

A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality: Immortal Realm #Chapter 11: Awakening - Read A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality: Immortal Realm Chapter 11: Awakening

Chapter 11: Awakening

Judging from the careful look on Daoist Master White Stone's face, it was clear that this black liquid was quite important to him. With a wave of his hand, he released a burst of black light that enveloped the liquid before falling upon the black block of ice.

As soon as the liquid came into contact with the ice block, it immediately seeped in, quickly turning the transparent block of ice murky black in color, to the extent that the figure of the young man inside became rather blurry and indistinguishable.

A pleased look appeared on Daoist Master White Stone's face, and he stowed the gourd away before sitting down again with his legs crossed.

This liquid was the Black Corpse Soul Corruption Bane that he had carefully refined using over 10 types of rare ingredients. It was an extremely vicious solution capable of infiltrating a cultivator's spiritual sense and harming their soul.

Daoist Master White Stone made a hand seal, and the specks of black light within the ice instantly began to move, with a part of it beginning to shift toward Liu Shi's head.

His plan was to only infuse a bit of the soul corruption bane at a time to gradually erase Liu Shi's soul. In doing so, he would be able to minimize the instinctive resistance that the subject would put up, thereby ensuring the highest probability of success.

Right as the first few specks of light made contact with Liu Shi's head, they immediately vanished into it.

Not only that, but all of the black specks of light in the entire block of ice erupted into a frenzy, surging rapidly into all parts of Liu Shi's body in an uncontrollable manner.

Daoist Master White Stone was extremely alarmed by this, and he frantically made hand seals in an attempt to regain control over the specks of black light, but it was already too late.

All of the Black Corpse Soul Corruption Bane vanished in the blink of an eye, but Liu Shi wasn't displaying any visible changes, and it was as if nothing had happened.

"What's going on? Where is my Black Corpse Soul Corruption Bane?" Daoist Master White Stone rose to his feet with a furious and alarmed expression while releasing his spiritual sense to examine Liu Shi's body over and over again.

However, no matter how much he searched, he wasn't able to find anything amiss.

He stared intently at Liu Shi through the block of ice, then took a deep breath, and the enraged look on his face quickly faded as his brows furrowed tightly in contemplation.

"He's not giving off any magic power fluctuations, so he's definitely not a cultivator. Could it be that he's taken some type of spirit medicine or is carrying some type of protective treasure that just so happens to be able to counteract my Black Corpse Soul Corruption Bane?"

With that in mind, his gaze wandered over to Liu Shi's chest, where there was a slight bulge beneath his robes, and there was a faint glimmer of dark green light there.

In the end, Daoist Master White Stone still decided against undoing the ice seal to search Liu Shi's body. After all, once the array was activated, it couldn't be easily cut off.

After a brief moment of contemplation, he flipped a hand over to produce a green gourd, then released an incantation seal, and green light flashed from the opening of the gourd, following which around a dozen thin, dark green insects flew out from within.

These insects were around the same thickness as a strand of hair and around half a foot in length each. They flew through the air while screeching incessantly, and as soon as they emerged, they immediately transformed into

streaks of green light that flew into the ice as if they had no substance, then immediately attempted to burrow their way into the top of Liu Shi's head.

Bursts of peculiar screeching rang out from within the ice, but no matter how hard the green insects tried, they were unable to burrow even a single millimeter into the skin on Liu Shi's head.

It was as if there were some type of invisible power in Liu Shi's head that was keeping the insects at bay.

Daoist Master White Stone's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, and he was finally becoming a little uneasy.

However, after a brief silence, the unease in his eyes was replaced by fury, and he harrumphed coldly, "There's no way an imbecile like you can oppose me!"

With a wave of his hand, he drew the green insects back into his gourd, then gritted his teeth before chanting an incantation.

A burst of gray light flew up from his body, hovering above his head. Within the gray light was a small gray flag, which swelled several times in size in the blink of an eye.

There were countless layers of runes inscribed onto the small flag, striking the beholder with a sense of disorientation, but all of these runes were completely dull and devoid of luster.

Daoist Master White Stone bit through the tip of his own tongue before releasing a mouthful of blood essence, which vanished into the flag. At the same time, he made a hand seal, releasing streaks of black light that also vanished into the gray flag. The flag immediately began to glow with dazzling light, and the runes inscribed upon them gradually began to brighten, following which a layer of gray mist rose up from the flag's surface.

The gray flag then expanded even further, swelling to around 10 feet in size, and the light on its surface flashed as a series of indistinct skull projections flew out from within. There were a total of around seven to eight of these projections, and every single one of them was wailing in a ghastly manner as they pounced toward Liu Shi.

Their collective voices instantly began to echo throughout the secret chamber.

Daoist Master White Stone's eyes were wide and bloodshot as he stared intently at the skull projections.

Right at this moment, an unexpected turn of events arose.

Right as the skull projections were about to plunge into the giant block of ice, the faint shadow of Liu Shi that was cast onto the ground suddenly rippled like water, following which a black object flew out from within before transforming into a sinister ghostly head with a pair of horns on its head.

The ghostly head was around the size of a washbasin, and it was cackling incessantly. The green flames in its eyes flickered as it cast its gaze toward the skull projections, and it opened its mouth up wide to release a vast expanse of silver light.

It was as if this silver light were the bane of the skull projections' existence, and they were completely powerless to evade as they were swept up by the golden light before being devoured by the ghostly head.

After that, the sinister ghostly head smacked its hideous lips, seemingly still not satisfied by the meal. Immediately thereafter, the golden flames in its eyes flashed, and it turned around before releasing a large burst of green qi out of its mouth, then vanished on the spot in the blink of an eye.

The azure qi struck Liu Shi in the face before vanishing into his body without a sound.

All of this happened in the blink of an eye, concluding before Daoist Master White Stone even had a chance to react.

As a Core Formation cultivator, Daoist Master White Stone considered himself to be quite experienced and knowledgeable in the field of cultivation, but he had never seen anything so strange before, and he was completely rooted to the spot, at a loss for what to do.

Right at this moment, a crisp crack rang out, and a series of white cracks suddenly appeared on the surface of the block of black ice, following which Liu Shi slowly opened his eyes.

His eyes were far clearer than before and were no longer looking lost and vacant.

He inspected his surroundings, then furrowed his brows and shrugged his shoulders slightly.

A resounding boom rang out as the cone of fire struck the light barrier, and having already been struggling to hold itself together, the light barrier instantly shattered upon impact.

A loud thump rang out as the entire block of ice exploded outward from the inside, sending shattered chunks of black ice flying in all directions before clattering onto the ground.

Liu Shi raised his head to take a glance at Daoist Master White Stone, and it seemed like he was about to say something, but in the next instant, a disoriented look suddenly appeared on his face, and he threw his hands over his own head as he began to howl in agony.

The joints in his body cracked and popped while his arms and legs expanded like an inflating balloon, and in the blink of an eye, his body had swelled to around twice its original size. At the same time, countless golden scales around the size of copper coins had appeared over the surface of his skin, including his face and his neck.

These scales looked as if they were forged from pure gold and were shimmering with a cold light, giving off a completely indestructible appearance.

Daoist Master White Stone was flabbergasted to see this, and he knew that at this point, things had already completely spiraled out of his control.

Upon returning to his senses, a fierce look appeared on his face, and he gritted his teeth before opening his mouth to release a ball of blood essence, which vanished into the gray flag in a flash.

The gray flag began to glow brightly again, and the runes on its surface began to squirm as if they had sprung to life. A burst of cracking rang out, and the flag abruptly transformed into a gray centipede that was 50 to 60 feet in length.

Daoist Master White Bone then patted the storage bag hanging from his waist, and seven or eight fist-sized black balls came flying out. Black qi was swirling around the balls, and they were giving off an incredibly pungent stench.

In spite of the terrible stench, the gray centipede let loose a joyful cry as it opened its mouth and eagerly devoured the black balls. Large black sections immediately appeared on the surface of its exoskeleton, and those areas rapidly expanded, turning its entire body pitch black in the blink of an eye. At the same time, its exoskeleton had taken on a metallic sheen, as if it were constructed from impregnable black steel.

The centipede screeched in excitement as faint red light began to glow in its tiny eyes. It roamed through the secret chamber, and as its sickle-like legs scratched across the hard stone walls, they were able to inflict a series of deep marks onto the walls like hot knives cutting through butter.

At the same time, the surrounding stone walls were stained an inky black color and began to give off a foul stench, clearly indicating that the centipede's legs were tipped with some type of extremely potent poison.

"Kill him!" Daoist Master White Stone roared as he pointed at Liu Shi.

Chapter 12: I Am Han Li

The black centipede screeched as it shook its body from side to side, then shot forward as a black shadow, reaching Liu Shi in the blink of an eye. It opened its mouth to reveal rows of dagger-like white fangs that were shimmering with a sinister light, and it bit down viciously upon Liu Shi's shoulder.

Liu Shi was still screaming with his hands clutching at his own head, completely oblivious to what was happening around him, and the centipede was able to chomp down onto his shoulder without any resistance.

A cruel smile appeared on Daoist Master White Stone's face upon seeing this.

He was well aware of how powerful the centipede was. It was capable of even shattering the average magic tool with a single bite, and what was even more terrifying about it was that its entire body was covered in lethal poison that could kill even with the slightest wound.

However, in the next instant, Daoist Master White Stone's smile abruptly stiffened.

The black centipede suddenly let loose an agonized screech as it reared back with blood gushing out of its mouth, and all of its sharp fangs had been completely shattered.

As for the golden scales on Liu Shi's shoulder, there wasn't even a single mark that had been left on them.

Even though the black centipede's fangs had been shattered, the pain seemed to have ignited its ferocity, and it wrapped itself around Liu Shi like a constricting boa, slicing at his body from all directions with its sharp legs.

Sparks were sent flying everywhere, but Liu Shi's scales remained completely unharmed.

Daoist Master White Stone was so shocked to see this that his eyes were on the verge of popping out of their sockets.

"I remember everything now... I am Han Li, the number one cultivator of the human race and the most powerful Grand Ascension cultivator of the Spirit Realm!"

All of a sudden, Liu Shi's screaming ceased, and he suddenly raised his head to reveal a pair of bright and clear eyes that were no longer disoriented in the slightest.

He was none other than Han Li, who had ascended to the Immortal Realm after enduring countless hardships in the Spirit Realm. [1]

Han Li didn't even look at the black centipede that was wrapped around his body as he plunged his hand into the hard exoskeleton on its back. His hand was like a steel spike, and after impaling the centipede, he casually tore it off himself with ease.

The black centipede was screeching incessantly as it thrashed desperately from side to side, but was unable to get free.

A dull thump rang out as Han Li's hand quivered slightly, and a burst of enormous power immediately surged throughout the centipede's entire body.

With one final anguished wail, the centipede fell completely limp and was unable to struggle any further.

Han Li plunged his other hand into the creature's body as well, then spread his arms wide to tear the centipede into two, then casually tossed the two halves of its body aside.

The two halves of the centipede's carcass spasmed violently on the ground for a moment before reverting back to the small black flag, which had already been torn into two, and the spiritual light glowing on its surface had completely faded, clearly indicating that it had been ruined.

All of this had happened in the blink of an eye, and Daoist Master White Stone was still looking on with a slack-jawed expression, unable to believe what he was seeing.

Only now did Han Li turn to take a glance at Daoist Master White Stone, and as soon as Daoist Master White Stone met Han Li's gaze, he immediately shuddered involuntarily. He felt as if his heart had been plunged into a bottomless glacial pit, and his entire body was freezing cold.

His expression changed several times in succession, following which he abruptly let loose a loud cry as he made a hand seal.

The black array in the secret chamber immediately began to glow brightly as a loud buzzing sound rang out, and tendrils of black mist surged rapidly toward Han Li again.

At the same time, Daoist Master White Stone swept a sleeve through the air to release a white flying spear, which shot forth toward the door of the secret chamber in an attempt to facilitate his escape.

"You're not going anywhere!" Han Li harrumphed coldly as golden light flashed from the scales on his arm, and he slammed his fist into the ground.

A resounding boom rang out as shattered stone chunks flew in all directions, and a massive crater was smashed into the ground. The black array was completely destroyed, and all of the black mist also ceased to exist. magic

Daoist Master White Stone shuddered as he heard the sound of the array being destroyed behind him, but at this point, he had already flown to the entrance of the secret chamber and was about to crash through it to make his escape.

However, right at this moment, a figure appeared directly in front of him, following which an explosive boom rang out.

Daoist Master White Stone was instantly sent flying back like a ragdoll, crashing heavily into the stone wall with a resounding thump.

Daoist Master White Stone immediately threw up a large mouthful of blood from the impact, and he slumped onto the ground with a horrified expression. The flying spear that was previously beneath his feet was already nowhere to be seen.

Han Li was standing at the entrance of the secret chamber, and he slowly withdrew his outstretched left fist, then abruptly appeared directly in front of Daoist Master White Stone again in a wraith-like manner, looking down at him with a cold expression.

"Please spare me, Senior! I was a fool to have failed to recognize your brilliance! I'm willing to offer up everything I have in exchange for my life!" Daoist Master White Stone was trembling uncontrollably as he struggled to a kneeling position, then pulled out the storage bag from his waist before setting it down reverently in front of Han Li's feet with both hands.

At the same time, he was kowtowing desperately with such force that his head was slamming audibly into the ground.

Han Li remained completely expressionless, and he didn't even bother to take a glance at the storage bag.

Han Li's silence struck further panic into Daoist Master White Stone's heart, and he hurriedly continued, "Aside from this, I have treasures elsewhere that I can offer to you, Senior. As a guest elder at the prime minister's manor, I know where the treasure pavilion in the prime minister's manor is. As soon as you give the nod, I can fetch all those treasures and bring them to you right away!"

For the sake of survival, he was willing to completely discard his moral compass.

Han Li's expression changed slightly upon seeing this, and it seemed that he was rather tempted by the offer.

The golden light glowing from his body slowly faded, and Daoist Master White Stone was ecstatic to see this.

However, right when he was about to say something, Han Li suddenly raised his hand before making a grabbing motion, releasing a ball of black qi that vanished directly into Daoist Master White Stone's face at Han Li's behest.

"Spare me, Senior!"

Daoist Master White Stone was greatly alarmed by this, and he hurriedly inspected his own internal condition. However, he didn't discover anything amiss, but that only made him even more terrified.

"Rest assured, I won't kill you for now, I'm just repaying the favor for what you tried to do to me. All it'll take from me is a single thought for that black of black qi in your body to explode, and I'm sure you know what'll happen to you after that. Also, I've regained my memories. My surname is Han, not Liu," Han Li said in an indifferent voice, and his body began to shrink back to its original size while the golden scales on his skin quickly faded.

Daoist Master White Stone's face was deathly pale, but he was quite relieved to hear that Han Li was going to spare him, and he hurriedly nodded in response.

Han Li grabbed onto Daoist Master White Stone's collar to lift him up from the ground, then tapped his right index finger against the daoist priest's glabella and released a burst of black light into it from his fingertip.

"Senior..." Daoist Master White Stone was horrified, thinking that Han Li had suddenly changed his mind, but before he had a chance to say anything, his eyes suddenly became completely glazed over.

Han Li's lips were tightly pursed, and a layer of sweat appeared on his forehead as his complexion paled slightly.

Moments later, he exhaled, and the black light glowing from his fingertip faded.

Daoist Master White Stone's eyes rolled into the back of his head, and he immediately fell unconscious.

Han Li tossed him onto the ground, and only after taking a few deep breaths did his complexion return to normal. However, his brows then furrowed tightly, and a grim look appeared on his face.

He had just unleashed a soul search technique that had allowed him to gather the information that he wanted from Daoist Master White Stone.

Han Li turned his gaze toward Liu Le'er, who was also unconscious, and a gentle look appeared in his eyes. Without any further injection of magic power, the golden rope around her had already fallen slack, but she was still trapped within the black light barrier.

He made his way over to her side, then swept a hand through the air to release a burst of enormous force that shattered the black light barrier in an instant.

Liu Le'er's body was riddled with wounds, and looking down at her, Han Li heaved a faint sigh. After a moment of hesitation, he made a hand seal,

A hint of color immediately returned to Liu Le'er's pale cheeks, and the wounds on her body began to heal at a rate that was discernible even to the naked eye.

"You've been through a lot the past few years. With that, I don't have much magic power left," Han Li murmured as he looked at Liu Le'er.

He then made his way over to Daoist Master White Stone before picking up his storage bag, then tore it into two, causing all of its contents to fall onto the ground.

Most of its contents were materials and ingredients, but there were also some pills.

After some careful examination, Han Li picked out two vials, tipping out an azure pill and a red pill from the vials before feeding them to Liu Le'er.

1. For those who haven't, please read the first installment of RMJI to see the story of Han Li's adventures in the Spirit Realm. 📖

Chapter 13: Mo Guang

Only after seeing Liu Le'er's breathing and aura gradually even out did Han Li sit onto the ground again with his legs crossed.

He reached into his own collar, and after some searching, he pulled out the accessory that he had always worn around his neck, which was a small vial that was light green in color.

There were a series of dark green leaf patterns all over the surface of the small vials, and they were extremely beautiful and life-like.

Han Li gently massaged the vial with his fingers, and an absentminded look appeared in his eyes as he felt its familiar texture.

After being lost in deep thought for a long while, he suddenly stowed the vial away before calling out the name "Mo Guang". [1]

The secret chamber was completely silent aside from the echoing of Han Li's voice.

However, moments later, the shadow in front of him warped slightly, then elongated forward marginally.

All of a sudden, a dark humanoid figure split itself off from Han Li's elongated shadow before slowly rising to its feet.

The figure had skin that was as black as ink and his appearance was rather similar to Han Li's. He was wearing a black robe, and his head of black hair was unbound, casually spilling down around his head. What was most remarkable about him was the indescribable aura of decay that he was giving off.

"Long time no see, Fellow Daoist Han," the figure said in a wooden manner as his gaze fell upon Han Li.

"What happened, Mo Guang? How did you become like this?" Han Li asked with tightly furrowed brows.

"I don't know. I only awakened a few years earlier than you did, and as soon as I awakened, I discovered that I had lost all of my spiritual nature, and all that remained of me was a wisp of my soul. Due to the Heavenly Devil Contract, I can only reside in your shadow, and I'm unable to show myself

unless you summon me or someone is trying to hurt you," Mo Guang replied in a rather mechanical voice.

Han Li was silent for a moment before asking, "Do you remember the last thing that happened before you fell into your slumber?"

"I can recall everything before your ascension clearly, but after your ascension, all I can recall is that you left the Ascension Platform with that immortal by the name of Gao Sheng, and that's where my memories end," Mo Guang replied.

"I see. My memories are also cut off from the moment we left the Ascension Platform. It looks like we'll have to seek out Gao Sheng if we want to know exactly what happened. However, we're currently not in a very good situation.

"I searched that man's soul just now, and it seems that not only are we in the Spirit Domain Realm, a lower realm directly under the Northern Glacial Immortal Region, 300 years have already passed by, which means that both of us are missing three centuries worth of memories," Han Li said.

"That is indeed terrible. Do you have any plans, Fellow Daoist Han?" Mo Guang asked.

"There may only be a wisp of your soul left, but you're still a Heavenly Devilish Monarch. Surely you still have some abilities up your sleeve," Han Li said as he raised an eyebrow.

"At the moment, I've lost almost all of my magic power and abilities, and I can only unleash some low-grade secret techniques," Mo Guang replied.

In spite of this piece of bad news, Han Li seemed to have drawn reassurance from it.

"This is already far better than the situation that I envisioned. Compared with you, I'm in a far worse state. I just examined myself, and not only have I lost all of my treasures and pills, nothing remains of my magic power, and my soul and physical body have all suffered severe trauma, so I'm currently nothing more than a shadow of my former self. The only good news is that I've finally awakened.

"As long as I can find the right spirit medicines to treat my condition, I should be able to recover very quickly. On top of that, I can sense Fellow Daoist Xie

and the Gold Devouring Beetle Monarch's existence through their soul contracts, but I don't know where they are. It looks like I'll have to find a way to recover them in the future."

"It sounds like you truly are in a troublesome situation, Fellow Daoist Han. In order to find Gao Sheng, you'll have to return to the Northern Glacial Immortal Region. If I recall correctly, it's far easier to ascend to the Immortal Realm from a realm that's directly under it, but you'll still require the assistance of an Ascension Platform and an immense amount of magic power to protect your body and allow you to forcibly break through the boundaries of the realm," Mo Guang said.

"There's no hurry in returning to the Immortal Realm. There's plenty of time for me to think about that. However, one thing is for sure: whoever is responsible for reducing me to this state, I'll be sure to have a good chat with them once I return to the Immortal Realm," Han Li replied in an indifferent voice, and his expression was quite calm, but one couldn't help but wonder if he were truly as calm as he appeared.

Mo Guang offered no response.

"Are you willing to continue following me, Fellow Daoist Mo Guang? As you can see, I'm in an extremely terrible situation right now. If you want to leave, I won't stop you."

"There's no need to test me, Fellow Daoist Han. Even in my current condition, the Heavenly Devil Contract is still effective, and as I am now, I won't even be able to resist the binding power of the contract. If I were to try and leave you now, I would be placing myself in even more severe peril," Mo Guang replied.

A faint smile appeared on Han Li's face upon hearing this, and he said, "Alright, in that case, I'll do my best to ensure that you don't regret your decision. As long as I can recover to the peak of my powers, I'll be sure to do everything in my power to restore your soul and spiritual nature. What we have to do now is gather some information and resources from this realm to see if we can recover my magic power to its former heights."

"I'll leave everything to you, Fellow Daoist Han. In my current state, it's a struggle to show myself for too long, so I'm going back to rest and recuperate," Mo Guang said in a calm manner, then transformed into a cloud of black mist that quickly vanished into Han Li's shadow.

Han Li exhaled before taking a glance at Liu Le'er, who was still sound asleep, and he also closed his eyes to rest.

Only after close to half a day later did Liu Le'er finally wake up.

As soon as she opened her eyes, she caught sight of Han Li, who was seated beside her with his legs crossed and his eyes closed, and the Daoist Master White Stone, who was standing off to the side with a wary expression.

Almost at the exact same moment, Han Li opened his eyes and said with a smile, "You're finally awake."

Liu Le'er's body instantly stiffened upon hearing this, and she looked into Han Li's eyes with a complex expression as she murmured, "Brother Rock, you're all cured now..."

"Le'er, my name is Han Li. You can call me Brother Han from now on," Han Li replied in a gentle voice.

A rather dejected look appeared on Liu Le'er's face upon hearing this, and she reluctantly obliged. "Brother Han."

In this moment, the young man before her was looking rather unfamiliar.

Han Li could tell what she was thinking from the changes in her expression, and he smiled as he said, "I may be awake now, but I still remember everything that happened these past few years. I'm still Brother Rock to you, and that's never going to change."

Liu Le'er was ecstatic to hear this, and tears welled up in her eyes as she dove straight into Han Li's arms.

"I know you have many questions you want to ask me, but now's not the time. I'll explain everything to you when a suitable opportunity arises," Han Li said in a gentle voice as he patted Liu Le'er's head in a doting manner.

Liu Le'er nodded obediently in response and didn't ask any further questions. However, her gaze then fell upon Daoist Master White Stone, and a wary look immediately appeared in her eyes.

1. For more information on Mo Guang, please refer to RMJI Chapter 2435: Soul Badge. 📖

Chapter 14: Attack

"Don't worry, Fellow Daoist White Stone is on our side now. He wouldn't dare to do anything to you in the future," Han Li said with a smile as he rose to his feet, taking a subtle glance at Daoist Master White Stone as he did so.

The elderly daoist priest shuddered upon hearing this, and he hurriedly nodded insistently to pledge his loyalty, while his back was already drenched in cold sweat.

Liu Le'er's expression eased slightly upon seeing this.

"Let's get out of here."

Han Li latched onto Liu Le'er's hand and made his way over to the stone door of the secret chamber before pressing his palm against it.

Right as he was about to push the door open, he suddenly stopped what he was doing, and his brows furrowed slightly.

Liu Le'er could sense the slight change in Han Li's demeanor, and she raised her head to look up at him with an inquisitive expression.

"What a coincidence!" Han Li chuckled before pushing the stone door open and making his way outside.

The sky outside was quite dark, indicating that it was already nighttime, but from the island, one could see that the entirety of the Yu Manor was as bright as day, having been illuminated by flames.

Sounds of battle could be heard ringing out from the front yard, interspersed with booming explosions.

Dense smoke was rising up from all over the Yu Manor like a series of black demonic dragons ascending into the night sky.

Even though Han Li's trio was situated on the island far away from where everyone else in the Yu Manor was, there was still a remarkably strong scent of bloodshed in the air.

"What's going on?" Liu Le'er asked as she swept her gaze around the Yu Manor with an incredulous expression.

"Do you know what's happening?" Han Li asked as he turned to Daoist Master White Stone.

"I'm afraid not, Senior. Perhaps the Yu Family is being attacked by its enemies," Daoist Master White Stone replied in a hesitant voice, then fell silent with a respectful expression, awaiting further instructions.

Han Li took a glance at Liu Le'er to find that she was also looking up at him, and after a moment of contemplation, he said, "I suppose I owe Yu Qi a favor for waking me up from my prior state, so I can't just leave without doing anything. Let's go and take a look."

With that, the three of them emerged from the daoist temple, then traveled toward the front yard of the Yu Manor.

The closer they drew to the front yard, the clearer the sounds of battle became. By the time the three of them arrived at that circular archway, they were greeted by the sight of a hellish scene.

The small courtyard beyond the archway was laden with piles upon piles of mangled bodies, most of which were wearing the armor assigned to the guards of the prime minister's manor, while only a very small proportion of them were wearing black assassin garments.

The courtyard was illuminated by fire, and there was a white light barrier in the corner of the courtyard that was closest to the front yard, which was keeping around a dozen black-suited figures at bay.

Right at this moment, a spiral-shaped cone of fire shot up from the group of black-suited figures, and upon reaching an altitude of several dozen feet above the light barrier, it suddenly descended from above, swooping down like a rapidly revolving fiery dragon.

A resounding boom rang out as the cone of fire struck the light barrier, and having already been struggling to hold itself together, the light barrier instantly shattered upon impact.

Immediately thereafter, a deep voice rang out. "Kill them!"

The dozen or so black-suited figures immediately charged toward the corner with their weapons raised.

"Stop them," Han Li ordered in an indifferent voice.

Daoist Master White Stone immediately stepped into the courtyard before opening his mouth to release a burst of black light.

The ball of black light contained the same serpentine flying sword from before, and it arrived above the black-suited figures in the blink of an eye.

A sharp screeching sound rang out as the flying sword shuddered, releasing several dozen bursts of black sword qi that shot down rapidly from above.

The sound of flesh and bones being punctured rang out incessantly within the courtyard, accompanied by agonized howls.

All of the black-suited figures were instantly killed on the spot, with the exception of one with a short beard who managed to react quite quickly and rolled several dozen feet away.

"Who's there?" the black-suited man asked in an aggressive voice.

Daoist Master White Stone offered no response as he swept a hand through the air, and the flying sword that was hovering in mid-air instantly came swooping down, hurtling directly toward the man's chest.

The black-suited man's expression changed drastically upon seeing this, and he hurriedly swept a sleeve through the air to release a small blue shield, which quickly expanded to form a giant shield that positioned itself in front of him.

At the same time, he raised his other hand, and the flames of the cone of fire reared up as it sped rapidly toward the black flying sword.

A resounding boom rang out, and flames scattered in all directions as the cone of fire exploded, falling down from above as balls of fire.

As for the black flying sword, it pierced directly into the black-suited man's chest. The giant blue shield had also been punctured as if it were nothing more than a papier mache structure, posing no resistance to the flying sword at all.

"You're... a Core Formation cultivator..." the black-suited man gurgled as blood poured out of his mouth and nostrils.

Daoist Master White Stone drew his flying sword back to himself with a wave of his hand, then scoffed in a disdainful voice, "To think that a mere Foundation Establishment cultivator dares to oppose someone as mighty as myself..."

Before he finished his sentence, he abruptly shut his mouth, then stole a fearful glance at Han Li.

Han Li didn't react to his arrogant proclamation at all. All he did was make his way over to a corner of the courtyard, where two people were huddled together.

One of them was a young man in a bloodstained azure robe with a head of disheveled hair. He was a Foundation Establishment cultivator, but his aura was quite feeble, and it was clear that he was close to being a spent force.

Behind him was a young woman in servant's clothing, curled up into a ball. Her entire body was stained with blood, and she was trembling with fear, not daring to raise her head.

Liu Le'er faltered slightly upon identifying the young woman, then called out, "Sister Xiao Wu?"

The young woman's body stiffened upon hearing this, and she slowly poked her head out from behind the young man. In the instant that she caught sight of Liu Le'er, she immediately burst into tears.

Liu Le'er hurriedly rushed forward to help her to her feet.

The young man hesitated momentarily, then also struggled to his feet before imploring, "Daoist Master White Stone, please save the young mistress... Hurry!"

Daoist Master White Stone faltered slightly upon hearing this, and he offered no response. Instead, he took a glance at Han Li.

"Where is the young mistress?" Han Li asked.

The young man clearly didn't recognize Han Li, so he was rather taken aback by this question, but he still replied, "When Xiao Wu and I were sent to request reinforcements from the island, the young mistress was being

protected by the other elders at the main estate, but given how fearsome the enemies are, I don't think they'll be able to last much longer."

"Stay here and treat your own wounds. Xiao Wu, you're most familiar with the layout of the Yu Manor, lead the way to the main estate," Han Li instructed in an indifferent manner.

At this point, Xiao Wu had stopped crying under Liu Le'er's consolation, and she turned to Han Li with a perplexed expression, wondering why the man who had been mentally handicapped just a few hours ago had suddenly started issuing orders to everyone.

The young man was also rather bewildered.

It was clear to him that Han Li was the leader of the group. Daoist Master White Stone was one of the most respected figures in the Yu Manor, yet he seemed to also be content to follow Han Li's lead.

"Alright, come with me."

Xiao Wu took a moment to collect herself, then rushed toward the front yard, followed closely by Han Li's trio.

Some time had already passed since the Yu Manor was first attacked, and the entire front yard of the manor was laden with bodies, some of which were guards, while others were servants. It seemed that the black-suited figures were intent on slaughtering everyone in the Yu Manor.

Liu Le'er was horrified by the sights that she beheld along the way. Even though she was already aware of the cruel and bloodthirsty nature of humans, the scenes presented to her still made her develop a completely new understanding of the human race.

Aside from the piles of bodies everywhere, they also encountered several groups of black-suited figures, but almost all of them were killed by Daoist Master White Stone in mere moments.

Occasionally, they would encounter some Foundation Establishment cultivators, but they were no match for Daoist Master White Stone, either.

Thus, the four of them passed through a corridor and continued to rush toward the main estate.

Chapter 15: Badge

At the main estate of the Yu Manor, the previously lavish and immaculately maintained courtyard had been reduced to a set of ruins. There were corpses and flowing blood everywhere, and the stench of blood in the air was so strong that it was downright nauseating.

All of the survivors of the Yu Family were gathered here, and there were only about two dozen of them left. Some were young and some were old, and Yu Qi and the second young master of the family were both among them.

All of them wore horrified expressions, and there were a few women among them who were trembling uncontrollably. Only Yu Qi and a few others were able to maintain some modicum of composure.

There was a particularly large number of black-suited figures here, close to 30 at a rough glance, and they had trapped the surviving members of the Yu Family in the courtyard from three sides. They were split up into small groups of around three to five people, and all of them were cultivators with most of them wielding magic tools.

Thankfully, the other elders of the Yu Family finally arrived to protect the surviving members of the Yu Family.

The Yu Family was the family of the Prosperous Nation's prime minister, so the cultivator elders assigned to the family were all quite powerful. In particular, there was a middle-aged red-robed cultivator standing in front of the surviving members of the Yu Family.

He had pockmarks all over his face and a short figure that was completely unremarkable, but red light was surging around his entire body, and he was giving off the enormous spiritual pressure of a Core Formation cultivator.

There was a crimson fire bead treasure that was hovering above his head, and several crimson balls of fire were revolving around it.

The other three elders of the Yu Family consisted of two men and a woman, and their cultivation base was inferior to that of the red-robed man, but they were also quite formidable in their own right. One of them was a black-robed young woman with a set of elegant features, but they were marred by a scar on her face. She was standing on one side of the red-robed cultivator, while

another thin middle-aged man with a pair of deep-set eyes stood on his other side.

The final cultivator was a thin elderly man with dark skin, resembling an old farmer, and he was standing slightly back from the trio.

Even though there was a Core Formation cultivator among them, they were still only a group of four, and they had to prioritize the safety of the Yu Family's survivors, so they found themselves locked in an impasse against the black-suited cultivators around them.

"We can't keep going like this. Protect the young mistress and everyone else, and prepare to rush out as soon as the opportunity arises!" the red-robed cultivator instructed, then made a hand seal before opening his mouth to release a burst of red light, which vanished into the fire bead above his head.

The fire bead instantly began to rotate at a far greater speed, to the point that it had become a crimson blur.

Around a dozen giant fireballs flew out of the bead before quickly fusing together to form a thick fiery dragon that was over 100 feet in length.

The fiery dragon was covered in a layer of clear-cut red scales, and it let loose a furious roar as it swooped down into the crowd of black-suited figures up ahead.

The first group of black-suited figures were caught off guard and sent flying by the fiery dragon, with two of them being reduced to ashes on the spot.

Immediately thereafter, the fiery dragon swept its tail violently through the air to release a wave of fire, forcing all of the black-suited figures in the general vicinity to rush back in retreat.

After a brief moment of chaos, all of the black-suited cultivators steadied themselves before bombarding the fiery dragon with a barrage of attacks.

The fiery dragon's giant body swayed from side to side from the impact of the attacks, and the flames on its body were churning incessantly, but none of the attacks were sufficient to deal a fatal blow. The dragon continued to wreak havoc to its heart's content, and after just a few seconds, close to half of all of the black-suited figures were either dead or injured.

"Go!" the red-robed cultivator yelled at his three companions.

However, right at this moment, a burst of blurry black light shot forth at an incredible speed, striking the lower abdomen of the fiery dragon directly like a bolt of black lightning.

The burst of black light pierced deep into the fiery dragon's body, revealing itself to be a black arrow that was riddled with black runes.

The runes on the arrow's shaft abruptly released an enormous burst of black light before exploding violently with an almighty boom, sending a giant dark red mushroom cloud rising up into the air, causing violent tremors to run through the nearby ground.

A huge hole was instantly blown into the fiery dragon's lower abdomen, and the flames around it flashed erratically.

The red-robed cultivator and the other three elders were all stunned to see this.

Another black-suited figure had appeared at the entrance of the courtyard, and he was wielding a large black bow with black light surging around his body. The aura that he was giving off indicated that he was a peak Foundation Establishment cultivator.

Immediately thereafter, four more black-suited figures emerged from the darkness behind him. They were all also at the peak of the Foundation Establishment Stage, wielding the same black bows that they drew and fired in unison.

Four black runed arrows shot forth, racing rapidly through the night sky like a cluster of black shooting stars.

The red-robed cultivator hurriedly made a series of hand seals to control the fiery dragon to evade the arrows, but it was far too big a target, and the archers were exceptionally skilled. In the end, it was only able to dodge one of the arrows, while the other three all struck their target.

The three runed arrows exploded in unison, and three more massive holes were blown into the fiery dragon's body.

As a result, it was unable to maintain its form any longer, and it exploded into a flurry of crimson flames that quickly fizzled out into nothingness.

The red-robed cultivator gave a muffled groan as his body swayed slightly.

Right at this moment, a ghastly screech rang out, and a streak of white light shot out of the darkness. It was several times faster than even the runed arrows from before, and it reached the red-robed cultivator in the blink of an eye.

The red-robed cultivator was greatly alarmed by this, and the crimson fire bead above his head immediately flew forward to meet the streak of white light at his behest. At the same time, he flew back while raising his hands to release two streaks of light, one blue and one red, containing a small blue sword and a crimson flying trident, respectively, both of which also flew toward the streak of white light.

The white light flashed, revealing itself to be a blade of bone that was around three feet in length with gusts of Yin wind swirling around it.

Large swathes of black threads abruptly appeared on the surface of the blade amid a faint buzzing sound, and the threads wrapped themselves around the fire bead, the blue sword, and the crimson flying trident.

The spiritual light radiating from the three treasures instantly dimmed, and they slowed down significantly, looking as if they could fall out of the air at any moment.

Meanwhile, the bone blade passed right through the three sluggish treasures in a flash, then suddenly appeared near the red-robed cultivator's head before flashing through the air like lightning.

The red-robed cultivator let loose a bloodcurdling cry that was abruptly cut short as his head slid off his neck, having been decapitated.

Blood spurted several feet up into the air like a gory geyser, and his headless body swayed momentarily before toppling to the ground.

"Daoist Master Red Robe!" the survivors of the Yu Family exclaimed in unison.

The other three elders were also horrified to see this, and they all backtracked a few steps, unsure of how to proceed.

Immediately thereafter, a young man with a set of sinister features slowly emerged from the crowd. He was none other than the man who had been spying on Yu Qi in secret back in Farbright City, but he wasn't accompanied by the gray-robed man here.

All of the surrounding black-suited figures immediately stopped what they were doing and bowed respectfully toward the young man.

With a wave of his hand, the white bone blade shot back to the young man, carrying Daoist Master Red Robe's three treasures along with it.

He took a glance at the three treasures, and a disdainful look appeared on his face, but he still stowed them away before turning to the survivors of the Yu Family with a cold expression. "Kill them all! Don't let a single one of them live!"

"Yes!" the black-suited figures hurriedly replied in unison before stepping forward to carry out his orders.

The three elders of the Yu Family looked on with grim expressions, but none of them stepped in to intervene.

Some of the women and children among the Yu Family's survivors were sobbing in despair, while others had already collapsed to the ground, and there were even a few who had soiled themselves.

"Hold on!"

A pleasant voice rang out, and Yu Qi stepped forward to confront the black-suited figures.

She had put on her male attire once again, but there was no disguising the hint of seduction in her features.

The young man's eyes immediately lit up at the sight of her, and his lecherous gaze roamed greedily over her body.

Yu Qi's face was quite pale, but she was still just barely able to maintain her composure. She fought back the urge to gouge out the deplorable young

man's eyes as she pulled out a purple and golden badge before displaying it to the group.

There was an extremely vivid and detailed purple and golden flame design emblazoned upon the badge.

"How dare you slaughter the members of our Yu Family? Do you have no regard for the Cold Flame Sect?"

Chapter 16: Despair

The young man took a glance at the purple and golden badge, then turned his gaze back to Yu Qi with a faint smile. "Ah, I see you have an acceptance badge from the Cold Flame Sect. I've long heard that you are the number one beauty of Farbright City, and I can see that those rumors certainly aren't unfounded."

Yu Qi was instilled with some confidence by the fact that the young man recognized the badge in her hand, and she declared, "I don't care who you are, leave the Yu Manor right this instant. Otherwise, you'll be making an enemy out of the Cold Flame Sect!"

The three elders of the Yu Family were originally planning to take no further part in this confrontation, but they were all very much encouraged by this turn of events.

A hint of hope was also ignited in the hearts of the Yu Family's survivors.

The young man suddenly burst into laughter upon seeing this. "Am I supposed to be afraid of the Cold Flame Sect?"

"How dare you look down on the Cold Flame Sect?" Yu Qi accused with a furious expression.

"All you have is an acceptance badge, so you're not even an official disciple of the Cold Flame Sect. Even if you were an official disciple, did you think that would be enough to faze me?" A cold smile appeared on the young man's face as he flipped a hand over to produce a black badge that was around the same size as the badge in Yu Qi's hand, and there was a silver skull design emblazoned onto its surface.

A stunned look appeared on Yu Qi's face upon seeing this. "That's a Heavenly Ghost Sect inner court disciple badge! You're from the Heavenly Ghost Sect!"

The Heavenly Ghost Sect ranks alongside the Cold Flame Sect!

The three elders of the Yu Family drew a collective sharp breath, and they exchanged a glance with one another before falling silent.

A thought seemed to have occurred to Yu Qi, and a hint of color returned to her face as she declared, "Even if you're a disciple of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, don't forget that the Cold Flame Sect belongs to the Prosperous Nation. Are you trying to instigate a war between the two sects with your actions?"

"Under normal circumstances, I would say that you're correct, but I'm afraid that you're sorely mistaken here," the young man countered with a disdainful sneer.

Yu Qi faltered slightly upon hearing this.

"Let me fill you in. The Cold Flame Sect has already been defeated in the contest against our sect, and they've handed over the jurisdiction rights over the Prosperous Nation, so now, the entire nation belongs to our Heavenly Ghost Sect," the young man revealed with a cruel smile.

Yu Qi was completely rooted to the spot upon hearing this as if she had been struck by a bolt of lightning.

The three elders of the Yu Family were also stunned by this revelation, and they reflexively backed away to open up some distance between themselves and the surviving members of the Yu Family.

Everyone from the Yu Family was even more disheartened by this, and their hearts had completely sunk.

They didn't know much about the world of cultivators, but they could tell from this exchange that this was not good news for them.

"By the way, there's something else I forgot to mention that I'm sure you'll be very interested to hear," the young man continued as his sinister smile widened.

Yu Qi's heart jolted upon hearing this, and she knew that there could only be more bad news to come, but she still couldn't help but ask, "What is it?"

"Some of the officials in the imperial court of the Prosperous Nation dared to oppose the orders of our Heavenly Ghost Sect, and they've been charged with treason. Yesterday, all of them were beheaded in public in the capital city, and I recall that Prime Minister Yu seemed to have been among them, alongside his two sons who were also serving under him," the young man said as he looked directly into Yu Qi's eyes.

Yu Qi's vision darkened momentarily upon hearing this, and she collapsed to the ground, while the badge in her hand also slipped out of her grasp.

Everyone else from the Yu Family was also plunged even further into the depths of despair upon hearing this, and several women were unable to contain themselves any longer as they burst into tears.

Just a moment ago, they had been the esteemed members of Prime Minister Yu's family, revered by the common folk from their lofty perches at the upper echelons of society, but all of a sudden, they were told that their nation had been conquered, the prime minister had been beheaded, and they were about to follow him soon.

The despair on Yu Qi's face brought a look of sadistic pleasure to the young man's face, and his cheeks became flushed with excitement as he cackled like a madman.

He loved nothing more than to drive others into the abyss of despair before taking in their expressions at the height of their helplessness.

Once his cackling subsided, the flush in his cheeks gradually faded, and he ordered in a cold voice, "Kill everyone, but leave the young mistress alive."

The black-suited figures immediately gave affirmative responses before closing in on the surviving members of the Yu Family with cruel grins.

At this point, the three elders had already backed away to the side with their heads lowered, seemingly waiting for an opportunity to escape. The young man was quite pleased to see this, and he made no effort to stop them.

One of the black-suited figures approached the young man as he said with a fawning expression, "You have an exceptional eye, Young Master Qi! This

woman possesses no cultivation base, but she's already received an acceptance badge from the Cold Flame Sect, which means that she must possess decent cultivation aptitude. She would be a perfect dual cultivation partner for you,"

The young man burst into laughter once again upon hearing this.

Yu Qi shuddered as a hint of clarity returned to her eyes, and a look of finality appeared on her face. With one swift motion, she drew a dagger from her waist before plunging it viciously toward her own heart.

The young man's smile stiffened upon seeing this, clearly not expecting her to be so fiery and unyielding, and it was already too late to stop her.

All of a sudden, a sharp gust of wind whistled through the air before striking the dagger in Yu Qi's hand, instantly sending it flying away before clattering onto the ground.

Several more sharp gusts of wind shot through the air, hurtling toward the black-suited figures who were about to slaughter the survivors of the Yu Family.

A string of agonized howls rang out, and the sharp gusts of wind were so strong that the black-suited figures who were struck were instantly sent flying with blood gushing out of their mouths.

All of their companions immediately stopped in their tracks with alarmed expressions.

"Who's there?" the young man asked as he turned toward an opening not far away.

Everyone else also turned toward the same direction, and the sound of footsteps rang out as several figures slowly emerged, revealing themselves to be none other than Han Li and his group.

The young man cast his gaze toward the group through narrowed eyes, but his gaze only lingered on Han Li for a brief moment before he quickly directed his attention toward Daoist Master White Stone.

"Daoist Master White Stone!"

"Daoist Master White Stone, save us!"

The survivors of the Yu Family were already awaiting death in a state of complete despair, but the arrival of Daoist Master White Stone instilled them with a renewed sense of hope, and they desperately implored for him to step in.

"Young Mistress!"

Xiao Wu paid no heed to the nearby black-suited figures as she rushed over to Yu Qi before helping her to her feet.

"Xiao Wu."

Yu Qi cast a complex gaze toward Daoist Master White Stone.

Daoist Master White Stone was a Core Formation cultivator, but the same had also applied to Daoist Master Red Robe, and he had been slain by the young man with ease, so Daoist Master White Stone was most likely no match for him, either.

All of a sudden, her gaze fell upon Han Li.

His physical appearance hadn't changed at all, but his eyes were no longer vacant, and he was giving off a sense of remarkable calmness given the situation that he was in.

"So you're Daoist Master White Stone? I'd advise you not to stick your nose into other people's business if you value your life!" the young man said as he turned to Daoist Master White Stone, and black light radiated from his body as he released a burst of enormous pressure.

Those sharp gusts of wind just now had been incredibly powerful, but they possessed no form, and it was as if they had arisen out of thin air.

The young man had no clue how those sharp gusts of wind had been generated, so he was rather wary of Daoist Master White Stone and was releasing his spiritual pressure for intimidation.

Daoist Master White Stone shuddered, and a hint of fear flashed through his eyes.

The spiritual pressure being released by the young man was already at the mid-Core Formation Stage, while he was only an early-Core Formation cultivator, so he was no match for the young man. With that in mind, he couldn't help but turn his gaze toward Han Li.

He had witnessed exactly what had happened earlier, so he knew that those sharp gusts of wind had been produced by nothing more than a few casual flicks of Han Li's finger.

A hint of a smile appeared on Han Li's face, and he didn't say anything.

Daoist Master White Stone's heart sank slightly upon seeing this, and he immediately made his decision, stepping forward in a righteous manner as he yelled, "I am an elder of the Yu Manor, how could I possibly just stand by and watch while you do as you please? You brazen bastards must be punished for the heinous acts you've committed here!"

A violent look appeared on the young man's face upon hearing this. "Fine. If you have a death wish, then I'll kill you along with everyone else!"

As soon as his voice trailed off, he raised a hand, and his white bone blade shot forth directly toward Daoist Master White Stone.

At the same time, he made a series of hand seals, and a vast expanse of white light erupted from the bone blade. A series of white skull projections emerged within the white radiance, and a chorus of ghostly howls began to ring out incessantly.

Chapter 17: Slaying the Two Cultivators

"Look out, Daoist Master White Stone! Daoist Master Red Robe perished to this very same weapon!" Yu Qi cautioned in a loud voice.

Daoist Master White Stone was already greatly alarmed by the power imbued within the bone blade, and his expression changed drastically upon hearing this. His first instinct was to flee the scene, but with Han Li present, he had no choice but to grit his teeth before opening his mouth to release his serpentine flying sword.

He then quickly made a hand seal, and the sword began to glow with black light, wrapping around the bone blade like a black python.

A cold smile appeared on the young man's face as he made a sequence of hand seals before pointing a finger forward, and the light radiating from the bone blade became even brighter as it tore viciously through the air.

A dull thump rang out from the serpentine flying sword, and it was snapped into several pieces that fell out of the air.

Daoist Master White Stone hurriedly raised his hand to release a round azure shield to take the flying sword's place.

The light radiating from the bone blade had dimmed slightly, but its power wasn't diminished at all as it struck the azure shield with tremendous force.

This time, the azure shield was able to pose some resistance, but it was still snapped in half in the end. The bone blade was stopped in its tracks for a brief moment before glowing brightly once again as it continued to hurtle toward Daoist Master White Stone.magic

Daoist Master White Stone was greatly alarmed to see this, and he ducked behind Han Li during the split second that the bone blade was kept at bay by the azure shield.

In the past, even if he were no match for the young man, he would've still been able to put up a good fight. However, all of his most powerful treasures had been destroyed during his clash with Han Li earlier, so he was completely powerless to stop the bone blade.

In the blink of an eye, the bone blade appeared in front of Han Li before continuing onward at an incredible speed, aiming to slice through both Han Li and Daoist Master White Stone's bodies at the waist.

"Senior Han!" Daoist Master White Stone exclaimed in a panicked voice.

Han Li remained as calm as ever as he raised a hand, and golden light flashed from his palm as he reached out like lightning while a series of golden scales surfaced over his skin.

A loud clang rang out, and the light glowing from the bone blade completely faded, as did the ghostly howls that were ringing out incessantly. As for the bone blade itself, it had been caught in Han Li's grasp, and it was squirming and struggling incessantly like a small fish, but it was unable to break free.

"Impossible!"

The young man's eyes widened with incredulity, and he couldn't believe what he was seeing.

The bone blade appeared to be quite ordinary, but it was a replica of the Heavenly Ghost Blade, the most powerful treasure of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, and it had been crafted for him using a vast array of precious materials by the seniors of his family. It was such a formidable artifact that even late-Core Formation cultivators would struggle to withstand its power, yet Han Li had caught it with his bare hand.

Everyone else at the scene was also looking on with astonished expressions.

Yu Qi was just as shocked as everyone around her, and she was staring at Han Li with bewilderment and a hint of admiration in her eyes.

Daoist Master White Stone was also staring at Han Li with a slack-jawed expression. He knew that there was a good chance that Han Li would be capable of stopping the bone blade, but he didn't think that Han Li would be able to grab it out of thin air with such ridiculous ease!

With that in mind, he couldn't help but wonder just how powerful Han Li was.

At the same time, he was also counting himself to be quite fortunate.

It was clear to him that if Han Li hadn't held back during their clash, then he would've already been dead by now.

In contrast with everyone else, Liu Le'er's eyes were filled with excitement, and she wasn't surprised in the slightest. In her eyes, her Brother Rock was the epitome of invincibility, so this display of power was only to be expected for her.

"It's been a very long time since I've dealt with such a low-grade treasure," Han Li said as he took an indifferent glance at the bone blade in his hand, then abruptly closed his fingers around it.

The bone blade was instantly crushed in his grasp with a dull thump, scattering onto the ground as specks of gray light.

"No!"

The young man's face instantly paled, and he threw up a mouthful of blood.

That blade was his bonded treasure, and for him, its destruction was akin to having an arm chopped.

"I'm going to make you pay with your life for destroying my treasure!"

A look of vicious resentment appeared in the young man's eyes as he made a hand seal and let loose a thunderous roar. Bursts of black qi rose up all around him, forming an inky-black cloud in the blink of an eye, within which were countless indistinct ghostly shadows.

Immediately thereafter, he slammed his palm into his own chest thrice in rapid succession, releasing three mouthfuls of blood essence. With each mouthful of blood essence that was released, his face would pale slightly further, and by the time all three mouthfuls of blood essence had been expelled, he was already looking as pale as a sheet.

The blood essence that was released instantly swelled to form a vast expanse of dense blood mist that fused into the black cloud.

The black cloud instantly turned as red as blood, and it churned violently as it expanded by severalfold. The indistinct ghostly shadows within it also became several times more substantial as they let loose chilling howls.

The young man then stepped forward and vanished into the blood cloud without a trace.

All of this had taken place in the blink of an eye, and in the instant that the blood cloud appeared, the temperature in the entire courtyard plummeted drastically as if the entire area had been plunged into a glacial pit.

Even a cultivator of Daoist Master White Stone's caliber couldn't help but shiver from the cold, and he hurriedly summoned a jade pendant treasure that released a white light barrier to encompass both himself and Liu Le'er, then retreated into the distance.

The black-suited figures in the courtyard and the three elders and surviving members of the Yu Family were all shivering uncontrollably from the freezing cold.

Liu Le'er only felt the biting chill for an instant before the freezing sensation was immediately alleviated by a white light barrier.

She turned to discover that Daoist Master White Stone had arrived by her side, and that the white light barrier had been conjured up by a jade pendant that he had summoned.

At the sight of Liu Le'er's surprised gaze, Daoist Master White Stone immediately flashed her a fawning smile, then retreated to over 100 feet away with her in tow.

A peculiar look appeared on Han Li's face as he cast his gaze toward the blood cloud in the sky, and he suddenly threw a punch in a certain direction.

A faint ghostly shadow was sent flying out of thin air, and it let loose an anguished wail before exploding into a cloud of gray mist.

However, right at this moment, several black chains shot out from beneath Han Li like a nest of vicious spitting vipers, instantly binding his entire body tightly.

Immediately thereafter, a gray-robed man emerged silently nearby with his hands locked in a hand seal. It was none other than the very same gray-robed man who had accompanied the young man back in Farbright City.

The aura that he was giving off was even superior to that of the young man's, and his entire body was encompassed within the black ghostly shadow. It seemed as if the two had fused as one, and his body had also taken on a semi-transparent state, looking as if it could vanish into thin air at any moment.

"You came just in time, Senior Martial Brother Fan! Let's kill this man together!" The young man's chortling voice rang out from within the blood cloud, followed by a burst of chanting.

Gusts of fierce wind were instantly swept up, and the blood cloud surged toward Han Li like a giant wave.

Han Li remained completely expressionless as he stood still on the spot, allowing the blood cloud to devour him in an instant.

The ghostly shadows within the blood cloud all had bloodthirsty looks in their eyes, and they were howling incessantly with their menacing fangs bared, looking as if they wanted to tear Han Li into pieces.

The young man was ecstatic to see this.

These blood souls were all refined using a special secret technique, making them extremely difficult to kill. Anyone who was caught among them would be powerless to escape and worn down until they died.

The gray-robed man was quite surprised that the concealed ghostly entity that he was controlling had been detected by Han Li, but a cruel smile then quickly appeared on his face as he said, "No matter who you are, you're going to pay with your life for opposing our Heavenly Ghost Sect!"

Immediately thereafter, he appeared directly above Han Li in a flash, then thrust his palms downward. Two giant black ghostly claws appeared out of thin air with green light revolving around the tips of the claws, and they were giving off a foul stench, indicating that they were carrying lethal poison.

The two massive claws came swooping down viciously, and Liu Le'er immediately rushed toward Han Li without any regard for her own safety.

Daoist Master White Stone hurriedly pulled her back with an alarmed expression. "Stop! With Senior Han's unfathomable powers, I'm sure he'll have a way to break free!"

Despite what he was saying, he was also feeling rather uneasy. Another powerful enemy had arrived on the scene, this one seemingly even more formidable than the first one, and he didn't know if Han Li would actually be able to hold his own against them.

In the distance, the three elders and surviving members of the Yu Family were all looking on with bated breath, hoping against hope that their unlikely savior would be able to rise to the occasion.

Han Li remained completely unfazed by the situation that he was in, and a string of dull cracks suddenly rang out from within his body. At the same time, he suddenly swelled drastically in size while a layer of golden scales surfaced over his skin.

With a casual shrug of his shoulders, the black chains around him instantly snapped into pieces. He then lashed out with his fists, unleashing a dense wall of golden fist projections that erupted in all directions like a ferocious storm.

As soon as the black ghostly claws came into contact with the golden fist projections, they instantly shattered and disintegrated into nothingness. The gray-robed man was also struck by countless fist projections amid an alarmed cry that was quickly cut short.

The black ghostly shadow around him was immediately destroyed, and he was sent flying like a ragdoll before slamming heavily down onto the ground. By the time he came to a rest, his entire body was nothing more than a gruesome mass of mangled flesh and blood. His body and soul had been instantly destroyed, and he was well and truly dead.

At the same time, the entire blood cloud and all of the ghostly shadows within it were also completely erased by the golden fist projections, forcibly revealing the young man.

At this moment, he was completely rooted to the spot, but in the instant that he met Han Li's icy cold gaze, he immediately shuddered before making a hand seal, upon which a vast black cloud surged out of his body, and he sped away into the distance as quickly as he could.

Han Li's eyes narrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he took a deep breath before exhaling sharply.

A burst of white light shot out of his mouth, piercing into the black cloud in a flash.

A blood-curdling cry rang out, and the black cloud abruptly disintegrated, following which the young man fell out of the sky, having had a hole punched through his head.

Complete silence descended upon the entire courtyard.

"He's a sword cultivator!" someone exclaimed in a feeble voice.

Chapter 18: Request

No more than three seconds had passed from the moment that the gray-robed man appeared to the instant that Han Li slew both of his assailants.

Two seemingly invincible Core Formation cultivators had fallen in what seemed like the blink of an eye, and everyone in the courtyard, including the black-suited figures and everyone from the Yu Family, was completely flabbergasted.

What was particularly astonishing to them was the burst of white light that Han Li had blasted out of his mouth. It was far too fast to be traced with the naked eye, and it had slain the young man in an instant, even though he had already fled far from the scene.

In addition to that, the assertion that Han Li was a "sword cultivator" had all of the black-suited figures completely petrified, and they didn't dare to stay any longer as they summoned their magic tools and frantically attempted to flee the scene.

In the Spirit Domain Realm, sword cultivators were able to easily crush other cultivators of the same caliber. In addition to that, flying swords were extremely fast and could kill in an instant, so if they didn't get away now, it would be too late.

Spiritual light of all different colors appeared in the courtyard in rapid succession as around a dozen flying treasures rose up into the air at once before fleeing in different directions.

Han Li didn't even bother to take a glance at those people. Instead, he cast his gaze toward the young man's body, and he raised an eyebrow as a contemplative look appeared on his face.

All of the surviving members of the Yu Family exchanged a series of bewildered glances, and no one dared to say anything. As for the three elders, they didn't even dare to breathe too loudly for fear of attracting Han Li's attention.

Meanwhile, Daoist Master White Stone stole a glance at Han Li, and after a brief hesitation, he suddenly swept his right hand toward one of the fleeing black-suited cultivators.

His sleeve bulged slightly, following which a long golden rope shot out like a viper springing out of its cave, then ensnared something in mid-air before rapidly flying back.

A thin black-suited cultivator was dragged back out of mid-air by the golden rope, and he was completely bound as he slammed onto the ground in front of Han Li.

The black-suited cultivator paid no heed to the pain from falling from such a height as he immediately implored, "S... Spare me..."

Han Li ignored the black-suited cultivator before him as he turned to Daoist Master White Stone before asking, "Do you know of this Heavenly Ghost Sect?"

Daoist Master White Stone took a glance at Yu Qi, then carefully answered, "The Heavenly Ghost Sect and the Cold Flame Sect are both considered to be among the most powerful sects in the Spirit Domain Realm."

Han Li nodded in response, then turned to the black-suited man. "How many people did the Heavenly Ghost Sect send to Farbright City?"

The black-suited cultivator struggled into a sitting position as he hurriedly replied, "According to my knowledge, it's only the people that were sent to the Yu Manor today."

As soon as his voice trailed off, he felt a bone-chilling sensation run through his entire body, as if he had been plunged into a glacial pit.

The tall and imposing young man before him was suddenly looking at him with an incredibly cold gaze. His inky-black pupils seemed to have suddenly become infinitely massive, transforming into a pair of bottomless black vortexes, and if he dared to even consider the idea of telling a lie, he would immediately be sucked in.

This feeling only lasted for an instant before fading, but it still made all of the fine hairs all over his entire body stand up on end, and his back was completely drenched in cold sweat.

The black-suited cultivator wanted to kneel down and kowtow to Han Li, but he was unable to do so as he was bound by the golden rope, so he could only

lower his head as a gesture of submission. "You have to believe me, Senior! I'm telling the truth!"

"We are only outer court disciples of the sect who were ordered to come on this mission to the prime minister's manor. As for whether there are other disciples of our sect in the city, that is something I truly do not know!"

"Whose orders are you following? His orders?" Han Li asked as he pointed at the body of the young man not far away.

"Yes. His name was Qi Minghao, and he was an inner court disciple of our sect. He possessed exceptional cultivation aptitude, so he was held in very high regard in our sect. On top of that, one of his granduncles is an elder of our sect, and that further strengthened his standings, so we didn't dare to refuse his orders.

"If we had known that the Yu Manor was under your protection, we would've never dared to set foot here!" the black-suited cultivator said in a pitiable voice.

At this point, Yu Qi had already made her way over to the black-suited figure, and there were tears swimming in her eyes as she asked, "Was Yu Minghao telling the truth? Are my father and brothers..."

"Outer court disciples like myself had no right to participate in what happened in the capital city, but according to what I've heard, the situation is much the same as what Yu Minghao described," the black-suited cultivator replied in a fearful manner.

Yu Qi closed her eyes upon hearing this, and tears quickly flowed down her cheeks.

Another burst of sobbing rang out from the women and children among the Yu Family's survivors.

A moment later, Yu Qi reopened her eyes before asking with a pained expression, "If your Heavenly Ghost Sect has already taken over the Prosperous Nation, then just seize control over the existing imperial family. Why do you insist on wiping out our Yu Family?"

"This is an established practice in our sect. In order to gain complete control over the Prosperous Nation, the imperial family tied to the Cold Flame Sect

and all of the families of the officials that served the past imperial family are to be killed, and the Yu Family falls under this category."

All of a sudden, a thought seemed to have occurred to the black-suited cultivator, and his voice began to tremble with fear as he continued, "Please forgive me for going off on a tangent, but Elder Qi of our sect is renowned for being protective of his juniors, so he's definitely going to come after all those involved in the death of his grandnephew. Even the outer court disciples like myself who accompanied him on this mission are sure to be killed."

All of the survivors of the Yu Family were horrified to hear this, and the expressions of the three elders also became extremely grim.

At this point, the graceful and regal facade of the Yu Family's second young master had been completely torn away, and his face was smeared with tears, dirt, and blood as he implored in a sobbing voice, "We can't afford to waste any more time here, Sister. We have to leave this place right away! You have a master at the Cold Flame Sect, don't you? Let's go to her, I'm sure she'll take us in."

Yu Qi paid no heed to him as she raised a hand before wiping her tears dry with her sleeve. She then made her way over to Han Li, Liu Le'er, and Daoist Master White Stone before extending a respectful bow. "Thank you for saving our lives."

Han Li offered no response and accepted her gesture of gratitude.

Daoist Master White Stone also remained silent, merely nodding in response.

"Sister Qi..." Liu Le'er's family had also perished under terrible circumstances, so she could empathize with Yu Qi. She wanted to say something to console her, but she didn't know what to say, so her voice trailed off into silence.

Yu Qi gave her a slight nod and forced a faint smile onto her own face.

After that, the grief and dejection in her eyes gradually faded, and a resilient and unyielding look appeared on her face. Even though she was still in her female attire, it was as if she had turned from the young mistress of the Yu Family to the young master that she occasionally posed as.

She picked up the dagger that had been knocked out of her hand earlier by Han Li, then plunged it viciously toward the black-suited cultivator's chest in a flash.

"No! Spare me..."

A blood-curdling howl rang out as the dagger was buried all the way up to its hilt.

The black-suited cultivator collapsed into a puddle of his own blood and spasmed a few times before falling still.

The survivors of the Yu Family couldn't help but exchange a few uneasy glances upon seeing this.

At this point, only around a dozen members of the Yu Family still remained, and Yu Qi turned to them with a determined expression as she declared, "The Yu Manor has fallen. Even with the Cold Flame Sect as our backer, we won't be able to recover from this anytime soon. All members of our Yu Family are to come with me to the Cold Flame Sect. As for everyone else, if you no longer wish to follow me, you can take some money from the storeroom and leave."

The surviving members of the Yu Family were horrified and at a complete loss for what to do, but with Yu Qi taking control of the situation, they gradually calmed down, and the sobbing coming from the women and children slowly subsided.

Han Li was quite impressed by this, and he turned to Yu Qi with a hint of approval in his eyes.

Yu Qi then cast her gaze toward the three elders and continued, "Elders, you have risked your lives to protect us, and words cannot express my gratitude. If you wish to leave, you can each choose a few of the treasures in our manor to take with you. However, if you're willing to continue protecting us on our journey to the Cold Flame Sect, then I'll be sure to offer your further compensation in the future."

The three elders exchanged a few hesitant glances upon hearing this, and all of them seemed to be waiting for Han Li and Daoist Master White Stone to make their decisions first.

Yu Qi took a glance at Han Li, and she immediately understood what the three elders were thinking. With that in mind, she immediately strode over to Han Li before extending a curtsy.

"Brother Liu, I know next to nothing about you, but it's clear to me that your powers are beyond what I can fathom. Normal treasures will most likely completely fail to appeal to you, so the only thing that I can offer you is a Wyrms Essence Bead that has been passed down in our family for generations.

"I'm willing to offer the treasure to you as compensation if you accompany us to the Cold Flame Sect," Yu Qi said as she looked straight into Han Li's eyes with an earnest expression.

A hint of greed appeared in Daoist Master White Stone's eyes upon hearing mention of a Wyrms Essence Bead, but he then took a glance at Han Li out of the corners of his eyes, and any sneaky thoughts in his mind immediately disappeared.

"Have you gone insane, Sister? How could you offer him our Wyrms Essence Bead?" the second young master of the Yu Family exclaimed in an alarmed voice.

Yu Qi didn't even bother to take a glance at her brother as she continued to look directly at Han Li. "The Yu Manor is already gone, what is a mere Wyrms Essence bead in comparison? If you're willing to accept my offer, I can bring you the treasure from our secret vault right away. What do you say, Brother Liu?"

Chapter 19: Grandnephew of A Deity Transformation Cultivator

"Wyrms Essence Beads are capable of helping Core Formation cultivators break through cultivation bottlenecks, so this is indeed quite a remarkable treasure, but I have no need for such a thing, so I'm afraid I must refuse," Han Li replied with a shake of his head.

Yu Qi's expression changed slightly upon hearing this, but she still wasn't willing to give up. "If you have any other demands, feel free to state them. As long as it's not something completely out of my reach, I'll do everything in my power to fulfill your request."

"I do owe you a favor for helping me awaken from my prior state, but I just prevented your suicide and killed those two Core Formation cultivators of the Heavenly Ghost Sect for you, so surely I've already done enough to return the favor.

"Under normal circumstances, perhaps I would be willing to accompany you, but I've only just awakened and have my own problems to take care of, so I'm afraid I won't have the time to spare to accompany you on a journey to the Cold Flame Sect," Han Li replied.

Yu Qi was distraught to hear this, but she was still holding onto one final shred of hope as she turned to Liu Le'er with an imploring gaze.

Liu Le'er couldn't bear to see her look so dejected, and she tugged on Han Li's sleeve with a hesitant expression.

Han Li was naturally aware of what she was thinking, and he gently patted her head, then cast his gaze toward a certain direction outside the courtyard as he said in a calm voice, "Rest assured, even if you don't have me in accompaniment, there will be others to protect you on your journey to the Cold Flame Sect."

Yu Qi faltered slightly upon hearing this, clearly failing to understand what Han Li was alluding to.

Right at this moment, several figures appeared in the distance.

Yu Qi and the other survivors of the Yu Family were all quite alarmed by this, and they immediately turned toward that direction. Daoist Master White Stone and the three elders had also summoned their magic tools again.

Shortly thereafter, several objects flew through the air, having been tossed into the courtyard from outside before landing on the ground. The objects rolled around briefly before coming to a rest, revealing themselves to be a cluster of human heads.

The heads belonged to the black-suited figures who had fled the scene earlier, and their faces were all twisted with shock and horror.

Everyone was given quite a fright by this, and Liu Le'er reflexively tightened her grip on Han Li's sleeve.

However, Han Li's expression remained as calm as ever as he cast his gaze toward a certain direction.

There, a white figure abruptly emerged amid a flash of white light, then drifted down into the courtyard with her clothes flapping around her.

It was a tall woman dressed in white who appeared to be in her thirties, and it was clear to see that she would've been a stunning beauty a decade ago. She was holding a black longsword, and was giving off a sharp and dangerous aura that was rarely seen in women.

"Master!" Yu Qi called out in an elated voice before rushing over to the woman.

"I'm so glad that you're safe, Menghan." The woman latched onto Yu Qi's hand as she gently stroked her hair, and her expression eased slightly as a doting look appeared in her eyes.

Yu Qi's reaction to the woman's arrival made it clear that she was not an enemy, and all of the surviving members of the Yu Family heaved a collective sigh of relief.

At the same time, Daoist Master White Stone and the three elders spotted a small flame pattern embroidered onto the woman's sleeves, a pattern that was identical to the one emblazoned on the badge that Yu Qi had brought out earlier, and respectful looks immediately appeared on their faces.

Liu Le'er seemed to be rather fearful of the woman, and she ducked behind Han Li as she clutched tightly onto his sleeve.

Han Li knew what she was concerned about, and he consoled in a gentle voice, "Don't worry, I'm here."

Liu Le'er was very much reassured by this, and she nodded in response.

"Why are you here, Master?" Yu Menghan asked as she fought back the tears in her eyes.

"I received news that the Heavenly Ghost Sect was going to attack the Yu Manor, so I immediately traveled here from the sect, but I was intercepted by the Heavenly Ghost Sect on the way, so I was delayed. Thank heavens I'm not too late," the woman said in a doting manner.

Yu Menghan led her master over to Han Li and the others before introducing everyone, putting special emphasis on her introduction of Han Li. "It's all thanks to our elders and Brother Liu here that we were able to survive. Everyone, this is my master. Master, these four are the elders of our Yu Manor, and this is Liu Shi. He took down two of the Heavenly Ghost Sect's Core Formation cultivators and played a pivotal role in saving us all."

Daoist Master White Stone and the elders hurriedly extended respectful salutes toward the woman.

Han Li didn't bother with such formalities, and he smiled as he turned to Yu Menghan. "I haven't had a chance to tell you this yet, but my name is actually Han Li. Liu Shi is just a moniker that I adopted."

Yu Menghan faltered slightly upon hearing this, then replied with a smile, "I see."

"I am Gu Yunyue of the Cold Flame Sect. Thank you for saving my disciple's life, Fellow Daoist Han. May I ask which sect you belong to?" the woman asked with an indifferent expression as she directed a sharp gaze toward Han Li and the others.

In the face of her probing gaze, Daoist Master White Stone and the others felt as if their skin were being pricked by sharp needles, and that only heightened the awe and veneration they felt toward the woman.

Gu Yunyue's gaze only roamed over the likes of Daoist Master White Stone and Liu Le'er for a brief moment before settling on Han Li, and the indifferent look on her face was instantly replaced with a hint of wariness.

Han Li's aura was extremely indistinct, and she was unable to see through him even with her spiritual sense, something that she found to be rather concerning.

"I don't belong to any sect, I'm just a vagrant cultivator. I only stepped in because I was indebted to Young Mistress Yu, and I was only repaying my debt," Han Li replied with a calm expression.

With his powerful spiritual sense, he was naturally able to see through the woman in an instant, and he discovered that she was a mid-Nascent Soul cultivator.

"I see..." Gu Yunyue was rather surprised to hear this.

The fact that he was able to kill two Core Formation cultivators clearly indicated that he was quite a powerful cultivator himself, but there were very few cultivators at or above the Nascent Soul Stage among vagrant cultivators.

Gu Yunyue could see that Han Li was unwilling to divulge any further information, so she gave him a nod, then turned back to Yu Menghan. "The Prosperous Nation belongs to the Heavenly Ghost Sect now, so we can't linger here. We have to leave right away."

The survivors of the Yu Family were eager to get away from here, and they were all ecstatic to hear this.

"Hold on a moment, Master, I have something to show you," Yu Menghan suddenly said, then led Gu Yunyue over to the body of Qi Minghao.

"That's Qi Minghao! Why is he here?" Gu Yunyue asked with a surprised expression.

Yu Menghan's heart jolted slightly at the sight of Gu Yunyue's reaction, and she asked, "So you recognize him as well, Master. Is his granduncle really an elder of the Heavenly Ghost Sect?"

"That's right. His granduncle, Qi Xuan, is an elder of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, and he's already at the Deity Transformation Stage. On top of that, he's extremely protective of his juniors, and if he finds out that his grandnephew has been killed, he definitely won't let things slide," Gu Yunyue said.

Yu Menghan's expression changed drastically upon hearing this, and Daoist Master White Stone and the others were also horrified.

Deity Transformation cultivators transcended above even Nascent Soul cultivators, and a cultivator of that caliber could easily erase them out of existence without even raising a finger.

"Who killed Qi Minghao?" Gu Yunyue asked, and her gaze was already wandering toward Han Li.

Meanwhile, Han Li casually made his way over to the body of the gray-robed man before picking up a storage bag and examining its contents as if he didn't have a care in the world.

"It was indeed Brother Han who killed this man," Yu Menghan confirmed.

A grim look appeared on Gu Yunyue's face upon hearing this.

"Master, will Qi Xuan try to personally avenge his grandnephew?" Yu Menghan asked in an uneasy manner.

Gu Yunyue considered the question momentarily, then shook her head in response. "Qi Xuan holds a very lofty position in the Heavenly Ghost Sect, and he has many descendants, so he most likely won't leave the sect just over the death of a grandnephew. At the very most, he'll only send some disciples of the Heavenly Ghost Sect to investigate this matter."

Yu Menghan's expression eased slightly upon hearing this.

"Even so, we can't afford to get complacent. Menghan, you and I need to set off right away and ensure that we return to the Cold Flame Sect before the people sent by Qi Xuan arrive," Gu Yunyue continued in a grim voice.

Yu Menghan's expression changed slightly upon hearing this. Judging from what Gu Yunyue had just said, it sounded like she was only planning to take Yu Menghan with her and no one else.

"Master, can my family also come to the Cold Flame Sect with me?"

All of the survivors of the Yu Family turned to Gu Yunyue upon hearing this, and Daoist Master White Stone and the other elders also turned to her with hopeful expressions.

If they could take advantage of this opportunity to join the Cold Flame Sect, even if they could only be outer court disciples, it would still be far better than being vagrant cultivators, particularly given that they had already made an enemy out of the Heavenly Ghost Sect.

Chapter 20: Invitation

"No. Our Cold Flame Sect can't just take in a bunch of mortals. Your family can escape to the Creek Nation under the protection of the elders for refuge for now," Gu Yunyue said with a shake of her head.

The Creek Nation was situated to the northeast of the Prosperous Nation, and at the moment, it still belonged to the Cold Flame Sect.

The elders of the Yu Manor were quite disappointed to hear this, but they didn't dare to contest Gu Yunyue's decision.

The survivors of the Yu Family were very much alarmed by this turn of events, and they all turned to Yu Menghan with imploring looks in their eyes.

"We'll all be screwed if the Heavenly Ghost Sect hunts us down! You can't just abandon us now that you've managed to join an immortal sect..." the second young master of the Yu Family yelled in a panicked voice.

"Shut up!" Yu Menghan scolded with a stern expression.

The second young master shuddered, and he didn't dare to say anything further.

Even though Yu Menghan was putting on a stern display, she was also quite concerned about the safety of her family, and she turned to Gu Yunyue before asking, "Master, will it really be alright to send them to the Creek Nation? Surely it won't be very difficult for the Heavenly Ghost Sect to track them down."

"Rest assured, Menghan. According to the rules of the Spirit Domain Realm, as long as you can officially become an inner court disciple of the Cold Flame Sect, the Heavenly Ghost Sect will be prohibited from attacking your family. Otherwise, they'll be committing what's considered to be a cardinal sin in this realm.

"If they dare to hunt down your family, then once you become an established cultivator, you'll also have an excuse to attack the families of the Heavenly Ghost Sect's disciples. They attacked the Yu Manor because they didn't know that you had an acceptance badge from our sect.

"Now that I've made an official appearance, things are completely different. The most important thing now is to get you to the Cold Flame Sect safe and sound," Gu Yunyue said with a serious expression.

Yu Menghan was quite relieved to hear this, and everyone else from the Yu Family was also put at ease.

"Elders, I'll be counting on you to look after my family. Once I become an established cultivator in the future, I'll be sure to reward you handsomely," Yu

Menghan said as she extended a curtsy toward Daoist Master White Stone and the other three elders.

"You're far too kind, Young Mistress. As elders of the Yu Manor, we've always been treated very well by Prime Minister Yu and yourself. Now that Yu Manor has gone through such a tragic catastrophe, it is our duty to protect your family," the elders hurriedly replied, vowing to protect the survivors of the Yu Family.

Even though they couldn't join the Cold Flame Sect, it would benefit them immensely to establish close ties with Yu Menghan, who was on track to become an inner court disciple of the Cold Flame Sect.

However, a reluctant look appeared on Daoist Master White Stone's face, and he stole a glance at Han Li.

Han Li was in the process of examining the storage bag in his hands, and he turned to Daoist Master White Stone with a hint of a smile on his face as he said, "Fellow Daoist White Stone, given how long you've been serving the Yu Manor, it should only be right that you accompany them on this trip as well."

Only then did Daoist Master White Stone force a smile onto his face and accept this arrangement.

Yu Menghan pretended not to have seen this exchange, and she extended another curtsy toward the elders. "You have my utmost gratitude."

Thus, with everything decided, the survivors of the Yu Family immediately began to prepare for the upcoming journey, gathering all of the treasures and valuable items in the manor.

Meanwhile, Han Li casually pocketed the storage bag in his hands, then made his way over to Qi Minghao's body before taking his storage bag as well.

As for the belongings of the black-suited cultivators, he couldn't even be bothered to pick them up.

Daoist Master White Stone and the others were ecstatic to see this, and they hurriedly gathered the scattered belongings of the black-suited cultivators.

"What are your plans for the future, Fellow Daoist Han?" Gu Yunyue asked as she approached him.

"It's a complete accident that I even came to Farbright City in the first place. Now that I've made an enemy out of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, I'll naturally have to get far away from here," Han Li replied in an indifferent voice.

"Not only have you gotten yourself involved in all of this, you've slain Qi Minghao as well, so I'm afraid it may not be a simple matter for you to get away. Given the power and reach of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, I'm sure they'll find out about you very soon," Gu Yunyue said.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged as he asked, "What are you trying to say, Celestial Maiden Gu?" magic

"If you're not opposed to the idea, how about you join our Cold Flame Sect? Our sect has always welcomed powerful vagrant cultivators. Given how you were able to slay those Core Formation cultivators so easily, you must possess Nascent Soul Stage power yourself, so it's not out of the question for you to become a guest elder of our sect. I would be honored to refer you to our sect's leaders," Gu Yunyue said.

Yu Menghan's eyes lit up at the proposal, and she chimed in, "Master's right. If you can join our Cold Flame Sect, I'm sure Sister Le'er will also benefit immensely."

Han Li turned to Liu Le'er, and a contemplative look appeared on his face.

Liu Le'er looked back at him with a pair of wide and innocent eyes, seemingly unsure of exactly what was happening.

"If I'm not mistaken, your aura seems to be rather unstable, which indicates that you're carrying some sort of injury, Fellow Daoist Han. I just so happen to have a Sharp Watch Pill with me, a vastly renowned healing medicine in the Spirit Domain Realm," Gu Yunyue continued in a meaningful voice.

Given that two of the Heavenly Ghost Sect's Core Formation cultivators had been slain here, one of which was the descendant of a Deity Transformation cultivator, there was a very good chance that they would be intercepted by powerful foes from the Heavenly Ghost Sect on the way back to the Cold Flame Sect.

Han Li was a complete mystery to her, but she was certain that he would be a strong ally if he were willing to accompany them.

Han Li stroked his chin in contemplation for a moment, then suddenly turned to Liu Le'er. "What do you say, Le'er? Are you willing to come to the Cold Flame Sect with me?"

Given Gu Yunyue's cultivation base, Liu Le'er's identity as a demonic fox was naturally no secret to her.

However, by searching Daoist Master White Stone's soul earlier, Han Li had learned that even though there was some severe segregation that existed between humans and demons in the Spirit Domain Realm, it was quite common to see some powerful cultivators in large sects with demons by their side, so there shouldn't be any issues taking Liu Le'er to the Cold Flame Sect.

Liu Le'er took a glance at Gu Yunyue, then looked at Yu Menghan before replying in a timid voice, "I'll do whatever you say."

"Don't worry, no one will dare to pick on you as long as I'm around," Han Li reassured with a smile as he gently patted her head.

"I know you'll protect me," Liu Le'er replied as a wide smile appeared on her face.

"Then I'll have to trouble you to refer me to your sect, Celestial Maiden Gu. Would you be able to give me the Sharp Watch Pill now?" Han Li asked as he turned to Gu Yunyue.

"Of course!" Gu Yunyue was elated, and she flipped a hand over to produce a white jade vial without any hesitation before handing it over to Han Li.

Han Li accepted the jade vial, then removed the lid before taking a slight whiff and giving a nod.

A faint smile appeared on Gu Yunyue's face upon seeing this.

At this point, the survivors of the Yu Family were already done packing, and aside from all of the manor's valuable items, they had also brought out several horse-drawn carriages.

Daoist Master White Stone and the others also made their way over to Han Li.

"Senior Han, I..." Daoist Master White Stone seemed to want to say something, but was rather hesitant about how to proceed.

"Just focus on protecting the Yu Family, and don't worry about anything else. Also, I have something that I need you to do for me..." Han Li's voice trailed off here, but his lips were still moving, and he communicated something to Daoist Master White Stone through voice transmission.

Daoist Master White Stone faltered slightly upon hearing what Han Li had to say, then nodded in response.

Meanwhile, Yu Menghan made her way over to Gu Yunyue's side, then said, "Master, the city gates have all been locked, so I'll have to trouble you to take them out of the city."

Gu Yunyue nodded in response, then swept a sleeve through the air to conjure up a large cloud of white mist that carried everyone into the sky.

The survivors of the Yu Family had never experienced something so ethereal, and they hurriedly grabbed onto the carriages beside them, while some of them cried out in surprise and alarm.

The white cloud flew out of the city in the blink of an eye, then landed gently on the official road outside the city.

"Mother, Auntie..." Even though Yu Menghan was already prepared for this separation, she was still overcome by emotions and embraced her family tightly.

Her mother and her other close relatives also had tears in their eyes as they told Yu Menghan to look after herself.

Only after a long while did they reluctantly part with one another.

Under the protection of the four elders, the survivors of the Yu Family headed east, and they quickly disappeared into the night.

Yu Menghan looked on with a blank expression as her family faded into the distance, and only after a long while did she withdraw her gaze.

After giving Yu Menghan a moment to collect herself, Gu Yunyue swept a hand through the air to summon a white spirit ark. "We need to set off as well."

The spirit ark was around 40 to 50 feet in length, and it had a rather interesting design, with a body that resembled a crescent moon. Its surface was riddled with azure spirit patterns that were giving off faint spiritual power fluctuations, and it was clearly no ordinary ark.

Han Li held onto Liu Le'er's hand as he stepped onto the spirit ark, and Yu Menghan took a deep breath before also following suit.

Gu Yunyue released an incantation seal onto the spirit ark, and it immediately began to glow with white spiritual light before rising up into the air and flying away into the distance as a streak of white light.