

The moment he opened his eyes, Darryl saw the dense woods that surrounded him. There was also a rapid-flow river in front of him. D*mn! That despicable prick, Zhang Jue, did not hold back at all. Darryl tried to stand up, but he immediately realized that his strength had been drained from his body. Even more shockingly, Darryl could not feel his energy field, not even the slightest trace of it. The realization hit Darryl like thunder as he felt his stomach sink.

“Crap...” It took a few minutes before Darryl managed to snap out of it and had a full grasp of the situation. When Zhang Jue attacked him, he was so close to a break through that he could almost taste it. However, at the time, he was forced to take the Bone Breaker Pill. He had sustained severe injuries in his encounter with Zhang Jue. He had managed to survive without going into a psychotic break, but the interference had caused him to fail in his attempt to break through. As a result, he had lost all of his internal energy.

No! He could not be without his internal energy. He had taken so many rare herbs and medicines, and his physique was invincible to all poison. He was confident that his internal energy would return eventually.

Then, Darryl sat down hurriedly and tried to meditate. A minute went by, and then another... Half an hour went by in a heartbeat, and yet to Darryl's disappointment, he could not sense his energy field. His heart sank in despair. Had he become worthless? He was trapped in the whirlpool of self-doubt and frustration, but the thought of the Chaotic Mountain Range's situation brought him back to his feet after some rest. Chester, Dax, and Yvette should still be in the Chaotic Mountain Range. It was best to meet up with them before he would decide on what to do next.

Meanwhile, at the Chaotic Mountain Range.

The Chaotic Mountain Range was situated in the Nine Mainland's borders. It was the natural barrier between the Nine Mainlands and the Wild Deserted Secret Region. Unfortunately, the environment in that area had always been horrendous, and that day, the sky was gloomy with thick layers of clouds. Volcanic ashes filled the air as thunderstorms continued to rage; it was almost apocalyptic. At the foot of the mountain, an empty field hundreds of meters away from the Hidden Spirit Temple was packed with crowds.

News that abnormality on the other side of the Chaotic Mountain Range had spread like wildfire. Representatives from different continents were sent to investigate the situation—there were hundreds of thousands of people from various sects! Of course, there were many familiar faces there, the World Universe's Elysium Gate, the Carter Clan, the Flower Mountain, and all the other sects like the Elixir Sect, the Artemis Sect, the Sword Sect from the Great East, the South Cloud World's Royal Army led by Quincy Long, the Westrington Army, and all the other sects from the Westrington.

Other allies also included the Famed Sword Manor from the Yellow Sea Continent, the sisters of the Sun Set Sect, Jackie and Jasmine, and the Middle Terra's Dokko family.

Of course, the monks from the Hidden Spirit Temple led by Rama were amongst the crowd as well. Everyone was on high alert as dangers crept toward the Nine Mainland. They could only send their men in full force. The gathering of that many sects was unprecedented in the history of all Nine Mainland.

On a hill nearby, hundreds of thousands of reputable soldiers stood in attention. They were led by a man in golden armor that oozed absolute confidence with a giant black hound by his feet. The man was Yang Jian. Ever since he received news that Darryl had been killed, he could not hide his joy. After he rewarded Gonggong and Zhang Jue, he immediately led his army toward the Chaotic Mountain Range. His smirk never left his

striking face. Since Darryl was dead, nothing could hold him back any longer.

All that was left was for him to defeat Raksasa Tribe, and he would be worshipped as the only supreme being of the Nine Mainland. Zhang Jue, Gonggong, and countless formidable warriors stood behind Yang Jian.

Gonggong wore a long white dress that exhibited the curves on her body; her figure glowed with blinding beauty. Yet still, undeniable sorrow planted itself between her brows. She had not been able to shake off the guilt when she attacked Darryl with Zhang Jue.

Even though she did hold back as she did not use her internal energy, she knew that Darryl would not survive his fall from the mountain. Unfortunately, that was a cross she would have to bear for the rest of her life.

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“Heroes and warriors!” Yang Jian hovered in mid-air as he faced the armies of all continents that had gathered there. Then, with a smile, he said, “I am Yang Jian, and I truly respect all of you for coming here to defeat the impending Raksasa Tribe and safeguard the peace in the Nine Mainland. However, war is upon us, and I sincerely hope that we can all work together and follow the lead of my military advisor, Zhang Jue. That is the only way that we could win this war!”

Zhang Jue leaped into the air as the last word was spoken and looked down with pride. Darryl was dead, and there was no other man more qualified to command them but Zhang Jue.

The crowd was impressed by Yang Jian’s aura, and many of them took a breath of disbelief. The depth of his strength was unimaginable! It was no wonder that he was honored as the Grandmaster Erlang for thousands of years. However, though overwhelmed, no one responded to his speech.

“Yang Jian!”

Then, Dax Sanders strolled out to the open and asked, “Darryl hasn’t arrived, and yet you ask that we follow Zhang Jue’s lead. Isn’t it a bit too early for that?”

Many nodded in agreement to the disclamation.

“Ya, Darryl is not inferior to Zhang Jue in terms of military strategies.”

“That’s right, Darryl isn’t here yet. We can wait.”

The majority of warriors, apart from the North Moana Continent, were close with Darryl. So naturally, they would prefer to be commanded by him, and not Zhang Jue. Most importantly, Zhang Jue might be resourceful, but he

was also cruel and cold-blooded. Yang Jian frowned when he heard the heated discussion from the crowd. Darryl was dead, but he did not anticipate his influence to reach that far into different continents. Zhang Jue was furious; how dare those people ignore him?

Yang Jian laughed. "I know that you wish to follow Darryl, but let's think about this. The situation in the Chaotic Mountain Range may escalate at any second now. What happens if the Raksasa Tribe decides to attack before Darryl gets here? Would you still prefer just to wait?"

He would be a fool if he were to tell them that he had ordered people to kill Darryl. In any case, the man was already gone, along with any proof of the assassination. He needed to manipulate the crowd into trusting him. Dax Sanders, Chester, and the rest were rendered speechless with the dilemma ahead. At the same time, most of them were confused. What could have happened to Darryl for him to be that late?

Colt Dokko seemed to have realized something, and he turned to look at Gonggong, "Gonggong, weren't you supposed to be with Darryl? Why are you here, but not Darryl?"

Chester, Dax Sanders, and every warrior there turned their attention toward Gonggong. 'What is going on? Darryl and Gonggong were on their way here together. How did no one know about this?' the crowd thought.

Gonggong shivered as she became the center of everyone's attention; she panicked. Yang Jian and Zhang Jue were shaken too. One tiny mistake in Gonggong's explanation could unravel their plans.

"I—" Gonggong found her composure and explained slowly, "I was in a hurry when I came across Darryl. He mentioned that he was on his way to convince the Dokko Family, so I tagged along with him." Gonggong paused and looked around before she continued to say, "After we left the Mid Sky City, Darryl said there was something else he needed to attend to, and so we went our separate ways."

Gonggong struggled as she explained that. She did not want to lie, but she knew that she would have to endure Yang Jian's wrath if she told the truth. It would also create a conflict amongst them, which was the last thing they needed when the Raksasa Tribe launched their attack.

Chester and the rest did not doubt Gonggong, but they were even more confused. Something else to attend to? What could possibly be more urgent and important than the situation at the Chaotic Mountain Range?

"Look! Someone is coming!" one of the warriors shouted.

All eyes immediately shifted toward the track. A tortured figure was making his way toward them slowly, one step at a time. It was Darryl, pale and weakened, and he appeared to be limping in pain.

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Darryl was without his internal energy; he barely made it there from the Middle Terra.

“Darryl!” Chester, Dax Sanders, Yvette, and the crowd were overwhelmed with joy with Darryl’s appearance. They hurried toward him. Yvette, Yvonne, and the others were incredibly excited as they crashed into Darryl’s waiting arms.

Yang Jian shivered at the scene; his head was dazed with surprise and anger. How was Darryl still alive? Zhang Jue also widened his eyes in disbelief. That should not have happened! They gave him the Bone Breaker Pill, and Gonggong had pushed him off the cliff; he could not have survived. Gonggong trembled, but it was because she was happy. She stared blankly at Darryl; she was unable to say a single word.

“Darryl!”

Chester sensed that Darryl was weak, and he did not have any internal energy. “What happened? Where is your internal energy?” he asked in shock.

The people around Darryl slowly realized that he had lost his internal energy; he was as vulnerable as a mere mortal. Then, Dax Sanders drew his axes abruptly and yelled, “Darryl, tell me right now! Did someone attack you? I am going to make that b*stard pay!” Most of the men felt the same.

“Ya, let us avenge your loss!”

“Who did that?!”

Darryl did not respond to them; he stared at Yang Jian, Zhang Jue, and Gonggong. Darryl could hardly contain his hatred, especially with Yang

Jian, who stood right in front of him. That hypocrite dared to speak of defeating the Raksasa Tribe together, then turned around and ordered for his assassination. As a result, Darryl had lost his internal energy.

Yang Jian and Zhang Jue also glared at Darryl. Yang Jian tightened his grip on his Tri-point Double-edged Saber; he prepared his internal energy ready for an attack at any moment. He decided to kill Darryl immediately if the man pointed his finger at him. He did not need to hold back if the truth was out anyway.

A few seconds passed before Darryl sighed as the crowd questioned him. Finally, he smiled bitterly and said, "Calm down. I was close to a breakthrough but accidentally failed and ended up like this." Darryl cast a glance at Yang Jian as he spoke; he had wanted to tell everyone the truth. Instead, however, he had witnessed the abnormalities in the Chaotic Mountain Range. The Raksasa Tribe could be there at any second with their army. If he told the truth about what Yang Jian did, it would wreak all kinds of havoc. Chester, Dax Sanders, and everyone else would want to avenge him. How could they go against the Raksasa Tribe then? How could they protect everyone else on Nine Mainland?

Darryl cared more about the Nine Mainland and the safety of the people than he did for himself. If he had to remain silent about the assassination attempt, then it was a cheap price to pay for that. His friends were sympathetic when they heard his explanation. After all, they knew that it would be difficult to break through once one reached the level of Martial King.

"Darryl, let me take you to get some rest," Yvette suggested as she took Darryl's shoulders. She could not bear to look at his state any longer; she said, "You are in bad shape."

The camps they set up were not far away, and all Yvette could think of was to nurse Darryl back to the healthy and strong man that he had always

been. Yvonne, Irene, and the rest came closer to help carry Darryl; they were all worried sick.

Darryl nodded and complied. He did use the very last strand of strength he had to rush there. Before he left, he made sure to remind Chester and the rest, "If the Raksasa Tribe attacks while I am resting, remember, you must stay calm and work together as one."

"Oh, don't worry." Chester smiled. "You focus on that rest; we'll wait for your command."

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Darryl nodded in response before he allowed Yvette and the others to carry him toward the camps as the crowd watched.

Yang Jian sighed in relief and slowly released his grip on his weapon. It was wise of Darryl to keep it to himself to hold on to his life.

On the other side of the camp, Yvette and the others carefully helped Darryl onto the bed.

“Darryl!” Yvette frowned as she asked softly, “You were lying. You did not end up like that because of failed cultivation, right?”

Yvette had always been the one to pay attention to details. It took her one look to realize that Darryl did not tell them the truth. He was immune to all poison and took countless rare herbs over the years. So the break through should not have been difficult for him; how could he possibly fail? Something else must have happened! Irene, Yvonne, and Megan turned to look at Darryl as they waited for his response. Darryl took a deep breath and smiled bitterly as he looked back at Yvette. Of course, Yvette would figure it out.

Darryl paused for a moment before he replied, “You’re right, but I can’t tell you anything for now. I will tell you everything once I regain my power.”

Yang Jian was too powerful; even if he chose to tell everyone the truth, they might not stand a chance against him. So the best option was to endure it. Since he was unwilling to say anything, Yvette respected his wishes and let go of the subject. Then, together with Megan and the others, they tended to Darryl’s wounds with care. It did not take long before Darryl fell into a deep sleep.

It was pitch dark when he opened his eyes again; he noticed that Yvette and the others were still there to care for him. Darryl was touched to have them next to him. With friends like them, he could die knowing that his life was worthy of something.

Suddenly, waves of rumbling noise echoed through the camp from the direction of the Chaotic Mountain Range. Even the ground began to shake. Darryl sat up hurriedly, “Are the Raksasa Tribe here?”

“Hush, that was just the sound of the abnormal occurrences. We have been here the entire day, and noises like that haven’t stopped ever since we got here.” Yvette grinned softly.

Irene and the others nodded at the same time and tried to calm Darryl. “You need to rest.”

“Don’t worry, we have many people guarding the borders; it’s going to be fine.”

Darryl relaxed and smiled. “I’m fine. You girls should go back and guard the borders with everyone else. I feel much better now after some sleep. You don’t have to be here watching over me.”

Yvette, Irene, and the others were hesitant at first, but as Darryl insisted, they complied with a nod and left. Once they were gone, Darryl sat upright and closed his eyes; he made another attempt to cultivate. However, there was no difference from before. There was still no response from his energy field. Darryl was more than desperate to set things right. Then, he heard footsteps outside his tent; they were soft but still noticeable.

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Darryl frowned and looked over to investigate it. A slim and elegant figure strolled into his tent. She was Jackie Yale, the woman he had a few conflicts with at the Yellow Sea Continent.

“It’s you!” Darryl grinned widely at the sight of Jackie. “You’re here to visit me? How touching!”

Jackie Yale was the Illusion Sound Sect’s Sect Master and the Sun Set Sect’s Elder Master; she was someone with supreme status and extreme pride. Darryl had managed to offend her a couple of times, and he even managed to place her in a situation where she had to say that he was her husband while they were in the Famed Sword Manor’s Sword Casting Pool.

Darryl thought that someone as arrogant as Jackie would harbor a deep hatred toward him for that. He did not imagine that she would move from the past and go to the Chaotic Mountain Range as one of the defenders against the Raksasa Tribe, let alone to visit him at his tent.

“Get over yourself! I am not here to visit you. I’m here to see if you’re dead!” Jackie’s face turned crimson as she denied it.

Jackie did not give him any time to react; she reached out swiftly to seal Darryl’s acupoint! The man could not even dodge it as he did not have his internal energy; he was immediately frozen in place. He widened his eyes in surprise. “You—”

“You b*stard! You never thought you’d be at my mercy, did you?” Jackie said coolly, “Don’t you dare think that I have forgotten what you did to me.”

Indeed, Jackie did not go there to visit him, but she wanted to teach Darryl a lesson. Darryl had tricked her repeatedly when they were in the Yellow Sea Continent, and she had not moved past the humiliation. At that time,

she could not take her revenge because Darryl had been too strong for her. However, he was like a mere mortal because he had failed in his latest cultivation. That was her chance to do something about it.

Jackie snuck her way in as soon as it turned dark but could not take action until Yvette and the others left the tent. Once they were gone, she could not wait to barge into it.

Darryl could sense Jackie's rage; he explained helplessly, "Jackie, you have to understand that I did not plot for what happened in the Famed Sword Manor's Sword Casting Pool. We didn't have another way to get out of the situation. You're not still holding a grudge against having to call me your husband, are you?"

"How dare you even mention that again?!" Jackie stomped her feet in frustration; her face got redder as she thought back to what had happened. She decided not to waste any more time with him. She knocked him unconscious before she took him away from the camp. Then, they reached a cave a few kilometers away from the Chaotic Mountain Range.

Darryl finally regained consciousness after many hours. The moment he opened his eyes, he cursed when he found himself bound from head to toe. When he moved to look around, he was stunned when he saw the location.

He was in a cave, and the air was humid with the sound of flowing water that echoed further in the depths of the cave. After a few looks, Darryl focused his attention on the woman in front of him.

Jackie sat on a gigantic rock with a bonfire lit in front of her. The dancing flame added a hint of mystery to her beauty. When she sensed Darryl's eyes on her, Jackie smiled and got up from the rock before she approached Darryl slowly. Her slim waist and seductive curves were clearly a bit overwhelming for Darryl; he could not help but swallow his saliva longingly.

“Jackie, what are you trying to do?” Darryl could barely hold his laughter. “Are you secretly in love with me, and now you’re trying to elope with me?”

Jackie raised her hand and slapped Darryl across the face with the speed of lightning. “I would not expect any decent word to come out of that vile mouth of yours, so keep your mouth shut, or I’ll have your tongue!”

Darryl sighed. “Jackie, the Raksasa Tribe is about to cross over to the Chaotic Mountain Range; things are pretty much as bad as it can go. We are supposed to be allies. Don’t you think it’s inappropriate for you to kidnap me right now?”

Jackie smirked mockingly. “Allies? You are nothing but a mortal now; what makes you think you have what it takes to stand against the Raksasa Tribe? No one would mourn you even if I were to kill you right here.”

Darryl smiled bitterly. “Fine, but I guess that you did not kidnap me just to take it out on me, right?”

Jackie frowned and stared at Darryl. “You are not as dumb as I thought you were.” Then, she picked up the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda and said, “I heard that the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda is one of the rarest treasures in the world, with armies of ancient warriors trapped in it. Teach me how to use it, and I’ll let you go.”

When not in use, the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda remained in its most miniature form. Darryl wore it like a pendant. Since Darryl had been unconscious, Jackie took it to inspect it. However, she could not find a way to open it.

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The moment he saw the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda, Darryl was so frustrated that his body trembled. However, he pretended to be calm. He smiled and said, “Jackie, that is not the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda; it’s just an accessory I wear. The real Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda is in the camp. Take me back, and I’ll give it to you.”

Darryl felt too anxious. Ever since he lost his internal energy, he could no longer synchronize with the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda. It meant that Darryl could not use the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda, so he could not unleash those ancient warriors. However, it was still a world-class treasure he had been keeping with care; he could not let Jackie have it.

“Did you honestly think that you could fool me? Or that I can’t tell if that is the real thing or not? Will you tell me the truth or not?” Jackie could barely keep her anger at bay as she glared at Darryl. It felt as if the temperature around them had dropped with the tension.

Darryl took a deep breath and looked at Jackie with a grin. “Oh, my bad! Maybe I remembered it wrongly. It is the real Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda, but I just can’t recall the spell to unlock it. Why don’t you release me? That ought to jog my memory.”

Jackie’s expression darkened. She took a bucket of water and splashed it into Darryl. The water was probably taken from the cave; it was freezing cold. Darryl shivered uncontrollably as he cursed discreetly. He was still defenseless; his acupoints were still sealed.

“Joke all you want. You don’t want to spill the secret of the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda? Fine, I will have it anyway.” Jackie pulled a blood-crimson whip. It was flexible and durable, made with the skin of a blood python that she killed years ago. No one could toy with her!

Darryl's smile sank when he saw the whip. "Jackie, that's enough. All I did was force you into calling me your husband. Perhaps I'll call you my wife, and we'll be even!"

"Shut up!" Jackie's face was red with anger. She was frustrated because Darryl had insulted her again. She held the whip in her hand and said, "Still an imbecile even in the face of your own demise! You messed up my plans, humiliated me over and over again. I will never let you off even if hell freezes over!" Jackie had lost her patience; she struck mercilessly.

One hit was all it took for Darryl's shoulders to crack open like nuts in a nutcracker. Blood immediately oozed from the wound. Seriously?! Without his internal energy to protect him, pain shot up the entire upper half of his body. It caused him to twitch in agony. Darryl tried his best to bite through the scream.

"Jackie, it's my bad, I should not have crossed the line, but what I took, I have given back. I can't hand the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda to you." Darryl took a deep breath.

Jackie laughed in awe. "You sure are tough. Is the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda really that important that you would rather risk your life for it at times like this?" Jackie did not hesitate to strike again.

Snap! Snap! Snap! The continuous attack rained over Darryl relentlessly. He had managed to hold back his scream, but he could no longer bear the pain. Finally, he shouted, "Jackie, you—" He wanted to curse so desperately but could not find his voice. It was not long until Darryl was soaked in his own sweat and blood.

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Jackie did not stop until she had struck him dozens of times. Then, she smiled smugly and asked, “What about now? Feel like talking?”

“Just kill me.” Darryl was barely breathing. Of course, even though the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda was precious, his own life was more important. He knew that once he told her about the spell, Jackie would not need him any longer; she would not let him go. On the other hand, as long as he kept his mouth shut, Jackie would not be able to do anything to him.

“Why you—” Jackie stomped her feet in frustration. “Fine, have it your way. You think that I won’t be able to find out the secret of the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda myself? Since you’re so fearless, you can stay here for the rest of your life then.”

Darryl was right; Jackie would never kill him. After all, Darryl was reputable and well-known across all of Nine Mainland. They would hunt her down if she had killed him. Jackie strolled forward and unsealed Darryl’s acupoint with a sneer. “I hope you rot in here.”

Jackie had thought about it. If Darryl could figure out the secret of the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda, then she could do the same too. However, she did not know that Darryl had found the pagoda at the bottom of Fuyao Palace in its original size, so it was not difficult for him to see the spell carved on the top of the tower. The pagoda had transformed into the size of a pendant, so she might not be able to see the spell. There was no way Jackie could find the spell even if she spent decades on it.

“What are you doing?” Darryl asked weakly; he was surprised. Even though she had unsealed his acupoints, he had been whipped multiple times. He was drained; he could not even move a finger. Jackie replied with a silent grin and turned to walk out of the cave.

Baam! Baam! Baam!

Almost instantaneously, Jackie raised her palms and pounded on the cave entrance. Then, with a deafening rumble, rocks crumbled and sealed the opening in a matter of seconds.

“Farewell, Darryl. Don’t say that I did not give you a chance.” Jackie sneered and turned to leave toward the camp.

Darryl finally realized that Jackie had planned on trapping him there. He tried to struggle, but the excruciating pain left him immobile. Who would have thought he managed to escape Zhang Jue and Gonggong’s assassination attempt, only to be trapped in a cave by Jackie? Darryl felt helpless.

The rumbles from the Chaotic Mountain Range echoed again. Darryl could still hear and feel the earthquake even though the cave was sealed. He wanted to go check out the situation, but he did not have the strength to do that.

In his despair, he recalled an ancient poem, and he began to mumble its lines. “Abed, motionless, in a lonely village. For myself, I sorrow not. All I seek is the defense of my country’s frontier. And a station there we share. Lying in the depth of the night, I listen to the winds blowing the rain and iron-clad horses o’er frozen rivers.

As of old, invade my dreams again...” All he wanted was to do something for Nine Mainland, to defend it against the Raksasa Tribe, and yet there he was; he was powerless. It was almost as if the poet was referring to him. Drown in his thoughts, Darryl let out a bitter laugh in resignation.

“How can you speak of saving the Nine Mainland while you are here pouting over a small obstacle?” Then, suddenly, he heard a hoarse voice from the depths of the cave.

“Who’s there?” Darryl was stunned, but he shouted back in response.

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Darryl rejoiced in the pleasant surprise. Who would have thought that there was someone else in an abandoned cave? However, at the same time, Darryl was slightly confused. Why did that person remain silent until Jackie left? Who could it be?

Baffled, Darryl could not help but raise his voice again. "What is your name? Please show yourself!"

He heard a peal of faint laughter, but then the cave returned to its absolute silence. Darryl tried to call out a couple more times, but there was no response after that. Darryl desperately wanted to get up to investigate it, but the pain that shot through his body kept him immobile.

So, he could only remain on the ground and tried to regain his strength slowly. He was not sure how long it took, but he started to feel slightly better with time. Finally, he struggled to stand up and limped his way further into the cave.

As Darryl ventured into the depths of the cave, he was overwhelmed by the cold temperature. Then, he saw an even bigger entrance with multiple tunnels that extended from within it. However, there was nothing but an ancient rocky track that went all the way into the dark as if there was no end to it. There was so much more to that cave than he had thought. It seemed as though Jackie got him there but never investigated the entire cave properly.

Darryl could barely contain his excitement as he followed the track. The further he went, the air became less humid but colder, by the minute. Without his internal energy to protect him, Darryl could only shiver in the cold. He could not tell how long he had been walking, but he finally reached an enormous room built with rocks, surrounded by eight walls. The name Nine Division Eight Trigrams was carved at the bottom of each wall.

The room seemed to have sat in solitary within that cave since ancient times. There was a platform in the shape of a lotus flower in the middle of the room with ancient wordings carved all over. Then, he saw an old man sitting on top of the platform.

The elderly man with silver hair wore a long black robe; his expression was calm yet authoritative with an aura that made him look almost unapproachable. The older man watched as Darryl walked into the room with a smile. It was the Ghost Valley Sage, the man that Darryl released from the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda in South Cloud World and aided his defense against the North Moana Army.

“Elder.” Darryl approached him with delight. He bowed sincerely. “I thought that I was speaking to a hero; I did not realize that it was you. It has been so long. I hope that you are well.” Darryl greeted the man earnestly. The Ghost Valley Sage was probably the only man in the world that warranted such respect from Darryl, apart from Ford South, his late master, and Zoran Carter.

Ghost Valley Sage smiled gently. “Why, yes, I have been well. Though I can hardly say the same for you.”

Darryl fidgeted awkwardly; he knew that the Ghost Valley Sage referred to his lack of internal energy.

“Elder, why are you here?” It took a second, but Darryl snapped back to his senses. He asked, “Are you here to fend off the Raksasa Tribe as well?” The thought made Darryl feel more driven than ever. The Ghost Valley Sage was one of the rarest geniuses in history, and with his help, they had nothing to fear when they faced the Raksasa Tribe’s formidable army.

The Ghost Valley Sage shook his head and smiled mysteriously. “I did come with that intention, but I’m afraid I would not be of much help this time.”

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Darryl was stunned as he stared at Ghost Valley Sage wordlessly. Then, Darryl realized that even though the Ghost Valley Sage looked energized, his energy field and internal energy were gone, just like his.

“Elder.” Darryl was shocked; he asked, “What happened to your power?”

The Ghost Valley Sage chuckled and said, “Darryl, you are quite knowledgeable when it comes to ancient studies. Have you ever heard of the final stage of cultivation called the Returning of Innocence?”

The Returning of Innocence? Darryl jumped as if those words had kicked him in the chest; he drew a quick breath with widened eyes. “Elder, so you are saying that you’re going to eclose...”

Darryl was shaken. He thought back to what he had learned about that. Once a cultivator reached the Heaven Ascension level, they still had another level to achieve—the Godly Realm level. It was an extremely challenging level, and very few had managed to do that. Yang Jian was a powerful being, and he was still in the final stages of the Heaven Ascension level. He was not even close to achieving the Godly Realm level yet.

As for the Returning of Innocence that the Ghost Valley Sage mentioned, one would need to go through the eclosion stage after one achieved the Godly Realm level. Darryl had always thought it was only a myth; he had not heard of anyone who had gone through that stage. He did not expect that the Ghost Valley Sage would be the one to break through that stage. The older man looked like he would eclose at any moment.

As he tried to remember all the information that he remembered about that stage, Darryl finally understood that situation. It seemed like the Ghost Valley Sage had gone all the way there to join them in defending the

Chaotic Mountain Range. However, the older man did not expect that he would have a chance to achieve a breakthrough.

So, he stayed in a cave to prepare for the Eclosion stage. Coincidentally, that was when Darryl got himself kidnapped and brought there by Jackie. As the last step of cultivation, there was no margin of error when it came to the preparation for Eclosion. That was why the Ghost Valley Sage remained silent while Jackie was there. He did not want to be disturbed.

“I will be leaving soon.” The Ghost Valley Sage watched as Darryl tried to gather his thoughts. Then, he said in a peaceful tone, “Our friendship began when you released me from the Seven Treasures Exquisite Pagoda and ends with you beside me as I eclose. Destiny really does work in wondrous ways.”

“I’ve written the manual of my powers called the Heart Sutra of Eight Wilds on these walls. Learn it well, and you should be able to regain your powers. I only wish that you will be able to serve the Nine Mainland once you do...” The Ghost Valley Sage’s voice began to fade; he closed his eyes as he uttered the last words.

A powerful shockwave erupted from the Ghost Valley Sage with a hum. It filled up every corner of the room and then disappeared into the air.

“Elder!” Darryl cried at the unexpected farewell; he got down on his knees. Darryl could sense it as the Ghost Valley Sage took his last breath, but he looked so peaceful that it was almost like he was asleep. The fact that the Ghost Valley Sage eclosed was great news, but the thought that he would never hear his voice again instantly filled Darryl’s heart with sorrow.

It took a few minutes before Darryl snapped out of it. He lowered his head until his forehead touched the ground as a gesture of respect, and with determination, he promised, “Elder Sage, rest in peace. I vow to serve the people until my last day once I regain my power as you had wished.”

As his words echoed through the caves, Darryl stood up and turned to inspect the walls. He found the words that had been carved into them with internal energy; it was the Heart Sutra of Eight Wilds that the Ghost Valley Sage had spent his entire life to create.

Darryl was deeply touched by the length that the Ghost Valley Sage had gone through to help him. He realized that the elder had stopped responding to him after their initial conversation because he was focused on carving everything he knew on the stone walls so that Darryl could regain his power. He would never forget what the Ghost Valley Sage had done for him! Darryl decided not to hesitate for another moment; he sat down and began to practice the sutra on the walls.

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Meanwhile, inside the Honourable Son's tent at the Raksasa Tribe camp on the other side of the Chaotic Mountain Range.

Debra and Shentel sat in the tent and sipped on their cup of hot water. They could not find any tea in the Wild Deserted Secret Region, so clean hot water was pretty much the next best thing. There were hung animal skins inside the tent with poetry, cultural and geographic knowledge from the Nine Mainland written on all of them. Alaric sat with them; he seemed sincere with no trace of arrogance that would have been normal for a man of his status.

"My dear teachers." Alaric asked with a smile, "According to what you have been saying, the people in Nine Mainland are not savages, but they are educated and with high attainment, and they seek peace more than anything else?" Alaric paused to consider before he said, "If that's the case, then it would not be reasonable to attack them. The Raksasa Tribe would become mere criminals who started a war."

Debra and Shentel gave each other a knowing glance. Then, Shentel smiled softly and said, "The Honourable Son is truly wise; we are relieved that you think that way. You are right; the people in Nine Mainland want to live peacefully. As long as the Raksasa Tribe communicates with sincere intention, then no one would see you as the enemy."

Debra nodded in agreement.

Days had gone by, and as the two ladies shared their knowledge with him, Alaric had learned a lot about the Nine Mainland. They were surprised that he was not only intelligent but he was also merciful. He was a truly gifted individual with incredible potential.

“I see!” Alaric grinned and stood up; he was delighted with the compliments that he had received. “Well then, I should try to convince my father not to attack them then, and I shall do it before he gives the order.” Alaric immediately headed toward the Raksasa King’s tent in long strides.

The Raksasa King had called for his generals to gather in his tent to discuss strategies for the battles ahead of them. The Gigantic Monster had sucked up enough energy, and the final arrangement was in place.

“Father.” Alaric trotted into the tent and said respectfully, “I think leading our army across the Chaotic Mountain Range to attack the Nine Mainland is too reckless. Instead, let’s send an envoy to express our sincere intention for peace and see how they respond to it.” Alaric paused to look around the tent before he continued to say, “If the Nine Mainland could not accept the Raksasa Tribe, then we will fight for our place. But if they are willing to co-exist, then that’s the best solution to avoid any unnecessary battles.”

The warriors around him immediately erupted into a heated discussion. The Raksasa King scolded, “Alaric, what are you talking about? The Yellow Emperor exiled the Raksasa Tribe to the Wild Deserted Secret Region thousands of years ago, and at the time, all the clans in the Nine Mainland allied to fight us off. How could they possibly want to co-exist with us? You are my son, and the future of the Raksasa Tribe rests upon your shoulders. You must remain unwavering in our one true goal, and that is to rule all of the Nine Mainland. How could you shy away from battles?”

Alaric was moved for a moment before he proceeded to explain, “Father, I do not fear war, but I just think that we should not harbor unnecessary hatred toward the Nine Mainland. Now that we have the strength to cross the Chaotic Mountain Range to their fertile lands, why can’t we settle for peace instead of raging war and destroying everything?”

“That’s enough!” The Raksasa King could no longer contain his rage and rebuked, “I will not hear anymore of that. You have allowed yourself to be manipulated by those two women from the Nine Mainland.”

“That’s right, Brother. Don’t believe anything those two women say. Our ancestors told us that people from the Nine Mainland are all scheming hypocrites, don’t be fooled by them,” Amastan said. He had been sitting at the side.

“I—” Alaric panicked when his father and brother doubted him. He wanted to persuade them, but he did not know where to start.

“Report!” A soldier ran into the tent and bowed respectfully before the Raksasa King. “Your Majesty, we have dozens of Gigantic Monsters on standby. The army is now in place and ready to attack. We are awaiting Your Majesty’s order.”

“Good!” Raksasa King was thrilled with the news. He stood and shouted with determination, “March!”

“Yes!” The soldier immediately responded before he left to convey the command.

“Father.” Alaric was startled, and he attempted to stop them, but it was already too late.

Boom! Boom! Boom!

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The Gigantic Monsters were the size of a small mountain, and the Raksasa soldiers rode on them as they made their way swiftly toward the Chaotic Mountain Range. Meanwhile, in the other camp, warriors from the different continents such as the North Moana, the World Universe, the Great East, and the South Cloud World stood guard at the bottom of the mountains.

Every half an hour, they would send men to climb up the slopes and check for any sudden movement. It was a challenging task because of the active volcanoes and relentless hurricanes on the mountains. Sometimes, they could barely manage to see around the edge.

The warriors also kept their distance from the North Moana Army due to Darryl's situation—it was almost as if there were two separate armies. Since they did not merge with the North Moana Army, the remaining troops joined forces and named themselves the Union Army.

Jewel ran into the Union Army's camp; she was terrified as she cried, "Somebody help! Master is gone! He is gone!" She had gone to the tent to check on him because she had been worried about him. However, the tent was empty, and there was no one there.

Jewel cared for Darryl deeply, and his disappearance sent her into a panic. The others heard her cry, and they went to investigate; they were distraught when they realized that Darryl was gone.

"Quickly! Send some men to search the area," Chester shouted anxiously. Darryl would now leave without a word; he knew that he would send word if he had to go somewhere.

Dax Sanders summoned hundreds of Flower Mountain followers frantically and began to search for Darryl. Right at that moment, someone in the

crowd sighed and said, "Maybe he left because he felt devastated over losing his powers?"

Many men nodded in agreement, but they did not say anything. It made sense. If someone as powerful as Darryl were to lose his powers overnight, it was too much for one to bear. That thought lingered and sent a ripple throughout the camp. Warriors of different backgrounds had believed in Darryl, and then they realized that he might have abandoned them without even a goodbye; it had left them disheartened.

"You don't know that! Stop second-guessing Darryl!" Yvette's face reddened in frustration as she glared daggers at the men around her and shouted, "He is not the kind of man who would run from trouble; something must have happened to him."

Chester shouted, "She is right! The most important right now is that we stick together as one. Let's not overthink this."

Boom! Boom! Boom!

As the discussion continued, rumbling noises ripped through the sky from across the Chaotic Mountain Range. Clouds began to gather as the earth trembled. Everyone could barely stand still as the ground below their feet moved abruptly.

They snapped their heads toward the Chaotic Mountain Range and paled when they saw the scene. Their jaws dropped in disbelief as they struggled to comprehend the situation.

Something had blasted an enormous hole at the very top of the Chaotic Mountain Range. Magma exploded as dozens of gigantic shadows emerged from within the ashes.

The shadows towered over a hundred meters in height, and each of those shadows was covered with thick black fur that made them look like gigantic

gorillas. Their eyes looked like something out of the most horrid nightmare that could easily scare a person to death.

Those were the Gigantic Monsters that had been tamed and trained by the Raksasa Tribe. Their army marched behind those beasts. Those giants were the ones that destroyed parts of the mountain top and caused the earthquake.

Every witness to the apocalyptic scene froze as their hearts stopped. No one could walk away without being permanently traumatized by what they have seen.

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Through the dim light, an enormous army came into sight. Each soldier wore the same armor made of black animal hide, and they towered over 2 meters tall with a long black sword in each of their hands. There were so many of them that the earth moved as they marched.

A gigantic chariot made of animal bones and fastened on the backs of four colossal beasts galloped ahead of the troops. The fierce beasts had shiny coats, and they were about 20 meters in length with razor-sharp fangs and claws. A tall, muscular frame in shiny black armor stood proudly on top of the chariot. His hair was down; it looked untamed as the wind blew on it—that was the Raksasa King. His sons, Alaric and Amastan, stood behind him.

“What? The Raksasa Tribe is launching an attack?!”

All of the defense forces froze in place. Most trembled at the scale and fearsome aura of the Raksasa Army. They realized that their opponents were at least at Martial Saint or higher levels. No one knew about the Raksasa King’s strength, though. However, they knew that there were no less than a million soldiers in the Raksasa Army.

They could see the reflection of the enemy soldiers on their swords. The Union Army’s soldiers’ hearts trembled when they saw the view. They finally acknowledged that the Raksasa Tribe did exist. How could they win against an army with formidable soldiers? Many began to panic, and some even wanted to run away.

“Warriors!” When he saw the wondrous scenery on the other side of the Chaotic Mountain Range, the Raksasa King thought it was the closest thing to heaven when compared to the Wild Deserted Secret Region

The Raksasa King stood abruptly with his arms in the air and yelled at the top of his lungs. “It’s been thousands of years, but we are finally taking back what’s ours. March forward, and eliminate them all!”

“Forward!” The Raksasa Army erupted in deafening battle cries and began to charge forward as they swung their weapons ferociously. Those Raksasa soldiers were trained in battles and could move so swiftly that it almost felt as though they had transported themselves.

Before anyone could respond, they had infiltrated the Union Army. Tortured cries and pained screams immediately echoed as blood was spilled upon the cold ground. In the blink of an eye, tens of thousands of soldiers had fallen.

“Forward! Get off your asses and take them!” Dax Sanders’ eyes reddened with rage as he yelled.

“Don’t panic! Maintain the formation; we can’t mess that up! For our home, forward!” Chester yelled as he clenched his fists. His blood boiled as he itched to take on the formidable opponents before him.

“Forward!” Yvette, Quincy, Andy, and the rest of the Union Army joined the battle cry. “Take them down!” Simultaneously, millions of Union Army soldiers flooded into the opposing troops with no reservations.

Not far from the battlefield, Yang Jian’s expression darkened as he raised his hand to silence Zhang Jue. The man did not hesitate; he leaped into the air and shouted, “Attention! Forward!”

Millions of North Moana soldiers charged into the battlefield to fight their enemy.

Tortured cries continued as the heated battle resumed.

“Urgh!” Soldiers fell onto the earth with pained screams, one after the other. Their blood soaked the ground crimson.

Ear-piercing rumbles followed the Gigantic Monsters as they rushed across the field under the control of Raksasa soldiers. Like machines made solely for massacres, dozens of soldiers turned to mush with every step, and hundreds were wiped off with a swing of their arms. They were almost invincible.

Dozens of Gigantic Monsters formed a line of absolute force that swept the ground; they ran over everything in their way. The North Moana Army and the Union Army could not escape the slaughter as they watched their comrades fall.

“Fall back! Fall back, we need to go now!” someone in the Union Army shouted. Soon, many began to run in fear away from the battle.

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