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How...how was this possible!?

The last time she had dueled Darryl was only half a year ago. At that time, she had unleashed her full strength and was still on par with Darryl. But now, she could not even withstand a single palm strike from Darryl.

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How could this be?

Darryl laughed lightly and looked at Gonggong. "Do you still want to fight? I advise you to give up. You are no match for me!"

As soon as he said that, Darryl rushed over and swiftly raised his hand to tap on Gonggong's acupoints.

Instantly, Gonggong's body stiffened and she wasn't able to move at all.

"Why did you come to kill me?" Darryl sat down and looked at Gonggong. He said calmly, "Tell me the truth. Don't come up with a random reason to kill me."

Gonggong snorted and did not respond.

Darryl frowned. He picked up the dagger that had fallen to the ground and placed it against Gonggong's neck!

Sensing the chill coming from the dagger, Gonggong's expression did not change. "If you want to kill me, hurry up and do it. There's no need to waste your breath!" She had failed her assassination and the mission that Yang Jian had given her. She could not reveal the truth.

If Darryl knew that the person he killed was Yang Jian, it would be difficult for them to fight against the Raksasa Tribe together.

Darryl furrowed his brows. This woman was unmoved by force or persuasion.

“If you’re not going to kill me, then hurry up and let me go,” Gonggong said coldly. Although her acupuncture point had been hit, her tone was extremely cold. She did not look like a captive at all.

Darryl couldn’t help but laugh. “Gonggong, you’re being unreasonable. You tried to kill me first. Now that I’ve caught you, you still want me to let you go? Do you think that’s possible? I can do that but you need to tell me why you tried to kill me. As long as you tell me, I’ll release you.”

“No.” A single word came out of Gonggong’s mouth.

F*ck!

Darryl lost his patience and carried Gonggong up.

“What are you doing? Don’t touch me.” Gonggong immediately panicked. She was as white as jade and was known as the water god by the world. If word of her being hugged by a man spread, her reputation would be ruined.

However, what made her both shocked and angry was how Darryl was still behind her. The wind blew gently and he laughed, looking at her playfully. “What do you think I’m doing? It’s late. Of course I’m going to bed!”

As he spoke, Darryl carried Gonggong to the bed.

It had to be said that Gonggong was indeed the famous goddess of the world. She had a beautiful face and a great figure. The thought of this woman trying to assassinate him made Darryl want to teach her a lesson. The angrier she was, the happier Darryl felt.

Gonggong could not struggle. Her face was red with anger. “You, let go of me!”

Darryl could not help but laugh. He intentionally shook his head and said, “That won’t do. You tried to assassinate me and disrupted my sleep. As a punishment, you must rest with me!”

Upon hearing this, Gonggong nearly cried from anxiety. She bit her lips so hard that they nearly bled.

Darryl wanted to anger her and did not actually want to sleep with her.

Seeing that she was about to cry, Darryl smiled and said, “Tell me, why do you want to kill me? As long as you say it, I will open your acupoints! Otherwise, I can only hug you to sleep.”

With that said, Darryl shook his head and smugly muttered to himself, “Tsk, tsk. The mighty Water God has such a good figure. I wonder how many men in the world dream of her. I never expected that I, Darryl, would be able to hug her to sleep. This life is worth it.”

“You—”

As soon as he said that, Gonggong’s face burned hot. She was extremely embarrassed and angry.

This bastard is getting more and more impudent!

But if she didn’t tell him, he was going to sleep with her.

Seeing the hesitation on her face, Darryl lay on the bed and smiled at her. “Are you going to tell me or not? If you don’t, I’ll hug you to sleep. Guess what the people from the Snyder family will think when they see the mighty Water God in my bed tomorrow morning? It will definitely be big news. I

reckon that such big news will spread throughout the nine cities in the Mainland very quickly.”

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“You!” Gonggong was furious.

Scoundrel!

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Darryl was such a scoundrel! At this moment, Gonggong only hated herself for being careless. She did not act decisively enough and was humiliated by him instead.

Gonggong glared at Darryll furiously. If looks could kill, Darryl would probably be riddled with holes.

“You’re really stubborn.” Darryl smiled and said. “Alright, let’s rest together.”

He proceeded to crawl under the covers with her!

Panicked, Gonggong blurted out, “Darryl, don’t...I’ll talk, I’ll talk! It...it was Yang Jian who sent me.”

Hearing this, Darryl took a deep breath and chuckled. “I actually knew he sent you, even if you didn’t tell me.”

Darryl felt a little angry. “Since Yang Jian has already stopped fighting with me, he has decided to send troops to guard the Chaotic Mountain Range and join forces with the other continents to guard against the Raksasa Tribe. Why does he still want to kill me?”

“He...” Gonggong bit her lips again and did not meet Darryl’s eyes. She replied in a low voice, “His Majesty thinks that you are his greatest threat. If you start a war with the Raksasa Tribe, you will definitely win. Your fame and reputation will surpass his then. ”

Gonggong heaved a sigh and continued, "If I kill you, Yang Jian will be the sole ruler of the nine cities of Mainland."

Upon hearing this, Darryl could not help but curse internally. Yang Jian was really a treacherous hypocrite. He acted like he had stopped the battle, but was secretly still sending people to assassinate him! He was too shameless.

As he thought, Darryl extended his hand and quickly released Gonggong.

"Go back and tell Yang Jian that if he really wants to kill me, he should do it publicly. Don't do it secretly." Darryl's face was cold and arrogant, telling this to Gonggong.

Gonggong did not respond.

Seeing Gonggong's expression, Darryl's tone softened. "You have failed the mission yang Jian tasked you with. If you go back, Yang Jian will definitely not let you off. Instead of returning to the North Sanctuary Continent, why don't you follow me to the Chaos Mountain Range?"

Darryl knew that Gonggong had been hesitating when it came to killing him.

To be honest, although Gonggong was cold and arrogant on ordinary days, her views on the righteous cause of the Kingdom of the Nine States were very upright. It was quite admirable.

It would be a pity if such a woman were to be dealt with by Yang Jian.

"I'll take care of my own matters." Gonggong quickly got off the bed and tidied her messed up clothes. Her face was red. "You don't have to worry about it."

With that said, Gonggong picked the dagger on the table and fled from the room like a frightened rabbit.

Darryl couldn't help but laugh. Gonggong's angry look was quite charming.

He had finally figured out the purpose of Gonggong staying by his side. He felt slightly at ease and no longer had to be on guard at all times. He lay on the bed and rested.

Darryl firmly believed that Gonggong cared a lot about her reputation. After the assassination was exposed, he would no longer plot against him.

On the other side, Gonggong had left the room and went to the yard outside. Her exquisite features were scrunched up in worry.

What should she do? She had failed to kill Darryl. If she returned like this, His Majesty would definitely fly into a rage and she would be punished. But there was no point in staying if she didn't go back.

At the corner of her eye, Gonggong black flag nailed to a tree not far away. Gonggong turned to look at it. The flag was only the size of a palm and a shape of a dragon was embroidered on it.

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Gonggong's delicate body trembled. Of course, she recognized this flag. It was the dragon flag that Yang Jian had used to mobilize the army. If the dragon flag had appeared here, it meant that His Majesty had arrived, without a doubt.

Gonggong panicked. She walked over, took the dragon flag, and quietly left the Snyder family residence.

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Outside, Gonggong saw a few more dragon flags. These dragon flags were nailed in some hidden spots. Clearly, they were guiding Gonggong.

A few minutes later, under the guidance of these dragon flags, Gonggong arrived at a forest on the east side of Tianzhong City.

“Lord Gonggong.”

As soon as she entered the forest, she heard a cold voice. Following that, a man in a black robe walked out slowly. He had a dark expression and an impressive aura.

It was Zhang Jue.

Gonggong had been gone for three days, but there was still no news of her successfully assassinating Darryl. Yang Jian could not wait any longer and had sent Zhang Jue over to ask about the situation. If necessary, he would secretly assist Gonggong.

“Advisor!”

Upon seeing Zhang Jue, Gonggong's body trembled slightly as she politely greeted him.

Seeing that it was not Yang Jian, Gonggong felt somewhat relieved. However, she still did not dare to act presumptuously in front of Zhang Jue.

One had to know that Zhang Jue was Yang Jian's military advisor. He was in charge of all the armies in North Sanctuary. Even Yang Jian listened to his arrangements. He was above everyone else.

"How is the assassination of Darryl Darby going?" Zhang Jiao asked expressionlessly. "I just found out that you and Darryl were treated well by the Snyder Family here, so I left behind the dragon flag in the Snyder Family residence and led you here to ask."

Gonggong bit her lips, unable to hide her embarrassment and shame. "Military counselor, I failed my assassination just now. Darryl was very alert..."

She recounted the scene, leaving out the part of how she was captured and humiliated by Darryl.

What? The assassination failed?

Zhang Jue was stunned.

"Does this mean that Darryl wants you to send a message to His Majesty that he will be parting ways with you tomorrow morning?" Zhang Jue's tone was light but he was frowning and seemed to be deep in thought.

Gonggong nodded, feeling very nervous.

He would not force her to go back and beg for Yang Jian's forgiveness, right?

"Don't panic, we still have a chance!"

Zhang Jue smiled at her and said, "Tomorrow morning, I will set up an ambush at the outskirts of Tianzhong City where you must pass through with Darryl. When the time comes, just cooperate with me."

Gonggong stared blankly at Zhang Jue. "Advisor, are we still going to attack?"

When the assassination failed, Gonggong had completely given up on the idea of assassinating Darryl. It was not only for the sake of her reputation, but she felt like the continent of the Nine Provinces could not do without Darryl. One had to know that Darryl had extremely high attainments in the arrangement of troops. With him around, it would be easier for the continent of the nine cities to resist the Raksasa Tribe. If he died, it would be a loss for the nine cities of Mainland.

"What?" Noticing Gonggong's expression, Zhang Jue scrutinized her intently and said in a low voice, "You don't want to kill him? Don't tell me you've secretly joined hands with Darryl to betray His Majesty?"

Quickly, Gonggong shook her head. "Advisor, you are mistaken. My loyalty to His Majesty is clear. How could I betray him? I just feel that we shouldn't deal with Darryl now that we are facing a great enemy."

Seeing Gonggong's sincere expression, Zhang Jue didn't doubt her. However, he still said firmly, "In that case, just listen to my orders and cooperate with me tomorrow morning."

Zhang Jue told her his plan in detail.

Gonggong was still somewhat reluctant. She had no choice but to agree with the current situation.

Half an hour later, they finalized the plan and Gonggong returned to the Snyder family residence.

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The next morning, Darryl woke up early. After Gonggong left last night, Darryl had slept for a while before he began to cultivate. To his pleasant surprise, he had discovered that his internal energy field was showing signs of approaching a breakthrough. The thought of reaching the level of Heaven Ascension had Darryl's heart leaping in joy.

Darryl and Gonggong left shortly after having their breakfast. Tanya Snyder wanted them to stay for another day or two, but she knew that what was happening in the Chaotic Mountain Range urgently needed their attention. Hence, she reluctantly walked them to the outside of the city before seeing them off and returning to the Sanders.

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On the boulevard of the outskirts, Darryl looked at Gonggong with a cheeky grin and asked, "So do you really plan on heading back to the North Moana Continent?"

"Yeah." Gonggong responded, her eyes reflecting the struggle in her heart. Darryl let out a small sigh and wondered what it was about Yang Jian that had Gonggong head over heels for him.

"Well then, that means we are going our separate ways after crossing this mountain ahead of us." Darryl said, sounding slightly disappointed.

"Ouch, ouch..." As they spoke, a pained wailing came from the woods ahead. The voice sounded like a man in pain. Darryl did not hesitate and ran towards the direction from where the voice was heard. Gonggong, on the other hand, froze for a moment before following him hesitantly.

Upon finding the source of the wailing cry, Darryl stopped dead, looking at what he found with a sympathetic look on his face. A man was sitting beneath a tree. His face shone with sweat as he held on to his right leg,

which was completely broken and bleeding continuously. The man cried out in excruciating pain, "Kind travellers!". Seeing as Darryl and Gonggong were approaching, the man clung onto the chance like it was his last shot and begged, "Please, please help me. I was logging on these hills and accidentally broke my leg. I will be forever grateful if you could take me home."

Darryl took a deep breath and nodded right away. He walked over to the man. "Okay, where do you live?"

"Darryl, don't..." Gonggong couldn't help but yelp, uncertainty in her eyes. Indeed, that man with the broken leg was a trap set up by Zhang Jue. Knowing what awaited ahead, Gonggong couldn't bear to watch as Darryl stepped right into it and tried to help.

"What's wrong?" Darryl paused and turned to look at Gonggong in confusion.

Gonggong cowered at his probing stare and replied softly, "I thought you were hurrying towards the Chaotic Mountain Range? This man might have his leg broken and bled out for a bit, but his life is in no danger for now. I'm sure his family will come looking for him soon."

Huh...? Darryl was shocked at Gonggong's comment on the matter and proceeded to debate with her comment, "Sure, what goes on in the Chaotic Mountain Range is important. But as cultivators, we have the responsibility to extend a helping hand to those who need it, otherwise what would be the meaning for us to cultivate to begin with?"

Darryl spoke with such determination and righteousness. It had rendered Gonggong speechless, her face flushing red in embarrassment. Not arguing any further, Darryl approached the man and tended to his wound with the limited tools they had. Once he was done, he carried the man on his back and asked, "Sir, where do you live?"

“Just up the hills,” the man replied gratefully. “My name is Joe Miller. My family and I make a small business selling logs, so we moved and settled in the mountains. You are truly a kind man.”

Darryl nodded emphatically, thinking to himself, ‘Life is hard for everyone, I guess. Joe has to be the breadwinner of the family and now that his leg is screwed, harder days are ahead for this family.’

“Come on, let’s go. Time for some charity work!” Darryl turned around and shouted at Gonggong. Gonggong wanted to refuse, but decided against it and complied with a sigh.

With Joe on his back, Darryl trekked along the mountain tracks and the two chatted as they slowly climbed the slopes. Throughout their conversation, Darryl noticed that Joe was holding onto some herbs tightly in his hands. Surprisingly, those herbs included two types of mid-level herbs that commoners shouldn’t know of, which seemed a little out of place.

“Joe!” Darryl asked. “I thought you were a logging worker. Where did you learn about herbs as well?”

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Joe's eyes darted back and forth as if he was unsure. He then smiled and responded, "Oh, this? My ancestors were doctors and they left behind some formulas as their legacy. It is difficult to get medical attention this deep into the woods so I picked herbs as backups when I was logging." Joe's tone was composed as he explained, but his eyes were filled with panic.

Darryl couldn't see his face in their positions and hence, didn't think to doubt his explanation. After some time, they managed to reach halfway through the mountainside. An empty field unfolded before them. A few cabins were scattered across the field next to one another, with trimmed logs piling up next to them.

"Where is your family?" Darryl asked as he turned to look at Joe.

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"They are probably resting in the cabin. Good sir, you can just walk in!" Joe replied anxiously.

At the same time, Gonggong's brows tangled up with anticipation. Darryl paid no mind to her expression as he nodded, setting Joe down on the bench next to the door, before proceeding to push the doors open.

The moment the doors swung open, Darryl froze at the scene before him. There sat a woman with panic written all over her face. There were two children next to her who couldn't have been over 10 years old. Their faces were pale with fear.

It was obvious that they were Joe's wife and children, but by the looks of it, it seemed as though they had been threatened and were being held as hostages.

At that instant, Darryl realized that something was wrong. Before he could react, a shadow dashed in from the doorway and sent a fierce punch on Darryl's chest. It was Zhang Jue, his expression bloodthirsty and cruel.

Zhang Jue was swift in his ambush and within close proximity. Darryl couldn't do much to dodge, but he managed to immediately fire up his internal energy as protection.

Baam!

The punch landed directly on Darryl's chest in full force. With a muffled grunt, he was sent flying backwards. He slammed into a tree and fell to the ground.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry..." Terrified, Joe shouted towards Darryl in tears. "I didn't want to do this, he made me..."

As he broke down into a sobbing mess, the herbs he was holding fell to the ground, revealing azure pills that were stuffed in between the herbs. Darryl ignored Joe and locked his glare onto Zhang Jue.

"Zhang Jue!" Withstanding the agonizing pain, Darryl said coldly, "You pride yourself over being the commander of North Moana Continent, and yet you use such despicable means against me."

Darryl felt as if his heart had been completely shattered to pieces.

Intensive pain radiated throughout his body but at the same time, he was glad that he managed to protect himself from further damages with his internal energy. Otherwise, that punch Zhang Jue landed could have easily killed him.

Zhang Jue laughed at the comment and stared right into Darryl's eyes.

"Darryl Darby, there is no means too despicable if it serves the purpose. You are indeed a talented one, but it's a shame that you are too caught up with benevolence. Back at the South Cloud World, had you left those commoners behind, you wouldn't have been suppressed by me the entire time."

Zhang Jue's eyes flashed in wicked coldness, "I'll tell you right now, I was the one who broke Joe's leg. I threatened him into working for me with the lives of his wife and children. He was ordered to fool you here, right where I would be waiting to ambush you. See those herbs that he was holding? The blue pills stuffed between them are called the Bone Breaker Pills. I had them prepared just for you."

Mortals won't respond to it, but for cultivators, a sniff is all it takes to interfere with their powers."

Darryl couldn't believe what he was hearing. His eyes turned red as they glared at Zhang Jue.

"So in order to defeat it, you went and laid your filthy hands on the innocents? Are you even human?" he asked.

Rage burned within him as he once again recognized just what a brutal snake Zhang Jue was, going as far as to break an ordinary person's leg and threatened him with his family's lives. Despicable, insidious, cruel, there weren't enough words in the world to describe the likes of him.

At the same time, Darryl could distinctly feel that his internal energy was slowly succumbing to an invisible force within him. Instantly, panic rose alongside his anger. The Bone Breaker Pills? It didn't sound like anything in the Infinite Elixir Manual. Little did he know, the Bone Breaker Pills was invented and made by Zhang Jue.

It was inspired by the Immortal Pure Scripture. Hence, like the Dark Day Pill created by Megan Castello, there was currently no cure to it.

With his eyes steady on Darryl, Zhang Jue sneered and said, "I've told you, benevolence is your Achilles' heel. You have nobody to blame but yourself for dying here today in my hands. Prepare yourself."

Zhang Jue leaped into action and began making his way towards Darryl.

Before anyone had the time to react, Zhang Jue appeared right before Darryl, his fist ready to strike. Instantly the sky darkened as clouds gathered at the sheer energy. The punch was filled with Zhang Jue's internal energy that had been honed and sharpened by mastering the Immortal Pure Scripture over a period of a thousand years. Sensing the mighty power within that single attack, Darryl cursed inwardly. Zhang Jue sure was merciless, he was going for the kill.

Darryl dared not to hesitate and immediately summoned the Heavenly Halberd, which appeared in his hands with a crisp sound. The moment it appeared, a wave of bottomless fight-will erupted and surrounded Darryl, so much so that everyone at the spot could taste the blood in the air. Heavenly Halberd? Zhang Jue sobered at the appearance of the Heavenly Halberd, as caution and passion flashed within his eyes simultaneously. "I alone was worthy of wielding such a powerful weapon.

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I must kill Darryl Darby right there and then and claim the Heavenly Halberd as my own." Zhang Jue plotted with stone-cold eyes. He sped up and blurred into a fearsome shadow as he engaged in the heated duel with Darryl. Joe and his family were frightened to death as they balled up next to one another, trying to stay as quiet as possible. Gonggong bit her lips hard at the two figures floating mid-air, her heart filled with worry and frustration.

On their way here, Gonggong had tried to warn Darryl about the attack a couple of times, but she ended up keeping her mouth shut. Now that Zhang Jue really did succeed in ambushing him before her eyes, she couldn't help but feel sorry for him. Sure, Darryl Darby was abominable, but he didn't deserve to die. Had she known that she would come to regret it, she would have told Darryl somewhere along the way. But now it was too late for that.

Half an hour had passed in a blink of an eye. Zhang Jue held nothing back with everything method he's known, yet still he couldn't manage to bring Darryl into submission. Zhang Jue could distinctly sense that Darryl was close to breaking through the Heaven Ascension. The realization had him stunned internally. Darryl Darby, his powers were getting stronger by the day. Fortunately he had him trapped here today, otherwise it would have been challenging to have him killed after that.

Darryl, on the other hand, was panicking on the inside as well, his expression grim. With the help of the Heavenly Halberd's power, it should have been easy to take Zhang Jue down. However, he could feel as if an unknown form of energy had penetrated into his entire body ever since he accidentally took the Bone Breaker Pills in. An invisible barrier formed itself around his energy field, making it extremely difficult to fire up his internal energy.

What had Darryl most infuriated was that he was so close to breaking through Heaven Ascension, and right now he was at the bottleneck where what happened could easily either ruin him or complete him. With the interference of the strange force within him, his internal energy and energy field were beginning to show signs of a rebound. At the stage of reaching the bottleneck, these signs could be indications of a life-threatening crisis. He could be forced into a psychotic break, or worse, die. On top of that, he still had to counter Zhang Jue's attack.

The situation simply could not be worse. Bang! Finally, Zhang Jue caught a chance and landed a strike on Darryl's back. Darryl jerked forward and fell from the sky. Blood came spilling out from his mouth before his body even touched the ground.

"Darryl Darby!" Zhang Jue sneered, his eyes flashed dangerously. "You will die today, stop trying to run and resign to your fate!" "Resign to my fate?" Darryl wiped the blood off from the corner of his mouth and stood proudly in response to that, his eyes bloody with determination.

“Not once have I, Darryl Darby, bowed down before fate in my entire life. If you want to have me killed, just come on and try...” Almost shouting at the end of those words, Darryl waved his hands and amongst the blinding golden light, a golden tower appeared. It was the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda! Out came hundreds of warriors, including Bradley Young, Yuan Tiangang, Pang Tong, and the Red Eye Warrior, under Darryl’s summoning spell.

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“Roar!”

At the same time, Darryl rolled his wrist and a burning white flame appeared tossing and turning in the air, finally settling in the shape of a lotus flower! Instantly, the temperature rose around them and the entire hillside was covered in its blinding white light. It was the White Lily Cold Flame! Darryl had decided to go all-in, he was close to a breakthrough earlier today but with Zhang Jue’s plots, he was about to go into a psychotic break.

He had to use everything he had ever learnt for a chance to get away. “White Lily Cold Flame?” Overwhelmed by the burning heat, Zhang Jue paled. White Lily Cold Flame was the most powerful strange flame. It was indestructible and would burn whatever it touches in its way. Zhang Jue forced his body to the side frantically, dodging the flame only by a few millimetres. Simultaneously, Bradley Young and all the warriors swarmed towards Zhang Jue and surrounded him in a tight circle. Phew!

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Darryl sighed a breath of relief as he leaned against a tree to anchor himself. Zhang Jue was temporarily under control, there was no way he could cause Darryl any further harm at the moment, but he could feel the chaos within his own body growing stronger.

Surrounded by Bradley Young and the others, Zhang Jue was having a hard time trying to shake them off, his face turned a bruised red in irritation.

Zhang Jue was placed in a position where he was forced into defence with no hope of causing any damage to his opponents. Bradley Young, Yuan Tiangang and the rest added up to hundreds of warriors. Not even Yang Jian could handle them back when they were unleashed upon him at Mid City. Needless to say, Zhang Jue was hardly comparable in strength to Yang Jian and hence, was over his head.

“Gonggong!”

Zhang Jue had his hands full and was clueless as to how he could break through. He turned around and saw Gonggong standing there, her expression thoughtful. He couldn't help but yell, “It's now or never, Darby is under the effect of the Bone Breaker Pills. His internal power won't hold for much longer, you need to kill him right now. If you hesitate and miss the chance, we might not get an opportunity like this ever again.”

“I...” Gonggong jerked forward as if someone gave her a push in the back.

She bit down on her lips hard, his words had her struggling now more than ever. With Darryl now wounded, she could easily have him killed. But to attack someone in their weakened state...she couldn't bring herself into doing that.

Seeing Gonggong hesitated, Zhang Jue shouted in frustration, “Gonggong, stop stalling. Have you forgotten what his Majesty told you right before we left?”

“Are you trying to disobey his order? Are you going to betray his Majesty?”

“Hurry, all of Darby's subordinates have their attention on me. If you do it now, they won't have enough time to react. NOW!” Zhang Jue shouted until he was blue in the face.

Indeed, Zhang Jue was right. Bradley Young, Yuan Tiangang and the others were besieging him with all they had, whereas Gonggong was right next to Darryl.

If she decided to attack, Darryl would not stand a chance in surviving.

Darryl's face darkened as he listened to Zhang Jue's relentless shout. His despicability truly knew no ends, having the audacity to ask someone else to do his dirty business for him. He had spared Gonggong last night. For someone as prideful as her, she wouldn't be able to live with herself for taking advantage of his weakened state. Darryl scanned Gonggong up and down.

But if she decides to do it, Bradley Young and the rest would never make it next to him in time, and that would be his doom.

Gonggong took a deep breath as if she was preparing herself. She looked back into Darryl's questioning eyes with complicated feelings in hers, and said, "Darryl, I'm sorry."

Before he could react, her palm rose to an offensive position and stroked. With his internal energy all over the place and his situation only worsening by the minute, there was no way that he could have dodged the attack.

Everything went dark in an instant as Darryl collapsed with a muffled grunt and fell from the cliff.

The side of the slope where Darryl fell off was extremely steep. A river with rapid current was just a few hundred meters below. Splash! The completely unconscious Darryl fell into the river and was carried out of sight almost immediately.

'Darryl...sorry...I'm sorry...'

Gonggong bit her lips until they were bruised as she watched Darryl disappear into the river. Tears gathered in her eyes.

'I didn't fire up my internal energy at the strike just now. All that was nothing but a show for Zhang Jue,' she thought. And yet the fact that Darryl was thrown into the river with no one knowing whether he could survive or not, had Gonggong's heart tangled with guilt.

With Darryl's life in danger, the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda automatically activated its unique feature. This caused Bradley Young and the others who had Zhang Jue surrounded to disappear into the air and to return to the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda. The White Lily Cold Frame that was burning in the air followed and slowly began to fade. "Hahaha..."

Zhang Jue laughed smugly at the sky. Even though he was worn out by the besiege earlier, the sight of Darryl being thrown into the river had him in indescribable euphoria. He looked towards Gonggong and nodded in approval.

"His Majesty wasn't wrong about you. Wonderful work, Madam Gonggong. Darryl Darby was under the influence of my Bone Breaker Pill and was already on his way to a psychotic break. With the hit you landed that sent him right down the river, he is just as good as dead."

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Relaxed, Zhang Jue went on, "With Darryl Darby's death, his Majesty will surely be pleased. Let's go, we can go back with a fulfilled mission report now."

"Okay." Gonggong responded, as she followed Zhang Jue into the air and flew towards the North Moana Continent. There was not a trace of satisfaction on her face.

As she leaped into the air, she turned around to cast a final look at the river below them and thought to herself, 'Darryl Darby, I never wanted to have you killed.'

Me holding back on that final strike was the best I could have done. The rest is up to you now...'

Meanwhile, on the other side of the ocean.

Fleets consisting of over a thousand ships pressed on leisurely. On the deck of the largest vessel, three people stood in silence, staring into the

distance of the vast sea. Ambrose, Eira, and Hidden Dragon, the leader of the Blood Shark Pirates.

A few days ago, the two siblings had been travelling along with Hidden Dragon's crew, tracking Donoghue Dixon all the way past well-known areas on the ocean, such as Island of Peach Blossom and Ice Fire Island. And now, they were closing in on the perimeters of the Ruins Sea. Ruins Sea — one of the most mysterious and dangerous waters, hidden away on the edge of the world.

Ambrose looked further into the distance and found his breath taken away by the view. Miles away on the ocean, islands that could be seen faintly were piled with strange looking rocks.

Fire erupted from the islands from time to time. Surrounding the islands were numerous gigantic whirlpools with widths of a few hundred meters. They swirled in a speed almost invisible to human's eyes, swallowing up anything that came close to the ocean.

"It's been days since we last saw Dixon. Would he really seek refuge here?" Slightly intimidated by the whirlpools, Eira couldn't help but asked. "There isn't anywhere else he could have run to."

Hidden Dragon nodded in assurance. They have searched up and down all across the ocean over the past few days. Everywhere but the Ruins Sea and they had yet to find Dixon.

Hidden Dragon went on to explain, looking slightly alarmed. "This is the Ruins Sea. Legend has it that an ancient secret has been hidden away at the bottom of these waters. But the environment here is way too hazardous with those whirlpools lurking all over the place.

All it takes is one careless mistake to get sucked into one of those things and you are doomed no matter how powerful you are. There was a saying, though, that there's a map called the Bottomless Valley Sea Map. One can only venture into the depths of the Ruins Sea and find the hidden secret if they follow the instructions on that map. It's a pity that it's just a rumour, no one has ever seen it in real life."

The Bottomless Valley Sea Map?

Ambrose's eyes flashed in interest as the name came up. Wasn't that the map that he got from Watson Tucker? Ambrose and Eira exchanged a look before retrieving the map. The days they had spent with Hidden Dragon had made them confident that the man was a truly righteous man, so there was no need for them to keep the map to themselves.

Splash!

Suddenly, sounds of water splashing that sounded somehow abnormal came from across the waters not too far away.

"Look, there's someone there!"

One of the pirates shouted. Instantly, the three of them, along with every single one of the pirates, turned to the direction where the sound came from.

Just one look and Ambrose immediately clenched his fists in anger and excitement. A man stood on the back of an enormous shark, with his arms wrapped tightly around the fin. It seemed like he was chasing after something. Donoghue Dixon was dressed in a monk's robe, and he had an arrogant expression on his face. The creature he was hunting dashed forward in the water.

It looked like a fish, but the crowd's jaws dropped in awe when they saw what it was. It was a girl, and she could not be older than 17 years old, with blue silky long hair and a curvy figure. She wore something that seemed to be out of the world; it was formed by countless scales sewed together delicately. It made her look like a fish.

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"A Sea Mackie?" Hidden Dragon stared at the girl in the water blankly and mumbled in awe, "Who would have thought? The legends within Ruins Sea were true; there really are Sea Mackies."

Everyone was frozen in place; they were speechless.

"Brother Dragon!" Eira snapped out of the initial shock and asked, "What is a Sea Mackie?"

Hidden Dragon took a deep breath and explained slowly, "A Sea Mackie belongs to a clan that protects the ancient secret of the Ruins Sea. Legend has it that they migrated to the Ruins Sea thousands of years ago. They live there for most of their lives, so their culture and practices are entirely different from ours. Did you see her clothes? That's made with fish scales, making them look like fish from a distance, hence the Sea Mackie name. "

Hidden Dragon vibrated with excitement as he explained that. Ever since he became a pirate, whispers of the Ruins Sea's ancient secret and the

legend of the Sea Mackie never left his ears, but he had yet to witness any proof of those until then. A Sea Mackie, right before their eyes, when they arrived at the edge of the Ruins Sea. That was when Dixon had spotted Hidden Dragon and Ambrose on the back of the gigantic shark. His expression darkened with frustration. How dare those people tracked him all the way there!

He had captured that gigantic shark the previous day in the deep sea. Dixon could not swim, but with the power of the Sky Breaking Axe, he had managed to tame the shark and use it to travel freely on the ocean.

Dixon laughed. He had given up on the hunt for the Sea Mackie girl, and instead, he turned to mock Hidden Dragon and the others. "A bunch of useless pirates! Who do you think you are, chasing after me? One of these days, I am going to throw all of you into the ocean as fish baits," Dixon spoke with absolute confidence as if everyone was beneath him.

Hidden Dragon could never hold his temper; Dixon's words and expression had ignited his anger. He tightened his grip on his blue sword and shouted at Ambrose. "Kid, go ahead and help that girl; I'll take care of that stinking monk." Hidden Dragon sprung into the air and headed toward Dixon's direction.

"Brother Dragon, be careful!" Ambrose shouted back in response. Then, he jumped into the water without any hesitation to help the girl.

Even though she was wary, the girl relaxed when she realized that Ambrose did not mean her any harm. As they reached up to the deck, her body shivered as she remained alert.

"What is your name? Why did that man chase you?" Ambrose asked softly.

Everyone gathered around the girl; they were more curious and more enticed than ever. Oh, what a beauty! She had delicate features, and the scaly clothing emphasized her slim figure.

The scales shone in glorious colors that complemented her deep blue hair. It was hardly an exaggeration for one to describe her as a fairy princess from the great ocean. The girl felt uneasy when the crowd focused their attention on her. She took a few seconds to calm herself before she turned to thank Ambrose.

“Thank you. My name is Heather, the princess of the Sea Mackie Clan. I came out to play today, but that bad man saw me and had been chasing after me ever since,” she said.

Everyone gasped in awe. She really was a princess with a beauty that matched the title! Ambrose was also fascinated by Heather and could not help but steal a few glances at her. Then, he smiled and said, "Don't be afraid; we are here. You are safe now."

Ambrose turned to look at Hidden Dragon and Dixon in their heated duel. Bam, bam, bam... Waves of internal energy vibrated between those two. Anger took over Hidden Dragon as he thought about how Dixon had defeated him once. He had to win to move forward from that shameful experience. Hidden Dragon was proud to be the king of the ocean that could overpower anyone in battles on the water.

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However, Dixon was composed the entire time, especially with the help of the gigantic shark that he rode. He did not feel threatened at all, and he slowly began to gain the upper hand. Little did they know that they were approaching a vast whirlpool not too far away.

"Brother Dragon!" Ambrose felt uneasy at the sight of the whirlpool; he shouted, "Be careful, don't get too caught up in the fight, come back!"

He had saved the princess of the Sea Mackie Clan; they should not need to worry much about crossing the dangerous Ruins Sea. After all, the Sea Mackie Clan had been protecting that area for thousands of years. With Heather's help, they could capture Dixon alive, so there was no need for Hidden Dragon to waste his time with the man.

However, amid his rage, Hidden Dragon could not be bothered with Ambrose's warning. They got closer to the whirlpool, and while Dixon remained agile with the help of the gigantic shark, Hidden Dragon was risking his life with every movement.

Baam! Finally, Dixon caught a chance and swung the Sky Breaking Axe fiercely toward his target. Hidden Dragon moved to dodge the strike, and he was sucked into the whirlpool in the blink of an eye.

“Brother Dragon!”

“Captain!”

Ambrose, Eira, and everyone else could not believe their eyes. Many of the pirates were devastated; they were in tears.

“Captain is dead?”

Ambrose and Eira felt a sharp pain in their chest. Who would have thought that the man who ruled the seas would lose to someone like Dixon? His body was sucked into a whirlpool, never to be found again.

Dixon laughed victoriously on the back of the gigantic shark. “That is what you get when a mere loser dares to challenge me.” Dixon’s eyes landed on Ambrose with a smirk. “Kid, I am in a good mood today, so you are spared for now. I’ll see you around.” He did not give them a chance to react before he retreated with the shark.

Dixon was cruel by nature; he would not have let Ambrose go under normal circumstances. However, the fight a few days ago had weakened his internal energy, and he was further drained when he fought Hidden Dragon. Ambrose wielded the Tyrant Hammer that made him a formidable opponent, so Dixon decided to stay away.

Ambrose clenched his fists and stared in the direction where Dixon left. He saw nothing but red, and every cell within him was screaming for him to go after Dixon and kill him right there and then. However, the whirlpool was far too dangerous to cross without a gigantic shark like Dixon’s.

“Brother Dragon.” Ambrose fell to his knees in the direction where the whirlpool devoured Hidden Dragon. He shouted in tears, “Rest in peace; I will avenge you. I will never stop until Donoghue Dixon is dead!” Every word echoed in the air with emotion and determination.

The pirates stood in silent despair. Suddenly, the Blood Sherlock Four Sisters stepped out from the crowd and knelt before Ambrose. They declared in perfect synchronization. “The Blood Sherlock Four Sisters plead for Master Darby to become our new captain!”

The Blood Sherlock Four Sisters were proud; they would never follow Ambrose willingly. However, Hidden Dragon was gone, so they needed a new leader. Ambrose was young, but he had the Tyrant Hammer. Most importantly, he was the son of the famous Darryl Darby; no one could be more qualified to be their captain.

“Aye, aye, Captain!” Everyone but Ambrose immediately knelt to their new leader.

Hidden Dragon treated Ambrose like a brother and had high hopes for the younger man. Who else was qualified to be the next captain, if not Ambrose? There was one man, though, who stood motionless in pride.

That man was Loro Chandler, Hidden Dragon's right-hand man; he had formidable strength in battle. His position in the Blood Shark Pirates ranked higher than most, even that of the Blood Sherlock Four Sisters. After Hidden Dragon's death, he should have been the captain. It was simply unacceptable that everyone decided on Ambrose instead.

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Loro looked around and said, "This area is extremely dangerous; we should get away from here before discussing who will be the next captain, and yet here you are, just handing the fleet over to an outsider!" Loro stared judgmentally at Ambrose. "Kid, how long have you been in the Blood Shark? What gives you the right to be our captain?"

The pirates looked hesitant at one other; they did not know what to think.

Ambrose looked back at the man without a care. "I do not think that I have the right to do that. So what do you say we do now?"

It was the truth. Ambrose was not interested in being the captain of pirates.

"If it were up to me, I say we give up on that monk and leave. Then we decide who gets to be the next captain," Loro said coldly.

Ambrose frowned. "You don't want to avenge Hidden Dragon?"

"Of course, we will take revenge, but we have to focus on retaining our strength right now. Captain was defeated because of his arrogance, and now he is at the bottom of the ocean," Loro responded pretentiously.

Indeed, Loro did not intend to avenge Hidden Dragon's death. Instead, he had his mind full of plots on how to deceive everyone and become the captain.

Ambrose saw right through Loro's intention and sneered, "Bullsh*t, you might be able to trick some innocent kids with that, but not me. Let me tell you something, I am not interested in being captain, but now thanks to you, I want that position."

"Fine, fine." Loro locked glares with Ambrose in disdain. "Let's see how good you are without that Tyrant Hammer!" Then, with eyes as cold as ice, Loro rushed toward Ambrose with a fierce punch and said, "If you can take this punch without your Tyrant Hammer, I'll acknowledge you as our captain!"

All the men were stunned by the fact that Loro would make such a sudden move against Ambrose. Everyone knew that he was powerful; he was only second to Hidden Dragon, a level five Martial Emperor. On the other hand, Ambrose was still young. Although valiant, his strength relied primarily on Tyrant Hammer. Without it, he would not stand a chance against Loro.

"Brother, watch out!" Eira gasped. Heather was also tense.

"Bring it on!" Ambrose did not even fret at the sight of Loro's attack. He took a deep breath and raised an arm to block Loro's punch. Baam! As the two arms came into contact, Loro felt a wave of power push against him, and he backed up a few steps uncontrollably. A stream of blood appeared from the corner of Loro's lips. It was clear that Ambrose had the upper hand. Ambrose was young, and he had also been the New World prince, fed with rare herbs and medicine since birth. He had followed Yang Jian into battles for years, and his experience in countless combat had forged him into a warrior not inferior to Loro.

Loro felt as if he was restrained and held in place—frustration and disbelief raged within him. First, he glared at Ambrose; he could not wrap his head around the fact that he did not even come close to defeating Ambrose, even when his opponent did not have the Tyrant Hammer. Then, just as he tried to process the situation, Ambrose trotted toward him with a calm expression and slapped his cheek.

Snap! Ambrose did not hold back; he swung his palm in full strength. Loro was sent flying toward one of the ships a hundred meters away. He spat a mouthful of blood in pain as he landed. Ambrose was beyond furious. Hidden Dragon had always treated Loro well, but the moment he died, Loro immediately plotted to take over his place as the captain instead of trying to avenge his death. Ungrateful men like him were disposable at best. The entire fleet was shaken as they witnessed the fight. They had been right about Ambrose; he was worthy of being their captain.

Ambrose summoned the Tyrant Hammer into his hand emotionlessly and approached Loro. “Disloyal and ungrateful, you would be better off as Brother Dragon’s companion in the afterlife.”

Loro began to sweat in fear when he sensed the menace oozing from Ambrose. All smugness was drained from him; he knelt and pleaded. “Please forgive me, Captain, for the insubordination. I beg of you; please give me another chance...” Loro desperately wished he could turn back time. He thought he could seize the opportunity to become the leader, but it was apparent that he had made the wrong choice. Death might be the consequence for him.

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Ambrose let out a long sigh. “Fine, I will give you one more chance. I hope that you will learn from that. I won’t be so forgiving next time.”

If he had to be completely honest, Ambrose would have preferred to have Loro killed right there and then. However, he had only just become the Blood Sharks Captain, and they were in the middle of the Ruins Sea. Danger lurked in every corner; they would need all hands on deck. It would not be wise to kill off one of the best fighters amongst them, so Ambrose decided to spare Loro; he hoped that the man would make up for his mistakes.

Phew!

Loro relaxed visibly as he wiped the sweat off his forehead. Then, he exclaimed, “Thank you for pardoning me, Captain.” Loro stood up and retreated into the crowd without another word. Ambrose looked around him and ordered, “Let’s rest and get ready to enter the depths of the Ruins Sea.” Ambrose was sure that Hidden Dragon could still be alive even

though he was sucked into the whirlpool. So, he wanted to inspect the depths of the Ruins Sea.

“Aye, aye, Captain!” The Blood Sherlock Four Sisters and rest responded in unison.

“My kind sir!” Heather hurried toward Ambrose. Her tone was soft and sincere as she said, “Are you heading into the Ruins Sea? I have lived there all my life; I can show you the way.” Ambrose was surprised to hear that; he immediately held Heather’s hands in joy. “Thank you.”

A pink blush blossomed on Heather’s alluring features when Ambrose held her hand. She thought of pulling away but was too embarrassed to do so. Finally, Ambrose realized he was out of line and let go awkwardly. “I am sorry. I will ask my men to prepare a cabin for you. You should get some rest too.” Heather agreed and went to the cabin.

For a split second, Ambrose was lost in thoughts as Heather walked away. Ever since he was a child, he thought that his mother, his aunt Yvette and his sister Eira had been the most beautiful women in the world. He never thought that he would come across such a beautiful woman on his journey.

“Pfft!” Her brother’s dazed expression amused Eira. “Brother, if you really like her, just go on and confess already. Else, you’re going to regret it when she returns to the Sea Mackie Clan.”

Eira had always been a witty young lady, and it only took one look for her to figure out that her brother was head over heels for Heather. She was his sister, so she had to support him.

“I... I am not...” Ambrose blushed as he mumbled.

Heather’s elegant form lingered in the back of his mind; he could not help the butterflies in his stomach. Finally, Eira smiled and decided to leave her brother alone.

Miles away on the shores of Mid Sky City in Middle Terra, a man named Darryl Darby laid unconscious; his body was soaked. He was pushed down the mountain before he fell into the river, and the current brought him a few kilometers away. He did not know how long he was out, but it felt like he had been stuck in a long dream, and then he was awake. Unfortunately, he was left with nothing but a headache.