships flying could constantly be seen, furthermore, there were also large-scale moving fortresses also full of cultivators slowly floating in the sky.

Both the sky and the ground were dyed in solemn silence.

There was only one sound to be heard.

The sound of cultivators circulating their spirit energy, preparing for something to arrive.

“READY!”

Someone shouted.

“What?” Gu Qing Shan couldn’t help himself asking.

The voice that shouted once again ordered: “All troops, charge!”

Every cultivator shouted at once: “Charge!”

But they didn’t get a chance to charge forward.

Far in the sky, a single beam of white light shot towards Gu Qing Shan’s direction.

Boom!

The light exploded in the middle of the formation.

The ground itself was blown away by the intense power of the attack, knocking dirt and sand to the air.

The cultivators standing around Gu Qing Shan were struck head-on by the white beam of light and were immediately blown to pieces.

Gu Qing Shan couldn’t react at all before he was hit by the residual power of the attack and blown to the sky.

Before he died, he saw a giant head covered in eyes descending from the sky as it slowly glanced around.

His vision became dark.

...

He once again opened his eyes.

Gu Qing Shan found himself still standing in the tidal waves of darkness.

「 Back from the dead? 」 the dark figure of light was standing next to him and asked.

“Yeah, I ran into something weird” Gu Qing Shan sighed.

He then realized something and asked: "Wait a minute, were you able to see how I die every time?"

「 Indeed 」 the dark figure of light replied.

"What about just now?"

「 Just now, you were brought back to the Age of Old by some sort of power. It almost trapped you there permanently 」

The dark figure of light's voice seemed serious unlike ever before.

Chapter 732

"The Age of Old? You're saying that I actually travelled back to the Age of Old?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

「 To be exact, it was most likely a kind of power even more potent than my Space-time Infiltration, the power was set up in a way to turn a certain event that happened in the past into a fragment of time 」 the dark figure of light explained.

It sighed: 「 Fortunately, it was only a fragment, otherwise you would have been stuck there forever, living in the time period millions of years ago, unable to go back here through my Space-time Infiltration 」

Gu Qing Shan thought about it: "If it's a fragment, then how do I get out after I go in?"

「 The simplest way is to die. After you die, I'll be able to pull you back here 」 the dark figure of light replied.

"Is there any other way?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

「 No one would spend so much power and effort to create a fragment of time for the sake of it. I guess that you will have to fulfil some sort of condition in order for that fragment to let you out 」 the dark figure of light answered.

"Fulfill some sort of condition? I get it" Gu Qing Shan said.

「 Did you really? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

"Yeah" Gu Qing Shan replied.

「 That world was really too dangerous, I'm actually a bit worried now 」 the dark figure of light said.

"Don't worry" Gu Qing Shan smiled: "Just send me back, I won't die so simply next time"

The dark figure of light asked: 「 What are you going to do? 」

Gu Qing Shan explained: "Up until now, I died because I didn't understand the Law of Time, and then because I didn't know the Primordial Heaven Realm well, and that time fragment was completely out of my expectations, now that I've understood the situation better, I won't easily use my life to test danger anymore"

「 Are you sure? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

Gu Qing Shan replied: “I really am, as a cultivator, I’m used to using my spirit sense to judge how dangerous a situation is. But now that my spirit sense is temporarily disabled, I’ll adapt accordingly to fit my circumstances”

He sincerely spoke: “Don’t worry, I won’t die so easily again”

The dark figure of light appeared trustful: 「 Good, then let’s try again 」

Oom.

The tidal waves of darkness swallowed up Gu Qing Shan, bringing him into the abyss of time.

Once again going back seven days, Gu Qing Shan headed toward a certain time node.

All of a sudden, a gigantic jaw several hundred feet wide came out of nowhere.

A monster from the fog of time!

It swallowed Gu Qing Shan and various other unknown creatures around him.

Gu Qing Shan’s vision immediately went dark.

He opened his eyes.

The dark figure of light was standing right across from him.

“...” Gu Qing Shan

「...」 the dark figure of light.

“That was an accident” Gu Qing Shan spoke with a stern expression.

「 Again? 」 the dark figure of light asked.

“Again!” Gu Qing Shan replied.

Oom.

The tidal waves of darkness swallowed him.

This time, it went a lot smoother.

He obtained the formation plate from Shifu, returned to the Justice Iron Fist Club, warped to the Primordial Heaven Realm, and spoke to the Tortoise again.

Following that, the fragment of time once again appeared.

Gu Qing Shan was once again standing among the ranks of the cultivator army.

Armoured cultivators completely covered the ground, waiting to be dispatched.

In the sky, the light of travelling airships could be seen.

The giant war fortresses drifted about.

The sky and ground were filled with solemn silence.

Only the wind's howling could be heard without stopping.

"READY!"

Someone shouted.

Gu Qing Shan directed his gaze towards where the shout came from and saw a general.

The general was wearing a crimson red armour, lightly hovering in the air right in front of the army with a weapon in his hand, currently directing commands to the troops.

Gu Qing Shan held his breath.

A split second before the giant head appeared in the sky, he activated [Ground Shrink].

The beam of white light came down.

Shu!

A dull but loud explosion came from his back.

Shockwaves rippled through the air.

But that wasn't important.

Gu Qing Shan had escaped, he dodged it!

He reappeared among another squad of cultivators, pulled his weapon, and attacked the creature in the sky with everyone else.

This time, the monster's body was completely revealed to the troops.

It didn't have a body, only a single head with countless eyes, whenever one of its eyes opened or closed, a beam of white light would shoot towards the cultivators on the ground, followed by deafening explosions.

The cultivators all attacked the monster without regard for their own lives.

In an instant, the monster was completely decimated.

Its blood rained down.

Even a monster with such impressive offensive powers was nothing when faced with this many cultivators.

Gu Qing Shan silently clicked his tongue.

This monster's use of Elemental Light had reached a level that Gu Qing Shan hadn't even heard of.

Several dozen more heads full of eyes appeared in the sky.

Someone shouted: "The Desolate Demon Eyes army has shown up! Everyone, charge!"

The cultivators continued to advance towards the monsters in what seems to be predetermined squads.

The war had already reached a tragic level right when it started.

Gu Qing Shan stood in mid-air, observed the situation of the battlefield, then stopped moving around.

He silently thought to himself: "So they're called Desolate Demon Eyes, this fragment of time seems to have come from a period between the Age of Desolation and the Age of Old"

Gu Qing Shan didn't intend to just slack off either, he quickly evaded a few beams of white light as he formed a hand seal to manipulate his swords.

Both his swords appeared!

The two swords streaked across the sky like flashes of light, quickly heading towards one of the monsters.

It was true that the damage he can cause was ridiculously little when compared to other cultivators here.

But he had a certain Thaumaturgy.

[Severance]

[Severance: Any creature struck by your Elemental Lightning spirit energy will have their consciousness separate from their body, the effect persists for 3 seconds after the attack hit]

[Note: This is the upgraded version of Seven Shackles and Stiffness, no living being is immune to it]

No living being is immune to it.

This was the description from [War God Thaumaturgy].

The only thing Gu Qing Shan wasn't sure about is if these Desolate Demon Eyes count as a 'living being' or not.

He activated his sword art.

I'll get an answer right now!

The Chao Yin sword struck one of the Desolate Demon Eyes.

The Desolate Demon Eye's body suddenly trembled and froze.

It stood still in the air.

The squads of cultivators were all exceptionally good at reading the situation and took that opportunity to attack with everything they had.

3 seconds quickly passed.

The monster roared with a dull tone.

After being stunned for 3 seconds, all of its eyes were ready to attack.

Faint white light manifested outside its hundreds of thousands of eyes.

In that split second, the Six Paths Great Mountain sword caught up and stabbed the Desolate Demon Eye's body.

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The white light all dissipated.

The Demon Eye once again trembled and froze.

This time, everyone attacked it with reckless abandon.

Everyone was clear, this was the last chance they had, if they couldn't take this opportunity to kill this monster right now, everyone here will have to face its rage.

The final attack.

Oom!

The monster exploded into chunks of meat, falling from the sky.

The monster is slain!

The cultivators all cheered.

Gu Qing Shan also grinned, although he was a bit regretful.

Since he didn't kill the monster, he didn't get any Soul Points.

However, [Severance]'s power was being displayed at full force.

After being upgraded twice, from [Stunned] to [Rigid], then from [Rigid] to [Severance], the Elemental Lightning of Life he chose had finally shown its true value.

A crimson figure flew down from the sky, stopping next to Gu Qing Shan.

He was this battlefield's general.

He was the one who has been commanding this war so far.

"Just now, was that your Thaumaturgy?" the general asked.

"Yes" Gu Qing Shan casually admitted.

"Well done, there are very few Thaumaturgies that could affect Desolate lifeforms. I'll be counting on you to put it to use even more" the general said.

"I understand" Gu Qing Shan nodded.

The general waved behind him: "Men!"

Two squads of considerably powerful cultivators came.

"His cultivation is lacking, you're in charge of his protection" the general ordered

“Roger!” the cultivators loudly responded.

They quickly surrounded Gu Qing Shan and the general, protecting them inside.

The general glanced at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan smiled.

During an extremely tragic war like this, he originally only wanted to protect himself.

But now, it seems my survival can be more or less guaranteed.

Since I'm being protected, I'll join the battle without fear.

In the sky, the two swords gave off intense sword phantoms.

They quickly flew across the sky, striking or stabbing each Desolate Demon Eyes one by one.

As soon as a Demon Eye was struck, they would immediately lose the ability to attack.

“All troops, follow the attack of the two swords!” the General shouted his order.

The other cultivators have already noticed what was happening here, so as soon as they heard their orders, they swiftly followed and attacked the Demon Eyes that the two swords had hit.

Although there were quite a few Desolate Demon Eyes, their numbers didn't help them against being forcefully restrained and killed one by one.

Soon enough, all the Demon Eyes were dead.

The cultivators cheered.

“Hoo-rah!!”

“Hoo-rah!!”

“Hoo-rah!!”

The battle is won!

The general spoke emotionally: “Youngster, what kind of Thaumaturgy is this? Which of the 5 Elements was it derived from?”

Gu Qing Shan was surprised: “You don't know about it?”

The general shook his head: “I've never seen it before”

Gu Qing Shan told him: “This is Elemental Lightning of Life”

The general scowled: “Elemental Lightning? The 5 Elements only consist of Metal-Wood-Water-Fire-Earth, there's no such thing as Elemental Lightning. What is Elemental Lightning?”

Gu Qing Shan was shocked.

From the look on the general's face, it didn't seem like he was pretending not to know either.

Could be it, there were no mutated 5 Elements in the Age of Old?

While they were talking, the sky suddenly became dark.

The general's expression warped, he shot straight to the sky and shouted: "All troops, prepare the large-scale defensive formation!"

Following his order, every cultivator descended to the ground, quickly returned to their own squads as the formation users arranged the formations.

While they were anxious, the cultivators were preparing the defensive means in proper sequence and order.

The cultivators who were protecting Gu Qing Shan had also begun their work.

They were preparing a defensive formation around Gu Qing Shan.

Suddenly.

Everyone couldn't help but look towards the sky.

The sky seemed to have been ripped open.

The sun, the moon, and stars were nowhere to be seen above, only the sight of another world slowly coming towards this one.

Gu Qing Shan could faintly see the scenery of the other world.

Countless fierce and cruel figures were waiting to move out in that world.

They were all monsters he had never seen before.

They were waiting for the two worlds to crash.

In the sky, the general shouted furiously: "They are coming towards us! This isn't them scouting! This isn't scouting! They intend to go all-out!"

"Messenger, quickly inform the council of elders, we need to call upon the Divinities!"

Before he finished his words, far underground, wave after wave of enormous tremors could be felt and heard.

Countless screams of pain and curses were resounding across the entire world.

Immediately after, a huge gust of wind blew from afar, bringing with it a wave of fresh blood and severed limbs that dyed the ground red.

The cultivator army was clearly shaken.

Gu Qing Shan also felt doubtful.

In another world, countless Desolate lifeforms were looking to completely take over the Primordial Heaven Realm, but during this crucial point in time, something huge seemed to have happened within the Primordial Heaven Realm itself.

Finally, a bloody and tattered cultivator followed the gust of wind to fly here from extremely far away.

While flying, he was also wiping away the bloodied tears in his eyes.

His sturdy-looking armour was already completely broken, only half a piece of the breastplate was left, barely clinging on to protect his heart.

The cultivator was struggling to fly, almost unable to land.

The general was the first to see him.

The general came up to catch him and asked: "Deputy Wang, what happened?"

The cultivator swallowed the blood in his throat to speak in a weak voice: "Divinities..."

"What of the Divinities?"

"The Divinities have betrayed us, they fled!"

"What did you say!?"

"The Divinities... suddenly ambushed us, the command center is already completely destroyed"

With those words, the cultivator's body became limp as he breathed his last.

Everyone on the ground went silent.

The cultivators were unable to process what they just heard.

Meanwhile, in the sky, the other world was quickly approaching the Primordial Heaven Realm.

Gu Qing Shan stared blankly at this.

A second later, everything disappeared.

Gu Qing Shan found himself once again standing on the desolate, barren land.

He had escaped the fragment of time.

Chapter 733

Gu Qing Shan stood alone in the barren wasteland.

He silently digested everything he saw just now.

A surprised voice came from the sky: 「 You're still alive? 」

Gu Qing Shan looked up.

The Spirit Tortoise was currently floating above, looking at him.

「 You're only a Virtualized realm cultivator! How did you survive in that war? Even if you found a way to hide without being noticed like a coward clinging onto life, that fragment wouldn't have let you out either, it would have just reset and forced you to go through everything again and again 」 the Spirit Tortoise commented.

“I have a certain Thaumaturgy that proved to be extremely potent in the war” Gu Qing Shan replied.

As the Spirit Tortoise heard his explanation, its eyes showed understanding.

So that's the reason why. He is as weak as a speck of dust, but he had a Thaumaturgy capable of changing the flow of war.

This youngster must have contributed greatly to that battle, enough that the fragment accepted him and let him out.

The Spirit Tortoise spoke emotionally: 「 After so many years, finally there is someone capable of staying alive outside of the Heavenly Palace, could I perhaps be dreaming right now? 」

Its tone was full of sorrow and pain, such that Gu Qing Shan had no idea how to follow up.

Gu Qing Shan thought briefly before he tried asking: “Senior, now can you allow me to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace?”

The Spirit Tortoise regained its senses and spoke: 「 There are two ways to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace right now. According to my estimation, one of them fits you very well 」

“Please elaborate, senior”

「 I will help you steal a jade disk, this is the fastest and most direct solution 」

“Stealing a jade disk?” Gu Qing Shan asked doubtfully.

The Spirit Tortoise explained: 「 There are a total of two jade disks that will grant you passage. The first is the sect master's jade disk, held by each of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's sect masters; the second is the protector's jade disk, which has been kept in the Vermillion Bird's nest ever since long ago 」

「 Vermillion Bird is already dead, but a strand of its soul is still left to protect its nest, so we will have to steal the jade disk from it 」

Gu Qing Shan asked: “How should we do that?”

The Spirit Tortoise explained: 「 A few moments later, I will separate my soul from my body, using it to fight with the Vermillion Bird. You can take that chance while it's busy to climb the tree and take the jade disk from its nest 」

「 The Vermillion Bird wouldn't go too far from its nest, so our battle might affect you. And with your current level of power, even the tiniest bit of residual energy from our fight will be fatal 」

“Then what do we do? If it's too hard, how about the other method?”

The Spirit Tortoise shook its head: 「 That's not it, I will teach you a certain Thaumaturgy. It will help you protect yourself during our fight 」

The Tortoise's tone seemed stern: 「 After learning this Thaumaturgy, you will be able to survive in many fatal situations, in fact, it will be harder for you to actually die 」

Hearing that, Gu Qing Shan was surprised.

What kind of Thaumaturgy would be so powerful that it allows a weak person to survive within the range of two powerful ancient spirit beasts' battle?

Furthermore, being able to teach someone a Thaumaturgy is completely unheard of.

No matter what, if it is willing to teach me such a powerful Thaumaturgy...

Gu Qing Shan thanked it sincerely: "Thank you, senior, for your goodwill. May I ask what kind of Thaumaturgy it is?"

The Spirit Tortoise spoke: 「 The Thaumaturgy I'm about to teach you is one with considerable history, it is called [Untraceable Head & Tail] 」

"[Untraceable Head & Tail]?"

「 Indeed, I will take off a piece of my own shell and use a secret technique to put it on your back, completely fusing it with your body 」

「 That way, you will obtain the same defensive capabilities that I have 」

「 With my shell as protection, no matter what kind of life-threatening danger you might face in the future, you only need to pull yourself into the shell. No matter how powerful your enemies' attacks are, they wouldn't be able to hurt you 」

「 How is it, isn't it a formidable Thaumaturgy? 」 the Spirit Tortoise boasted.

"...It certainly is... Will I be able to put the shell away or hide it normally?" Gu Qing Shan carefully asked.

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The Spirit Tortoise replied: 「 There is no way to hide it, the turtle shell will have thoroughly fused with you and become a part of your body. On the other hand, why would you want to hide such a fearsome shell? 」

Gu Qing Shan couldn't help but imagine himself wearing a tortoise's shell.

Although...

Normally I would have to carry this shell on my back...

But with this shell, I'll be able to attack my enemies as I see fit!

Whenever someone wants to attack me, I can simply pull back into the shell to protect myself.

Yeah... that is indeed [Untraceable Head & Tail], it is indeed formidable...

...

Formidable my ass!

Damn it!

If I fight like that, before the battle is half over, the enemy will have already laughed themselves to death!

At this point, the Spirit Tortoise seems to recall something as it spoke regretfully: 「When Kirin was close to dying, I originally wanted to teach it [Untraceable Head & Tail] because we were the closest among the four」

「But after it heard my explanation, it refused to learn the Thaumaturgy no matter how much I persuaded, finally succumbing to its wounds and dying」

「I really don't understand what it was thinking」

Gu Qing Shan spoke with a solemn expression: “Senior, no matter what others might think, I personally feel that your Thaumaturgy is indeed formidable and peerless, I really am in awe”

The Spirit Tortoise appeared glad: 「You're quite right, youngster, your eyes are certainly correct!」

Gu Qing Shan then spoke heavily: “But I have already made a vow to heaven and earth. As a sword cultivator, the most I can use is an armour to protect myself, I can never use a technique specifically to evade or dodge an enemy's attack, otherwise, I would be killed by the heaven's Dao”

「You are a sword cultivator? No wonder you would make such a heavy vow」 the Spirit Tortoise regretfully sighed, 「Then there is no other way, you cannot learn my Thaumaturgy」

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Senior, didn't you say there were two ways to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace? We can try the second method”

The Spirit Tortoise nodded: 「Indeed, if you cannot learn my Thaumaturgy, you wouldn't be able to survive the residual energy that mine and the Vermillion Bird's fight would give off, so we can only try the second method」

“Please tell me, senior” Gu Qing Shan said.

The Spirit Tortoise told him: 「The second method was something the master of the Heavenly Palace arranged to test newcomers. You must take the trial of passage like a completely new member of the sect, only after passing it will you be granted entry」

It then sighed and added: 「This is an exceedingly arduous trial, I will not be able to help you at all, and if you are unable to pass, you will immediately be killed by the lock seals inside」

“I am willing to try” Gu Qing Shan replied.

「Very well, then you may try」 the Spirit Tortoise spoke.

A jade disk flew out from its mouth.

「This is a jade disk for the trial of passage, the Golden Dragon, Vermillion Bird, Kirin as well as myself each has one of them」

「Take this jade disk to the Mountain Protector Pavilion, the Kirin's soul will not stop you and instead bring you into the trial」

The jade disk hovered in the air as it slowly landed in Gu Qing Shan's hands.

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: "Thank you, senior"

The Spirit Tortoise spoke: 「 Yes, if you pass the trial, you will enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace as an official disciple, at that time, I will wait for you inside the Heavenly Palace 」

"Yes, then I shall be on my way" Gu Qing Shan said.

「 Go, and be careful 」 the Spirit Tortoise sent him off.

Gu Qing Shan nodded lightly before heading up through the sea of clouds.

As the Spirit Tortoise looked at him leaving, it silently sighed.

「 Ah, how regretful, if that youngster had been able to learn my Thaumaturgy, why must he walk this tribulation of life and death? 」

The Spirit Tortoise regretfully sighed again.

Chapter 734

Gu Qing Shan peeked his head out from below the clouds.

A large rock stood within his vision.

This rock was a familiar one.

This place was the Feeding Ground.

Gu Qing Shan had already gone far past where the Golden Dragon was, plus he was quite close to where the foot of the mountain and the palace structures were.

He leapt out from the layer of clouds and turned into a blurred figure that flew towards the faraway mountain.

About half an incense's stick of time later, he gradually saw the appearance of a pavilion.

The Mountain Protector Pavilion.

The Kirin was currently leaning on the pavilion, sleeping.

It was giving off incredible pressure.

To deal with Gu Qing Shan, all it needed to do was look at him.

How unimaginable, for this to be nothing a lingering strand of its soul.

Gu Qing Shan took out the jade disk that the Spirit Tortoise gave him and held it.

Sure enough, as he approached the pavilion, the Kirin didn't bother to look up, only turning to sleep a bit more comfortably.

Gu Qing Shan landed inside the pavilion.

As he clasped his fist, about to say something, the Kirin reached out with its claw and tapped the floor.

Countless strands of silver strings appeared from the ground, manifesting as mystical runes.

A formation was formed.

The entire pavilion glowed brightly.

Pah!

In an instant, a pillar of light was formed, swallowing Gu Qing Shan up, leaving no trace behind.

...

Darkness.

Gu Qing Shan opened his eyes and glanced around.

Good, the dark figure of light isn't here.

That means I'm at least not dead yet.

There was no wind.

The air was silent and fragrant as if someone had lit quite a stick of calming incense or something of similar nature.

Faint spirit energy drifted from the ground, silently filling this entire space.

This was a Spirit Funnel formation.

Together with the mind-calming effect of the incense, it made for a great place to rest.

The feeling this place gave off was similar to that of a cultivator's personal cave manor.

Gu Qing Shan formed a simple hand seal.

A light came from the tip of his finger to illuminate the place.

A cushion made of spirit silk was placed next to a formation with a few white jade tags.

A spirit spring was silently flowing from the deepest part of the cave.

A jade bed was placed across from the spirit spring.

Gu Qing Shan pulled his gaze back, confirming his conjecture.

This place really was a cultivator's cave manor.

He suddenly noticed something out of place.

My cultivation seems to be unbelievably high.

He changed his hand seal.

The light gathered to form a mirror.

As Gu Qing Shan looked at himself in the mirror, he appeared shocked.

This isn't my face!

A sudden headache came, striking Gu Qing Shan so hard that he almost stumbled to the ground.

The pain came and left quickly.

In an instant, the pain completely went away, as if it never appeared in the first place.

Gu Qing Shan found new pieces of knowledge in his mind.

Shen Yang.

Martial cultivator.

Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, sect master's disciple, ranked 3rd.

Ever since he joined the sect, he had shown exceptional martial art prowess that were praised by all.

He spent day after day thinking about nothing but martial arts, even during his meal and his sleep. Whenever he practiced martial arts, he would go on for several days in a row, only stopping once his stamina reached its end.

Being this obsessed with martial arts, he naturally earned the title of [Martial Crazy].

Shen Yang went through countless trials to become the youngest and most excellent martial arts seed within the younger generation of the sect.

He was then inducted as a direct disciple under the sect master of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, becoming his last disciple.

Henceforth, the title [Martial Crazy] became famous throughout the lands.

Information about Shen Yang appeared in his mind little by little.

It didn't only include the most notable moments of Shen Yang's life or the people he was the closest with.

Every single last detail about him, down to his daily life, all appeared in Gu Qing Shan's mind.

Even his understanding and comprehension of martial arts were present.

Having this bit of Shen Yang's memories, Gu Qing Shan now had the same level of mastery and experience with martial arts that Shen Yang had.

If he returned right now, these memories would no doubt become the most precious possession he has.

But now, I should focus on how to pass this trial.

If I can't pass this trial, I won't be able to enter the Heavenly Palace.

While Gu Qing Shan was thinking about his situation, a soft light slowly formed in the air.

As Gu Qing Shan glanced at the light, a piece of memory stood out in his mind.

He instantly understood.

He had a visitor.

Gu Qing Shan took a deep breath and made his expression turn calm.

From this point onwards, I will have to act like Shen Yang.

I won't leave any opening or make any mistakes.

One breathe.

Two breaths.

Gu Qing Shan had completely calmed down and formed a hand seal according to Shen Yang's memories.

The light turned into a gate that opened in front of Gu Qing Shan.

A man with a sword on his back came out of the gate.

He spoke: "Junior brother, Master has issued an emergency summon"

Following Shen Yang's memories, Gu Qing Shan appeared doubtful: "First brother, didn't Master say he would participate in this year's banquet of the Divinities?"

Indeed, the man standing in front of him was the first disciple of the sect master, sword cultivator Zhao Kuan.

As Gu Qing Shan looked at him, he was a bit regretful that he didn't obtain his memories instead.

Just the thought of possibly learning sword techniques from the Age of Old was making him ecstatic.

Zhao Kuan replied: "I'm not sure, something seemed to have happened, Master is urging us to go quickly"

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"Yes" Gu Qing Shan replied.

He walked together with Zhao Kuan out of his cave manor as both flew towards the top mountain of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

During their flight, Gu Qing Shan couldn't help himself from looking below.

The entire mountain range was covered in various silent lights, cultivators were flying in various directions, all of them appeared to be excited and assured.

Because it was currently the end of the year.

Everyone could temporarily stop their cultivation and worries to enjoy new year's eve.

During this time, the Divinities would also organize a grand banquet and invite the most excellent cultivators to participate.

Gu Qing Shan looked afar.

There was light illuminating every path, as crowds of people were walking to one place or another.

Right outside the sect, Gu Qing Shan could even see some bustling market places.

Streaks of light occasionally flew across the night sky.

They were airships.

Additionally, there were also several large ships abundant with light that floated in the sky.

Many cultivators were gathered there, drinking, eating, dancing, singing, debating about Dao, or competing against one another.

Men and women walking together could be seen everywhere, some even flying above the clouds to enjoy themselves.

A very lively scene!

Gu Qing Shan silently praised before pulling his gaze back.

They have arrived at the palace on the highest mountain.

This was the manor of the Heavenly Palace's master.

A cultivator with a short Blade was already waiting for them here.

This was Shen Yang's second brother, spell user, Huang Zhan.

The Blade he had wasn't something to fight in close combat with, but rather a medium for his spells.

"First brother, third brother, you've come" Huang Zhan spoke.

"Hm" Gu Qing Shan replied.

"Let's go in, Master is waiting for us" Zhao Kuan urged them.

The three of them went in.

In the hall of the palace, a black-robed, white-haired cultivator was standing with his back to the three of them, his hands behind his back.

An undecorated ancient-styled sword was silently floating in front of him.

When Gu Qing Shan saw that sword, he felt his heart almost jumping from his throat.

The Earth sword!

That's the Earth sword!

"Master!" the other two disciples both bowed and greeted him.

Gu Qing Shan also followed suit.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master deeply sighed, apparently a bit sorrowful, but still hadn't said anything.

The three disciples exchanged glances.

They all had the same puzzled expression on their faces.

Master has always been a confident, outstanding, and high-spirited person, why is he so melancholic today?

Silence.

The atmosphere of the hall was becoming more and more eerie.

Finally, the first brother Zhao Kuan couldn't help himself anymore and asked: "Master, didn't you leave to participate in the banquet? Why did you return so soon? And why did you sigh?"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master pointed at the Earth sword and spoke: "It was injured"

Zhao Kuan was surprised: "This sword was a Divine Armament that Shifu had spent countless resources on, even asking for the help of the 9 Venerable Smiths of the Heavenly Realm and took 81 days to complete, who could have damaged it?"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master spoke simply: "Assessment God"

Assessment God was one of many Divinities, one who assesses the variables and future of all living beings and all things.

Huang Zhan wondered: "The Divinities have always been merciful and kind to all things, why did they injure Master's sword?"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master replied: "During today's banquet, I was in a duel with Assessment God, using this sword, I won against him by half an exchange. But I didn't expect it to anger him, causing him to exert his full power to injure this sword"

The Palace's master suddenly turned around and told his three disciples: "This was all due to a moment of my arrogance, bringing this calamity upon us. The destruction of the sect is already imminent"

"Zhao Kuan, Huang Zhan, Shen Yang, the three of you are my direct disciples, I hereby order you to flee from Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, hide your identities and escape to the lower realms and maintain a seed of our sect's heritage"

"The other Elders are also working on this"

"You will leave tonight!"

The three disciples all appeared unprepared.

"Master, the Divinities wouldn't go that far"

"That's not possible!"

“It was only a duel, why would our sect be——”

They were all trying to persuade their Master.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master sternly shouted: “Quiet, all three of you!”

The three of them all went silent.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master spoke: “Zhao Kuan!”

“Your disciple is here!” Zhao Kuan knelt down.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master spoke: “You were the earliest to join, but your swordsmanship still hasn’t achieved Great Attainment, I now leave all of our sect’s scriptures with you. When you reach the lower realms, you must never be distracted, study our sect’s swordsmanship, reform our sect on the lower realms and light a new fire”

“Understood!” Zhao Kuan responded.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master spoke: “Huang Zhan, among you three, your expertise with spell and magic is the greatest. I want you to protect the Earth sword, lead it to the lower realms and hide it away, survive through this turmoil and wait for the next opportunity”

Huang Zhan couldn’t help asking: “But Master, this is your personal sword, if I bring it away, what will you use?”

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master sternly spoke: “I can use any sword, but nothing must ever happen to the Earth sword. It carries the secret of humanity’s fate, the last hope of mankind as a whole, you must make sure to protect it well”

“Yes, Master” Huang Zhan solemnly said.

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master then turned to Gu Qing Shan: “Shen Yang, you are the purest among you three, so Master has a something personal I want to entrust to you”

Gu Qing Shan spoke: “Please give your order, Master”

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace’s master explained: “The Divinities claim that my daughter is naturally insufficient, so her natural life span wouldn’t go past 7 years. But I only found out later on that she was born with a golden lotus following her, capable of taking the essence of heaven and earth, causing the envy and hatred of Divinities, so they had placed a curse upon her”

“Together with the greatest cultivators of the Heaven realm, we exhausted every solution to finally find a certain method that would allow her to escape the curse and extend her life”

“Unfortunately, our method would take several hundred thousand years to completely negate the curse of Divinities, allowing her to awaken from the ice crystal”

He slightly raised his hand and summoned a large piece of ice crystal.

Gu Qing Shan looked at the ice crystal.

Inside the crystal, hundreds of thousands of Spirit Jade Flowers were bound together, surrounding a golden lotus.

On top of the lotus sat a little girl with an innocent and immature expression, currently deep in slumber.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at the Spirit Jade Flowers.

There were two types of flowers here, one was the actual jade flowers, while the other was a spirit jade carved to look like flowers.

According to Shen Yang's memories, even in the Heaven realm, each jade flower was a rare, nearly unattainable treasure.

While the flowers made from spirit jade were carved with countless runes, obviously forming some sort of extremely intricate and complicated formation.

Inside the crystal, tiny strands of light were coming off the artificial spirit jade flower, mixing with a 5-colored light coming from the real spirit jade flowers as they got absorbed into the little girl's body at an extremely slow pace.

"This is my daughter, perhaps she wouldn't wake up for another few hundred thousand years, so most likely I wouldn't see her within my lifetime"

"Shen Yang, bring her to the lower realms, shelter her, and take good care of her for me"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master glanced at the little girl inside the ice crystal.

His gaze became gentle and attached.

"If one day she does wake up, pass on her name for me. She is... Xie Dao Ling"

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"Xie... Dao... Ling, I will make sure to remember it"

Gu Qing Shan looked at the little girl sealed inside the ice crystal and solemnly clasped his fist: "Please don't worry, Master, as long as I'm alive, I will definitely protect her"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master nodded.

He was very pleased with this disciple.

With a flip of his palm, the ice crystal floating in the air disappeared without a trace.

Instead, a transparent, glittering bracelet made of ice appeared in his hand.

"This is a Heaven's Grotto Band, it is connected to the subspace where she slumbers. There is nothing within that subspace but 81 mountains of spirit stones, constructed specifically to supply power to her ice crystal"

The Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master gently stroked the bracelet, took a deep breath, then gave it to Shen Yang.

Shen Yang solemnly received the bracelet and put it on his own wrist.

Huang Zhan looked at the bracelet, then glanced at Shen Yang with a worried look.

Zhao Kuan glanced briefly at the bracelet before lowering his head.

At this time, the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master spoke to his three disciples: "Go, at the foot of the Heavenly Palace, the sect has prepared airships for the three of you to travel to the lower realms. It is best that the three of you go separately, and to ensure further safety, make sure to not contact each other under any circumstances, go now!"

Seeing how the three of them were still hesitant, their Master angrily shouted: "The destruction of the sect is already imminent, all three of you have already received your responsibilities, do you wish to stay here and die meaninglessly?"

"Go now! Otherwise, I won't be able to die with my eyes closed!"

The three of them hurriedly responded: "Yes, Master!"

Huang Zhan couldn't keep himself calm anymore, so he shouted to the sky to express his stifled emotions and dashed out.

Zhao Kuan hurriedly chased after him.

Gu Qing Shan turned and told the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master with a serious expression: "Farewell, Master. If all else fails, choosing to save yourself is also a choice"

The Master wasn't angry this time, but smiled bitterly: "You fool, you think I need you to teach me that? Scram!"

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist and bowed, then turned to leave.

All three disciples have now left the Heavenly Palace.

The gate closed.

The Master silently stood there.

A figure floating in mid-air appeared in front of him.

It was an old man with silver-white hair.

"Immortal King" the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's master clasped his fist to greet him.

The old man nodded and asked doubtfully: "Sect master Xie, you were originally going to pass the inheritance on to Shen Yang, so why did you give it to Zhao Kuan in the end?"

The Master sighed: "Zhao Kuan is considerate and meticulous on all sides, the only thing lacking about him is that his five desires burn too brightly, causing a defect in his Dao heart, so his swordsmanship cannot reach great attainment. Since that was the case, I decided to leave him the responsibility of forming a new sect in the lower realms and continue passing the torch"

"Huang Zhan is an excellent spell user of the highest calibre, with a genuine heart and sincerity. Furthermore, he's a trustworthy person, so I can only be relieved with leaving the Earth sword to him"

The Master then had a complicated expression as he continued: "As for Shen Yang, without great wisdom and great will, how could one give up on everyday life to pursue Dao? Shen Yang would naturally be the best choice for a leader of the sect, but with the current situation where Divinities are looking to kill us and we're mounting resistance against them, it is best to hide him away. Away from the responsibilities of the sect, away from the distractions of life, so that he may continue cultivating his martial arts and perhaps one day he would surpass us"

The old man sighed: "I truly hope that he can surpass us and defeat the Divinities, at least that way I wouldn't have to arrange for my own death so laboriously"

The Master chuckled bitterly: "I have no doubt that he would be able to surpass me. But to surpass you, Immortal King, it will depend on his fate"

...

On another side.

Gu Qing Shan followed the memories and headed towards the foot of the Heavenly Palace mountain.

He was a bit doubtful.

What meaning does what I'm currently doing have?

Or to be precise, my choice, my actions right now, will they truly affect the history of what happened in the Age of Old?

If I have truly returned to the Age of Old and replace Shen Yang, will everything I do cause the future to change?

Everything in the next several ten thousand years would completely change, how completely unimaginable.

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought briefly before silently shaking his head.

According to what I learnt so far, during this time period, the power of humanity as a whole had just only reached a point where it could barely threaten the position of Divinities.

And from what I've learnt, Divinities are unable to change or affect the flow of time.

Following this vein of thought, humanity would also be unable to achieve such a thing as well.

And so I should currently be in a reproduction or simulation of a real event that happened in the past.

I'm currently Shen Yang.

If this really is a test...

Then the goal of the test should be to see how much better or worse I could do compared to Shen Yang.

Gu Qing Shan ran through his thoughts once again and confirmed his conjecture to most likely be correct.

At this time, he had just arrived at the foot of the mountain.

Several grey airships were docked here, each engraved with a unique pattern of runes used to enable inter-realm travel.

When this airship was activated, it would directly bypass the limit of the world and head directly towards another realm among the Samsara world.

Depending on the difference between the engraved runes, some airships would take him to the Asura realm, while others would take him to the human realm.

Heaven, Human, Asura are the upper three realms, so whenever a cultivator decides to travel to another realm, they would choose one of these three.

As for the Wraith, Animal and Huang Quan realm, they were considered the lower three realms, where no one would normally be willing to travel to.

The elders were already there, arranging everything.

Numerous young disciples of the sect were being led onto their respective airships.

Whenever an airship was filled, a leading cultivator would activate it, let it open the void of space and fly towards another world.

One of the elders noticed the three of them coming.

“So it’s you three, come, here are your airships”

The elder led them towards three small-sized airships.

“All of you have your own responsibilities to fulfill, so the sect arranged you three separate ships”

“The first one is for Zhao Kuan, the second is for Huang Zhan, and the last one in the corner is for Shen Yang, make sure not to get on the wrong one”

Boom!!!

As they were talking, the ground began to shake.

Far in the sky, a thunderous voice came.

「 Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, for disrespecting a Divinity, for scheming to surrender to the Desolate world, your sins deserve death! 」

A glorious light descended from the sky, pulling the curtains of the night sky away.

The elder’s expression warped and shouted: “Hurry! Leave, all of you!”

His figure flashed before disappearing from the three of them.

They didn’t hesitate any more and quickly got on their own airships.

Zhao Kuan hurriedly threw two jade tags towards Huang Zhan and Gu Qing Shan.

He spoke quickly: “Junior brother Huang, junior brother Shen, once we arrive in the lower realms, our original communication talismans won’t be usable anymore. Take these jade tags, it can sense my location, we will meet up again in the lower realms!”

Huang Zhan nodded and put the jade tag away.

Gu Qing Shan also put the jade tag into his Inventory Bag.

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As they were in a hurry, the three of them said nothing else and activated the formations on their airships.

With a sharp howl, the ships ripped open the void of space and headed for the lower realms.

...

The space vortex.

Once again in the space vortex.

As soon as his airship ripped the void of space open, Gu Qing Shan watched as the other two ships headed for different directions.

Seems like the destinations of the ships weren’t the same.

He then carefully observed his surroundings.

Within the gloomy space vortex, the wind blew without end.

This was a part of space that existed outside of the world, a place where any strange or eerie creature could appear.

But the space vortex of this era was much different from how it was in the future, besides the wind, Gu Qing Shan wasn’t able to see anything else.

Perhaps it was because wars were frequent in the Heaven realm that the unusual creatures have already learned to avoid this part of space.

Gu Qing Shan loosened his tense mind.

Making use of this brief moment of peace, he sat down cross-legged and began to meditate.

He was quickly going through all of Shen Yang’s martial arts in his mind.

Gu Qing Shan began to think about how to use these martial arts and techniques.

He was planning to absorb Shen Yang’s martial arts and make it part of his own fighting style.

Time slowly passed.

While Gu Qing Shan was silently simulating battle techniques in his mind, an airship appeared.

The airship also seemed to be surprised as it carefully circled around a few times before getting closer.

Gu Qing Shan stood up and looked at the airship.

It was a familiar airship.

The person riding it was even more familiar.

“First brother?” Gu Qing Shan was surprised.

“What a coincidence, third brother. It seems our destinations are very close” Zhao Kuan spoke up.

Gu Qing Shan grinned: “That is great, as long as we brothers stand together, there is nothing in the human realm that could stop us”

Zhao Kuan also grinned and spoke: “I think so as well. What do you say I put my airship away and come onto your ship, that way when we land, we’ll be in the same place”

Gu Qing Shan excited replied: “That’s how it should be”

Zhao Kuan put his airship away, leapt up towards Gu Qing Shan’s airship.

Gu Qing Shan tapped his Inventory Bag and took out the jade tag.

“Senior brother, this jade tag won’t be needed anymore, I’ll return it to you”

He threw the jade tag to Zhao Kuan.

Zhao Kuan squinted his eyes at the jade tag.

That certainly is the same jade tag I gave him before, the one that allows us brothers to sense each other’s locations.

“That is true, this jade tag won’t be necessary anymore”

Zhao Kuan laughed and reached his hand out to receive the jade tag.

Suddenly.

Pah!

The jade tag vanished, and Shen Yang was now standing right in front of Zhao Kuan.

Divine Skill, [Shadow Shift]!

As soon as Shen Yang appeared, he grabbed Zhao Kuan’s hand.

Zhao Kuan’s expression warped, but his entire body felt completely numb, so much that he couldn’t even move a finger, his spirit energy also completely went out of control.

[Severance]!

At this point, Shen Yang struck Zhao Kuan.

In an instant, he punched Zhao Kuan so many times that he couldn’t even count, so much that the defences Zhao Kuan set up around his body were glowing brightly as they were stripped away bit by bit.

Zhao Kuan shouted in pain, but couldn't mount a single bit of resistance.

When three seconds were about to be over.

From the void of space, a girl with an indifferent and aloof expression appeared with a sword in her hand.

She thrust it forward without hesitation.

[Severance]!

The sword that Zhao Kuan had just managed to summon was swept away by the space vortex, vanishing in just the blink of an eye.

He lost control of his body again!

The punches never stopped.

With an expressionless face, Shen Yang continued to pound Zhao Kuan with his full strength.

At this point, the defences around Zhao Kuan's body were already completely broken, and he didn't have the ability to take anything else out to replace them.

Taking that chance, Shen Yang struck and shattered all the joints of his bones to dust.

The final kick.

Bam!

Zhao Kuan was sent flying.

Shen Yang disappeared and reappeared far away in the space vortex, caught Zhao Kuan and dragged him back, throwing him onto the ship.

Zhao Kuan was completely powerless to resist.

He spat out some blood, shouting: "Shen Yang! You are betraying the sect and our Master!"

"Betraying the sect and our Master?" Gu Qing Shan asked with a light tone.

"Yes! Master chose me as the next master of the Heavenly Palace, but you ambushed me when I let my guard down! Do you want to be Palace Master that badly!?" Zhao Kuan shouted questioningly.

Gu Qing Shan slowly crouched down in front of him and shook his head: "The one who betrayed the sect and our Master was you, wasn't it?"

Zhao Kuan furiously snapped: "Bullshit! This Zhao Kuan has always been completely loyal and devoted to the sect. Never once was there any doubt about that, don't sling mud on other people!"

Gu Qing Shan chuckled and spoke in a low voice: "Then let me ask you. Master told us to go separately, then for the sake of safety, we would have to cut off all communications between us as well, so why did you give me a jade tag to contact you?"

Zhao Kuan froze.

Gu Qing Shan then continued: "Let's give you the benefit of the doubt. If the two of us were really supposed to arrive in the same place, why would the sect arrange three separate airships? Isn't that drawing legs on a snake?"

He sighed: "Senior brother Huang is honest and sincere, so during these turbulent times, his mind was clouded. Furthermore, as you are our senior brother, he wouldn't have put up his guard, that's why he was deceived"

"Zhao Kuan, hah, Zhao Kuan, do you really think I would be so easily deceived like senior brother Huang?"

Zhao Kuan stared at Shen Yang with his mouth wide open, unable to say a single word.

Chapter 736

On the airship.

Zhao Kuan was completely stunned, leaning on the side of the ship.

"Not going to defend yourself?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

Zhao Kuan remained silent.

"How unfortunate" Gu Qing Shan regretfully spoke, "then I'll have to do it myself"

Gu Qing Shan reached his hand out, touching Zhao Kuan's forehead.

[Soul Reading], activate!

A flash of light appeared on Zhao Kuan's forehead, knocking Gu Qing Shan's hand away.

A mystical golden rune appeared on Zhao Kuan's forehead, giving off a faint sense of solemnity.

This was a Divine Script!

Zhao Kuan spat out some more blood and laughed: "Shen Yang, you intend to search my soul? Dream on!"

Gu Qing Shan's expression changed as his tone turned serious: "You surrendered yourself to the Divinities! You were already the number one disciple of the sect, the next sect master, why did you do this!?"

Zhao Kuan spoke full of hatred: "What dogshit sect master!?! Master wanted me to help pass on the torch for the sect, he wanted me to work myself to death for the sect!"

His shout became even more frenzied: "He didn't even teach me the way to become a Sword Saint! Not even the way to become a Sword Saint!"

"Shen Yang, can you imagine how I feel!?! Whenever I see other Sword Saints control their flying swords in battle, while I have to hold it with my own hands! Yet as the direct disciple of the sect master, I have to maintain an amiable façade whenever anyone looks at me. You can never understand that feeling!"

Gu Qing Shan froze, then slowly explained: “To become a Sword Saint, you have to find your own path. No one can ever teach you how to become one, because that is the path of another. Do you not understand even this simple thing?”

Zhao Kuan snapped: “I know that! Of course, I know that. But it’s been 30 years, Shen Yang, it’s been 30 years! My cultivation keeps increasing, eclipsing that of my peers, but I still couldn’t become a Sword Saint, do you understand what that feels like!?”

“I understand” Gu Qing Shan replied.

Zhao Kuan howled: “YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND!”

“Everyone always says that Zhao Kuan is too busy taking care of the sect that my cultivation suffers, but they don’t know just how much effort I actually put into my cultivation!”

“But nothing! Nothing happened! I’ve tried so many times, but no matter what I do, I can’t manipulate the sword with my mind. I’ve even resorted to breaking my original sword to exchange for another, but it was still impossible!”

“You broke your own sword...”

Hearing that, Gu Qing Shan scowled.

Zhao Kuan continued: “Shen Yang, I’m a sword cultivator. The path of a sword cultivator rejects that of any other path, so I have no way to practice anything else, do you know how many times I’ve wanted to die because of this?”

He suddenly grinned, causing the wounds on his face to bleed, making his grin incredibly terrifying and frenzied.

“Unable to keep living like that, I ran to ask for help from a Divinity, and guess that happened!”

“Everything was so simple, so unimaginably simple, I managed to learn [Sword Manipulation] right away!”

Gu Qing Shan cut him off: “And that’s why you surrendered yourself to the Divinities”

“That’s right! What sect, what Master, I don’t care anymore! I now serve the Gods. And today, they will destroy everything of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, including the disciples from before, Huang Zhan, you, as well as the Master’s daughter, none of you will escape!”

Gu Qing Shan’s heart tensed up and quickly asked: “The disciples from before? What did you do!?”

Zhao Kuan appeared boastful: “I’m the first brother of the sect, the one in charge of most things, take a guess how I handled them”

As Gu Qing Shan glared at him, he felt a bit sorrowful.

The cultivation world in the future was so vastly weaker than before that they didn’t even know how to travel between the realms, they didn’t even know that there was more than one world. So when it came time to face against the demons and demon beasts, they were always being pushed back.

If even one of the disciples from the Heaven realm had been able to survive this ordeal, the cultivation world in the future wouldn't have been that way.

It seems that during this actual event, even if the real Shen Yang had been able to survive, he didn't have too long to live either.

Otherwise, his martial arts would definitely have been passed on.

Zhao Kuan purposefully riled him up: "Just wait, the Divinities have sent a lot of subordinates to pursue those disciples, not even one of them will be able to escape"

"Shen Yang, I have already presented the Earth sword to the Divinities. They were so pleased that they granted me their divine protection, even if I die right here, my soul will return to the Divinities. I really must say, everything you've done so far is meaningless"

Looking at him, Gu Qing Shan felt his emotions welling up.

"Not at all"

Gu Qing Shan calmly said.

He took a scepter out from the void of space.

It was the Devil King Warden Rod.

He raised the scepter.

Then stabbed it downwards.

Zhao Kuan was pierced by the scepter, trembling from the pain.

Gu Qing Shan tightly held the scepter down.

Blood began to flow all around the floor.

Gu Qing Shan's tone became cold as he asked in a low voice: "How do you feel right now? Betraying the struggles of everyone"

"Spare me the moral lesson" Zhao Kuan breathed heavily, "after I revive, I will ask the Divinities to leave me with your soul, I'll make sure to torture you for eternity!"

Gu Qing Shan went silent.

He sighed: "Zhao Kuan, since you're about to die, I'll take the time to tell you something"

"In truth, your true aim was never swordsmanship, but rather the authority and fame that the power of your sword can bring you after becoming a Sword Saint"

"If you truly were aiming to walk the path of the sword, you would never have tried breaking your sword or beg for power from the Divinities"

"A sword cultivator would never seek power from outside"

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“The power of the sword must come from yourself, only your will can truly light its flames”

Hearing that, Zhao Kuan coughed up some blood, breathed heavily and spoke: “And you think your words are worth a damn?”

He shook his head in contempt.

Gu Qing Shan simply looked at him without moving.

Two flying swords slowly appeared behind from the void of space.

Flying swords!?

Zhao Kuan opened his eyes wide, completely stunned, unable to accept what was happening right in front of his eyes.

“Zhao Kuan, don’t learn swordsmanship again in your next life” Gu Qing Shan said.

He tightened his grip on the Devil King Warden Rod and stabbed again.

Zhao Kuan spat up the last of his blood and lost his life with extreme unwillingness.

All of a sudden, golden light erupted from his body.

Countless golden Divine Scripts appeared around his body to form a mystical pattern.

The golden light shined brightly and lifted the body.

As Zhao Kuan’s body was about to disappear from the ship.

Gu Qing Shan heavily pressed the Devil King Warden Rod downwards and activated [Soul Dispersion]

[Scepter Secret Art: Soul Dispersion]

[Description: The Devil King can use the power of the scepter to permanently erase any disobedient dead, the erased dead’s soul will completely disappear, turning into the scepter’s sustenance]

Oom!

A black light came from the scepter and entered Zhao Kuan’s body.

At the same time, the golden light shined greatly.

The two powers competed against one another.

But obviously, the golden light was no match for its opposition and was quickly being swallowed by the black light.

Gu Qing Shan’s eyebrows twitched.

The Samsara really is the epitome of the Old Gods’ creations, the Devil King Warden Rod alone was able to completely overpower the power of Divine Script.

A few moments later.

With a faint flash, the golden light was completely gone.

The scepter received the right of judgement for the corpse!

A faint figure appeared in front of Gu Qing Shan.

Zhao Kuan.

He had a horrified and desperate expression on his face, staring with eyes wide open at the scepter in Gu Qing Shan's hand, completely speechless.

"I'm sorry, I made a mistake, you don't need to consider what you will cultivate in the next life at all"

Gu Qing Shan tapped the scepter on Zhao Kuan's soul.

"Because you won't have a 'next life'"

The soul let out a shrill howl before being completely shattered and absorbed by the scepter.

A faint but very real sound came from the Devil King Warden Rod as if it was slowly chewing.

Gu Qing Shan ignored it and put it away.

Zhao Kuan was dead.

Gu Qing Shan searched him but didn't find anything resembling an Inventory Bag.

Only a jade disk and a formation plate that was carefully hidden by Zhao Kuan on his body.

The formation plate looked exactly the same as the Primordial Heaven Realm warp formation plate that Gu Qing Shan had.

Gu Qing Shan looked at the jade disk.

Seems like this is the Heavenly Palace sect master's jade disk.

So this was how Shen Yang obtained the jade disk and the warp formation plate all those years ago.

But he must've gone through a much harder battle.

While Gu Qing Shan was thinking about that, a roar came from the faraway space vortex.

Glorious golden light illuminated the void, gradually coming closer from the faraway space vortex.

That was a Divinity's pressure!

Gu Qing Shan glanced at Zhao Kuan's body.

Zhao Kuan's corpse must have something to do with the Divinities' pursuit.

When Gu Qing Shan was about to throw the corpse away into the space vortex, he saw a sword fly in from the void, landing on the ground.

The Earth sword.

「 Shen Yang, well done, hurry and grab me, I'll take you away! 」

The Earth sword's heavy mountainous voice came.

Gu Qing Shan couldn't help but grab the Earth sword.

A second later, everything faded.

Chapter 737

Gu Qing Shan opened his eyes.

He found himself standing in the middle of a ruin.

Everything around him were destroyed structures and buildings, from the foot of the mountain where he stood all the way to the top of the mountain.

A few palace structures that still haven't collapsed were still glowing with a beautiful and gorgeous light, but not at all tacky, it was quite obvious that they were surrounded by a simple vacuuming formation.

A vacuuming formation could function as long as there was energy in the air to absorb, so they can last a very long time through the years.

Gu Qing Shan pulled back his gaze.

At some point, a young man was already standing in front of him, watching him.

"Excuse me—" Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist.

"No need no ask, I'm the Spirit Tortoise, you don't recognize me?" the young man said.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at the tortoise shell on his back and nodded: "Senior—"

The young man cut him off: "What 'senior', I'm only 150,000 years old. I'm still very young, you can call me Young Man Tortoise— or Young Tortoise for short"

Gu Qing Shan: "..."

Young Tortoise threw something at him.

"You did quite well, even better than Shen Yang, so you passed the trial and obtained the disciple jade disk" Young Tortoise told him.

Gu Qing Shan looked at the jade disk in his hands.

The jade disk was giving off incredible spirit energy, manifesting as a faint white mist that drifted from his hand.

The disk itself was crafted in quite a peculiar shape, almost like a half-broken rune.

"Go, no need to look at it too closely. Because you've passed the trial to join the sect, you may now begin to cultivate as a disciple of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace" Young Tortoise said.

"Cultivate?" Gu Qing Shan was surprised, "but I came here to look for the Heaven Sword"

“I know” Young Tortoise looked at him with eyes full of implications: “You are still too weak, as you currently are, you wouldn’t be able to obtain the Heaven Sword, so you must cultivate first”

“For cultivators who returned to the Heavenly Palace like yourself, this is actually a considerable once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, as you will be able to practice the great scriptures of that era and quickly become stronger”

“Then what realm should I reach in order to search for the Heaven Sword?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

“Since that is a disciple jade disk, you would naturally need to become the most outstanding disciple during that era to be qualified to search for the Heaven Sword” Young Tortoise told him.

He reached his hand out and lightly tapped the jade disk.

An invisible wave spread from the disk all around.

Young Tortoise explained: “Keep in mind, although it is only a piece of the phantom image of the Age of Old, the Laws of the worlds are interlinked, the cultivation that you obtain inside can be brought back to this era”

“What should I do? Do I only need to cultivate myself?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

Young Tortoise shook his head and grinned: “First you have to get into the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace”

“You mean I might not necessarily get to enter the Heavenly Palace?” Gu Qing Shan asked doubtfully.

Young Tortoise casually told him: “You will get a chance to find the Heaven Sword even if you enter other sects— — — don’t worry, even if you don’t obtain the qualifications to search for the Heaven Sword, you would still obtain a lot from this experience”

As Gu Qing Shan was about to ask something else, a bright light came from the jade disk.

It brought Gu Qing Shan into the void of space and gradually faded away.

...

Spirit energy gently washed over the body like a refreshing breeze of wind.

The mountains were thick, layers stacked upon layers of greenery filled the scene, a small bridge stretched across the calm lake as a thin layer of mist drifted above it.

A ray of morning light shined from above.

Countless children wearing clean and neat clothes were lined up on the mountain path, waiting to be chosen by a sect.

Every child here would obtain the right to cultivate.

Even if someone was born without the necessary spirit roots to do so, Divinities would grant them miracle herbs to grow a spirit root in themselves that can harmonize and connect with the 5 Elements.

No life would be wasted.

The Divinities required a large number of people to fight their wars, and humans craved to become stronger.

This was the best era.

Gu Qing Shan opened his palm and looked down.

He didn't know whether to laugh or cry.

The skin of his hands was soft and white as if they had never even touched cold water.

And in fact, he was currently in a child's body, about 6-7 years old.

He was currently standing together with other children, waiting to be selected by a sect.

His cultivation returned to zero.

His current self could only faintly sense scattered strands of spirit energy in the air.

His Dantian was completely empty.

Fortunately, my Thaumaturgy and my swords are still here.

My memories as well as battle experience haven't been taken away.

During this miraculous experience, it's a good thing that my core still remains the same.

Gu Qing Shan silently stood with the other children, waiting for time to pass.

Not too long later.

Someone shouted: "Group 59, enter the Daoist Hall"

Gu Qing Shan followed the group of children neatly and orderly inside the Daoist Hall.

As soon as he came in, his eyes were opened wide.

The entire Daoist Hall was extremely spacious, easily enough for thousands of people to stand.

The yard at the center was left empty to let the children come up and test their aptitude.

The sects took up various spaces for themselves around the large venue.

Numerous 5-coloured clouds floated in the sky above, easily over a hundred of them at a glance.

The clouds were hovering in place without moving.

A cultivator smiled at the children and spoke in a gentle voice: "From left to right, step forward in order, one by one"

Everyone looked towards the first children on the left.

Having never been showered with so much attention before, the child gulped nervously, unable to step forward even after a while.

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Finally, at the urging of the cultivators, he slowly came up and stood in the middle of the yard.

Very quickly, one of the 5-coloured clouds gave off a light that enveloped the child.

A few moments later.

A short staff descended from the sky, floating lightly next to the child.

The elders of the sect glanced at him with open eyes.

One of the elders smiled and gestured to the child: "Come, child, you have received the Spirit Summoning Wand of my sect, you will become a Spirit Master in the future"

The child took the short staff and joyfully ran towards the old man.

Following him, a second child stepped up.

When he stood in the yard, items descended from three clouds.

A cane, a short Blade and a fan.

Three elders looked at him tentatively.

The young boy was a bit surprised, not sure which one to choose.

The cultivator in charge of the ceremony suggested: "You are free to pick the one you like best"

The young boy grabbed the Blade and happily swung it around.

The cane and the fan flew back to the sky, into their original clouds.

An old man declared: "Come, you've received the ceremonial Blade of our sect, from now on, you will be our sect's disciple"

The boy ran with the Blade towards that elder.

The ceremony continued.

The third child came up.

He was surrounded by 8 formation plates and only chose one of them after a long while of thought.

Another elder received him.

The fourth child was a young girl.

When she stepped into the center of the yard, a bright indigo glow came from her body.

Several dozen clouds gave off light at the same time, pointing at her.

Almost 60 treasure tools descended at once, silently floating in front of her.

The elders of the sect whispered in discussion.

They began to argue on who this girl should belong to.

The cultivator in charge was clearly experienced as he asked the girl: “You may now choose—— do you have a sect that you wish to join?”

The girl nodded: “Profound Water Gate”

Profound Water Gate was the sect with the strongest Water Elemental techniques, a highly renowned sect that once received the teachings of the Water God themselves.

The discussions quieted down.

A beauty in ancient palace garbs smiled and waved at the girl.

The young girl glanced at the cultivator in charge to ask for permission before joyfully running towards the woman.

The fifth child stepped forward.

11 clouds gave off light that shined on him, then several armoured gauntlets descended from the sky, hovering in front of him.

This showed that he was talented with martial arts.

The boy carefully chose a flaming light red gauntlet.

Right away, the rest of the gauntlets returned to their clouds.

A muscular man stepped out to bring the boy back to his sect.

And then it was Gu Qing Shan’s turn.

He silently stepped forward and stopped in the center of the yard.

A mystical presence manifested in between heaven and earth.

This invisible presence silently went between his eyebrows, searching for something.

As Gu Qing Shan felt this presence, he felt curious.

There was no such advanced method in the future to directly pinpoint what would suit someone best like this.

The Spirit Tortoise said that it didn’t matter what sect I joined, as I would have the chance to search for the Heaven Sword either way.

But from what I saw in the trial, the Heavenly Palace’s sect master was a powerful sword cultivator.

Enough that he won by half an exchange against a Divinity...

Gu Qing Shan looked up at the sky, seeing the countless hovering 5-coloured lights.

Come, give me a sword.

Gu Qing Shan silently stared at the clouds and thought that to himself.

One second later, several hundred clouds trembled at once.

A sword suddenly came down from the clouds, silently standing in front of Gu Qing Shan.

The sword was giving off a faint vibration.

This seemed to act as a signal.

Sword after sword shot down from the clouds, hovering in front of Gu Qing Shan.

A few moments later.

Something completely unbelievable happened.

An innumerable amount of swords lined up, surrounding Gu Qing Shan, forming several layered circles that encircled him inside.

There were almost a thousand swords there.

They were all vibrating faintly as if wishing for Gu Qing Shan to choose them.

The children still waiting were already completely flustered.

The elders of every sect stood up.

The cultivator in charge regained his calm and asked: "Child, which sect do you wish to join?"

Gu Qing Shan muttered: "Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace"

Chapter 738

"Yes, I want to join the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace"

Gu Qing Shan once again confirmed.

He was currently a young child so his voice was clear and pure, easily heard by everyone in the area.

The cultivator in charge smiled: "You sure know how to choose, Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace is the number one sect in the Heaven realm, one highly favored by the Divinities"

He turned a certain direction and asked: "What does the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace think?"

The others also turned to look.

In front of everyone, an old man in white stood up and joyfully spoke: "He was able to call upon thousands of swords, enough to show a pure heart and excellent talent with the sword. Of course, our Heavenly Palace wouldn't object"

Shill!

A sword flew over and went into Gu Qing Shan's hands.

The rest of the swords vibrated unwillingly, but quickly flew back to the sky into their clouds.

The old man gestured to Gu Qing Shan: "Come child, from today onwards, you will be a disciple of our Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace"

Gu Qing Shan took the sword and walked behind the old man.

Several other children were already sitting on the ground here, curiously looking at him.

They were all new disciples during this generation of the sect.

Gu Qing Shan opened his mouth a bit, then closed it again.

He knew how to act like an uncle to calm the children down.

But he already forgot a long time ago how to talk to other children as equals.

Should I try and act cute or something?

He thought briefly before silently shaking his head.

So he randomly found an empty spot on the ground, sat there like the rest of them, and said nothing.

The other children's voices came by.

"Big brother Zhao, he seems quite impressive" a nervous voice spoke.

"What's to be afraid of, he doesn't eat people, though he is a bit irritating" another envious voice spoke.

"Ah, hm"

"Don't worry, this Zhao Kuan will look after you, timid Huang Er Lang¹"

"My father already changed my name, I'm now called Huang Zhan"

"Alright, Huang Zhan, from now on, I'll protect you in the sect, it's because I'm your big brother"

"Thank you, big brother, Zhao, but I won't randomly cause you trouble"

"Stupid, even if you cause trouble, it'll be others who will be afraid of you"

"Ah, hm"

Gu Qing Shan silently opened his eyes and closed it again.

The sky slowly went dark.

The sect selection ceremony slowly came to an end.

The elders of the sect greeted each other before putting out their airships to bring the new disciples back to the sect.

When the airship got close to Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's area, the children were all excited.

They could see the various palace structures from afar.

And today, they would become a part of this renowned great sect.

Gu Qing Shan looked in the sky.

The light of various airships could be seen flying in as well.

Those airships also carried many young children.

Gu Qing Shan crudely estimated and found that there were at least 200-300 children in total.

But that was only a current number, as Gu Qing Shan was counting, more ships could be seen approaching from other directions as well.

Despite Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's strict requirements, the fact that there are so many new disciples joining them at once really showed just how prosperous humanity was in this era.

Airship after airship approached the outer gate of the Heavenly Palace and floated in the air.

The elder stood at the front of the ship, explaining to the children: "Once everyone arrives, you will all enter the sect together"

"Excuse me elder, will we be cultivating in the Heavenly Palace from now on?" Zhao Kuan stepped forward and briskly asked.

The children all looked at the elder expectantly.

The elder thought of something and chuckled, telling them: "The Heavenly Palace is the center of the sect, it normally isn't open for normal disciples"

Zhao Kuan doubtfully asked: "Then we—"

The elder told him: "There are still a few ships that haven't returned, once everyone arrives, I'll explain"

Zhao Kuan tactfully went quiet and went back among the children.

They obediently stayed on the ship, hovering in the sky.

Time passed.

Occasionally, an airship would fly in from afar, also floating in the sky, silently waiting for the ones that haven't returned.

It was already nighttime.

The sky was filled with glittering stars.

The night wind was hushed and silent.

Until a final streak of light flew in from afar.

Every airship has now returned.

An elder flew to the air and reported: "Palace Master, all the airships have returned, we have accepted a total of 759 new disciples this time"

Two breaths of time later.

A dignified male voice resounded in the air: “Open the Heaven’s Grotto¹”

“As the Palace Master wills” the old man responded.

Their conversation echoed across the heavy darkness, resounding far.

The children all listened, but were all puzzled, unable to understand what they were talking about.

But soon, they saw something that they would never forget for the rest of their lives.

In the sky, the faint light of the stars glittered.

But the heavy shroud of darkness was slowly peeling away as if a curtain was being pulled.

Right above the Heavenly Palace, a rapid and restless water stream appeared.

The river flowed past them.

Several dozen mountains were standing atop the river.

Clouds and fog drifted about.

Heavenly beings flew back and forth among the mountain tops.

While it was night time outside, it was day time here.

This looked like something straight out of a dream or imagination.

“A Heaven’s Grotto” Gu Qing Shan muttered.

It turns out another world was hiding above the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

In that world, a beautiful girl flew in from a faraway mountain, landing on top of a mountain nearest to the outside world.

She looked at the children coming from the outside, smiled amiably before she took out an emerald green flute from her waist and pressed it against her lips.

A moment of silence.

Then came the sound of the flute.

At that moment, it was as if no other sound existed in the world, as the only thing left to hear was this lingering graceful tune.

Everyone was mesmerized by the sound of the flute.

Rumble rumble~

Suddenly, countless black shadows took to the air from the airships docked right there, screaming in agony among the sound of the flute.

But the girl didn’t seem to notice it as her song continued.

The wind brought the tune far.

The black shadows struggled and writhe, wanting to escape, but ended up crumbling in the wind, turned to ash, and disappeared without a trace.

A few dozen seconds later.

The tune stopped.

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The girl lowered her flute and reported: "Palace Master, the hidden Desolate Evil Worshipers have been eliminated"

The Palace Master's voice resounded in the void of space: "Well done, you are dismissed"

The girl lightly curtsied as she turned into a streak of light heading to a mountain top obscured within the clouds.

This scene remained unforgettable within the children's hearts.

At this time, the airships that have been waiting so far, rose up at the same time, flying into the Heaven's Grotto.

The ships landed on the river and followed it towards a small island at the center of everything.

The island was completely empty except for several steep staircases of stone at the edge, leading towards the various mountains around.

But since the fog was so thick, quite a few staircases were obscured by the clouds in the middle with no way to see where they led.

The children were all brought to the small island.

Accepting new disciples into the sect was a grand event held once every three years, so the masters of each mountain were already waiting there.

Even the Palace Master himself was there.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at him.

The current Palace Master was quite a bit younger than he was when Gu Qing Shan saw him before, his hair still hasn't turned white and he was still a very dashing man at his prime, one look at him could tell you just how exceptional he is.

No wonder his daughter is also so excellent.

Gu Qing Shan changed his focus and turned to the place next to the Palace Master.

A sword was silently hovering there, but it wasn't the Earth sword.

It seems the Earth sword hasn't been completed yet at this point in time.

Now that the children were now all settled in line, the Palace Master glanced over them and waved his hand.

A cultivator stepped out and stopped at one of the stone staircases.

“Those who obtained an Elementalist treasure tool will go this way, you will stay at Clear Water peak” he loudly called out.

A second cultivator stopped at another staircase and spoke: “Those who obtained armour and gauntlet-type treasure tools, go on this staircase to Ancient Dawn peak”

Various other cultivators quickly made their ways to each staircases and explained to the children.

“Those who obtained spirit summoner tools, walk up this staircase, you still stay at Spirit Echo peak”

“Those who obtained Blades, bows, swords, staves and other weapons, walk this way up Perching Cloud peak”

“Those who obtained musical instruments, come up this way and head to Fine Sound peak”

“Those who obtained formation plates, pill furnaces, coins, talisman pens, hammers and cooking tools, come here to Grey Crane peak”

“The above are the six Peaks of Barren Cloud, each of you will have to make your way up on your own. You can now form teams to climb up the peaks together”

Hearing that, children quickly gathered at the stairs according to the items they received during the test.

While lining up, Gu Qing Shan looked outside the small island.

Besides this island being used as a relay area, there were a total of 7 mountains.

But the cultivators only mentioned 6 peaks just now, no one mentioned anything about the remaining largest mountain.

So he asked the elder who led him here.

The elder smiled: “That largest peak is the Barren Cloud Palace Master’s peak, only the Palace Master and his disciples can climb up”

Gu Qing Shan silently thought about it.

Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

This sect that I’ve joined is actually Shifu’s original sect.

Shifu had already come to the Heavenly Palace to learn techniques and spells of the sect.

Not to mention, the Barren Cloud Palace Master was actually Shifu’s father, in other words, my Grand Shifu.

But if taking the heritage into account, Shifu is the sect master of who knows how many generations later, so the Barren Cloud Palace Master could actually count as my founding ancestor instead.

A bit complicated.

But obviously, to learn and cultivate techniques of the sect, I had to join the sect from the very beginning again, so this shouldn't count as overstepping.

With that in mind, Gu Qing Shan went straight towards the Barren Cloud Palace Master.

The cultivators had already noticed his actions while he was halfway there.

But since the Palace Master didn't say anything, no one tried to stop him.

Soon enough, the children also noticed what was happening.

They all stopped their feet, looking at Gu Qing Shan in disbelief.

Gu Qing Shan came in front of the Barren Cloud Palace Master and solemnly bowed to him.

"What's the matter" the Barren Cloud Palace Master asked him.

"Please take me as your disciple" Gu Qing Shan spoke sincerely.

The Barren Cloud Palace Master silently looked at him, then his expression changed slightly.

Obviously, someone was reporting Gu Qing Shan's situation to him.

Every other peak master was also told the same, so they prepared themselves to watch what would unfold.

It wasn't common for a child to be this brave.

And this one was actually a very talented one.

So they all wanted to see how the Palace Master will deal with this.

The Barren Cloud Palace Master asked: "Why should I take you as my disciple?"

Gu Qing Shan answered: "Because I want to become the strongest sword cultivator of my generation"

The Barren Cloud Palace Master asked: "What does that have to do with asking me to be your master?"

Gu Qing Shan responded: "You have a sword with you, so you are obviously a sword cultivator. Furthermore, as you are the Palace Master, it is clear that your swordsmanship must be above all else to be able to stand above others and reach where you are"

"So it can't be wrong to learn the sword from you"

The Barren Cloud Palace Master slightly nodded: "You said you wanted to become the strongest sword cultivator, why not the strongest cultivator?"

Gu Qing Shan replied: "The world is vast and talented individuals are many, I cannot claim myself to be the best in the world"

The Barren Cloud Palace Master once again nodded and asked: "To want and to do are two very different things. The path of a sword cultivator isn't a simple one, if I take you in and you aren't able to achieve anything, wouldn't that be a waste of my teachings?"

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: "In the future, if there ever comes a day where I am no longer the number one sword cultivator among my peers in the sect, I will cripple my own cultivation and leave the sect, may the heaven and earth be my witness"

Oom!

A sudden rumble of thunder.

A vow to heaven and earth was made.

Everyone's expressions changed.

Even the Barren Cloud Palace Master felt moved.

The one who made the vow was only a child, but this child already had a spirit root that can connect to the natural spirit energy of the world, he just hasn't started his cultivation.

So his vow was accepted by the Laws of heaven and earth.

The six peak masters looked at Gu Qing Shan with shocked expressions.

From now onwards, if he couldn't maintain his strength as the number one swordsman in the sect, he must cripple his own cultivation and leave the sect, becoming a useless person.

This was a vow to heaven and earth, one that cannot be violated, otherwise, Heaven's Punishment would strike from above, killing you on the spot, not even leaving your soul intact.

This child had just willingly put himself onto a path of no return, a rare decisiveness even among established cultivators, and a clear display of his spirit, fitting that of a sword cultivator.

For the first time, the Barren Cloud Palace Master seriously observed Gu Qing Shan.

He muses: "Then I ask you, why do you want to learn swordsmanship? Do you wish to become famous and renowned across the world, to fight back against the Desolate world's monsters, to help Divinity solve their problems, or do you wish to become liberated, no longer bound to anything?"

Gu Qing Shan went silent for a moment.

I'm still only a child, so being able to say this much is already displaying unprecedented talents and an unwavering Dao heart.

But if I say anything deeper, it would instead raise suspicions.

But I can't lie either since all the cultivators here are extremely powerful, even the slightest peculiarity will cause their spirit senses to react.

So to answer this question, I need to say my purest and truest desire.

Thinking that, Gu Qing Shan said simply: "To put down any injustice I see with my sword"

Silence, all around.

The peak masters exchanged glances.

The Barren Cloud Palace Master looked up in thought for a few moments and finally uttered a single word: "Kneel"

Gu Qing Shan then knelt down in front of him and bowed: "Master, please accept your disciple's bow"

The Barren Cloud Palace Master looked at him and spoke: "A pure mind, an unwavering heart, a child like you is indeed rare. Today I will take you as my disciple, in hope that one day you will reach your Dao, to put all injustice down for Humanity"

"As Master wishes" Gu Qing Shan replied.

Chapter 739

5 years later.

Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

In the main palace, the Palace Master was in a meeting with the 6 peak masters.

"The situation at the frontline is currently very tense, most of the equipment there are heavily damaged, so the Divinities have requested us to quickly forge a great amount of armour and weapons to replenish supplies" the Palace Master spoke.

"Leave it to our Grey Crane peak" one of the peak masters spoke.

Grey Crane peak's disciples were experts at the 6 arts, so normally supplies were left to them.

The Palace Master nodded: "That's good to hear. Additionally, we've obtained intelligence that the Desolate world has recently dispatched a group of Nether Soul Demons. To prevent them from infiltrating our bases, our sound cultivators will need to be sent to the frontlines"

The peak masters all glanced at a certain girl.

The girl was sitting cross-legged on her chair with an emerald green flute in her hand.

She was the current Fine Sound peak master, Luo Bing Li.

The one who played to flute to dispel the evil worshippers when new disciples entered the sect 5 years ago was her.

Luo Bing Li smiled: "No problem, leave it to me"

The Palace Master asked: "How many people are you going to bring?"

Luo Bing Li thought briefly: "I'll bring five people, that should be enough"

The Palace Master shook his head: "Sound cultivators are rare and few in number, raising even one of them takes a lot of effort, you don't need to bring so many"

Luo Bing Li replied: "Then I will bring only two"

The Palace Master nodded.

He then turned to a cultivator sitting close to him and spoke: "Perching Cloud peak master, bring a group of subordinates with you to accompany Fine Sound peak master, you will be responsible for their safety."

The cultivator grinned: "Please be assured, Palace Master, I will lead a group of my strongest swordsmen and Bladesmen, as well as a few exceptional spear users"

The Palace Master asked: "How many people are you going to bring?"

"Two hundred" Perching Cloud peak master replied.

"Hm, two hundred should be enough, make sure to protect them well"

"Understood"

The Palace Master stood up and told the peak masters: "Good if there is nothing else, today's meeting can end here"

The peak masters exchanged glances.

Clear Water peak master spoke up: "Palace Master, there is one more thing"

"Ah, then go ahead" the Palace Master said.

"It's about the new disciples of 5 years ago. They have joined our sect for 5 years and have been through 4 years of the annual competition, and it will soon be the end of the year, which is time for the 5th year competition" Clear Water peak master explained.

"Isn't it a simple annual occurrence?" the Palace Master appeared surprised.

"The main issue is that recently, some bad rumors have been circulating among most of the peaks about the master peak" Clear Water peak master told him.

There were a total of 7 mountains on top of the river with the 6 other peaks surrounding the master peak in the middle.

And the master peak was where the Barren Cloud Palace Master resides.

All of the sect's crucial scriptures, inheritance treasures as well as the Skyward Path were on this mountain.

"Rumors about the master peak?" the Palace Master scowled and sternly spoke: "Elaborate, what exactly happened?"

"It's actually nothing too serious, just that everyone noticed how the Palace Master's disciple hasn't participated in any competition despite joining the sect for 4 years already, not to mention he doesn't appear in any sect-wide activities as well, so some rumors have appeared" Clear Water peak master explained.

Ancient Dawn peak master added: "The youngsters of our peaks have been practically screaming for the Palace Master's disciple to show up and fight them. If you have some time, please try and convince your disciple to show up for them to quiet down"

The Palace Master's expression loosened.

So that's what it was about.

He asked: "So Gu Qing Shan still hasn't signed up for this year's competition?"

Clear Water peak master replied: "Yes, that's why his cultivator peers have been silently questioning why the Palace Master's disciple keeps hiding himself and refuse to show up"

Ancient Dawn peak master followed up: "Palace Master, please tell Gu Qing Shan to participate at least once, so that those children wouldn't hide unnecessary thoughts about the master peak.

The Palace Master answered: "I will ask him, but I can't guarantee any results"

Then he suddenly chuckled: "As for those rumors, hah, they're still only children, it wouldn't affect the master peak in any way, so there's no need to pay them any mind"

Saying so, the Palace Master disappeared with a wave of his sleeves.

The other peak masters exchanged glances.

"Not even the Palace Master can make that youngster go out and fight?" the Spirit Echo peak master commented in disbelief.

The Ancient Dawn peak master shook his head: "Like I said before, the Palace Master favors his disciple too much. That disciple really should have more contact with his peers, build up trust and relationships through the competition, that way everyone would have nothing to say about this position"

The other peak masters nodded in agreement.

"You think that hasn't happened?" the Fine Sound peak master, Luo Bing Li spoke, "I'm responsible for overseeing the sect, so I have seen Gu Qing Shan travel to and from Grey Crane peak a few times, there are always disciples going after him trying to challenge him to spar, but he always refused them"

The peak masters were all shocked.

He refused them?

Usually, unless the difference in cultivation is too great, no one would refuse to spar with others among their peers.

If someone did, they would be thought of as being fearful.

Not to mention, this type of sparring is also a way for their name to be known.

The more they thought about it, the more the peak masters scowled.

That youngster was the first disciple that the Palace Master took in, so naturally, he's the Eldest Disciple¹ of the sect.

Regardless of how their character or cultivation is, someone in this position would naturally represent every disciple of that sect.

With such a status, even if his cultivation is lacking, he should have already joined the Palace Master in dealing with various matters around the sect, not only to build his abilities but also to accumulate prestige.

But ever since he joined the sect, that youngster hasn't shown up in public at all.

The very few times that he did show up, that youngster would stay for days on end inside the library of Grey Crane peak.

According to the library records, he borrowed quite a few jade tags related to spirit cooking and formation arts.

Since he had the Palace Master's jade disk, no one could stop him.

But is it really fine for a new disciple of the sect who hasn't joined for too long to distract himself this way instead of focusing on training his sword arts?

The Palace Master really does spoil him too much.

The Spirit Echo peak master muses: "Maybe we should find an opportunity to talk some sense into the Palace Master later on, since his eldest disciple will represent the dignity of the sect, as well as the attitude by which our sect nurtures our disciples"

"Indeed"

"That should be the case"

"Let us try and convince the Palace Master next time"

...

Barren Cloud master peak.

Barren Cloud Palace Master, Xie Gu Hong had returned.

He was taking a stroll along the gravel path that led towards the peak of the mountain.

This relaxes him.

Whenever he returned from a meeting, he made it a habit to take a stroll like this for a while.

Suddenly, he stopped and looked up at the sky.

Snow was lightly drifting from above.

It was now the end of another year.

But it wasn't at all a relaxing year.

At the frontlines, more and more Desolate monsters were showing up day by day, and they were also getting stronger, some of them to the point that it was practically impossible to defeat by force.

Even the Divinities were wary of those monsters.

Although this wasn't something that could be openly discussed, Xie Gu Hong believed that the other leading cultivators have already noticed.

That battle was a tragic one.

It took the death of 10 consecutive great cultivators, as well as basically using the weaker cultivators' lives as fodder to swarm the monster to finally kill it.

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Indeed, humanity was becoming more and more prosperous.

But at the same time, the risk they faced was slowly and silently becoming greater.

Xie Gu Hong sighed.

The frontline battle situation, the urging of the Divinities, as well as various matters of the sect, his attention and effort were needed everywhere.

He reached his hand out to catch a snowflake.

I could die at the frontlines at any moment.

All of a sudden, he recalled the matter that the other peak masters mentioned at the end of the meeting.

"Qing Shan"

Xie Gu Hong muttered and disappeared where he stood.

Deep inside the Barren Cloud master peak.

The Sword Abyss.

All of the sect's sword scriptures were kept here.

A teenager sat among the mountain of piled up jade tags with one of them in his hand, silently studying the mystery inside.

Gu Qing Shan.

He had entered a state of deep immersion.

Xie Gu Hong appeared in the void of space in front of him.

At first, Xie Gu Hong waited for a bit, but seeing how Gu Qing Shan didn't react at all, he uttered a light cough.

Gu Qing Shan immediately sensed that.

He opened his eyes.

"Master, you've returned" he stood up and clasped his fist.

"Hm, how has your cultivation been recently?" Xie Gu Hong asked.

“Everything is going smoothly” Gu Qing Shan replied.

Xie Gu Hong tried asking: “Teacher suddenly recalled something, you’ve joined the sect for 5 years already, but you still haven’t sparred with anyone even once, have you?”

“I indeed have not” Gu Qing Shan nodded.

Xie Gu Hong asked: “Why haven’t you sparred with the others?”

Gu Qing Shan seemed confused and replied: “I couldn’t possibly win against the seniors as I am right now, their cultivation is too far ahead”

Xie Gu Hong spoke: “Teacher was talking about your peers”

Gu Qing Shan replied: “Because that’s meaningless. The heaven and earth still haven’t said anything, so I clearly am still number one, fighting with them would just be a waste of time”

Xie Gu Hong was speechless.

This brat once made a vow to heaven and earth, as long as he isn’t the number one sword cultivator he would have to cripple his own cultivation and leave the sect.

Even if he stays here without doing anything.

The heaven and earth are still judging him, constantly proving his abilities.

Xie Gu Hong cleared his throat and said: “During this year’s annual competition, you should consider participating”

Gu Qing Shan hesitated: “Master if I do that, wouldn’t that just be bullying?”

Xie Gu Hong raised his brows.

This brat.

Even while he did nothing, seven swords appeared behind him, floating in the air.

Xie Gu Hong took one of the swords.

“Come, let teacher test you, as the number one sword cultivator of this generation, just what level you’ve achieved”

“Yes, please teach me, Master”

Gu Qing Shan also took out a sword.

Without bowing, he simply leapt forward.

To receive teachings directly from a sword cultivator that could win against a Divinity, Gu Qing Shan has been itching for a very long time.

He held nothing back.

The sword split into two, then into six, finally settling at 36 swords, all giving off an intense glow that slashed towards Xie Gu Hong.

Gu Qing Shan has combined all the sword techniques he knew with everything he had learnt for the past 5 years into one, together with his wealth of battle experience for this one attack.

Xie Gu Hong's eyes lit up.

"It's only been 5 years" he muttered.

His sword swung.

Clang clang clang clang clang.

With a few light swings of his sword, all of Gu Qing Shan's attacks were diverted away.

"Hah!"

Gu Qing Shan suddenly appeared right in front of him as his sword and half his body was a complete blur.

This attack was so fast it couldn't be seen.

Kih!

A sharp clash of metal.

Gu Qing Shan and his swords were sent flying.

Spinning a few times in the air, Gu Qing Shan regained his footing at about 10 feet.

"Alright"

Xie Gu Hong let go of his sword.

Gu Qing Shan reluctantly put his sword away.

He still wanted to spar more.

But if Master had put his sword away, that means the sparring stops here.

Gu Qing Shan looked at the seven swords behind Xie Gu Hong and seriously asked: "Master, have you already surpassed the realm of Sword Saint?"

Xie Gu Hong nodded.

Gu Qing Shan asked doubtfully: "But why do you only have seven swords? With your strength, you can probably manipulate a few hundred swords at once without problem"

Xie Gu Hong replied: "In the past when I achieved Great Attainment as a Sword Saint, I carried 1954 swords with me. But after I surpassed Sword Saint until now, I've ever only used seven swords"

"Why is that?"

"Because once you can completely release the power of your flying swords, you will have to think of how to converge it"

"Converge..." Gu Qing Shan muttered.

He recalled that Ilya told him the same thing back in the hidden world of the Gods below the sea.

Xie Gu Hong nodded: "Indeed, converging is much harder than releasing, when you can converge all of your power into one, turning it into a single sword, that is when your swordsmanship reaches Great Attainment"

"So Master has converged it into seven swords"

"No, I have already converged it into one sword, but I've reached another realm beyond that, so I have seven swords"

Hearing that, Gu Qing Shan gasped in admiration and appeared fascinated.

Seeing his expression, Xie Gu Hong smiled: "Alright, your speed of improvement is already considerably impressive, no need to admire me"

"Yes, Master"

"Continue your cultivation, teacher will leave first"

"Yes"

Xie Gu Hong put the seven swords behind him away and slowly turned to leave.

On his way out, he recalled something and stopped.

He turned and told Gu Qing Shan: "For the next three years, don't go out and bully the others. After three years, I'll give you an official position, you'll be teaching others how to use a sword in Perching Cloud peak"

"As Master wills"

Chapter 740

Although Xie Gu Hong gave Gu Qing Shan three years to continue training his sword skills, things don't always go exactly as planned.

Two years went by.

Today.

Gu Qing Shan was still sitting in the middle of a mountain of jade tags.

His sword was left on the ground next to him.

—this was nothing but a mass-produced sword that belonged to the sect, something Xie Gu Hong gave him so that he could practice his sword skills.

With a jade tag in his hand, Gu Qing Shan currently wasn't in the mood to study sword techniques.

And for some unusual reason, he was spacing out.

7 years ago, the Spirit Tortoise sent him into this time period .

That was the start of everything.

In the last few years, he gradually understood what the Spirit Tortoise told him back then”

「Although this is only a piece of the phantom image of the Age of Old, the Laws of the worlds are interlinked」

Throughout these years, whenever Gu Qing Shan would breakthrough to the next realm, a Heaven’s Tribulation would come.

The devils and fiends of the Age of Old were also in no mood to chat with him.

Since they didn’t know him.

And Gu Qing Shan didn’t need to smile or act polite to them.

He went all out, killing them to his heart’s content.

Erm....

A bit too much to his heart’s content...

To the point that the Devil Kings and Fiend Kings became a bit meek.

Since the Heaven’s Tribulation was almost over and Gu Qing Shan was a bit tired of killing them, plus the fact that he hadn’t had much social contact with anyone for the last few years, he decided to talk a bit with the evil creatures that came for the Tribulation.

And then they all became friends!

The Tribulation ended.

Everyone reluctantly said their goodbyes.

After this Lightning Tribulation, Gu Qing Shan was feeling a lot better.

The evil creatures from the Age of Old were all exceptional, not only can they hold a conversation, but they also liked to gossip and band together to make merry.

From their conversations, Gu Qing Shan learnt quite a bit.

There was one time that Xie Gu Hong came to check on his Lightning Tribulation out of concern.

Then Xie Gu Hong never came again.

After making it through his karmic adversities with great difficulty, Gu Qing Shan had a few days of peace.

Once the karmic adversity was over, he once again reached Virtualized realm.

At which point he noticed a certain thing.

—his real body replaced this young body.

In other words, from Virtualized realm onwards, the one who’s currently in this world is himself, both in body and mind.

All the knowledge, Skills, and Thaumaturgies that he gained from cultivating here can be brought back to his time.

—-*how miraculous.*

What great level must a cultivator reach in order to create such a fragment of time?

Gu Qing Shan couldn't imagine it at all .

At this point, a flame talisman flew in.

A communication talisman.

Gu Qing Shan received and scanned it with his inner sight to hear Xie Gu Hong's voice asking him.

"The ceremony is about to begin, where are you?"

Gu Qing Shan put the jade tag in his hand back where it was.

He stood up and flew out.

7 years.

He has stayed inside the Sword Abyss for 7 years straight.

During these 7 years, Gu Qing Shan hadn't used a single bit of Soul Points.

—-with his understanding of swordsmanship, it wasn't necessary to use Soul Points to comprehend these sword scriptures.

He only needed to read and think about them to understand the contents inside.

And through his studies, he found that sword cultivators from the Age of Old were different from modern sword cultivators.

In the Age of Old, sword cultivators highly emphasized the individual mastery of the sword without paying too much attention to specialized Skills, so the concept of Secret Arts didn't exist.

—-ancient sword cultivators can easily level a mountain and move the sea with a single swing of their sword, an exceptionally powerful sword cultivator can display immense power with every strike, so there was no need for Secret Arts.

But modern cultivators weren't the same.

There was a hard limit to how strong one could become through cultivation, and since they didn't have the ample resources and exceptional cultivation environment of the Age of Old, most sword cultivators began to manifest and create specialized sword techniques that obey the Laws of the world, siphoning its power to display an attack with power far greater than they could manifest on their own.

This was the origin of Secret Arts.

Gu Qing Shan wasn't sure when Secret Arts began to appear.

But he didn't want to bother learning about that either.

This era's swordsmanship had its own mysticism and qualities, enough that Gu Qing Shan had immersed himself in it each and every day.

But he had to halt his cultivation for now.

Because today, the Barren Cloud Palace Master, Xie Gu Hong, would induct two more disciples.

As his Eldest Disciple, Gu Qing Shan must be present to observe the ceremony, perhaps even teach his junior brothers in his Master's stead.

Recalling how he got accepted 7 years ago, Gu Qing Shan couldn't help but sigh.

He leapt out, flying towards the small island in the middle of the seven peaks.

...

The small island in the middle.

All the peak masters were here.

Countless disciples of the Heavenly Palace had gathered.

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Xie Gu Hong was standing in the middle of the field.

In front of them, two adolescent cultivators stood.

Due to the excellence they've shown since they entered the sect through daily cultivation, competitions and trials, their talents and mental fortitude were recognized and earned them the right to be inducted as the Palace Master's disciples.

And now, the disciple induction ceremony would begin.

Gu Qing Shan quickly arrived on the island, landing in front of Xie Gu Hong and respectfully bowed.

Xie Gu Hong asked: "Why are you so late?"

Gu Qing Shan explained: "I was viewing a sword scripture just now, but I made it just in time, didn't I?"

Xie Gu Hong just nodded and said nothing else.

He knew very well how obsessive Gu Qing Shan can be while learning swordsmanship.

Sometimes, even if he came back or left, Gu Qing Shan wouldn't even notice.

While Xie Gu Hong casually let that slide, the same couldn't be said for the peak masters and the other disciples.

Everyone was in a somewhat inexplicable mood.

Because Gu Qing Shan was the Eldest Disciple, this ceremony was supposed to be hosted by him.

But he almost arrived late.

Because he was studying sword scripture!?

While the peak masters only silently scowled, the disciples were clearly dissatisfied.

“Very well, let us begin”

Xie Gu Hong ordered.

Gu Qing Shan came forward and began to recite the two disciples’ backgrounds, experiences, and achievements.

While reciting what was written, he glanced at the two disciples kneeling on the ground.

Huang Zhan.

Shen Yang.

— — *Zhao Kuan isn’t here.*

Seems like I already replaced Zhao Kuan’s position.

The ceremony proceeded as tradition dictated.

Once Gu Qing Shan finished reciting, it was time for the exceptional disciples of the sect to present their commendations to the peak masters.

After accepting the commendations, the peak masters praised the two disciples’ virtues and qualities, then reported it to the Barren Cloud Palace Master.

After receiving their reports, the Palace Master personally asked Huang Zhan and Shen Yang if they were willing to be inducted.

Naturally, the two of them expressed willingness and got accepted as his disciples. As the one responsible for the ceremony, the Eldest Disciple Gu Qing Shan took out the inheritance jade tag of the sect and recorded the induction of two more disciples under the Palace Master .

At this point, Xie Gu Hong began to give a speech to the two disciples on what to pay attention to on a daily basis, how to lead the other disciples, and how to become good role models...

Listening to this, Gu Qing Shan commented in his mind.

So the process of becoming a disciple of the Palace Master was this complicated— — and the two of them had to display their excellence for 7 years.

It seems like what I did on a whim back then was correct, it saved me a lot of trouble.

While he was thinking that the surrounding became silent.

“Your turn” Xie Gu Hong sent his voice to remind him.

Gu Qing Shan regained his sense.

Ah right, as the Eldest Disciple, it’s my turn to encourage my two junior brothers.

He came forward and looked at Huang Zhan and Shen Yang.

They were still only teenagers so they were anxious and stiff, Huang Zhan's legs were still trembling.

Gu Qing Shan nodded to the two of them: "Cultivate well from now on"

After waiting for a long while more, both Huang Zhan and Shen Yang didn't hear Gu Qing Shan say anything else.

Is that... it?

The two of them quickly clasped their fist and loudly declared: "We shall follow Eldest brother's teachings"

"Hm"

Gu Qing Shan lightly said and returned to stand by Xie Gu Hong.

The others were also waiting for him to show more but only got to hear a few words.

An even more explicable mood filled the venue.

The ceremony ended here.

Xie Gu Hong then started to arrange for his three disciples.

"Alright, everyone is dismissed"

"Huang Zhan, Shen Yang, follow your First brother back to the Barren Cloud master peak, I will be out for the next three months, so your First brother will be responsible for teaching you"

"Yes!" the two new disciples both replied.

The disciples of the peaks who were just getting ready to return all froze.

Gu Qing Shan will be responsible for teaching these two excellent disciples?

Him?

A disciple who hasn't shown up once in 7 years?

A sword cultivator who refuses every challenge directed his way so far?

A disciple who hasn't even signed up even once for the sect's competition?

HE will be responsible for teaching Huang Zhan and Shen Yang?

If he messes anything up, wouldn't that be two wasted talents!?

The crowd became rowdy.

A crimson figure jumped down from Ancient Dawn peak, landing on the small island.

It was a muscular, burly teenager.

He clasped his fist: "Sect Eldest Disciple Gu Qing Shan, I am the current strongest martial cultivator of Ancient Dawn peak. I hereby challenge you, if you dare to accept—"

Gu Qing Shan looked at him.

The teenager felt his vision darken and fainted.

Chapter 741

After a grand declaration, the martial cultivator teenager suddenly collapsed and fainted.

An elder quickly came over to check him.

“He’s fine, his soul vessel was a bit shaken so he fell unconscious” he reported.

The cultivators around all sighed in relief.

But the peak masters’ gaze looking at Gu Qing Shan was no longer the same as before.

They were experienced and knowledgeable enough to notice the tsunami of invisible sword spirit in the air.

But the other disciples were too inexperienced to know what happened.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at Xie Gu Hong.

Xie Gu Hong kept quiet.

Gu Qing Shan cleared his throat and declared with a calm and gradual voice: “The Palace Master’s disciple induction ceremony is one of our sect’s most sacred ceremonies, according to our customs, it is never to be violated. Seeing how today was your first violation and you had reasons for your actions, I sentence you to three months of seclusion. Carry him away”

Two enforcer cultivators stepped forward and carried the martial cultivator disciple away.

The surrounding disciples were still completely clueless as to what happened.

What happened just now was too out of this world, and with how inexperienced they were, they couldn’t even imagine such a thing was possible.

Their cultivations were still shallow so they couldn’t tell how terrifying the density of sword spirit converged in that split second just now.

All they saw was that a disciple who tried to issue a challenge suddenly collapsed.

And then Gu Qing Shan issued him a punishment.

And so...

That was a martial cultivator, why did he just collapse while talking?

Was that a stooge who purposefully acted that way so that Gu Qing Shan guy could gain prestige in front of everyone?

Or did an elder silently act?

The disciples all felt resentful.

How could the Eldest Disciple of the sect be that sheltered?

This way, who would ever listen to him from now on?

Various disciples of the Perching Cloud peak exchanged glances and nodded.

They all leapt onto the small island in the middle.

Over ten other martial cultivators of Ancient Dawn peak also leapt out and landed on the small island.

Disciples of Spirit Echo peak turned into mist and reappeared on the small island.

Disciples of Clear Water peak surfed the water to gracefully board the small island.

Since there weren't too many disciples in Fine Sound peak, they didn't move out just yet, but the sound of instruments playing could be clearly heard, displaying their dissatisfaction.

A crowd of disciples gathered.

They ignored the expressions of their own peak masters and spoke in unison: "Eldest Disciple of the sect, Gu Qing Shan, we issue you a challenge"

Gu Qing Shan looked at them all and sighed.

They're still only teenagers barely old enough to attend high school, do I really have to be petty with them?

He glanced at the crowd.

Wherever his gaze swept through, the overwhelming invisible sword spirit easily shook the minds of these youths.

They all felt their minds became blank before falling unconscious.

A single breath's worth of time.

The world returned to silence.

Everyone looked at Gu Qing Shan like they were looking at some sort of monster.

Gu Qing Shan looked again at the unconscious disciples and shook his head: "They're all sentenced by 3 months of seclusion, if they cause another ruckus, strip them of their cultivation and expel them from the sect. Does Master want to add anything else?"

Xie Gu Hong answered: "That will be fine"

"Yes" Gu Qing Shan replied.

"Qing Shan, things are done here, bring your two junior brothers back to the master peak, I'll come by later" Xie Gu Hong told him.

Gu Qing Shan then brought Huang Zhan and Shen Yang back to Barren Cloud master peak.

The only people left on the small island were the Barren Cloud Palace Master, the peak masters and the elders.

No one said anything.

Xie Gu Hong glanced around and cleared his throat: "I heard that the peaks are somewhat dissatisfied with how I teach my disciple"

Everyone was quiet.

Xie Gu Hong continued: "All of you are peak masters and elders, if you have free time, spend it to care for your disciples and teach them not to be so reckless. So quick to violate the sect's rules just to end up unconscious without even figuring out how strong their opponent was"

Still, no one replied.

Xie Gu Hong sighed: "A few hundred years ago, you all couldn't cultivate as well as I did, a few hundred years later, I can't believe you'd teach your disciples with the same carelessness, hah"

He swung his sleeve and leapt into the sky, quickly disappearing without a trace.

On the small island, everyone still stayed quiet, but the atmosphere was tensed to its limits.

...

Barren Cloud master peak.

The three disciples arrived at the grand hall on top of the peak, sat down in a circle and chatted.

They would need to wait here until the Palace Master returns to arrange the specifics.

Huang Zhan looked at Gu Qing Shan in awe, asking: "Eldest brother, how are you so strong?"

Gu Qing Shan replied: "As long as you focus yourself on cultivating, you'll be able to reach this point in no time"

Huang Zhan replied: "But I'm already very focused. Besides the days when we have to socialize with the other peaks, I'm always cultivating"

Gu Qing Shan replied: "I've stayed in the Sword Abyss for 7 years straight, besides going to other peaks to look for jade tags, I've never left the master peak"

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang both opened their mouths wide and gasped.

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This was the first time they've heard that someone could cultivate diligently to this degree.

For them, nothing was impossible for someone who could push themselves that hard.

But what they didn't know was that, for Gu Qing Shan, taking that much time just to return to Virtualized realm was already very slow.

This time, Gu Qing Shan made sure that he cultivated slowly.

Because he had a lot of time.

And also because being too exceptional was a cause for suspicion.

The Laws of this world were the same now as they were in the future, so if he cultivated too quickly in front of Xie Gu Hong, he might instead become suspicious.

So Gu Qing Shan has been carefully maintaining a natural pace of cultivation and breakthrough so that even if someone tried to observe him, they would only find that he naturally broke through as anyone should in his circumstances.

At this point, Xie Gu Hong returned to the master peak with a refreshed body and mind.

He told the three of them.

“Qing Shan, since you’ve revealed your cultivation today, there’s no need for you to stay in seclusion constantly anymore”

“Your cultivation has surpassed others of your peers by 4 to 5 realms, which should be more than enough to teach your two junior brothers”

He then threw a jade disk out.

Gu Qing Shan caught it.

“This is the sect master’s jade disk, while I’m not here, you can use my jade disk to go to any of the peaks to find and use any cultivation resources or scripture necessary for your junior brothers”

“Yes, Master, where are you going?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

Xie Gu Hong replied: “I need to go to the frontlines, you should already know the strange occurrences at the frontlines already. I want to take a look myself to make sure that the information we received was correct”

He then spoke with a serious tone: “Take good care of your junior brothers for teacher”

“As Master wills” Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist with a solemn attitude.

Xie Gu Hong nodded.

He then told Huang Zhan and Shen Yang a few more things in detail.

Once everything was taken care of, Xie Gu Hong disappeared from the grand hall.

Once Xie Gu Hong left, Gu Qing Shan led Huang Zhan and Shen Yang to the outside of the Sword Abyss.

The Sword Abyss looked like a simple mountain valley, but as you enter, you will need to pass through layers after layers of formations before descending over several hundred miles of cliffs before reaching where the sect’s sword scriptures were stored.

Gu Qing Shan stood outside the valley and pointed at the two cultivation chambers next to the entrance of the valley.

“Master and I spent some time to create these two cultivation chambers outside of the Sword Abyss, one of them suitable for spell cultivation while the other is suitable for martial cultivation, this way, us three brothers will be able to cultivate in the same place”

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang lightly nodded.

Gu Qing Shan clapped his hand: "Very well, now go and cultivate. If there is anything you don't understand, or if you need any resources, come into the Sword Abyss and inform me. I need to go cultivate now as well"

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang looked blankly at each other.

We just got to the master peak and we're just going to directly cultivate without doing anything else?

Gu Qing Shan continued: "One day later, I'll test your strength, then come up with suitable methods for you to better cultivate"

Huang Zhan couldn't help but ask: "Eldest brother, why one day later?"

Gu Qing Shan spoke embarrassed: "I have a sword scripture that I've only read halfway, I can't help but finish the rest of it today otherwise I won't be able to think about your matters"

Shen Yang spoke up: "But Eldest brother, you have to at least show us to our rooms, otherwise we wouldn't know where to rest tonight"

Gu Qing Shan was a bit surprised and told him: "If you're tired, just rest inside the cultivation chambers"

Shen Yang went quiet thinking about the meaning of his words.

Huang Zhan, on the other hand, carefully asked: "Eldest brother, could it be that the Master never gave you a place to rest all this time?"

Gu Qing Shan replied: "Ah, that's too troublesome, I'd rather just stay in the Sword Abyss. I can cultivate whenever I can, if I'm tired I'll just sit down and rest, it's great. Master eventually also thought that to be great, so we never bothered"

Huang Zhan cut him off: "Which means, Eldest brother has been staying inside the Sword Abyss for 7 years?"

"7 years and 8 days" Gu Qing Shan replied.

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang turned to look at the mountain valley.

From where they stood, they saw nothing in there but mountains after mountains of sword scripture jade tags, all the way to the end of one's sight.

Eldest brother stayed there for 7 years, doing nothing else but cultivating.

Gu Qing Shan said: "Alright, go and cultivate in your chambers, I'll be studying my sword scripture now, see you after one day"

He then headed into the valley.

"Wait a minute, Eldest Brother" Shen Yang called out.

Gu Qing Shan stopped, turned around, and asked: "Is there anything else?"

Shen Yang took a deep breath and asked doubtfully: “Eldest brother’s cultivation has far surpassed others in the same generation. You should already be the number one cultivator of this generation both in name and in truth, so why are you still cultivating so painstakingly?”

Gu Qing Shan chuckled at this question.

“Alright then, let me teach the two of you the first cultivation lesson in place of our Master” he said.

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang both clasped their fist and bowed respectfully: “Please teach us, Eldest brother”

Gu Qing Shan stood and fell into thought briefly.

He suddenly asked: “Do you know about what happened at the frontlines?”

Huang Zhan’s eyes appeared a bit shaken as he spoke: “I heard that the war situation is getting desperate. A Divinity went missing, most people assume that he was surrounded and slain by Desolate monsters”

Shen Yang also chimed in with a heavy voice: “This was the first time that a Divinity had died in battle, so the great sects are currently in shock and panic”

Gu Qing Shan smiled: “Indeed, this time’s matter was certainly shocking, it had such a heavy impact that Master had to travel to the frontlines to investigate the truth”

“Regardless of the truth of this matter, what I want to teach you is how this could affect you”

He stepped forward and patted his junior brothers on their shoulders: “Try and imagine, 10 years later, the Desolate world suddenly defeats the Divinities, and the Divinities can no longer save anybody but themselves, all your family members are killed by the monsters, your closest friends and allies in the sect were massacred, even the girl you like was treated and eaten like food. But when you want to take revenge, you found that you couldn’t save anyone with your measly strength, even when you disregarded your own life and fought with everything you have, you still end up being killed by a single slap of the monster”

Gu Qing Shan’s tone below slow as he continued: “At the very moment of your death, suddenly someone told you that you can live your life again, that you can return to this exact point 10 years ago, when you had just been inducted as Master’s disciple, to this point where you’re listening to me talking”

“And then you found that you really did return, you really did get another chance”

“Tell me, how do you intend to live this time around?”

Chapter 742

One month later.

Barren Cloud master peak.

Outside of the Sword Abyss, on the great tree next to the valley.

Gu Qing Shan was lying on one of the tree’s branches.

His eyes were closed with a jade tag in his hand.

Occasionally, he would squint, then smile, apparently studying the mystical knowledge inside the jade tag.

A few moments later.

He placed the jade tag in his hand down and stopped studying it with his inner sight.

Apparently, he had finished today's cultivation and was about to take a nap.

However, when he seemed to be asleep, he suddenly took out a gourd, opened it, and took a large swig of the liquor inside.

"This time of the day is always the most relaxing huh"

Gu Qing Shan muttered to himself.

He then put the gourd of liquor away and fixed his posture a bit to sleep more comfortably.

Below the great tree.

Gusts of sword-infused wind were drifting about like a faint harmless mist, yet gave off a sense of sharpness at the same time.

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang were doing everything they could to repel the attacks of the sword-infused wind.

"Shen Yang, dodge!" Huang Zhan shouted.

He swung the dagger in his hand.

Dozens of earth-colored light immediately flew over and formed a thick wall of dirt behind Shen Yang.

But the wall of dirt wasn't able to stop the sword-infused wind at all and was quickly cut into fine grains of dirt and sand in just one breath's worth of time.

Fortunately, Shen Yang was able to take that chance to catch his breath.

He weaved through the thick mist of sword-infused wind and attacked Gu Qing Shan on the tree.

"Oh"

The corner of Gu Qing Shan's mouth lifted just a bit as he played with the jade tag in his hand.

While he could tell that Shen Yang was getting closer and closer, he still didn't open his eyes.

A gust of wind made completely out of sword qi came from his body, turning into an intense wave of sword qi that attacked Shen Yang.

"Help me!"

Shen Yang shouted.

Huang Zhan wielded the dagger in both hands and swung it again from afar.

Oom

The ground at Shen Yang's feet suddenly lifted up, perfectly aiding him in avoiding this wave of sword qi.

Shen Yang used the momentum to jump up, gritted his teeth and attacked with everything he had.

A phantom black dragon manifested around his body.

Martial Divine Strike, [Phantom Dragon Void Strike]

Shen Yang punched the void of space with his full power.

Immediately, the black dragon's huge jaws opened as it flew to attack Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan wasn't playing with the jade tag anymore.

He opened one eye and lightly glanced at the black dragon.

Inside his eyes, hundreds of thousands of sword images suddenly flashed in and out of existence.

This was an extremely weird thing.

No one had ever thought of hiding swords inside their eyes before.

Just like before, he already became a Sword Saint when he reached Ascended realm.

Following the Master's teachings two years ago, he no longer sought to collect more flying swords.

Instead, he began to think about how to best exert the power of a Sword Saint, at the same time using that as preparation for converging his power once he reached the peak of Sword Saint.

And then, he recalled what happened with the Golden Dragon, Kirin, and Vermillion Bird.

So he started to experiment with condensing his sword qi inside his eye through willpower, using that to exert the power of a Sword Saint.

This way, not only would he be able to unleash the power of a Sword Saint, but he would also be converging it at the same time.

After all, no matter how many sword images there are, they still come from his eyes and are gathered inside his gaze.

In truth, this method of attack had one huge flaw compared to controlling flying swords like he normally does.

That was the fact that his flying swords all have extraordinary abilities. By unleashing sword attacks through his gaze, he wouldn't be able to use his swords' abilities.

And so, after a lot of thought, Gu Qing Shan decided to specialize it more and focus the power of his attack to damage the soul vessel.

Just like that, as he trained it to the limit, he created a Thaumaturgy that specializes in slashing people's soul vessels.

Gu Qing Shan named this Thaumaturgy [Soul Sword].

This extraordinary thought process of his received ample praise from Xie Gu Hong himself, saying that he was wise and that he found his own path to heaven.

Hoh!

The intense sword-infused wind completely dismantled the black dragon and pushed Shen Yang back several dozen feet before he safely landed.

Gu Qing Shan clapped his hands and sat straight up on the tree branch: "Well done, you've learned to perform proper battle coordination. Furthermore, your spell casting and adaptive abilities have greatly improved"

Huang Zhan dejectedly spoke: "But we were barely able to force you to open one eye"

Shen Yang has already been bullied by these sessions so much he's already numb, so he carefully reconsidered the battle just now and asked: "If we can stop the sword qi in your eyes, does that mean we're already stronger than the disciples who challenged you that time?"

"Hm, I guess you can say that" Gu Qing Shan nodded: "I only used 10% power that time. Just now, I only opened one eye, but I was using 20% of my strength"

Shen Yang continued to ask: "What if they also learn how to properly coordinate attacks like Huang Zhan and me? How much power would you need to defeat them?"

"30%, and don't discuss this again from now on. As disciples of the master peak, there is no need to compare ourselves to our peers from other peaks, your eyes should be aiming a lot higher" Gu Qing Shan told them.

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Shen Yang uttered his confirmation and sighed: "No wonder the other peak masters couldn't say anything at all that day"

Huang Zhan asked: "Eldest brother, how did you create such a terrifying Thaumaturgy?"

Hearing that, this time it was Gu Qing Shan who sighed.

He appeared to have recalled some distant past before shaking his head: "When you get killed a few times by someone looking at you, you naturally learn a thing or two"

Huang Zhan chuckled: "Hahaha, 'killed a few times by someone looking at you', Eldest brother's jokes are always so funny"

Gu Qing Shan clapped his hands and jumped down the tree.

Ever since he got two junior brothers, he received another daily chore.

Which was what happened just now.

Laying on a tree branch and sparing with his two junior brothers.

This was also the time of the day when he is the most relaxed.

But today's sparring session was over.

And he had something else he needed to do.

His two junior brothers are still growing, so besides putting in daily effort cultivating, their daily nutritional needs also have to be satisfied.

Gu Qing Shan spoke: "The food stock is empty, I'll be going to Grey Crane peak to pick out a few ingredients to make dinner for you tonight"

"Ah"

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang's eyes both lit up.

Eldest brother's cooking skills are absolutely top-notch, the spirit cooking he makes are so good that once you start eating, you wouldn't want to stop.

"Eldest brother, I want meat stew tonight" Huang Zhan sincerely spoke.

"I want spicy noodles, and a few eggs as well" Shen Yang also said.

Gu Qing Shan spoke without turning around: "Do your best and keep cultivating, if I see either of you being lazy when I come back, no one gets any dinner tonight"

He leapt to the air, heading for Grey Crane peak.

...

Grey Crane peak.

"Eldest brother, greetings"

"Hm, greetings"

"Eldest brother, greetings"

"Hm, greetings"

"Eldest brother, greetings"

"Hm"

Wherever Gu Qing Shan went, the disciples he met on the way would clasp their fist and greet him.

After the explanations of their masters and cultivators of previous generations, everyone gradually slowly understood just how terrifyingly strong this eldest brother of the sect was.

The strong are respected, this is a principle that won't change, no matter the era.

And so everyone's attitude towards Gu Qing Shan instantly became different.

When they heard that he came to get cooking ingredients and other resources, a lot of disciples quickly ran to help him place his order and collect the ingredients.

Gu Qing Shan himself became free.

He only needed to take a stroll around the peak and enjoy the scenery while waiting for his order to be prepared.

At this point, a young girl approached him.

“Senior brother Gu” she shyly spoke.

“Yes, what’s wrong?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

The girl didn’t say anything and only gave him a communication talisman before running away.

Holding the communication talisman, Gu Qing Shan was a bit speechless.

A few moments later.

Another female disciple landed next to Gu Qing Shan and shoved a jade tag into his hand.

Hoh!

She then immediately flew away.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at the jade tag he just took, then at the feminine figure that just flew away, again speechless.

Seriously, I’m not in a mood to look for a Dao companion or anything here.

But if you take a look at it from a socialization perspective, the way ancient cultivators socialize is a bit strange, isn’t it?

The first female disciple at least called my name before running away; but the second one said nothing, gave me a jade tag, and flew away immediately. What is that supposed to mean?

Comparatively, the first female cultivator was a lot more polite.

Gu Qing Shan glanced down at the communication talisman again.

After a brief moment of thinking, he understood.

With a communication talisman, there was no need to say anything face-to-face, giving both parties a lot of room to wiggle, thus avoiding the natural embarrassment that comes with getting to know each other.

Hmm, a polite and clever girl.

Gu Qing Shan silently praised her and glanced at the jade tag in his other hand.

She didn’t say a single word.

What’s in here?

He scanned it with his inner sight.

There was a recording of her stored inside the jade tag.

Ah.

I see...

Chapter 743

While Gu Qing Shan had his attention on the jade tag, a slender hand reached out in front of him.

And took the jade tag away.

It was only now that Gu Qing Shan realized someone was standing in front of him.

A beautiful young woman.

It was the Fine Sound peak master, Luo Bing Li.

——only a great cultivator of Luo Bing Li's level would be able to take a jade tag from Gu Qing Shan's hand without him noticing them.

As Gu Qing Shan glanced at her, he remembered Xie Gu Hong's words.

Xie Gu Hong constantly reminded him that he should keep an amicable relationship with peak master Luo, directly telling him that she was a trustworthy ally and that she was peerlessly strong to the point that he might not be her match.

——among the seven peaks of Barren Cloud, when it came to individual deadliness, Luo Bing Li was the undisputed number one.

But despite Luo Bing Li's unrivalled prowess, she doesn't have much in the way of personal protection, and since she's always the most eye-catching on the battlefield, it was necessary for her to always be protected by a large number of cultivators.

Remembering his Master's words, Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist and respectfully greeted her:
"Greetings, peak master Luo"

Luo Bing Li didn't respond to that, instead, she scanned the jade tag with her inner sight before asking him: "How is it? What do you think of my peak's disciple's Guqin¹ skills?"

Gu Qing Shan stared at the jade tag in her hand and praised: "I can still hear it echo by my ears, not fading even after three days, it must have been peak master Luo's excellent teachings"

Luo Bing Li lightly hit his head with her hand and spoke: "Save me the flattery, I'm telling you right now. I won't allow you to woo female cultivators from my peak"

Gu Qing Shan spoke with a serious expression: "Peak master Luo, my heart is fully dedicated to Dao, I have no intention of looking for a Dao companion in our sect"

Luo Bing Li judged him with her gaze for a while before gradually loosening her expression.

As an accomplished Sound Cultivator, she was an expert at seeing through a person's true thoughts and emotions, so she could tell if someone was lying or not without them making a vow to heaven and earth.

“That is good, then you may keep this jade tag”

Luo Bing Li gave the jade tag back to him.

“Thank you, peak master” Gu Qing Shan replied.

“Come with me, I have something to tell you” Luo Bing Li said.

Seeing her somber expression, Gu Qing Shan’s attitude also became serious and followed her up to the top of the mountain.

Grey Crane peak was named for its likeness to a Grey Crane, with a single long path that leads straight on like the beak of a crane.

The tip of the beak was also the peak of the mountain.

As Luo Bing Li reached the top of the mountain, she stood with her hands behind her back.

As a gust of wind blew past, her clothing fluttered with it, giving her an appearance not unlike that of a fairy descended from heaven or a goddess that could take flight at any moment.

“While we’re here, I can guarantee that no one will be able to listen in on our conversation” Luo Bing Li told him.

Gu Qing Shan glanced around.

The clouds drifting about the top of the mountain were slowly turning into a rain of spirit energy, soaking the water stream below as it flowed down, quietly yet turbulently.

As the two of them stood inside the misty rain, they were alone, no one would be able to find out what was happening here.

Gu Qing Shan spoke with a somber expression: “Peak master Luo, please go ahead”

Luo Bing Li spoke: “The situation at the frontlines is becoming more desperate by the day, great cultivators are falling one after another, humanity has only managed to barely contain the situation through sheer numbers alone, do you know of this?”

“I have heard” Gu Qing Shan nodded.

Luo Bing Li continued: “Earlier, the Divinities have finally given us a decree. They want the sect to send a group of disciples to the various Divine Palaces, where they will be personally taught by a Divinity or a Divinity’s servant god”

“Cultivating under the Divinities?” Gu Qing Shan asked again.

“Indeed, our sect has always had deep ties with the Divinities, so we were given quite a few quotas to send our disciples to cultivate at their Divine Palaces” Luo Bing Li replied.

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought.

The current situation was getting serious by the day, humanity was being forced back slowly but surely, unable to win against the Desolate monsters at all, even the Divinities themselves have faced losses.

It seems the Divinities want to once again increase the strength of humanity, raising a group of powerful soldiers for the sake of long-term war.

“Are the Divinities feeling pressured?” Gu Qing Shan unconsciously commented.

Luo Bing Li was shocked and hurriedly scolded him: “You sure are bold! Those aren’t words you can say!”

Whenever Divinities were openly discussed, nothing but unbridled calamity would follow.

Gu Qing Shan smiled: “My apologies, please go on, peak master Luo”

Luo Bing Li glared at him again before continuing: “The sect has decided to host a competition to pick out excellent disciples of each generation to be sent to the various Divine Palaces”

“The chance to be taught by Divinities themselves, huh? The disciples of every generation are probably going to go mad over this”

He then smiled: “But we’ve just concluded the sect competition a few days ago, haven’t we? To host another right away, don’t you find it troublesome?”

Luo Bing Li answered: “This time it’s different, the various peaks will be hosting competitions among their own disciples to pick out those who will receive the quota”

Gu Qing Shan was a bit surprised: “Is that really necessary? Hasn’t the peak masters been teaching their own disciples every day? They should know better than anyone who is and isn’t suitable”

Luo Bing Li replied: “That’s not something you need to concern yourself with. What I want to tell you here is that while the sect master has been absent, the disciples of your master peak has always been the role model of all other disciples, so through the discussions of every peak, we have decided to give your master peak two quotas”

Gu Qing Shan asked right away: “How many quotas are there in total?”

Luo Bing Li replied: “In total, there are 30 quotas”

“30 quotas? And the master peak only received 2?” he chuckled.

Luo Bing Li glanced at him: “Indeed, this was the result of discussion among all the peak masters. Because the Palace Master currently cannot be contacted from the frontlines, everyone has made his decision and hope that you will soon pick out two people”

She then added: “Huang Zhan and Shen Yang have been informed of all the related matters by Ancient Dawn peak master, telling them to be ready to compete for the master peak’s quotas”

Gu Qing Shan fell silent.

They informed Huang Zhan and Shen Yang directly without going through me.

Those two youngsters are indeed mentally strong, but they are still too young, how could they reject such great allure?

For any cultivator, the chance to be taught directly by a Divinity is one of the biggest opportunities they will ever receive!

Gu Qing Shan slowly calmed down.

Every peak will compete among themselves...

This means I will have to compete for the quota with Huang Zhan and Shen Yang.

... Gu Qing Shan was feeling a deep sense of ill-will and bad intent.

While Master isn't here, they want to use this elimination competition to instigate discord among the disciples of the master peak.

How dare they?

Are they confident that Master wouldn't be able to return just because they lost contact with him?

However, thanks to the fragment of time he experienced, Gu Qing Shan knew perfectly well that until the moment of the Heavenly Palace's destruction, Xie Gu Hong was still fine.

He glanced at the mist outside the mountain peak.

The clouds and mist were swirling nonstop, constantly forming and dissipating.

Gu Qing Shan muses: "Which peak master came up with the idea to only give the master peak two quotas?"

Seeing that he was questioning a key issue, Luo Bing Li's expression loosened somewhat.

She answered: "It was a suggestion from Ancient Dawn peak and Spirit Echo peak, Grey Crane peak and Perching Cloud peak expressed their support of this decision"

Gu Qing Shan continued to ask: "What about Clear Water peak and Fine Sound peak?"

Luo Bing Li replied: "We were against it, but as we were outnumbered, the decision was forcefully passed"

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist with a stern expression: "Thank you, peak master Luo. As Master isn't here right now, please teach me briefly about the situation of the sect"

Seeing his reaction, Luo Bing Li was pleased and answered: "Ancient Dawn peak and Spirit Echo peak are the heritage of the Life God, so they follow the Teachings of the Life God"

"What about Grey Crane peak and Perching Cloud peak?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

"These peaks are loyal to the faith of the Star God. You should know as well, the Star God's relationship with the Water God has never been an amiable one"

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Gu Qing Shan continued: "So Clear Water peak and Fine Sound peak follow the Water God?"

“Indeed, your Master has also followed the teachings and advise of the Water God—— the Water God is a unique existence among the Divinities, as they treat humanity the most amiably”

“That’s why they’re attempting to go against the master peak this time since my Master’s whereabouts are unknown?”

“Correct. On the frontlines, your Master sometimes takes humanity’s casualties into consideration a bit too much. And since Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace was the biggest sect of humanity, his actions are a guideline for other sects to follow”

“For a few certain noble existences, acting against your Master themselves will cause too many undesirable consequences, so...”

Her words made things very clear.

When Xie Gu Hong came to the frontlines to check the situation, he went missing unexpectedly.

And so only his three disciples are left on the master peak.

What a good chance this was.

If discord happens to be sowed among the three disciples and something unseemly happened, or if they did something irreversible during the competition, through the aid of certain parties, the news will immediately spread across the entire cultivation world.

Xie Gu Hong would then be marked with a ‘powerless to teach others’ title.

As the head of a sect, if he were to be plastered with that title, the only thing he could do was to actively step down from his position.

Even if he didn’t do it himself, the Divinities would naturally speak up and force him to.

Gu Qing Shan sighed.

He casually reached his hand out to grab a leaf that was flying through the wind.

The leaf was already half-withered, but the other half was still full of life, currently flying to somewhere unknown.

Was it going with the flow, or being swept away by the wind?

Gu Qing Shan let go, allowing it to continue travelling in the wind.

At this point, Luo Bing Li continued: “The decree of Divinities must not be violated, if they ordered us to send disciples to cultivate in the Divine palaces, then we must send them”

“Gu Qing Shan, as the Eldest Disciple of the master peak, you must conduct the competition. The peak masters will be present to watch, so you have to quickly think of a solution”

Gu Qing Shan just smiled and coldly replied: “That’s simple then, I give up”

“Give up?”

“Yes. There are only a total of three people in the master peak. The fact that competition had to be conducted openly for other peaks to watch in the first place is a big joke. So I’ll give it up”

“As for being taught by the Divinities... just let Huang Zhan and Shen Yang go”

Luo Bing Li was a bit shocked.

His swift decision was outside of her expectation.

“Gu Qing Shan, this is a chance to be taught by Divinities we’re talking about here. Not only will you be able to learn a lot of secret Divine Skills, but your cultivation speed itself might also increase rapidly, are you not tempted at all?” Luo Bing Li asked.

“It’s ok, let them go—— Master told me to teach my junior brothers for him, but now that the Divinities can do it for me, that’s one less responsibility for me, I can focus more on my own cultivation, so it’s a good thing” Gu Qing Shan replied.

Luo Bing Li slowly nodded.

She could sense that he was telling the truth, there wasn’t a single hint of regret.

Gu Qing Shan continued: “My only request is for them to be sent to the Water God Divine Palace”

“That much can be guaranteed” Luo Bing Li replied.

“If that’s the case, I have no more worries” Gu Qing Shan said.

Luo Bing Li was observing him.

As the Eldest Disciple of the sect, he gave up his chance to give the opportunity of a lifetime to his junior brothers, there was no way for anyone to find fault in that.

“Gu Qing Shan, you are quite decent” she commented.

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Then this matter is settled, I will keep today’s conversation in mind. Thank you, peak master Luo”

He turned around and was about to leave.

Luo Bing Li’s eyes moved a bit before suddenly asking: “Gu Qing Shan, we will not frequent from now on, so I have one final thing to ask you”

“Please”

“What do you think about the Divinities?”

This question was the most important issue of today.

Earlier, when Gu Qing Shan mentioned Divinities, she had scolded him, but now she was actively asking Gu Qing Shan about his view of Divinities.

Gu Qing Shan fell into thought.

His gaze drifted from the river below through the surrounding peaks before stopping at the master peak.

That's right.

What do I think about the Divinities?

The various things he had seen before were quickly flashing through his mind.

Xie Gu Hong's entrusting words echoed in his ears.

"If one day she does wake up, pass on her name for me. She is... Xie Dao Ling"

The voice faded away and turned into another scene of his past.

Bai Hua hall.

On the Ten-thousand Flowers Throne carved from immortal jade, that peerless woman asked him in a soft voice: "Are you willing to join Bai Hua sect?"

...

Standing among the fierce mountain winds, Gu Qing Shan suddenly chuckled.

"Peak master Luo, I heard that your Fine Sound peak's instruments are the finest in the land, I want to ask for a jade flute"

After a bit of hesitation, Luo Bing Li took out and gave him a purple jade flute.

"This flute was something I intricately crafted and frequently carry on myself, make sure to treat it well"

"Thank you very much"

"However, have you...?"

"I have"

As Gu Qing Shan received the flute, he didn't say another word and began to play it.

Ooooo—

As the very first note came out from the flute, a deeply sorrowful sword qi rose to the sky, circled around the intense water currents below before returning to the top of the seven peaks.

Luo Bing Li lightly nodded— it wasn't a good idea to discuss Divinities with words, so replacing that with the sound of the flute was a good idea.

She carefully listened.

Note after note came out from the flute, each one louder than the last.

Sword qi swirled intensely like a tide together with the sound of the flute, yet at the same time, it was flying as free as the clouds and cranes, jetting through the mist towards the faraway horizon.

As the tune was about to end.

The sword qi that filled the air transformed into a gust of wind that swept across heaven and earth, blowing the dark clouds and mist in the sky away.

The rain stopped and the ten thousand miles ahead were cleared of clouds.

Rays of sunlight appeared to illuminate the world below, carrying with it a soft warmth that gently caressed Luo Bing Li's beautiful features.

The sound of the flute stopped.

Luo Bing Li silently stood there with a bit of turbulence in her eyes.

There was no longer anyone standing across from her.

Only the vitality-filled mountain scenery under the light of the sun was left.

Luo Bing Li lightly sighed and muttered: "No one is left when the tune ends, only the green peaks above the river"

Chapter 744

The Barren Cloud master peak.

Gu Qing Shan had returned.

The master peak was now very lively.

The masters of Ancient Dawn peak, Spirit Echo peak, Perching Cloud peak, and Grey Crane peak were sitting on a platform above an arena that was being constructed.

Many disciples were busy making the arena as well as the surrounding competition venue.

This was an official matter of utmost importance, so every step must be done as thoroughly as possible in order to produce the results they wanted.

"Eldest brother"

"Eldest brother"

As soon as Huang Zhan and Shen Yang saw Gu Qing Shan, they quickly approached him as if they found their saving grace.

"What's the matter? The two of you seem a bit nervous" Gu Qing Shan smiled.

Huang Zhan told him: "The peak masters said that we will need to fight in the arena"

Shen Yang added: "There are only three of us, but as this matter was related to being selected by the Divinities, we have to do it"

Gu Qing Shan looked past the two of them at the busy cultivators in the sect: "Ah? This place is the master peak, if I remember correctly according to the rules of the sect, no personnel of any other peaks is allowed to desecrate it— — oi, you over there, who allowed you to build this arena?"

The cultivators seemed to be too focused on their work to hear him.

The peak masters exchanged pondering looks.

Gu Qing Shan silently smirked.

Seven years.

For the first time in seven years, he reached his hand into the void of space and grabbed hold of his sword.

The sword gleamed!

The heads of 12 disciples flew.

Everyone's expressions changed.

Too fast.

The sword was so fast that they felt a chill welling up from inside!

— with the peak masters here, they had thought this matter wouldn't be any trouble.

Against a few teenage disciples, with their authority, they could just threaten them a bit or at worst shout at them and it would've been easily dealt with.

Who knew that Gu Qing Shan would immediately kill their people like that, he was even more ruthless than Xie Gu Hong!

"How dare you!"

Ancient Dawn peak master angrily roared.

Without seeing him do anything, Gu Qing Shan was sent flying back several dozen feet.

"You dared to kill your fellow sect members without reason, even your master wouldn't be able to save you if he was here!" the Ancient Dawn peak master was furious.

The other peak masters immediately stopped him.

They were knowingly being unreasonable today, so no matter how he reacted, if they were to really kill Xie Gu Hong's eldest disciple openly while Xie Gu Hong was missing, this would become a huge scandal for the entire cultivation world.

Not only will the other sects rush here asking to investigate, but even the Divinities will also be forced to intervene and question them.

If what they were doing comes to light, this wasn't going to end well for anyone.

Especially in the off chance—

That Xie Gu Hong isn't dead...

Ancient Dawn peak master scoffed and pulled back his fist: "To dare to kill fellow sect members so openly. When I report this to the Divinities, they will surely punish Xie Gu Hong for being powerless to teach his disciples"

Perching Cloud peak master stopped him and scolded Gu Qing Shan: "No matter what happened, we could've talked things out, why could you kill them right away like that? Even if you're the Eldest Disciple of the sect, you were in the wrong no matter how we look at it"

"Heh..."

Gu Qing Shan spat out some blood and grinned.

He took something out from his chest.

The sect master jade disk.

This was something Xie Gu Hong gave him before he left.

This was the peerless symbol of power in the sect, even after tens of thousand years, it still represented unrivaled authority until it was lost in Xie Dao Ling's hands.

It was because Gu Qing Shan didn't have this jade disk that he was killed four times in a row by the Divine Beasts of the sect!

Gu Qing Shan held the jade disk tight and infused it with spirit energy.

The jade disk started to glow.

"The sect is in peril, o' four Divine Beasts of our sect, protect us!" Gu Qing Shan shouted.

Oom—

Heaven and earth trembled.

The flow of the river was reserved, the wind howled terrifyingly.

Faraway at the horizon, a faint light manifested.

Among the clouds of the South, flaming clouds illuminated the sky.

At the end of the river in the North, an earth-shaking howl of a beast could be heard.

And then the entire seven peaks rumbled nonstop as if something below the river was being woken up.

Everyone's expressions warped.

"Gu Qing Shan— stop your hands!" Spirit Echo peak master shouted.

Gu Qing Shan infused more spirit energy.

The sect master jade disk glowed with blinding light.

A 7-colored light erupted from the master peak all the way to the sky.

"Protection!"

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Gu Qing Shan operated the jade disk.

The ground of the master peak began to rotate.

Mystical golden runes weaved with silver patterns manifested one after another from the ground, shielding Huang Zhan, Shen Yang, and himself under his control.

The peak master's expressions were no longer calm.

"Gu Qing Shan, what do you want to do!?"

"You dare to invoke the sect master jade disk!"

"Who gave you the right to use the jade disk? Stop right now!"

They were all shouting.

This commotion had already far exceeded what they expected, enough to alert various parties.

Seeing how things came to this, the peak masters were feeling very regretful.

Damn it!

What kind of disciple did Xie Gu Hong take in!

What a psycho!

Gu Qing Shan wiped the blood from the corner of his mouth, completely ignoring them.

With the sect's grand formation protecting them, their safety can be guaranteed.

"Eldest brother"

A scared voice called out to him from behind.

Gu Qing Shan turned around.

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang were both looking at him worriedly.

Gu Qing Shan smiled to console them: "Everything is fine. Before he left, Master entrusted the jade disk to me, so I'm just dealing with a few things in his place"

While they were talking, the black clouds above began to descend.

A Dragon that gave off a faint golden glow peeked its head out from the clouds.

Following that, a Kirin covered in a shroud of flames also appeared.

The Vermillion Bird flew over, the Spirit Tortoise surfaced from the water.

Taking up every corner of the sky, they all looked towards the Barren Cloud master peak.

「 Who summoned us? 」 the Golden Dragon asked.

“I did”

Gu Qing Shan raised the jade disk.

「 What do you need? 」 the Kirin asked.

“To protect the sect” Gu Qing Shan replied.

「 How so? 」 the Vermillion Bird asked.

Gu Qing Shan lightly uttered a single word: “Kill”

“Wait!” Ancient Dawn peak master shouted out and began to explain to the four Divine Beasts in the sky: “This brat is acting arbitrarily, he killed his fellow disciples for no reason, operated the jade disk wanting to destroy our Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace, please consider this clearly, o’ Divine Protectors of our sect”

The four Divine Beasts listened and said nothing, only staring at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan simply showed them the jade disk and lightly spoke: “I am the Eldest Disciple of the sect, my Master entrusted the jade disk to me himself, this is how the heritage of the Heavenly Palace is passed down. Everything is as the rules of our sect dictates”

The Golden Dragon spoke with a deep voice: 「 He isn’t lying 」

The Vermillion Bird spoke: 「 In the Heavenly Palace, the master peak is the true heritage, and he even has the jade disk 」

The Spirit Tortoise continued: 「 The sect master jade disk naturally aligns itself with the grand formation of the Heavenly Palace, it cannot be forged 」

The jade disk in Gu Qing Shan’s hand lightly gave off a chime, as if to confirm the Spirit Tortoise’s words.

Hearing that, the four Divine Beasts reaffirms it without a doubt.

The Kirin muses: 「 We only take orders from the jade disk, and so...」

The Golden Dragon finishes: 「 Tell us what to do 」

They were staring closely at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan glanced at the peak masters.

“With the sect master jade disk in my hand, I ask of you, kill them for me”

「 「 「 「 Yes! 」 」 」 」

The four Divine Beasts responded at once.

The wind howled as the clouds swirled.

Immense killing intent erupted from the four Divine Beasts.

They do not know mercy or listen to any plea, once they decide to kill someone, it would simply be done.

The peak masters were flustered.

They never thought for even a second that setting up a mere trap would result in this situation of life and death.

The Ancient Dawn peak master was the first to be unable to keep his calm and shouted to the sky: "Life God, please save me!"

A sea of pure white clouds quickly filled the sky as divine light shined from above like a flowing waterfall.

This light directly went through every protective formation of the sect and directly arrived at the master peak.

A solemn voice questioned: "Four Divine Beasts, your role is to protect this place, why are you trying to kill human cultivators now?"

The Golden Dragon, Kirin, Vermillion Bird, and Spirit Tortoise were all prostrating below the sea of clouds.

A man exuding solemnity silently appeared in the sky.

Boundless divine light drifted around him.

A faint golden light could be seen in between his eyebrows, like a silently burning fire.

Chapter 745

When the man clad in divine light appeared in the sky, an impressive and boundless power flowed from his body outwards.

Every cultivation sect was able to sense this power.

Quite a few powerful cultivators of other sects personally took to the sky and headed for the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

In the void of space, countless mysterious creatures had also silently arrived.

All of their gazes were focused on the Barren Cloud master peak.

The four Divine Beasts were prostrating below the clouds, solemnly listening to the Divinity's questioning.

Gu Qing Shan also silently looked up at the Divinity, observing him.

It was said that Divinities created humans from their likeness, so the countless races within the infinite worlds use the human form as the common ground for communication.

The difference between a Divinity and the others are probably between their eyebrows.

There was a golden burning fire in between this Divinity's eyebrows.

As for the divine light surrounding him, Gu Qing Shan actually knew what that was.

Among creations of the Divinities, invisible ones were the greatest, and this brilliance was the manifestation of their dignity.

Which means that divine light must be the Divinity's armor.

Back in Triste's collection world, he had already donned such an armor.

At this point, the Divinity had fished his question.

The Golden Dragon responded: 「 Benevolent Life God, we are not killing human cultivators, but rather following the orders of the Heavenly Palace master to protect the true heritage of the Heavenly Palace 」

The Life God questioned: "An order from the sect master? I seem to recall that the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace master is still at the frontlines"

The Golden Dragon answered: 「 According to the rules of the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace when the sect master is not present, we need to listen to the order of the sect master jade disk 」

The Life God looked to Gu Qing Shan.

Without waiting for the Life God to say anything, Gu Qing Shan respectfully bowed and told him: "O' benevolent God, I am only acting in accordance to the rules of the sect, the four Divine Beasts have also agreed"

"O' great and merciful God, you descended upon us with pity in your heart, but as the rules of our sect dictates, these people must be executed, they do not deserve your mercy"

Silence.

Silence across the entire Heavenly Palace.

Everywhere, every great cultivator, every Divinity, every mysterious creature that was silently paying attention here fell silent.

He's insane.

He must be, to try and talk to a Divinity that way.

Divinities very rarely interfere with internal matters of human sects.

No, in fact, before this very moment, there has never been a case where that happened.

And yet, the very first time that a Divinity interfered, he was so flexibly and lightly stopped by a young human before he could even try.

The Life God's voice was also a bit warped: "I ask you, these are powerful cultivators of humanity, the peak masters of your sect, while you are a mere disciple. On what basis do you condemn them to death?"

As soon as Gu Qing Shan heard that, he recited quickly and clearly, as if he was waiting for exactly this moment: "According to the rules of our sect, no one is to set foot on the Barren Cloud master peak without being summoned by the Palace Master, this is the first"

"Arbitrarily constructing things on the master peak without permission is desecration, a great crime, this is the second"

"As the Eldest Disciple of the sect, when I personally asked about the master peak, they ignored me, this is disrespectful to the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace as a whole, this is the third"

"While the sect master is not here, they instigated the three disciples of the sect master to kill one another, this is open maliciousness and an act of rebellion, this is the fourth"

"The fifth..."

"Wait"

The Life God cut him off.

Unable to hear any more, the Life God silently regretted giving Gu Qing Shan the chance to speak.

The Divinity then declared in front of everyone: "You said that they instigated the disciples of the master peak to kill one another, that is not so. It was for the sake of aiding humanity that we provided the quotas for cultivating in the Divine Palaces"

The Ancient Dawn peak master immediately continued: "This was a unanimous decision of the peak masters after much discussion to provide the master peak with two quotas, that is the reason why there was a need to compete among the disciples of the master peak. In fact, every peak is the same, I do not see any acts of rebellion here"

Gu Qing Shan slowly spoke: "If it was a competition among disciples of the master peak, this should have been conducted by my Master. Since Master wasn't here and I had the sect master jade disk, as well as the status of Eldest Disciple of the sect, according to the 9th, 15th and 31st rules of the sect, this should have been decided, prepared, and conducted by myself. It had nothing to do with any of you, and what right do you have to do this on the master peak? If I remember correctly, acting on behalf of the sect master without having the sect master jade disk can only result in being executed"

The Ancient Dawn peak master forcefully insisted: "We were worried that a young man like you wouldn't be able to arrange it appropriately, making your junior brothers hold discontent towards the sect"

Gu Qing Shan responded: "I have already decided to give up competing for the quota, directly giving Huang Zhan and Shen Yang the quota to cultivate in the Divine Palace"

The peak masters were stunned.

He gave up on the chance to enter a Divine Palace.

He is only a teenager, how could he have given up such an opportunity?

Wouldn't that mean all of our schemes were for naught?

Gu Qing Shan somberly continued: "Even after I have finished arranging this, you still insist on doing this and that on the master peak, planning to make the master peak's disciples kill one another in front of everyone. Who gave you the nerve to do such a thing!?"

He raised his voice: "The sect master jade disk is right here. As masters of the peaks, you attempted to act on behalf of the sect master while he isn't here without the permission to. Following the rules of our sect, you should be directly executed. Four Divine Beasts, please!"

The four Divine Beasts howled in response but stayed still in the sky.

They were carefully glancing at the Life God.

The Life God lightly shook his head towards them, trying to think of an excuse.

There were too many people watching this place, and they were currently at an important point in the war, even someone like him needed to come up with a reasonable excuse in order to save these people's lives without damaging his own dignity.

At this point, Gu Qing Shan suddenly bowed deeply to the Life God.

He spoke with respect: "O' benevolence creator, he who humanity worships, our peerless God, naturally, we always listen to you before all else, as your decrees are the truth of the world. If you feel that they are correct, then they are correct. Even when my Master is risking his life at the frontlines and is currently nowhere to be found, as long as you give the words, these people can, in fact, ignore the rules of our sect and enforce the authority of the sect master as they wish"

He opened his palm to show the sect master jade disk in front of everyone.

"O' benevolent God, your words are absolute, but then we will be troubled"

"This isn't easy at all... because what good will this sect master jade disk be? Humanity wouldn't need the existence of a sect, we can simply struggle for power among ourselves. There would be no benefit to going to the frontlines when there are people waiting to constantly backstab you to the point that you can't even protect your own disciple"

Saying so, Gu Qing Shan tossed the sect master jade disk in the air.

He slashed at it with his sword.

Everyone's expressions changed.

The great cultivators of other sects, the sect masters, Divinities in the sky, including the Life God, as well as the peak masters were all completely stunned.

With this slash, if the jade disk really breaks, it will be a huge scandal across the entire world.

This would signify that Divinities can and will interfere with humanity's sects, causing every sect to be plunged into chaos that came from within.

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Because Divinities will get the final say in every internal human matter.

The meaning of having sects would be lost.

The frontlines will be thoroughly divided.

And then, most importantly, Xie Gu Hong was connected to the sect master jade disk through his soul vessel, so if he was still alive, he would be able to sense that the jade disk had been broken.

Regardless of what he was doing, as long as he was still alive, he would hurry to return.

At this moment, countless people want to stop Gu Qing Shan, but at the same time, countless people don't want to stop him.

No one knows for sure whether or not Xie Gu Hong was dead.

If Xie Gu Hong really was dead, this action of his disciple would be considered disrespecting the sect master jade disk, by which he can easily be branded and punished.

If Xie Gu Hong wasn't dead.

Then it would be a lot more interesting.

As the Barren Cloud Palace Master, famous as the best sword cultivator in the world, Xie Gu Hong's relationship with these peak masters who insulted his disciple would inevitably become irreconcilable until death.

The number one sect in the world, Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace will be caught in internal discord.

Causing it to quickly decline and fall to ruin.

Ruined by the intervening hands of a Divinity.

Time seemed to freeze in this very moment as countless thoughts went through everyone's minds.

Until finally, when Gu Qing Shan's sword was about to touch the jade disk.

No-one stopped him.

When it was only a hair's width away from the jade disk, Gu Qing Shan's sword suddenly stopped.

Because he felt inner sight coming from inside the jade disk.

The true owner of the jade disk was Xie Gu Hong.

So this inner sight must also belong to Xie Gu Hong.

His voice came from inside the jade disk: "Qing Shan, I've finished what I needed to do and will soon return to the sect. How has your cultivation been recently? Have you been teaching your junior brothers properly?"

While Gu Qing Shan's facial expression remained unchanged, he was smiling ear to ear in his mind.

What wonderful timing Master has, being able to coordinate so perfectly at this exact moment.

The current situation is even better than if I had broken the jade disk.

Gu Qing Shan then clasped his fist to the jade disk: “Yes Master, everything is going swimmingly, the two junior brothers are also very diligent with their cultivation, but there are a lot of matters in the sect that will need you to take care of”

“Very well, I’ve eliminated the monster. I’ll soon make my return to the sect” Xie Gu Hong spoke.

The voice disappeared from the jade disk.

It then fell back into Gu Qing Shan’s hands.

Everyone was discussing among themselves.

Xie Gu Hong said he had eliminated the monster.

What exactly has he been doing?

“That’s not possible” the Ancient Dawn peak master muttered at a loss, “he should’ve already fallen in the Desolate World, how did he...”

At this point, something else happened.

Countless streaks of flames were flying through the air, landing in the hands of the great cultivators of each sect.

Communication talismans.

A large number of communication talismans.

Following the talismans was a streak of light that stopped in the sky above the sect.

It was an armored cultivator.

He first bowed towards the Life God before excitedly declaring to everyone: “We achieved a great victory in the frontlines! The Ruler of Seven Swords, Xie Gu Hong infiltrated the Desolate World with a group of elite troops and successfully assassinated the Desolate Saintly Demon King! Seizing the chance when the Desolate world was in chaos, our troops launched an all-out attack and managed to kill countless enemies!”

The sound of discussions became louder.

Everyone appeared incredibly glad.

This was the first and greatest victory for humanity for the last several years.

After this campaign, humanity would once again regroup with renewed morale, obtaining a long period of strategic reorganization.

Gu Qing Shan’s grin was as bright as can be.

It was natural for Xie Gu Hong to be OK.

Countless years later, he will even spar against a Divinity and win by half an exchange.

Because of that, he knew very well that as long as he doesn't blow this matter too much out of proportions, there was no way he would be killed.

Even if the other party was a Divinity.

During a public situation like this, without appropriate reasons, even a Divinity wouldn't be able to do anything to him.

While Xie Gu Hong was risking his life at the frontlines, there were people in the back scheming against him, pushing his disciples into a dangerous situation where they might be forced to kill one another.

And then those people were saved from any repercussions by the Divinities.

If something like that really did happen, who's going to be willing to go to the frontlines?

Who's going to risk their lives for the sake of Divinities anymore?

Who's going to use their own bodies to pile on and kill the Desolate monster?

The peak masters' faces were now ghastly pale, unable to say even a single word.

Gu Qing Shan thought briefly before claspng his fist and bowed at the peak masters.

"I'm very sorry, as the Eldest Disciple of the sect, I was too emotional"

"I was indeed in the wrong today"

Under everyone's scrutinizing stares, he appeared embarrassed.

"As a disciple, I really shouldn't have acted that way towards the peak masters or become so emotional, regardless of what happened"

"So it would be best to wait for Master to return and take your lives himself, that would only be fitting with the rules"

Gu Qing Shan very sincerely said.

Chapter 746

The situation was about to be blown sky-high.

Even the Life God had personally come to the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace.

But Gu Qing Shan managed to wait until Xie Gu Hong sent his voice through inner sight.

With a few words, Gu Qing Shan completely glossed over everything that happened today.

No matter if they were a Divinity or a cultivator, if they had any objections, go and find Xie Gu Hong.

As long as Xie Gu Hong was still alive, he was still the Palace Master.

So it makes sense both rationally and emotionally for him to take care of this matter.

That was the end.

Gu Qing Shan cleared his throat and clasped his fist to everyone around and spoke: "One last thing"

Everyone's hearts tensed up as they looked at him again.

A large group of great cultivators standing in the air with somber expressions, waiting for a teenager to speak.

This scene was just as ridiculous as you imagine it to be.

But there was no helping it because this teenager hasn't done anything considered 'normal' thus far, everyone was forced to take him seriously.

In front of everyone there, Gu Qing Shan had an apologetic look: "There are no left-overs in the master sect, I'm sorry"

Everyone was surprised.

As long-lived great cultivators, they understood perfectly what he meant.

If there isn't anything else, our place doesn't intend to invite you for a meal, so why aren't you leaving yet?

The peak masters looked at him, then at the Life God, not knowing whether they should leave or not.

Without the Palace Master's permission, cultivators from other peaks aren't allowed on the master peak.

Remaining any longer here would be openly admitting that they were violating the rules.

But since the Life God hasn't left, the peak masters couldn't leave either.

Truthfully, the one most irritated right now was the Life God.

As a Divinity, what the hell did you even come here for?

The other party has already given up on pursuing any further and left everything to Xie Gu Hong, which means there currently weren't any issues.

Even if there was, that would be Xie Gu Hong's issue.

And he said 'there aren't any left-overs in the master peak'.

Then what else is a Divinity like you staying here for?

Waiting for food to be cooked?

No, this isn't an issue of whether or not there are left-overs.

In fact, even if the master peak had left-over food, are you, a Divinity, going to shamelessly eat for free?

No, that's not even the main point.

Then what's the main point?

In the end, no matter what he did right now, there was no good way to wrap this up.

The Life God calms himself down and declared with a solemn tone of voice: "Go back to your own places, when Xie Gu Hong triumphantly returns, you can discuss the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace's internal matters among yourselves"

This gaze was firm, his tone strict and solemn.

But his words...

Were completely redundant.

Apparently the Life God also noticed that, as he immediately turned into a golden streak of light and flew away after his declaration.

As the Divinity had left, the four Divine Beasts also silently retreated.

The peak masters had nothing left to say and no choice but to bring the corpses of those who were killed and the cultivators who were still alive to quickly leave the master peak.

They caused a huge commotion when they arrived, but unable to say a single word as they left.

Holding the sect master jade disk, Gu Qing Shan controlled it with a hand seal.

He then waved towards everyone standing outside: "Those who came to spectate are free to leave, our master peak will have our meal soon"

The jade disk flashed.

Poof

The entire master peak disappeared without a trace.

The concealment formation on the jade disk was activated.

The master peak was still standing there, but it couldn't be seen anymore.

The three disciples of the master peak will have their meal.

This...

There was nothing else for them to see.

Earlier, the various parties came here because of the manifestation of a Divinity, they came for his teachings.

But now that the Divinity had already left in a sour mood and the Barren Cloud master peak had also openly closed the doors.

If they don't take this chance to leave and stay until they are formally sent away, their pride wouldn't be able to take it.

After this, everyone would know what kind of disciple Xie Gu Hong had taken in.

Let's go, as soon as possible.

The great cultivators quickly scattered while silently thinking of the future.

The next generation of Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace is also not to be trifled with.

That was too much excitement for one day.

With various thoughts on their minds, the great cultivators returned to their sects.

...

Two days later.

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Barren Cloud master peak.

Huang Zhan and Shen Yang were standing guard outside the Sword Abyss.

When Xie Gu Hong returned, he ordered them sternly to stay right there without going anywhere.

After standing guard for so long, Huang Zhan was a bit bored.

He glanced at Shen Yang and couldn't help himself speaking: "Third brother, there's something I've been thinking about"

"Go ahead, senior brother" Shen Yang replied.

Huang Zhan spoke: "Two days ago, why did everyone leave when Eldest brother mentioned there being no left-overs?"

Shen Yang replied: "Maybe because they didn't have a reason to remain on our master peak?"

Huang Zhan waved his hand dismissively: "That's not that I meant. I was thinking about how well senior brother phrased it; no matter how much I tried, I couldn't learn it at all"

Shen Yang chuckled: "What would you have said instead?"

Huang Zhan puffed out his chest and pretended to shout: "If there's nothing left for you to do here, get off the master peak"

Shen Yang stared at him: "There was a Divinity in the sky, you dared to tell him to scram?"

Huang Zhan deflated and continued: "That's why I said senior brother's words were phrased well. He was clearly telling everyone to scram, but even the Divinity was unable to scold him in any way and just left"

"That's why he's the Eldest brother" Shen Yang replied.

While they were chatting outside, Xie Gu Hong was scolding Gu Qing Shan inside the Sword Abyss.

"Did you know that you nearly angered the Divinity a few times during that!" Xie Gu Hong said.

Gu Qing Shan just smiled: "I know that. I was treading carefully in order not to anger the Divinity"

Xie Gu Hong sighed: "You can't do that again from now on, otherwise if you really did offend a Divinity someday, even I wouldn't be able to save you"

Gu Qing Shan replied: "I'm sure I already offended him"

Xie Gu Hong went silent.

"That is true" he slowly said, "the Life God must hate your guts right now"

"It is hard to make the Divinities happy, but making them hateful is very simple. If you ever run into a follower of the Life God from on now, run away as soon as possible"

"Furthermore, do not arbitrarily cause a commotion, it's best to see the situation clearly before you act"

Gu Qing Shan was a bit doubtful: "Master, what do you mean by that?"

Xie Gu Hong went silent briefly before answering: "The Life God protected the peak masters' lives"

Gu Qing Shan also went silent and smirked: "He's a Divinity, and no one dares to go against the words of Divinity, is that right?"

"Yes, Gu Qing Shan, you have to understand. We are creations of Divinities, and the decree of Divinities are the meaning of our existence"

"Master, is that what you really think?"

"No, that is what the Divinities think"

"Then what about you, Master?"

"I appreciate them giving me life, but as sentient life, I naturally have my own thoughts"

Xie Gu Hong clapped his hands

A figure appeared from the void of space.

Luo Bing Li.

She told Gu Qing Shan: "I need a drop of your blood, of course, it would be more effective if there were more"

Without hesitation, Gu Qing Shan cut his open and gave her a small blob of his blood.

Luo Bing Li lightly pressed one finger into the void of space.

The blob of blood floated still in the air.

Luo Bing Li pulled out a flute and played a tune towards the blood.

As the song ended.

The blob of blood slowly turned into Gu Qing Shan's appearance.

"This is?" Gu Qing Shan doubtfully asked.

Xie Gu Hong explained: “Your junior brothers will be sent to cultivate in the Water God Divine Palace, and I will have to return to the frontlines soon, so it will only be you alone on the master peak”

“This situation is very dangerous. Qing Shan, next time, if I really die and the peak masters must take your life no matter the cost, you wouldn’t have the time to wake up the four Divine Beasts”

“And so...” Gu Qing Shan muttered.

“And so, we will create a doppelganger of you to live and cultivate here on the master peak” Luo Bing Li continued.

“What about me?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

Xie Gu Hong and Luo Bing Li exchanged glances.

Luo Bing Li commented: “I heard that your skills with the 6 arts were quite decent”

“It’s passable” Gu Qing Shan replied.

Xie Gu Hong spoke: “We have one final identity that is both trustworthy and secretive, not only is the identity not known among the people of humanity, it is completely unknown to Divinities”

“Qing Shan, you will take on this identity. I hope that you will be able to seize the time and continue to cultivate your swordsmanship”

His tone with heavy and stern: “Once your swordsmanship reaches a point where you can retaliate against the peak masters, we will be able to be assured of your safety, and you will be able to return to the sect as the Eldest Disciple once more”

Luo Bing Li added: “Not only is the identity a trustworthy one, but it is also in a safe place, so you will not be too busy every day. Once you’re finished with your daily chores, you can use the rest of the time to cultivate”

“Where am I going exactly?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

“The camp of humanity’s 23rd reserve corps, the very last one among the 23 reserve corps”

“In other words, I will be a soldier cultivator” Gu Qing Shan nodded.

Since it’s a reserve corps, I probably won’t have to go to the frontlines too quickly, not to mention that it’s the very last one out of 23.

It would’ve been better if I had gone to the battlefield instead since I’ll be able to earn some Soul Points that way.

While he was thinking that, the two great cultivators both shook their heads.

“No, not a soldier, the final secret identity we have on our hands is being one of the 23rd reserve corps’ cooks” Luo Bing Li replied.

“A cook?” Gu Qing Shan was stunned.

Chapter 747

The camp of humanity's 23rd reserve corps.

A middle-aged cultivator sitting in a room full of documents was carefully checking a jade tag.

[Zhang Xiao Yun, loose cultivator background, his family has been earning their cultivation resources through the art of cooking for generations]

[During the last invasion of the Desolate world, everyone in his family was massacred, leaving only Zhang Xiao Yun himself, so he decided to join the army]

[The above has been confirmed to be true, requesting judgement from the General]

Followed by the names of the cultivators who confirmed this information.

Placing the jade tag back on the table, the middle-aged cultivator observed the young man standing across from him.

Plain appearance, plain cultivation.

When being observed, the young man appeared a bit nervous.

Hah, a pitiful young lad.

The middle-aged cultivator asked his vice-general: "Does our camp not have enough cooks?"

The vice-general reported: "General sir, we have always had a shortage of cooks. The previous incident was caused by the severe lack of cooks"

Hearing that, the middle-aged cultivator scowled.

Previously, the soldiers of the reserve corps all complained about the horrible quality of the spirit cooking, boycotting the kitchen and its staff, a few people even openly fed their food to the pigs.

In truth, it was because there simply were too many people to cook for, that the kitchen couldn't keep up, resulting in the taste naturally degrading.

The middle-aged cultivator asked: "How are his cooking skills?"

"The other cooks have tried and all responded positively" the vice-general answered.

The General spoke: "Then what are you waiting for, register him into the corps, he can go help the kitchen out today"

"Yes" the vice-general replied.

The middle-aged cultivator cleared his throat and spoke to the young man in front of him: "Zhang Xiao Yun, was it? From now on the entire camp's food will rely on you and the others, make sure to put your heart into it after you join us"

"Yes sir!" the young man clasped his fist.

"Alright, you're dismissed" the middle-aged cultivator waved his hand.

“Yes, General!”

The young man was then led away by other people.

After dealing with this minor thing, he completely put it at the back of his head.

After all, as the one responsible for this entire camp, he had a lot of other businesses to deal with.

After being led to a certain building, Gu Qing Shan patiently sat waiting outside.

A bit more time would be needed while his entry into the camp was being registered.

Once everything was complete, an identification badge will be made for him.

Having a badge was necessary.

Otherwise, if he wandered around the camp without one, he was at risk of being killed by the camp’s grand formation at any point.

While sitting there, Gu Qing Shan felt bored and touched the corner of his face.

He wasn’t able to feel anything strange.

But a line of glowing text appeared in front of his eyes.

[Item name: Ice Cicada Silver Mask]

[Unique item]

[The most excellent disguise tool created by humanity. Even your cultivation can be adjusted accordingly without being noticed by any person]

[The only thing you need to be wary of is to not let any Divinity look at you for too long, otherwise they would notice something wrong]

Gu Qing Shan felt a bit more assured.

This cicada mask was from Luo Bing Li.

She herself told Gu Qing Shan that as long as he wasn’t being stared at by a Divinity for a prolonged period of time, there would be no problem.

And Gu Qing Shan was currently at the camp of the further reserve corps.

Normally, the Divinity would only show themselves at the frontlines or in the middle army, they have never paid any attention to the reserve corps.

In the tiny chance that a Divinity actually shows up, as the most basic form of respect, the camp itself wouldn’t let a cook meet a Divinity.

This identity really is the most secure.

He currently had Zhang Xiao Yun’s appearance and his cultivation was adjusted to be around Golden Core realm.

Within a crowd, he would be part of an unnoticeable mob.

This was all thanks to the Ice Cicada Silver Mask.

Gu Qing Shan lightly pressed his hand on his Inventory Bag and carefully checked the inside.

There was a wall of jade stored inside the Inventory Bag.

He couldn't help but recall what happened before he left.

...

Inside the Sword Abyss, as Luo Bing Li was about to bring Gu Qing Shan away, Xie Gu Hong called him back.

"Qing Shan, I've fully prepared the necessary resources for your cultivation, but there's something else I need to give you" Xie Gu Hong said.

"Yes, Master" Gu Qing Shan replied.

Xie Gu Hong tapped his Inventory Bag and took something out.

Boom

The Sword Abyss itself slightly shook.

When Gu Qing Shan took a careful look at it, he saw that it was a large white rock that was as tall as 8 people and as thick as 20.

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This rectangular white rock was towering and intimidating, giving off a faint sword qi.

"Master, what kind of treasure tool is this? Why is it so big?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

"My disciple, this isn't a treasure tool, it's a large-scaled jade tag. All of teacher's sword cultivation methods are recorded inside. It should be able to help you quickly achieve Great Attainment as a Sword Saint and breakthrough to the next step. If you dedicate yourself fully to studying it and cultivate, you may be able to break through again and reach teacher's current realm"

Gu Qing Shan looked up at the huge jade tag, feeling a sense of excitement.

Finally.

I've finally obtained the greatest sword cultivation heritage of the Age of Old.

"Master, this is too precious, I'm afraid..."

"Do not worry, I've placed a soul vessel key on the jade tag so that if anyone but you tried to observe it, the jade tag will immediately be destroyed"

"That's great, that's very great, but then how should I transport this?"

"Just put it in your Inventory Bag and use your inner sight to study it whenever you can"

“Hm, that sure is convenient”

...

And since Gu Qing Shan was now bored with nothing to do, he decided to study the sword cultivation jade tag.

Half an incense’s worth of time later.

“Zhang Xiao Yun, come receive your badge” someone called out.

“Yes!”

Gu Qing Shan replied and pulled his hand away from his Inventory Bag before standing up.

He came into the room to see that there were constantly people going in and out of here, an exceptionally busy place.

The vice-general from before looked at him and smiled: “Put your heart into your work, since we’ll be depending on the kitchen’s cooking every day”

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Please be assured, sir. This humble one is always serious with his work, especially when it comes to the art of cooking”

The vice-general and everyone else around appeared pleased to hear that.

No matter how good this youngster is at cooking, him being present would mean more help in the kitchen and decrease the workload of other cooks, so the food would be better regardless.

The vice-general tossed a jade tag on the table to Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan reached his hand out to receive it.

All of a sudden, the jade tag stopped in mid-air.

Silence, all around, all the voices disappeared.

The smile on the vice-general’s face was still there, his hand remained in the tossing position.

Next to him, one cultivator was currently organizing the jade tags, two other cultivators were cross-checking something so their mouths were opened, but they were also frozen in place.

Everyone in the room was frozen in place.

A sword appeared from behind Gu Qing Shan and turned into Shannu.

“Gongzi, time has stopped” Shannu told him.

Gu Qing Shan replied with a low voice: “I know, stay silent and see what happens next.

He also summoned the Chao Yin sword and held it in his hand.

Suddenly, a young man descended from above.

It was the Spirit Tortoise.

The Spirit Tortoise in human form.

This was the first time it appeared since it brought Gu Qing Shan into this era's phantom image.

"Young Tortoise, what's going on?" Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist and asked.

The Spirit Tortoise's expression seemed a bit alarmed.

It explained: "I suddenly sensed an intense ripple in space-time, something must've infiltrated this place"

"Infiltrated this place?" Gu Qing Shan parroted.

"Indeed, something unknown to me had gone against the flow of time and infiltrated the phantom image of this era" the Spirit Tortoise told him.

"How is that possible? Has something like this ever happened before?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

Killing intent could be felt from the Spirit Tortoise: "Never. My responsibility is to guard this Age of Old phantom image, so I've eliminated any and every creature that dared to attempt infiltrating it"

"What about that 'something'?"

The Spirit Tortoise appeared a bit unwilling: "That 'thing' used an extremely intricate method to travel back to this time period from an extremely far future, bypassing all of my defenses and directly entered the phantom image"

"I am the Spirit Tortoise from the Age of Old, but I found that nothing I do could stop it and that I am still too young to fight against it. That's why I'm here right now"

He looked straight at Gu Qing Shan and continued: "The Tortoise race have always been experts in defense and divination. I have just performed a divination for you and found that there was a high chance of you dying if you continue to remain here"

"That's why I now give you two choices. The first is to take what you've obtained so far and immediately leave this era's phantom image, returning with me"

"The second is to remain here and continue to inquire more about the Age of Old while avoiding that 'thing'"

Gu Qing Shan went silent.

I've already obtained the sword cultivation inheritance from the Age of Old, so it's not impossible for me to leave.

Even the Spirit Tortoise had admitted that he didn't know what that thing was and that he was unable to stop it.

So I would naturally also be unable to do anything to that 'thing'.

Gu Qing Shan asked: "It would probably be best to leave, but after I leave, will I be able to search for the Heaven sword?"

The Spirit Tortoise sighed and told him: "You cannot. Seeing how serious the current situation is, I might as well tell you honestly. You must finish this entire phantom image in order to obtain for qualifications to go onward, only then will the search for the Heaven sword truly begin"

"Then I will remain here" Gu Qing Shan answered without hesitation.

"I must remind you, that 'thing' is coming specifically for you. As yourself right now, you are no match for it. You might die here" the Spirit Tortoise told him.

Gu Qing Shan shook his head: "If I leave, it will be my sword that dies"

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"Are you really sure you want to remain here?" the Spirit Tortoise stared straight at Gu Qing Shan and asked again.

"Yes, I'm sure. This is the only chance, I have to find the Heaven sword" Gu Qing Shan replied.

"For the Earth sword?" the Spirit Tortoise asked.

"Yes" Gu Qing Shan replied.

The Spirit Tortoise shook his head.

"Then do as you like, but the chances for your survival are very slim"

He took one last glance at Gu Qing Shan before disappearing.

He had left.

He was the guardian of the Age of Old, but he can only inform Gu Qing Shan of the situation, not make the decision for him.

Gu Qing Shan said nothing.

Shannu consoled him: "Gongzi, it'll be ok, you still have a lot more chances"

Gu Qing Shan shook his head: "You can't think of it that way, Shannu. We can't let our guards down for even a single second, we must act like we're always treading on paper-thin ice. Before meeting the dark figure of light, I didn't even know it was possible to have such an ability, so similarly, if the unknown existence could sneak back to the Age of Old by directly infiltrating this era's phantom image, there's no telling what other things it could be capable of"

After some brief thought, he muttered: "If, for example, it doesn't kill me but rather restrain me and use some sort of unimaginable mean to deal with my soul, there wouldn't be anything we can do"

Hearing that, Shannu trembled and refuted: "Gongzi, that can't be"

"That's the only thing I can think of for now. If it had infiltrated this era's phantom image and was specifically coming for me, it must know about that the fact that I'm here"

Gu Qing Shan continued: "Spending so much effort to come here, it's impossible that it hadn't made ample preparations, the most basic of which is to find out everything it could about me. And so, it's very likely that it knows about the fact that I can return to this point at least a few hundred more times"

"Despite knowing that, it still came here" Shannu muttered.

It was now that she truly realized how dangerous the situation had become.

"Indeed, no matter what it is, if it came from the future, then it definitely knows a lot of things that we do not. I'm sure it had also prepared a way to capture me" Gu Qing Shan continued.

Shannu asked worriedly: "Gongzi, then why didn't we leave?"

Gu Qing Shan smiled: "Leave? We still haven't found the Heaven sword, so we can't leave just yet"

"Gongzi"

"Don't worry, my current identity is the most well-hidden one that not even Divinities know about, so it wouldn't find me so easily"

Gu Qing Shan thought for a bit and added: "In other words, if it was even more powerful than the Divinities, capable of traveling through countless time periods back to the Age of Old from the future, and capable of locating me immediately, then no matter how many times we return, we wouldn't be able to defeat it"

"If such an existence really did exist, no one would be able to defeat it, gongzi"

"Ahaha, seems so"

The flow of time returned to normal.

Gu Qing Shan received the jade tag badge from the vice-general and smiled: "Thank you very much, sir"

"Hm, someone lead him to see his colleagues"

"Yes"

One cultivator stepped out and brought Gu Qing Shan outside.

Time passed.

Gu Qing Shan quickly got to know the other cooks of this camp and became closer to them.

When sunset came, he was naturally participating in the job of preparing tonight's dinner.

Thanks to his excellent cooking skills, his fluid and decisive movement as well as familiarity with the kitchen as a whole, he truly became part of the kitchen staff in record time.

After all, regardless of the environment, only those who are truly excellent will receive sincere recognition from everyone else.

When they finished preparing dinner for the entire camp and the soldiers had finished their meals, the cooks were already exhausted.

Gu Qing Shan then volunteered to cook some food for the kitchen staff himself.

Not only did his food taste good, but they were also a lot more well-made compared to the food of the soldiers.

Everyone naturally held a better impression of him.

“Hm, Zhang Xiao Yun, you’re quite the decent youngster alright. Where did you learn spirit cooking?” the head chef, old man Zhang asked.

“It was handed down in my family” Gu Qing Shan smiled.

“Ah, so your father is also a cook? Which camp?” old man Zhang asked, a bit intrigued.

“He’s no longer of this world, due to the last Desolate world invasion”

“What about your other family members?”

“Everyone is no longer of this world”

“Ah, is that so... I’m sorry”

“It’s ok” Gu Qing Shan just smiled.

Old man Zhang thought for a bit before telling him: “We don’t really have any rules here, it’s fine as long as you’re present when it’s time to cook, other than that, you can rest whenever and however you like. There’s a marketplace to the camp’s Southeast, you can take a look there when you don’t have anything to do”

Sensing his goodwill, Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist: “Thank you so much for telling me, boss Zhang”

At this point, another cook silently tapped old man Zhang, gestured with his eyes, and said: “Boss, you can tell him about that other thing as well”

Old man Zhang glared at him and said: “He’s still too young to even hold the knife”

The other cooks seemed a bit unwilling to accept that, but since the head chef had expressed his attitude, he had no choice but to smile and gloss it over.

“Uncle Lu, what’s the matter? There’s no need to feel bad, just tell me” Gu Qing Shan sincerely asked.

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The man called uncle Lu casually answered him: “Do you know where the meat that we use in spirit cooking comes from?”

“I don’t”

“They are meat from Desolate monsters”

“What? You mean we were eating those monsters?” Gu Qing Shan was surprised.

When uncle Lu saw that he was interested but not at all scared, he felt a bit disappointed.

But he continued: “Yep, this meat is very beneficial to cultivators, so whenever there’s a huge battle at the frontlines, there would always be a huge number of monsters transported to the backline here”

“Please go on” Gu Qing Shan urged him.

Uncle Lu continued: “After these monsters die for a long time, their meat will go bad and can’t be eaten anymore, so the monsters would only be crippled to the point of near-death before being sent back to our 23 reserve corps where we would take turns butchering them for meat”

“Then what’s the matter?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

“Well, it was our camp’s turn this month, and the bunch of us here have all taken one turn each when you arrived, so maybe you should try it out once as well” uncle Lu suggested.

“Ridiculous, he’s still so young. It would already be great if he doesn’t get scared to death by seeing those monsters, let alone butcher them for meat” old man Zhang scolded.

Another cook also chimed in: “He’s right, old Lu, Zhang Xiao Yun is still too young, even now we’re scared out of our minds whenever we meet those things, how could someone his age do it”

Seeing everyone dismissing his idea, uncle Lu complained in annoyance: “We’re all cooks here, so what if he’s a bit young”

“You’re right” Gu Qing Shan also clapped his hands.

Hmm?

What did he say?

The other cooks all looked back at Gu Qing Shan.

Everyone saw that he didn’t have a single bit of fear on his face and his eyes were completely lit up instead.

Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist towards old man Zhang and spoke seriously: “Boss Zhang, please let me do it”

Old man Zhang looked at him from head to toe: “The slaughterhouse is always full of blood and meat. Before they die the monsters always let out blood-curdling screams and howls, making their blood splatter all over you”

“The slaughtering shift is usually five days, during which you’ll have to constantly butcher monsters one after another. Even if you’re feeling scared to death, you wouldn’t be allowed to run away. Zhang Xiao Yun, think very carefully about this”

Gu Qing Shan grinned brightly and happily answered: “Don’t worry, my actual job back then was butcher, cooking is only something I took up to earn money”

“Butcher? You mean you’ve killed quite a few spirit beasts?” uncle Lu asked, intrigued.

Gu Qing Shan nodded: “I did, quite a lot actually, hm, I also killed a few other things as well. Let’s just say doing this is actually what I enjoy the most, I know about butchering even more so than cooking”

He grinned brightly at the other cooks: "Don't worry everyone, let me take the shift this month, I guarantee I won't let our camp be disgraced"

Seeing his pure grin, everyone unknowingly nodded.

For some reason, they all felt a chill run down their backs.

...

Still the Age of Old.

An area extremely far from where Gu Qing Shan was.

A barren land of gravel and rocks that very few went to.

Even the Desolate monsters don't care to attack this place because of how vast this place was compared to how little value it offers.

Normally, after being barren for so long, this place should continue to remain silent.

But today, about a minute before Gu Qing Shan and the Spirit Tortoise met, something happened here.

A coin appeared in the sky.

This was a unique coin. It was blood-red and completely different from every other coin from the Strife Zones.

It spun around itself in the sky until it finally broke.

At the very moment that the coin broke, a sea of light manifested in the sky above.

The sea of light flowed downwards to form intense tidal waves on the desolate, barren land.

One breath.

Two breaths.

Three breaths.

A figure stood up from within the tidal waves of light.

The vast sea of light disappeared right away.

The only thing left within the barren land was the figure.

A gust of wind blew past.

And the figure began to mutter.

「 I am finally here 」

「 Now that I've come, there should be no more problems in the future 」

His voice suddenly became full of grudge and killing intent, but at the same time maintaining a mocking tone:

「 How pitiful, you must still be looking for that sword during this period 」

「 As long as I find you, catch you and imprison your soul inside this era, everything that happened in the future will no longer exist 」

「 I swear I will use everything I have to torture your soul 」

「 God Slayer, Gu Qing Shan! 」

Chapter 749

Within the empty wilderness.

The figure was standing still in place, apparently waiting for something.

Time slowly passed.

One minute later.

A streak of light flew in from afar and stopped in the air.

It was a patrol cultivator who was sent here to check the situation by his sect.

This place was so desolate that if anything unnatural happened, it was hard to sense it from several thousand miles away.

Not to mention that the figure only appeared for a few moments before all the paranormal phenomena disappeared.

The nearby sect only managed to notice a very faint change, which was why they sent this cultivator here to check it out.

As the patrol cultivator stopped in the air, he shouted: “Who are you? What are you doing here?”

He held his treasure tool tightly, preparing to attack.

The fact that a single person was standing alone in the middle of nowhere was extremely strange by itself.

「 You asked who I am? 」

The figure asked him back and looked up.

The patrol cultivator’s expression warped.

He hurriedly landed and prostrated on the ground in front of the figure: “I did not know you were here, please forgive me for my insolence, o’ benevolent God”

There is no mistake, a flame of light in between his eyebrows and clad in glorious light that obscures his appearance—— this is definitely a Divinity.

I actually shouted at a Divinity, this is a huge crime!

Thinking that, the cultivator was trembling.

The figure carefully observed the cultivator's trembling appearance for a while before speaking with a pleased tone: 「Hm, your attitude pleases me, it perfectly reflects the lowly existence of living beings from the Age of Old. I have decided to forgive and grant you a blessing」

The cultivator was stunned as he didn't understand what the first half of what he said meant.

But he understood the second half without fail.

The Divinity wants to grant me a blessing!

What a huge opportunity this is.

The cultivator bowed, again and again, speaking joyfully: "Thank you, benevolent God, for your grace, I am forever grateful"

The figure reached his hand out and placed it on the cultivator's forehead.

「Your gratitude is true, I can sense it so」

Saying that the figure began to transform.

He had turned into the cultivator.

An exact replica that was perfectly the same, not even the closest people of this cultivator would be able to tell the two of them apart.

Except for one minor difference, a burning flame of light in between the eyebrows of one of them.

Apparently the figure had also noticed this.

He waved his hand over his forehead and made the flame of light disappear.

It was now that he spoke up: 「Because of your humility and how you've given your identity to me, I shall grant you the blessing of a painless death—— it is very rare for me to grant such a thing to living beings, this is your honor」

The cultivator was stunned.

He couldn't understand what was happening at all.

He couldn't do anything either, as his body slowly lost its vitality and turned into a grey statue.

A gust of wind blew past the statue and swept it away as it crumbled to tiny grains of ash.

He no longer existed in this world.

No.

There was still another 'him' here.

He waved his hand.

The treasure tool and Inventory Bag on the ground flew into his hand.

He put the items away before closing his eyes and carefully checked the cultivator's memories.

「 That didn't take too long, Gu Qing Shan, Xie Gu Hong's eldest disciple, caused a great commotion in the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace and drew the attention of Divinity... Hm, this period of time was quite sensitive so many Divinities are paying close attention to that sect, how troublesome, I cannot meet them...」

「 It seems I have to think of some other way to enter the Barren Cloud Heavenly Palace 」

After a bit of thinking, the cultivator flew up and away.

...

On another side.

The camp of humanity's 23rd reserve corps.

It was currently night.

Gu Qing Shan paced back and forth around the camp before arriving at the camp's gate.

When the cultivator standing guard saw the badge on his hip, he smiled.

“And here I was wondering why today's food was so good, turns out we have a new cook”

“You praise me too much” Gu Qing Shan smiled.

“Where are you going now?” the guard cultivator asked.

“I'm probably going to take a random stroll around here since I'm not used to this place yet” Gu Qing Shan replied.

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Hearing that, the guard cultivator patiently told him: “Don't go North, that's the direction of the other camps, you can't trespass without permission; the West is just a huge barren land, there isn't anything there. But there was a marketplace in the Southeast that was managed by several sects, it should be quite lively there right now, you can try walking around there”

“Thank you for telling me” Gu Qing Shan clasped his fist.

“Hm, you can go”

The guard cultivator opened the formation and let Gu Qing Shan out of the camp.

He first started to fly in the Southeast direction, carefully confirmed that there wasn't anyone around before he started to head West.

After half an hour of flight.

Gu Qing Shan had gone deep into the barren mountain.

He picked out a relatively empty place, landed, and quickly arranged several layers of formations.

After silently meditating for a bit, Gu Qing Shan confirmed that he had made all the necessary preparations.

He put the Ice Cicada Silver Mask away, circulated his spirit energy, and began to break through to the next realm.

As heaven and earth sensed the change on his body, it started to react accordingly.

An intense wind began to pick up.

Dark clouds filled the sky.

Arcs of lightning could be seen flashing inside the clouds above.

Lines of glowing text scrolled past the War God UI in front of Gu Qing Shan's eyes.

[You are attempting to breakthrough Virtualized realm to enter Cryptic realm]

[Heaven's Tribulation is about to begin, please prepare properly to breakthrough]

[5]

[4]

[3]

[2]

[1]

[Begin!]

Boom———

A flash of lightning descended.

Gu Qing Shan stood still in place and commanded with his mind.

Two flying swords appeared from the void of space, flew up to the sky, and attacked the flashes of lightning.

The Tribulation Lightning was thoroughly cut apart.

But then, more Tribulation Lightning appeared from the Tribulation Clouds and struck down at Gu Qing Shan.

Gu Qing Shan silently prepared a hand seal in his mind.

The two swords turned into blurred flying images that quickly rushed through the lightning storm at full speed.

Countless orbs of lightning were hit and exploded on the spot.

The flashes of lightning and flying swords continued to clash!

...

Time passed.

The Lightning Tribulation slowly came to an end.

Gu Qing Shan knew exactly what was going to happen next.

He sighed and rubbed his face, making sure to make himself appear as amiable and approachable as possible.

A second later.

『 Wahahaha, Devil King Gu, you're facing another Tribulation, what terrifying cultivation speed 』 a Devil King appeared from the void of space.

『...Old Gu, when this King came here this time, the Tribulation is suppressing this King's strength a lot less. Seems like you improved quite a bit 』 a huge Fiend King was crouching as he walked out from the void of space.

Followed by a Devil King who was wearing a Daoist robe that was perfectly ironed so that not a crease could be seen, gesturing to Gu Qing Shan as soon as he came out.

『 Boss Gu, come come come, now that you've reached Cryptic realm, the Tribulation finally summoned the big names, let me introduce you 』

Gu Qing Shan spread his arms wide and smiled: "Old Bloody! Hahaha, welcome, welcome, brothers, I've already prepared a lot of food and booze for this occasion, let us enjoy ourselves"

『 That's what I'm talking about! As soon as I felt the Tribulation's summon, I immediately went to steal a seat and got here, that's how much I respect you, Old Gu 』

『 Gather around and make a table for yourselves, let us have a feast today, it's been a while since I went out 』

『 Ah? Where's the female Devil King from last time? 』

『 Ahaha, you fancy her? She has quite the taste for fiends like you, you know? 』

『 Hah... I actually also like to eat her kind of devil, but that's just when I was young, I just want to have a nice conversation now 』

A female voice came: 『 A nice conversation? Or some nice flirting? 』

A female Devil King casually appeared from the void of space and drifted over.

She landed next to Gu Qing Shan, blew softly into his ear and told the other fiends and devils: 『 This Devil King only have eyes for someone as fierce as Devil King Gu, the rest of you can forget it 』

The evil creatures all laughed.

Gu Qing Shan offered a cup of liquor to the female Devil King and smiled: "Come, let's drink"

His face was actually cramming up.

A huge feast was about to begin.

...Make no mistakes, this is indeed a Heaven's Tribulation...

Chapter 750

A Heaven's Tribulation that was only supposed to take 1 hour took 4 hours.

The host and guests were all pleased.

Everything finally ended.

The evil creatures unwillingly said their goodbyes.

The party was over.

The night fell back to silence.

Gu Qing Shan took a few sips of soup that he prepared to sober up but was still feeling dizzy.

He glanced around to confirm that there were no fiends or devils that remained.

It was now that he circulated his spirit energy to dispel all the alcohol from his body.

A huge cloud of alcohol mist came off his body, blown away by the wind to fill the entire barren mountain in a thick smell of liquor.

He drank 5 full barrels of spirit liquor by himself.

Those evil creatures were even worse, all of them were so drunk it was a miracle they could return at all.

Shannu pinched her nose: "Gongzi, the smell of alcohol is so terrible, you've been through a lot"

"I'm fine" Gu Qing Shan replied.

Shannu suggested: "Just now, gongzi could've drunk while silently dispelling the alcohol, that way you wouldn't feel so uncomfortable"

Gu Qing Shan smiled bitterly: "Everyone would notice if I did that, there would be no point to drinking then"

Shannu gritted her teeth: "Maybe the next time they come, I should just fight and chase them away, otherwise gongzi would have to deal with them every time"

Gu Qing Shan waved his hand dismissively: "It's only a drinking party"

Seeing her still a bit displeased, Gu Qing Shan became a bit more solemn and slowly told her: "Shannu, through everything I've seen so far, whether it's the Age of Old or our era, I found that the infinite worlds are always interconnected and that there are three kinds of existences"

Shannu was intrigued: "Ah? Only three kinds, gongzi? What are they?"

Gu Qing Shan sighed: "Right, there are Gods, people, or living beings to be more exact, and evil creatures"

"Being a God is the easiest, they can create many things and give life to living beings. Before running away they were worshipped by living beings everywhere, even after running away there are still living beings who worship them"

"Being people, you have to live a very tough life, not only do you have to worship Gods, but you also have to try and become stronger to help the Gods stop their terrifying enemies. At the same time, the fate of 'people' are fixed, you can only be used and abused by Gods, working your whole life without seeing any hope"

"But evil creatures, I think that most of them were not created by Gods. One proof of this is that normal people couldn't possibly find the world of the fiends and devils, normal people couldn't even enter those worlds if they wanted to. Furthermore, evil creatures don't have to listen to the orders of Gods, they live and survive by the combined Laws of billions of worlds. Just look, even the Heaven's Tribulation summoned them to work for it, so I believe that evil creatures have a lot more freedom than people do, at least they don't have to bend to the whims of Gods"

"Gongzi, how do you know that those evil creatures don't have to listen to the orders of Gods?" Shannu asked.

"When the Tianma helped the Demon King Order steal the heritage of the Old Gods, I already noticed"

Gu Qing Shan continued: "The Tianma stole something so important from the Old Gods to help the evolution of the Old Gods' hated enemies, an [Order]. This means that the Tianma doesn't care what the Old Gods think"

"Then why did you get acquainted with them, gongzi?"

"There isn't a reason, I simply wanted to be their friend" Gu Qing Shan smiled, "if one day, they need my help with something, I will help them. And similarly, if I need their help, they might come to my aid, which might be a huge saving grace"

Gu Qing Shan spoke with a serious expression: "That's why, when we go out into the world like this, we need to make as many friends as we can, especially in the age of Apocalypse. Don't just fight everyone you come across and think of that as being great, because it isn't. We're not main characters of some fantasy novel, there's no need to make unnecessary trouble"

"After saying so much, in the end, you just wanted to advise me not to fight, alright, I understand"

Shannu stopped a bit and teased him: "On the other hand, gongzi is too lonely. You truly do need more friends, like that female Devil King from before"

Seeing the killing intent going away from her expression, and even had the will to tease him, Gu Qing Shan slowly calmed down.

"She's not really my type, too flirtatious" Gu Qing Shan sighed.

Casually answering her, his gaze was focused on the void of space.

Lines of glowing text were scrolling past his retina.

[This Tribulation is over]

[You've reached Cryptic realm]

[Your total spirit energy has greatly increased]

[As a Cryptic realm cultivator, you will awaken a Thaumaturgy]

The icon representing [War God Thaumaturgy] on his War God UI lit up.

Line of glowing text appeared from the icon, turning into a new notification.

[You've reached Cryptic realm. You can now trigger the Thaumaturgy awakening Quest, would you like to trigger it now?]

"Trigger" Gu Qing Shan answered.

[Please pick one of the following choices:]

[One: complete a series of Quest and awaken a new Thaumaturgy as the reward]

[Two: complete a single Quest and evolve your current Lightning Thaumaturgy as the reward]

Reading the glowing lines of text in front of him, Gu Qing Shan fell into thought.

A new Thaumaturgy.

That would certainly be a good thing.

But his Lightning Thaumaturgy has been evolved three times from [Stunned] to [Rigid] and finally [Severance].

During the fragment of time that depicted the war from the Age of Old, I was able to abuse [Severance] to help the cultivators from the Age of Old eliminate an entire army of Desolate Demon Eyes.

And cultivators from the Age of Old seem to not know anything at all about Elemental Lightning.

Which means, it's likely that [Severance] would become a great aid in battle if it could evolve again.

Still a bit hesitant, Gu Qing Shan decided to ask the War God System: "If I choose to awaken a new Thaumaturgy, what kind of Thaumaturgy will I receive?"

The War God System replied: [A new Thaumaturgy represents possibility. It will be determined the same way as the previous times you obtained a new Thaumaturgy, through random gacha]

Gu Qing Shan asked: "You mean like how I first obtained the Lightning Thaumaturgy?"

[Correct, if you need to, I can create a gacha simulation here to help you make a decision] the System replied.

"Then please simulate it once, I want to see what kinds of Thaumaturgy I'll get" Gu Qing Shan said.

[Please spend Soul Points] the System told him.

“You want Soul Points for a simulation? I just want to take a look, can’t you do it for free?” Gu Qing Shan asked.

The System paused briefly before solemnly declaring: [The System will permanently shut down the simulator function]

“Wait! I’ll just give you the Soul Points” Gu Qing Shan hurriedly said.

And the Soul Points were consumed.

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At this point, the War God System spoke: [Soul Points received, manifesting Thaumaturgy gacha simulation]

[Please note, the following is only a simulation and not the real thing]

Three unique icons appeared at the center of the War God UI.

[Thaumaturgy gacha complete, the following three choices have been generated according to your Quest’s rate of completion]

[Please select one of the following three Thaumaturgies to awaken]

Gu Qing Shan looked at the three icons.

He found that whenever he focused his gaze on one of the icons, the icon would lit up and a description would appear next to it.

The first icon was a grey card.

Depicted on the grey card was an old man, currently kneeling on the ground and praying.

When Gu Qing Shan focused his gaze on it, a description appeared.

[Summoning Card: Primal Chaos Summoning]

[You were able to obtain this Thaumaturgy because you have turned into a card]

[Primal Chaos Summoning: You can summon a primal chaos creature within the fog of primal chaos to help you fight]

[Note: Due to the restriction of the level of your card, you cannot control which creature you summon, it is possible to summon a small lizard or a monster of the same level as a God]

[Note: When the summoned creature is 10 times stronger than you are, it may backlash on you]

Gu Qing Shan shook his head.

This type of skill is too random to know if it’s going to aid in battle or not.

But a skill of this type showing up means I can obtain card-type skills now.

That's new.

Gu Qing Shan looked towards the next icon.

A suit of armor covered in frost was depicted on the icon.

A description appeared next to the armor.

[Protection Thaumaturgy: Frost Armor (Primary)]

[Description: When you wear armor in battle, you can activate this Thaumaturgy to increase the defensive capabilities of your armor by 30%]

Gu Qing Shan took a deep breath.

The (Primary) means this is a Thaumaturgy that can evolve.

Just like [Severance], possible for this Thaumaturgy to evolve and become stronger.

So from Cryptic realm onwards, I will be able to obtain a Thaumaturgy capable of evolution that isn't a Lightning-type, this is a crucial piece of information.

But from an objective point of view, the current [Severance] can already shift the flow of the battlefield against the Desolate world monsters, so its evolution might be even more crucial.

He looked at the final icon.

Huh.

This looks familiar.

The third icon was a female portrait.

However, this time the female depicted also had a crown.

[Divine Skill: Empress Transformation]

[Description: When using the Skill, the user will transform into an Empress. Allure +1800%, total strength +130%]

Gu Qing Shan almost choked on his saliva.

He forced himself to resist the 130% increase in total strength while constantly reminding himself that this was only a simulation and not a real choice.

"Alright, I understand" he told the War God UI.

[Please make a choice] the War God System urged him.

"One last question, between the new Thaumaturgy Quests and Lightning Thaumaturgy evolution Quest, which is harder?" Gu Qing Shan asked.

[The Lightning Thaumaturgy Quest is harder] the System responded.

Gu Qing Shan understood.

This meant that the 4th tier of Lightning Thaumaturgy was recognized by the War God System to be more powerful than the majority of other Thaumaturgies.

“I’ll choose to complete one Quest to evolve the Lightning Thaumaturgy” Gu Qing Shan quickly replied.

[Are you sure?] the War God System asked.

“I’m sure”

[Very well, you will soon face the toughest battle of your life, one small slip and you could perish, are you sure you want to begin this Quest?] the War God System once again asked for his confirmation with a solemn tone.

Gu Qing Shan paused briefly.

The System is giving me a warning.

Seems like this Quest is exceptionally hard.

It makes sense. This is to evolve a Thaumaturgy for the 4th time in a row, there’s no way it was going to be an easy task.

Gu Qing Shan confirmed: “I have decided to take this Quest without fail, now, please tell me the details of the Quest”

Lines of glowing text began to float onto the War God UI.

[Thaumaturgy Quest: Lightning of Life]

[Quest description: This is the Age of Old, an era where the Desolate world was terrifyingly powerful. You will have to wrestle against the monsters that even Divinities fear and obtain their overwhelming power to awaken the 4th tier of your Lightning Thaumaturgy]

[Quest objective: Overcome the odds and kill 100 Desolate monsters]

[Quest reward: Awakening the 4th tier of Lightning of Life]

Reading the Quest description, Gu Qing Shan was surprised.

He needed to kill 100 Desolate monsters.

Even cultivators vastly more powerful than himself couldn’t be able to do such a thing in a short amount of time, as killing too many of them on the battlefield could draw the enemy’s attention to yourself and become the focus of attack.

This truly is an incomparably hard and dangerous feat to accomplish.

But...

As an army cook, he would be on duty at the slaughterhouse starting tomorrow...