

A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality: Immortal Realm #Chapter 21: Nascent Soul Transformation - Read A Record of a Mortal's Journey to Immortality: Immortal Realm Chapter 21: Nascent Soul Transformation

Chapter 21: Nascent Soul Transformation

Inside the spirit ark, Han Li was seated with his legs crossed and his eyes closed with his back leaning against a wall, while Liu Le'er was seated obediently beside him, inspecting her surroundings with an intrigued expression while also occasionally taking glances at the rapidly receding scenery outside.

Gu Yunyue was standing outside, controlling the spirit ark while also speaking with Yu Menghan in a low voice.

After an indeterminate period of time, Han Li gently exhaled as he slowly opened his eyes, and his expression was rather grim.

Following his awakening, he discovered that he was no longer able to absorb the world's origin qi into his body, so it was impossible for him to recover his meditation through cultivation. He had only recently awakened, and he was stunned by the revelation of his memory loss, so he didn't get a chance to examine this matter.

He had just attempted to absorb the world's origin qi, and he discovered that it was still to no avail.

After a moment of contemplation, Han Li flipped a hand over to produce a white jade vial, and as soon as it was opened, he was immediately greeted by an extremely rich medicinal scent that struck him with a sense of reinvigoration.

He tipped out an azure pill from the vial, holding it up to his eye between two of his fingers for closer examination.

"So this is a Sharp Watch Pill. I hope it'll actually do something," Han Li murmured to himself, then swallowed the pill before closing his eyes to meditate.

Liu Le'er knew that Han Li wasn't to be interrupted during this process. She could see that Yu Menghan had already finished her conversation with Gu Yunyue and was making her way toward her, so she stood up and made her way over to another corner of the ark before taking a seat to speak with Yu Menghan.

Moments later, the pill gradually began to take effect, and Han Li's eyebrows suddenly twitched slightly as a gentle surge of warmth slowly emerged from his dantian, then made its way throughout his body along his meridians.

After circulating the energy throughout his body once, he immediately felt far more comfortable, and the sense of emptiness in his body was also beginning to fade. At the same time, a slight hint of magic power was generated in his dantian, and even though it was only a tiny amount, it was still a very encouraging turn of events.

Han Li slowly opened his eyes as he examined what was taking place inside his body, then flipped a hand over to produce around a dozen more pills.

Aside from the ones that he had taken from Daoist Master White Stone, there were also some pills that had been left behind by Qi Minghao and the gray-robed man. Almost all of them had the effect of treating injuries and recovering magic power, but there was a great variance in the quality of the pills, most of them were far inferior to that Sharp Watch Pill.

Han Li picked up one of the pills before swallowing it, then slowly closed his eyes again.

However, moments later, his eyes suddenly sprang open, and a perplexed look appeared on his face. He then picked up another pill before swallowing it as well.

Once again, he reopened his eyes only a brief moment later with a rather uncertain gaze.

The two pills that he had just taken had failed to produce any effect. He was unable to sense any changes taking place in his body, nor was he able to generate any more magic power.

A grim look appeared on his face as he swallowed the pills in his hand one after another.

Soon, all that was left was a thumb-sized pill of a dark golden color.

This was a pill of quite a high caliber, comparable to the Sharp Watch Pill, and it was presumably the pill that Qi Minghao had been reserving for life-threatening situations.

Han Li took an expressionless glance at the pill, then tossed it into his own mouth.

This time, he wasn't disappointed. The golden pill quickly took effect after being devoured, transforming into a wisp of spiritual power that flowed into his dantian, increasing his magic power slightly once again.

Only then did Han Li's expression ease slightly.

As long as his body was still receptive to pills, it wouldn't be a difficult task for him to recover his magic power. As for why the other pills hadn't yielded any effect, that was most likely because they were of too low a caliber to make any difference in his body.

Right at this moment, a voice suddenly rang out in his head.

"Congratulations, Fellow Daoist Han. It looks like there's hope yet for you to recover your magic power."

"It hardly matters if I can't produce any magic power of my own," Han Li replied with his spiritual sense.

"It's still better than nothing. With each shred of magic power that you recover, you and I will be closer to returning to the Immortal Realm," Mo Guang said.

"That's true, but I'm afraid it's most likely not going to be so easy," Han Li replied.

"If pills work, then what about spirit stones?" Mo Guang asked.

"I was just about to try that," Han Li replied with a smile.

He flipped a hand over to produce several azure spirit stones of different sizes, and as he closed his hands around them, they immediately began to give off azure light.

Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan couldn't help but have their attention drawn to the azure light that had suddenly appeared in Han Li's direction, while Gu Yunyue displayed no reaction as she stood at the front of the ark.

Azure spiritual power began to slowly flow from the spirit stones, but after circling over Han Li's palms for some time, the spiritual power suddenly became murky and indistinct.

Moments later, the azure light gradually dissipated, vanishing into thin air.

Han Li released the spirit stones, which had become completely dull and devoid of luster, and he fell into deep thought with a perplexed look on his face.

"What's going on? It appears you're unable to absorb power from spirit stones, either." Mo Guang's voice rang out in his mind again.

Han Li was silent for a moment before replying, "Perhaps just like those pills, these spirit stones are of too low a quality and don't contain sufficiently pure spiritual power to be converted into magic power in my body."

Mo Guang was silent for a moment, then said, "In that case, you should be able to return to your former peak as long as you have sufficient high-grade pills and top-grade spirit stones."

Han Li heaved a long sigh, then replied in a rather frustrated manner, "It's not that simple. It's still yet to be seen whether top-grade spirit stones will even be effective for me. Thankfully, my body and spiritual sense foundation are decently stable, so even if I'm unable to absorb the world's origin qi, I'll still be able to recover slowly on my own."

"You're far too modest, Fellow Daoist Han. If the foundation of your body and spiritual sense can only be considered to be decently stable, then no one would be able to claim to have a strong foundation. Seeing as we've already identified a way forward, I can only wish you luck in your recovery," Mo Guang said before falling silent.

Han Li heaved another faint sigh. None of the storage bags that he had picked up contained any top-grade spirit stones. Otherwise, he would've tested them out right away.

He carefully examined the magic power in his body to find that it was only equivalent to what would be found in a mid-Nascent Soul cultivator. If he wanted to continue to make improvements in this area, he would either need to regain the ability to absorb the world's origin qi or take high-grade pills for magic power recovery.

With that in mind, Han Li's brows furrowed slightly, and he directed his spiritual sense deep into his own dantian to examine his internal condition.

His entire dantian seemed to be enshrouded within a boundless cloud of mist, and there was a layer of faint golden light at the heart of the mist, resembling a yellow lantern in the night.

Han Li projected his spiritual sense into the mist, upon which he saw a miniature golden figure that was glowing brightly. The figure was seated in the mist, and it was completely identical to Han Li in appearance. It was none other than his nascent soul.

The nascent soul wore a calm expression, and its eyes closed while its arms were hanging by its sides, seemingly in a state of slumber.

His inability to absorb the world's origin qi had to have something to do with the state of his nascent soul. Back when he first awakened, he had used his spiritual sense to examine his nascent soul, only to find that his spiritual sense was unable to enter his nascent soul, nor was he able to rouse it from its slumber.

If it weren't for the fact that there was still a faint spiritual connection between himself and the nascent soul, he would almost be led to believe that it didn't even belong to him.

A catalog of secret techniques flashed through Han Li's mind, and in the end, he made a hand seal, upon which the magic power that had just been generated in his dantian converged before forming a faint silver rune, which slowly drifted toward the nascent soul's body.

A string of dull thumps rang out, and as soon as the silver rune made contact with the nascent soul's skin, it immediately disintegrated into bursts of silver light.

Han Li's expression darkened slightly upon seeing this, but he wasn't too surprised. He immediately switched to a different secret technique,

summoning a series of white threads of light that slowly converged toward the nascent soul from all directions.

Several hours later, Han Li's eyes sprang wide open, and he had to take a sharp breath to swallow back the blood that was threatening to gush out of his throat.

Just now, he had used his Spirit Refinement Technique [1] to try and forcibly inject his spiritual sense into his nascent soul, but a burst of terrifying power had suddenly emerged from the nascent soul, repelling his spiritual sense and magic power, thereby resulting in secret technique backlash.

Thankfully, his physical body and spiritual sense were sufficiently powerful for him to survive the ordeal. If an ordinary cultivator had been in his place, there was a very good chance that they would've been reduced to a true imbecile by the spiritual sense backlash.magic

After that series of experimentation, Han Li had used up some of the magic power that he had regained, almost dropping back down to the early-Nascent Soul Stage, and that was rather disheartening for him.

1. Refer to Chapter 1740 of RMJI for information on the Spirit Refinement Technique. 📖

Chapter 22: Windcloud Duomagic

While Han Li was pondering possible solutions to his problems, Gu Yunyue was able to sense Han Li's magic power fluctuations, which he was unable to conceal due to the secret technique backlash that he had suffered earlier, and her heart jolted slightly at the discovery.

"So he's at the mid-Nascent Soul Stage!" she murmured to herself, and after a brief hesitation, she turned and approached Han Li.

Han Li temporarily set aside his train of thought upon seeing this and rose to his feet.

"It seems like the Sharp Watch Pill was effective for you. With that, I presume you've at least mostly recovered from your injuries," Gu Yunyue said with a warm expression.

"Indeed. You have my gratitude, Fellow Daoist," Han Li replied.

"You're more than welcome, Fellow Daoist Han. Once you join our sect, you'll receive additional spirit pills as well," Gu Yunyue said.

She seemed to be quite eager to win over Han Li, as evidenced by the fact that she was initiating a constant stream of conversation in an attempt to get on friendlier terms with Han Li.

Through their conversation, Han Li was able to learn quite a bit about the Spirit Domain Realm.

His understanding of this realm was still only limited to the knowledge of Daoist Master White Stone, who was only a Core Formation cultivator, so he was naturally receiving different information and insights from a Nascent Soul cultivator like Gu Yunyue.

All of the questions that Gu Yunyue raised about Han Li's past were met with rather ambiguous responses, and Gu Yunyue quickly refrained from asking such questions as it was clear to her that Han Li didn't wish to share too much about himself.

"By the way, would you be willing to tell me about the Cold Flame Sect, Fellow Daoist Gu? My current knowledge of the sect is only limited to some rumors that I've heard," Han Li suddenly said.

Gu Yunyue was rather taken aback by this question, but she immediately replied, "Even if you hadn't asked me, I would've gotten to this topic sooner or later. Our Cold Flame Sect is a renowned sect of the Spirit Domain Realm. Up to this point, its history has spanned in excess of 1,000,000 years, and there are hundreds of thousands of disciples in our sect.

"Setting aside all of the Core Formation and Nascent Soul Stage disciples, we have dozens of Deity Transformation and Spatial Tempering Stage elders, three Body Integration Stage powerful beings, and a Grand Ascension Stage patriarch."

A proud look appeared on Gu Yunyue's face as she spoke about her sect, and Han Li's heart stirred slightly after hearing her description.

The Cold Flame Sect was indeed a very powerful sect. With a Grand Ascension Stage patriarch, the sect was comparable in power to a major race in the Spirit Realm.

"Furthermore, the founder of our sect, Patriarch Cold Flame, ascended to the Immortal Realm over 1,000,000 years ago, and even to this day, our sect is still able to communicate with our immortal founder through special means.

"He would occasionally bestow upon us some spirit pills and cultivation arts from the Immortal Realm, thereby giving us an even greater advantage over other sects. You're definitely making a wise decision by joining our sect, Fellow Daoist Han," Gu Yunyue said with a smile.

Han Li's expression finally changed slightly upon hearing this.

It came as quite a surprise to him that the Cold Flame Sect had a backer in the Immortal Realm, and that the sect's founder was still able to communicate with them even after his ascension.

He had never heard of anything like this back in the Spirit Realm, so it appeared that things in the Spirit Domain Realm were truly vastly different from the circumstances in the Spirit Realm.

A pleased look appeared on Gu Yunyue's face at the sight of Han Li's reaction, and she fell silent with a faint smile.

"I didn't think that the Cold Flame Sect would be this powerful. No wonder it's such a dominant force in the Spirit Domain Realm. May I ask what the Heavenly Ghost Sect is like?" Han Li asked.

Gu Yunyue's smile faded, and a serious look appeared on her face as she replied, "The Heavenly Ghost Sect is roughly comparable with our Cold Flame Sect, and they also have a founder who has ascended to the Immortal Realm. Aside from our two sects, there's another sect by the name of the Origin Realm Temple, which also has a backer in the Immortal Realm, and those three sects rank alongside one another, standing at the pinnacle of the Spirit Domain Realm."

Han Li stroked his chin in a contemplative silence for a while, then asked, "Theoretically, the sects are ranked alongside one another, but practically speaking, I'm sure there must be a power hierarchy. How do the three sects compare with one another?"

"The three sects are roughly evenly matched in power, but the Heavenly Ghost Sect has a far longer history than our Cold Flame Sect and the Origin Realm Temple. Throughout its history, there have been three cultivators who

have ascended to the Immortal Realm from the Heavenly Ghost Sect, so it's slightly superior in terms of overall power. As for our Cold Flame Sect and the Origin Realm Temple, there's not much that separates us," Gu Yunyue replied.

It seemed that in reality, the Heavenly Ghost Sect was far more powerful than the Cold Flame Sect, but she was unwilling to admit it.

Han Li's eyes narrowed slightly in contemplation, and he became rather interested in the Cold Flame Sect.

Seeing as the Cold Flame Sect was able to communicate with an immortal, it had to possess a great deal of exceptional resources. Perhaps he would be able to find a way to awaken his nascent soul there.

He enquired about some more matters regarding the Cold Flame Sect before ending the conversation and sitting back down to meditate again.

A short while later, traces of azure light gradually surfaced over his body, but his aura was then quickly subdued before vanishing entirely, making it impossible to detect any magic power fluctuations from him.

Gu Yunyue had returned to the front of the ark, but she couldn't help but be amazed once again after noticing the changes in Han Li's magic power fluctuations.

The sky gradually brightened, and as the spirit ark pierced through the cloud and mist, a majestic mountain range appeared up ahead.

The mountains were extremely steep and dark red in color, making the mountain range resemble an enormous red forest when viewed from a high altitude.

Gu Yunyue was quite relieved to see the red mountain range up ahead.

This mountain range was known as the Red Coral Mountain Range, and it sat on the border of the Prosperous Nation.

On the way here, she had intentionally taken a winding route to avoid the areas where Heavenly Ghost Sect scouts were prevalent, and now that they had made it to this point, they were surely in a far safer situation.

However, as a safety precaution, Gu Yunyue still elevated the spirit ark slightly so that it was able to conceal itself within the clouds up above.

It wasn't a particularly cloudy day, so the clouds in the sky were rather sparse, but traversing through them still provided more cover than nothing.

Yu Menghan and Liu Le'er gradually grew accustomed to traveling on the ark, and they were no longer so afraid. They stood up to look at the beautiful scenery around them, pointing out things that they found interesting to one another, and occasionally giggling when they caught sight of something that caught their fancy.

The mountain range down below quickly receded into the distance, and shortly thereafter, a plain appeared in the distance up ahead, instilling Gu Yunyue with a further sense of reassurance.

"Look out!"

Han Li had been meditating with his eyes closed this entire time, but all of a sudden, his eyes abruptly sprang open.

Both Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan faltered slightly upon hearing this urgent warning.

Gu Yunyue's expression also changed drastically as she immediately made a hand seal, blasting a thick beam of white light out of each of her palms that vanished into the spirit ark.

The spirit ark instantly began to glow brightly as it drew to an abrupt halt, then shot back at an incredible speed.

Right at this moment, one of the white clouds up ahead suddenly turned as black as ink, then transformed into a gargantuan, ghostly face. The sinister ghostly face opened its mouth before chomping down viciously, but it was unable to strike its target as the spirit ark had already retreated to a safe distance away.

A faint cry of surprise rang out from within the ghostly face, following which it collapsed into a black cloud, atop which stood a pair of men.

On the left was a hunch-backed elderly man with a heavily-wrinkled face. He had several strands of sparse yellow hair on his head, and he appeared to already have one foot in the grave.

On the right was a hideous young man with a long face and a large mouth, as well as a pair of squinty little eyes that were giving off a vicious gleam.

Both of them were wearing black robes with a sinister ghostly head design embroidered upon them, and the spiritual pressure that they were exuding indicated that they were both at the Nascent Soul Stage.

Just like Gu Yunyue, the long-faced young man was also at the mid-Nascent Soul Stage, while the hunch-backed elderly man was already at the late-Nascent Soul Stage.

"You're the Windcloud Duo!" Gu Yunyue exclaimed as a grim look appeared on her face.

Chapter 23: Battle

"I didn't think that you would know of us, Fellow Daoist Gu Yunyue. This is truly an honor." The hunch-backed elderly man's voice was extremely unpleasant, like pieces of rusty metal scraping against one another, striking the listener with a sense of discomfort.

The long-faced young man remained silent as his gaze slowly roamed over Han Li and the others, and, as he caught sight of Yu Menghan and Liu Le'er, his eyes lit up slightly as he extended his tongue out of his mouth to lick his thick upper lip.

Liu Le'er hurriedly ducked behind Han Li upon seeing this, and Yu Menghan was also quite disturbed to see this.

As for Gu Yunyue, she was feeling a little flustered. She had guessed that the Heavenly Ghost Sect wouldn't be willing to let things slide, but she didn't think that their pursuers would reach them so quickly, nor did she expect to be hunted by such a notorious pair.

However, as a cultivator with plenty of battle experience under her belt, she quickly regained her composure as she said in a cold voice, "Why are you attacking me on the border of the Prosperous Nation? Are you trying to instigate a war between our two sects?"

"Why ask a question that you already know the answer to? I'm sure you're already well aware of why we're here. We've received orders from Elder Qi to capture the perpetrator who killed his grandnephew, and that girl with the Yu surname," the hunch-backed elderly man cackled as his gaze crept over to Han Li and Yu Menghan.

Han Li was completely unfazed to hear this, but Yu Menghan's complexion immediately paled.

Gu Yunyue gave a cold harrumph and offered no response, but she was scrambling to think of a way out of this situation.

"There's no bad blood between us, Fellow Daoist Gu. As long as you're willing to hand over those two, we can let you go. What do you say?" the hunch-backed elderly man asked.

Gu Yunyue was someone of quite a lofty status in the Cold Flame Sect, so if possible, they wanted to avoid a conflict with her.

A cold look appeared on Gu Yunyue's face as she replied, "Fellow Daoist Han is a guest elder of our sect, while Yu Menghan is an inner court disciple. If I were to hand them over, our Cold Flame Sect would be regarded as the butt of all jokes in the cultivation world!"

"Alright, we gave you a chance! If you have a death wish, then we're more than happy to send you on your way!" the hunch-backed elderly man said in a cold voice.

The long-faced young man had already grown tired of waiting, and as soon as it became clear that a peaceful outcome was out of reach, he immediately sprang into action, sweeping a sleeve through the air to release a vast expanse of gray flames.

The gray flames instantly converged to one spot at his behest, forming a fiery gray vortex.

A fiery ghostly claw the size of a house reached out of the vortex, grabbing at Gu Yunyue and the others.

Gu Yunyue was already prepared for this, and she stomped a foot down onto the spirit ark, upon which it began to glow brightly once again as it shot back in a flash.

At the same time, she raised a hand to release a black longsword, which flew through the air as it transformed into a streak of black light that was 70 to 80 feet in length. The sword struck the palm of the fiery ghostly claw, only for a metallic clang to ring out.

Gu Yunyue was rather taken aback by this, and she immediately made a hand seal, upon which the streak of black light shrank to less than half its original size, but it had become far brighter and more piercing.

The black sword pierced through the fiery ghostly claw before emerging from the other side.

The ghostly claw instantly exploded into countless balls of fire, and the flaming vortex in the sky also dissipated.

An unnatural flush appeared on the long-faced young man's cheeks, and he threw up a mouthful of blood.

He let loose a furious roar as his eyes turned bright red, and he flipped a hand over to produce a black scroll.

A vast expanse of murky gray light then erupted out of his body, forming a smokescreen that made it impossible for anyone on the outside to see what he was doing.

At the same time, the hunch-backed elderly man also stomped a foot onto the ground, and a burst of inky-black light erupted out of his body as he released his enormous late-Nascent Soul Stage spiritual pressure.

Gu Yunyue's expression changed slightly as she withdrew her black longsword, and it circled around above her head as she intensely scrutinized her two assailants with her spiritual sense.

At this point, the spirit ark had already retreated to over 1,000 feet away, and only then did it come to a rest.

"Fellow Daoist Han, these two are extremely powerful and established cultivators of the Heavenly Ghost Sect. If the situation goes sour, take Menghan and Le'er and escape. I'll hold them off to the best of my abilities," Gu Yunyue hurriedly said to Han Li through voice transmission.

Even though she had caught the long-faced young man off guard and emerged as the superior party in that exchange, she knew that she was no match for the hunch-backed elderly man. As for Han Li, she didn't know the extent of his powers, so even if they were to join forces, there was no guarantee that they would be able to hold off their two opponents. Hence, her immediate thought was to flee.

Han Li offered no response as he stood on the spot, looking as if he hadn't even heard her.

Right at this moment, a sinister voice rang out beside Gu Yunyue. "Did you think you can get away?"

Gu Yunyue's heart jolted upon hearing this, and all of a sudden, the black light around the hunch-backed elderly man suddenly exploded, while his body transformed into a gray skeleton.

Gu Yunyue faltered slightly upon seeing this, and a hint of surprise also flashed through Han Li's eyes. magic

Immediately thereafter, violent spatial fluctuations erupted in the air above the spirit ark, following which a beam of inky-black light shot out without any warning, and the hunch-backed elderly man was standing right within the black light.

He raised his hands, and a giant golden pagoda that was over 100 feet tall appeared in front of him out of thin air amid a flash of golden light, then came crashing down viciously toward the spirit ark.

A burst of terrifying pressure descended from above, and the spiritual light on the surface of the spirit ark rippled in an unstable manner, looking as if it were on the verge of collapse.

Gu Yunyue gave a muffled groan as she made a rapid series of hand seals, casting a string of incantation seals into the black longsword above her head.

The black longsword trembled violently, releasing countless sword projections that swept toward the golden pagoda.

A string of violent explosions rang out as the countless sword projections struck the giant pagoda in rapid succession, only to be shattered upon impact without leaving so much as a single mark on the pagoda itself.

However, the speed of the pagoda's descent was slowed down.

Gu Yunyue took advantage of this opportunity to release a burst of silver light out of her hand. It was a silver handkerchief that rapidly expanded while radiating dazzling silver light.

A projection of mountains and rivers appeared on the surface of the handkerchief, and it was giving off astounding spiritual qi as it positioned itself beneath the giant pagoda, further slowing its descent.

Gu Yunyue's expression eased slightly upon seeing this, and a cold look appeared in her eyes as she switched to a different hand seal.

The black longsword immediately began to glow with dazzling black radiance while swelling drastically in size, transforming into a giant black sword that was 50 to 60 feet in the blink of an eye before hurtling toward the hunch-backed elderly man at an incredible speed.

A cold smile appeared on the elderly man's face as he released an incantation seal, and the base of the golden pagoda opened up with a resounding boom, revealing a black hole.

Blinding golden light erupted out of the hole to form a giant golden halo, which released a burst of terrifying suction force that sucked in everything within a radius of several hundred feet.

The giant black sword immediately stopped cold in its tracks, then flew toward the hole at the base of the golden pagoda, unable to resist the suction force.

Gu Yunyue was struggling desperately to stabilize the giant sword, but to no avail, and after just two or three seconds, the giant sword was completely sucked into the golden pagoda.

Gu Yunyue's heart sank as her spiritual connection with the black longsword was completely severed.

The golden light radiating from the giant pagoda became even brighter, and it continued to descend amid a burst of loud rumbling.

The surface of the silver handkerchief began to collapse downward, and under the enormous suction force released by the giant golden pagoda, the

mountain and river projections on its surface began to warp, looking as if it were about to be sucked into the pagoda as well.

Gu Yunyue hurriedly made a hand seal, then thrust both hands toward the handkerchief and rapidly injected her magic power into it.

Bright silver light radiated from the mountain and river projections on the surface of the handkerchief, and it was finally stabilized again.

Right as the hunch-backed elderly man raised his hand to continue his attack, a loud boom suddenly rang out in the distance as the gray light around the long-faced young man exploded.

A black scroll was hovering before him, and it was none other than the one that he had summoned earlier, except at this moment, it was already unfurled. There were countless ghostly entities drawn on the scroll's surface, and it was radiating piercing black light.

"Stand down, Brother! I'm going to punish this bitch for hurting me and make her wish she was dead!" the long-faced young man roared as he glowered at Gu Yunyue with a resentful expression.

Chapter 24: Crushed

The hunch-backed elderly man raised an eyebrow upon hearing this, and he briefly stopped what he was doing, but his gaze remained fixed on Gu Yunyue.

At the same time, the long-faced young man flipped a hand over to produce a black dagger, using which he sliced viciously into his own arm.

Blood gushed out of the gash, forming a cloud of dense blood mist that fused into the black scroll.

The black qi emanating from the scroll instantly became significantly denser, and gusts of fierce Yin wind were swept up all around it amid the sound of ghostly howls, presenting a harrowing sight to behold.

A pair of fierce ghostly entities leaped out of the scroll, then swelled drastically to around 40 to 50 feet in size.

The two ghostly beings had ape-like upper bodies that were covered in short green fur with sharp white fangs that protruded out of their mouths. Each of them had a pair of thick and strong ape arms with fingers that were tipped with sharp crimson claws that were each around a foot in length, while their lower bodies were enshrouded in black mist, appearing to have no physical form.

The gusts of Yin wind around the scroll became even fiercer, and black qi surged as one ghostly being flew out after another.

In the blink of an eye, over 100 ghostly beings had appeared.

Most of them were at the Foundation Establishment Stage, but there were also five or six of them that were clearly far more massive than the other ones, and they were giving off Core Formation Stage auras.

"Kill them!" the long-faced young man cackled as he stabbed a finger in Gu Yunyue's direction.

The ghostly beings roared in unison as they swarmed the spirit ark with ferocious might.

Gu Yunyue's expression changed drastically as she patted the storage bag on her waist to release four streaks of white light, which descended around her before transforming into four humanoid jade puppets, each of which was around 10 feet tall. The puppets were clad in suits of armor, and each of them was holding a large white flag that was glowing with bright spiritual light.

With a wave of the flags in their hands, dazzling white radiance emanated from the bodies of the puppets before quickly joining together to form a white array that encompassed the entire spirit ark within.

As soon as the array took shape, the army of ghostly beings swarmed onto it, surrounding it from all directions.

The ghostly beings roared ferociously as they attacked the white array with all their might.

In particular, the Core Formation Stage ghostly beings were blasting bursts of green light into the array with devastating power, causing it to tremble violently.

Gu Yunyue hurriedly made a hand seal before releasing bursts of white light onto the four puppets, and only then was the array gradually stabilized.

Meanwhile, the long-faced young man himself also flew over to the white array, and he chanted an incantation as a vast expanse of gray fire emerged on his body again, forming a sea of fire that was over 100 feet in size.

He then made a grabbing motion with both hands, and two small balls of fire detached themselves from the sea of flames before transforming into a pair of fiery spears that were several dozen feet in length.

With a wave of his arms, the two fiery spears shot forth like lightning, flying through the air with a sharp screeching sound before striking the white array with tremendous force.

Two resounding booms rang out as the fiery spears exploded, but the white array also trembled violently, and Gu Yunyue also shuddered as her face paled slightly.

The long-faced young man cackled with glee as he hurled one fiery spear after another into the array.

The white array continued to tremble violently, and it was originally around 70 to 80 feet in size, but it was shrinking rapidly and was quickly reduced to less than 30 feet in size.

Gu Yunyue's face became paler and paler, and her body began to tremble from overexertion as a faint sheen of sweat appeared on her forehead.

The hunch-backed elderly man burst into raucous laughter at the sight of the terrible state that Gu Yunyue was in, and he patted the storage bag on his waist to release 12 streaks of black light, which were revealed to be 12 bone tridents.

The bone tridents expanded rapidly while inky-black flames rose up on their surface, and they gave off a bone-chilling aura as they came hurtling down toward the white array.

They were here on Qi Xuan's orders, so the one who killed Gu Yunyue would naturally be rewarded handsomely.

Gu Yunyue was already a spent force, and the hunch-backed elderly man was taking full advantage to try and land the killing blow.

The long-faced young man was furious to see this, but the hunch-backed elderly man was a superior cultivator to him, so he could only begrudgingly accept this.

A hint of despair surfaced in Gu Yunyue's eyes upon seeing this.

However, right at this moment, a figure rose up into the air from the spirit ark, flying through the white array to arrive outside it in the blink of an eye. It was none other than Han Li.

He moved left and right through the air, conjuring up several afterimages that quickly fused as one, and the 12 bone tridents somehow vanished in the blink of an eye.

The hunch-backed elderly man's brows furrowed tightly upon seeing this, following which his expression changed drastically. magic

As it turned out, all 12 of the bone tridents had been caught in Han Li's grasp, and as he rubbed them between his hands, the black flames on the tridents were completely snuffed out.

He took a glance at the tridents before casually stowing them away in an expressionless manner, as if he had just done something completely unremarkable.

"You... You..." The hunch-backed elderly man was both shocked and furious to see this.

As soon as the ghostly beings surrounding the array detected Han Li's aura, they immediately abandoned the array and pounced toward him, letting loose excited roars as they did so.

"What a nuisance!"

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly, and he sped into the army of ghostly beings as an indistinct azure shadow.

In the face of the azure shadow, all of the ghostly beings in its path were like waves crashing into rocks, exploding violently into countless pieces.

In the blink of an eye, all of the ghostly beings had been slain with incredible ease.

The long-faced young man was utterly astonished as he looked on with wide eyes.

All of a sudden, Han Li appeared in front of him before throwing a vicious punch, and the long-faced young man didn't even get a chance to cry out before his body exploded into scraps of flesh and blood, and not even his nascent soul managed to survive.

The hunch-backed elderly man was horrified to see this, and he hurriedly swept a sleeve through the air to release hundreds of green flying needles. Each needle was around a foot in length and as thin as a strand of hair, with green flames burning on their surface.

The thin needles screeched through the air as they sped toward Han Li, and at the same time, green flames erupted out of the elderly man's body as he fled into the distance, even abandoning the golden pagoda in his desperation to get away.

Han Li remained completely still on the spot as he opened his mouth before taking a deep breath.

A burst of enormous suction force took shape in the air before him, and the entire space buzzed incessantly as all of the flying needles were caught by the suction force before flying into Han Li's mouth.

The needles crunched between his teeth as he chewed briefly, then tipped his head back slightly to swallow everything.

Gu Yunyue's mouth gaped open slightly upon seeing this, and she was completely rooted to the spot.

From the perspective of Yu Menghan and Liu Le'er on the spirit ark, all they saw was a frenzied flurry of activity. Before they had even figured out what had happened, one of their two powerful assailants had been killed, while the other was desperately fleeing the scene, and they were no less shocked than Gu Yunyue.

Meanwhile, Han Li cast his gaze toward the fleeing elderly man, and golden light flashed from his arm as he threw a punch in that direction with an indifferent expression.

A golden fist projection that was around the size of a human head instantly appeared behind the hunch-backed elderly man, and it was flying several times faster than he was.

The hunch-backed elderly man's expression changed drastically upon seeing this, and he hurriedly released a layer of black light around his entire body, right before he was struck by the golden fist projection with devastating force.

The green flames around him exploded violently, but only a pile of bones fell out of the sky.

At the same time, a burst of spatial fluctuations several dozen kilometers away, and a vast expanse of black light appeared out of thin air before the hunch-backed elderly man stumbled out of it.

He took a horrified glance behind him, then opened his mouth to release a burst of green light, which enveloped his body in a layer of green flames before he continued to flee into the distance, vanishing out of sight in the blink of an eye.

Han Li's spiritual sense had already been released, so he was well aware of where the hunch-backed elderly man was. However, right as he was about to lash out again, he suddenly lowered his head to look at the azure light around his body, which had clearly become dimmer than before.

His brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and he decided against pursuing the elderly man. Instead, he swept a hand through the air to release a burst of azure light that drew the long-faced young man's storage bag to him, then descended back onto the spirit ark.

He had relied mostly on the power of his physical body during that battle, but he had still expended a great deal of magic power.

Chapter 25: Lu Ya

"Brother Rock!"

Liu Le'er hurriedly rushed toward Han Li upon his return, and there was a concerned look on her face.

She had never witnessed a battle between such powerful cultivators before, and even though Han Li seemed to have secured victory with ease, she still couldn't help but fear that perhaps he had sustained some injuries in the process.

Han Li gave her a warm smile to reassure her, then stowed the storage bag in his hand away.

Without the support of the hunch-backed elderly man's magic power, the giant pagoda's golden radiance quickly faded, and it rapidly shrank before descending from the sky.

With a wave of her hand, Gu Yunyue drew the golden pagoda into her grasp, then took a glance at Han Li, and only after confirming that he had no intention of taking the pagoda for himself did she dare to stow it away into her storage bag.

The golden pagoda was clearly quite a powerful treasure, and its ability to trap other treasures would make it an extremely useful trump card for her in future battles. However, the Windcloud Duo had been defeated by Han Li, so it was only right that this treasure belonged to him. Thankfully, he seemed to have given her silent permission to take the treasure.

Gu Yunyue took a moment to compose herself, then made her way over to Han Li. "Thank heavens you're here with us, Fellow Daoist Han. I knew you were no ordinary cultivator, but I still severely underestimated your powers."

Even though she looked quite calm and collected on the outside, the awe and veneration hidden deep in her eyes didn't escape Han Li's notice.

Even if she had faced the long-faced young man on her own, she knew that there was definitely no way that she would've been able to kill him as easily as Han Li did, inflicting such a heavy blow that even his nascent soul had been unable to escape. On top of that, there was also another late-Nascent Soul Stage enemy present, making Han Li's feat even more remarkable.

"They were trying to kill me, so I naturally had to deal with them," Han Li replied with a faint smile.

A faint smile appeared on Yu Menghan's face upon hearing this, but as she cast her gaze upon Han Li, there was also a hint of awe and veneration in her eyes, intermingled with some other complex emotions.

In her eyes, her master was an unfathomable powerful being. Her father had to treat Daoist Master White Stone with the utmost respect, yet even Daoist Master White Stone didn't dare to step out of line in the slightest in Gu Yunyue's presence. However, Han Li had just displayed incredible power that was far beyond even Gu Yunyue's reach.

To her, Han Li was a massive mystery, and even though she was standing by his side, she felt as if they were separated by a vast galaxy.

"I thought we'd be safe from the Heavenly Ghost Sect after leaving the Prosperous Nation, I wasn't expecting them to come after us so quickly," Gu Yunyue sighed.

"That's only to be expected. After all, we're currently still within the Heavenly Ghost Sect's territory," Han Li replied with a nonchalant expression, not appearing worried in the slightest.

"As soon as we enter our Cold Flame Sect's territory, we should be free from our pursuers," Gu Yunyue replied with a nod, but her expression suddenly stiffened slightly, and she glanced at Han Li with a perplexed look in her eyes.

It was only for an instant, but her peculiar gaze didn't escape Han Li's notice.

Han Li's expression remained unchanged, but he was feeling rather frustrated. During the battle that had just taken place, he had only briefly unleashed a layer of protective spiritual light over his body, yet his magic power had plummeted from the mid-Nascent Soul Stage to the early-Nascent Soul Stage.

Gu Yunyue had most likely sensed the change in his aura, but he naturally wasn't going to bother to explain anything to her.

.....

Inside a dark secret chamber deep within a certain cave abode in the Heavenly Ghost Sect.

There were around a dozen lit torches on the walls of the secret chamber, and the yellow flames of the torches were casting countless shadows all over the entire secret chamber.

Right at the center of the secret chamber was a round stone table, in front of which sat a thin elderly man with a head of white hair and a mismatching black beard. He was wearing an ochre robe, and he had one hand resting on the stone table, while his other hand was gently tapping his knee in a rhythmic manner.

He had a very pronounced nose and a pair of deep-set eyes that were staring absentmindedly forward. There was a contemplative expression on his thin and wrinkly face, which was illuminated by the light of the burning torches.

Directly in front of him was a copper mirror roughly the size of a human head hovering in mid-air. The mirror was displaying the visage of a hunch-backed elderly man. It was none other than the surviving half of the Windcloud Duo.

He already had a hunched back to begin with, and he was hunched over even further at this moment. His head was virtually buried against his chest, and he didn't dare to look up at all.

"So what you're saying is that not only did the two of you fail to bring back the people I wanted, one of you died in the process?" the thin elderly man asked.

His voice was extremely deep and coarse.

The hunch-backed elderly man shuddered, then hurriedly replied, "Please forgive me, Martial Uncle Qi. Our enemy was simply far too powerful! In the beginning, he seemed to have intentionally concealed his aura so that he appeared to be no different from a mortal, but in the instant that he entered the battle, he suddenly became a mid-Nascent Soul cultivator.

"He managed to take my 12 bone tridents before I could even see what he was doing, and after that..."

Before he had a chance to finish, he was interrupted by the thin elderly man. "So his cultivation base was inferior to yours, yet he was able to take your treasures with ease?"

"Th... That's right. Not only that, but his physical body is also extremely powerful. Compared with him, the ghostly entities in my junior martial brother's Myriad Ghost Scroll may as well have been made from mud and twigs! All of them were destroyed on contact, and he even ate my Bone Devouring Yin Needles!" the hunch-backed elderly man replied with a hint of lingering fear in his voice.

The thin elderly man fell silent upon hearing this, seemingly having fallen into deep thought again.

The hunch-backed elderly man still didn't dare to raise his head, and the fear in his heart was further fueled by the thin elderly man's prolonged silence. He couldn't help but fall to his knees as he said in a trembling voice, "I'm telling the truth, Martial Uncle Qi! I'm not exaggerating the story at all!"

The thin elderly man remained silent, and only after a long while did he speak again. "Judging from what you've told me, that man is most likely a powerful body cultivator. Cultivators of that nature are extremely rare, and they are indeed too powerful for you to handle. I'll take care of matters from here, you don't need to play any further part in this."

With that, he casually swept a sleeve through the air, and the image of the hunch-backed elderly man on the copper mirror instantly vanished.

"So what if you're a high-grade body cultivator? I'm still going to tear you from limb to limb for killing Hao'er!" [1] the thin elderly man spat through gritted teeth as a vicious look appeared on his face.

Sometime later, his gaze returned to the copper mirror, and he chanted an incantation before making a hand seal, then pointed a finger at the mirror.

The surface of the mirror began to ripple like water, following which another image emerged.

The image depicted a well-built middle-aged man standing in mid-air above a lush forest, and he stroked his short beard as he said with a smile, "It's been quite some time since we last saw each other, Brother Qi. What business do you have with me today?"

"I won't bore you with small talk today, Brother Lu Ya. I have a favor to beg of you," the thin elderly man said with a serious expression.

The middle-aged man could see that the thin elderly man was in no mood to be joking around, so he also adopted a serious expression as he asked, "What is it?"

The thin elderly man took a deep breath, then gave the middle-aged man a recount of everything that had happened, starting with the death of Qi Minghao.

"How dare he go after one of your descendants? He deserves to die 1,000 deaths!" Lu Ya harrumphed coldly after hearing the story.

"I have some matters to attend to in the sect at the moment. I know that you're near the Prosperous Nation right now, so I'm hoping you can go after Hao'er's killer in my stead and exact revenge on him," the thin elderly man said.

Lu Ya was silent for a moment, then mused, "Body cultivators are far more powerful than normal cultivators, but it's extremely difficult for them to advance in their cultivation and break through bottlenecks. The fact that this man has been able to reach such a high level in body cultivation indicates that he must be no ordinary cultivator..."

The thin elderly man took a meaningful glance at Lu Ya, then replied, "According to one of my disciples, he's a guest elder that the Cold Flame Sect is planning to take in, but he still hasn't officially joined the sect yet, so you don't need to worry. If you can kill him for me, you can have my Origin Spirit Pill as repayment."

A hint of elation flashed through Lu Ya's eyes upon hearing this, but he quickly disguised it, then said, "In that case, you can count on me, Brother Qi."

A thought suddenly occurred to the thin elderly man, and a sinister look appeared on his face as he said, "By the way, spare that girl with the Yu surname for now. If possible, bring her to me alive."

Lu Ya faltered slightly upon hearing this, then nodded in response.

1. In Chinese, it's common to take the last character of a person's name and add JL(er) at the end as an affectionate pet name, which is what's happening here, with Qi Minghao before referred to as Hao'er. Some of you may remember that Nangong Wan was sometimes referred to as Wan'er by Han Li in RMJI, and that follows the same principle. 📖

Chapter 26: Persistent Enemies

In the sky above a desert tens of thousands of kilometers away from the Prosperous Nation's border, a spirit ark that was enshrouded in white light was flying rapidly toward a certain direction.

It was a bright and sunny day with clouds that resembled clumps of cotton drifting lazily through the sky. It was a truly beautiful and relaxing sight to behold, but none of the people on the ark were in the mood to be appreciating the scenery.

Han Li was seated with his legs crossed and his eyes tightly shut at the tail-end of the ark, and there was a layer of faint golden light roaming over his body.

Liu Le'er was seated right next to Han Li with green light surging over her body, and she was clearly also cultivating.

Gu Yunyue and Yu Menghan were standing at the head of the ark, and the latter was occasionally turning around to cast her gaze toward the other end of the ark with a complex look in her eyes. Meanwhile, Gu Yunyue was controlling the ark with a faint smile on her face, and she seemed to be in high spirits.

Two days had already passed since they were last attacked, and during that time, they hadn't encountered any more danger. As they approached the Cold Flame Sect, they were drawing closer and closer to safety.

After an indeterminate period of time, Han Li's brows suddenly furrowed slightly, and he opened his eyes, following which the golden light on his body quickly faded.

During these past few days, he had attempted several more methods to try and remove the seal on his nascent soul, but he had made no progress at all and expended quite a bit of magic power in the process.

Even though he had managed to find two pills of a similar caliber to the Sharp Watch Pill in the long-faced young man's storage bag, for some reason, they had no effect on him at all.

It seemed that his condition was far more complex than he had anticipated.

He shook his head to rid himself of that train of thought, then cast his gaze toward Liu Le'er.

Her aura had clearly become significantly more powerful than before, and she was showing signs of breaking through to the late-Foundation Establishment Stage. This was all thanks to another vial of pills that Han Li had found in the long-faced young man's storage bag.

Han Li gave a pleased nod and didn't interrupt her cultivation. Instead, he stood up and made his way over to the side of the spirit ark before casting his gaze outward.

Gu Yunyue approached him with a smile and said, "All we need to do is travel west from here, and we'll be able to reach the sect in no more than half a month. Once we arrive, our sect will be sure to organize a top-tier cave abode for you so you can recover from your injuries."

Yu Menghan was following along behind her in silence.

"I'll be in your care then, Fellow Daoist," Han Li replied with a nod.

Gu Yunyue was just about to say something else when a burst of faint rumbling suddenly rang out up ahead.

The three of them turned toward the direction where the sound was coming from, and they discovered that there was a vast expanse of darkness on the horizon. Several massive tornadoes were extending directly up into the heavens, sweeping from side to side, and thunderous rumbling was ringing out incessantly from the tornadoes, while the entire sky was enshrouded under a suffocating layer of yellow sand.

Gu Yunyue's brows furrowed slightly as she released an incantation seal, and the spirit ark drew to a halt.

Liu Le'er was roused from her cultivation as a result, and she made her way over to Han Li's side with a curious expression.

"It looks like nothing more than a sandstorm. Is there a problem?" Han Li asked.

"The desert that we're currently in is known as the Yellow Billow Desert, and sandstorms are very rare here, but in the case that a sandstorm does arise,

it'll quickly spread across the entire desert and rage on for around a month without rest," Gu Yunyue replied.

"Why don't we just travel directly through it? The sandstorm may encompass the entire desert, but surely it won't have any impact on us," Han Li said as his brows furrowed slightly.

"Of course the sandstorm is of no concern to us, but there's a type of ancient insect known as the Flying Sin Ant that resides in this desert. Normally, they rest beneath the sand in hibernation, but they always come out during sandstorms. One or two of these flying ants naturally pose no threat, but they often appear in vast numbers, and they're incredibly fast.

"On top of that, they're capable of releasing a corrosive mist that's capable of eroding the spiritual natures of all treasures unless they've been refined using devilish arts. Hence, even high-grade cultivators find them to be a huge headache to deal with, and getting caught in a swarm of those flying ants could be quite troublesome," Gu Yunyue explained with a grim expression.

Han Li was silent for a moment upon hearing this, then asked, "What if we fly around this desert?"

At the moment, his magic power was a limited resource, and he didn't want to have to waste it here.

Gu Yunyue considered the question for a moment before replying, "It'll probably extend our journey by over a month."

Han Li fell silent as he stroked his chin in contemplation.

Gu Yunyue was also watching Han Li in silence, clearly waiting for him to make a decision on how to proceed.

All of a sudden, Mo Guang's voice rang out in Han Li's mind. "There's no need to worry about those flying ants, Fellow Daoist Han. Just leave them to me."

"Oh? You have a way to deal with them?" Han Li asked internally.

"Flying Sin Ants are a type of ancient insect born from a mixture of underground baleful yin energy and the resentment of deceased spirits, so they share some similarities with Heavenly Devilish Monarchs like myself.

"I didn't think that they would exist in the Spirit Domain Realm as well. These ants are indeed quite difficult to deal with, but they have a natural fear of sound-based devilish attacks. I may have lost most of my abilities, but even in my current state, dealing with these mere flying ants won't be an issue at all," Mo Guang said in an assured voice.

Han Li considered the situation briefly before making a decision. "Alright, then we'll be counting on you if we encounter those Flying Yin Ants in the desert."

"We're both in the same boat here, so I naturally have to do my part," Mo Guang said before falling silent.

"Going around the desert will take too long, so let's go straight through the sandstorm. If we encounter those Flying Yin Ants, I have a way to deal with them," Han Li said to Gu Yunyue.

Gu Yunyue faltered slightly upon hearing this. "Are you sure, Fellow Daoist Han?"

"Do you not trust me, Fellow Daoist Gu?" Han Li asked with a faint smile.

"I have no intention of doubting you, Fellow Daoist Han. In that case, let's proceed," Gu Yunyue hurriedly replied, then wasted no further time with words as she made a hand seal.

The spirit ark began to glow brightly, releasing a white protective barrier before plunging directly into the sandstorm up ahead.

In the next instant, the surroundings dimmed significantly, and there was nothing in sight in all directions aside from boundless yellow sand that was being carried by fierce gusts of wind, which were blowing viciously against the spirit ark's protective barrier.

The ark immediately began to sway slightly, and in response, Gu Yunyue switched to a different hand seal, releasing a burst of white light that vanished into a certain part of the ark in a flash.

As a result, all of the spirit patterns engraved onto the surface of the ark immediately lit up, and the white protective barrier instantly became several times brighter. The ark itself was also stabilized, and it continued onward.

Initially, Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan were rather concerned by the sight of the ferocious sandstorm outside, but as time passed, it became clear that there was no way that the sandstorm would be able to break through the spirit ark's protective barrier. Hence, their concerns were put at ease, and they began to marvel at the rare scenery outside the white light barrier.

Gu Yunyue was controlling the spirit ark, carefully maneuvering it so that it avoided the tornadoes up ahead, and the speed of the ark's advance wasn't hampered by much.

Soon, they had already been traveling through the sandstorm for several hours, and thankfully, they were yet to encounter any Flying Sin Ants.

Han Li was standing at the head of the ark with a calm expression and his hands clasped behind his back, but a hint of blue light suddenly flashed through his eyes as he cast his gaze toward a certain direction up ahead.

Gu Yunyue immediately noticed the slight change in Han Li's expression, and she asked, "What is it, Fellow Daoist Han?"

"Looks like we have trouble, Fellow Daoist Gu," Han Li replied as he turned to her with a faint smile.

Gu Yunyue faltered slightly upon hearing this, unsure of what Han Li was referring to.

Right at this moment, one of the tornadoes up ahead suddenly moved directly toward the spirit ark.

This tornado was particularly thick, and it extended all the way up into the heavens. Even before it arrived, the spirit ark was almost swept up by the ferocious gusts of wind that it was releasing.

Gu Yunyue's expression changed drastically upon hearing this, and she had no time to ponder what Han Li had just said as she quickly stomped a foot down onto the ark.

The flying ark immediately began to glow brightly as it sped forward rapidly, instantly covering a distance of close to 1,000 feet, allowing it to just barely evade the tornado.

However, before Gu Yunyue had a chance to catch her breath, the ground around the ark suddenly fell away, and pillars of yellow light erupted into the sky.

These pillars of yellow light instantly intertwined with one another to form a huge yellow array in the blink of an eye.

In particular, the array that had appeared on the ground was extremely complex and over 1,000 feet in size.

Gu Yunyue was naturally quite alarmed to see this.

All of a sudden, the surrounding scenery took on a drastic change, and they were transported into a glittering and translucent world. They were surrounded by a series of mountains, and the sky and the ground were shimmering with yellow light.

A burst of enormous spiritual pressure compressed toward the spirit ark from all directions, and countless cracks quickly appeared on the white protective barrier around the ark, looking as if it were going to crumble away at any moment.

Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan immediately let loose cries of alarm upon seeing this.

In contrast, Han Li remained as calm as ever as he reached out a hand to summon a small copper bell, which swelled to several dozen feet in size before descending onto the spirit ark, encompassing Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan beneath it.

The yellow bell was a defensive treasure that Han Li had found in the long-faced young man's storage bag, and it was perfect for this situation.

Almost at the exact same moment, the white light barrier around the spirit ark was shattered, and an enormous burst of pressure descended upon the ark.

The spiritual light around Han Li and Gu Yunyue's bodies wavered slightly, but they were able to bear the pressure without much difficulty.

The spiritual light radiating from the yellow bell also flickered erratically for a moment before returning to normal again.

"Could it be that the Heavenly Ghost Sect has sent more people after us?"

Gu Yunyue was doing her best to maintain her composure, but judging from the immense pressure being released by the array, she could tell that it definitely couldn't have been erected by a normal Nascent Soul cultivator, and that was making her feel a little panicked.

"The Heavenly Ghost Sect sure is persistent!" Han Li chuckled.

Chapter 27: Carrying the Five Mountains, Crushing the Five Ghosts

As soon as Han Li's voice trailed off, the surrounding space suddenly underwent a change.

A series of giant yellow rocks the size of millstones emerged out of thin air, and there were around 20 to 30 of them. They were positioned tightly next to one another, forming a watertight encirclement around the spirit ark.

Gu Yunyue's heart jolted slightly upon seeing this, and before she had a chance to do anything, the surfaces of the giant rocks flashed with dazzling light, and they began to spin rapidly while crashing toward the spirit ark.

Gu Yunyue was greatly alarmed to see this, and she immediately made a hand seal, upon which a streak of black light rose up into the sky from her body, then instantly swelled drastically in size, transforming into a giant black sword that was over 100 feet in length.

The giant sword swiveled around as it released a vast expanse of black light, which took on the form of a dragon with a long tail trailing behind it as it struck the nearest rock.

A resounding boom rang out, and the giant sword shattered the rock with great difficulty, but as a result of the impact, the sword itself was also sent flying back, flipping end over end, and the radiance that it was giving off had also completely faded.

Gu Yunyue shuddered violently, and she stumbled back several steps before steadying herself as a stunned look appeared on her face.

The power of that single giant rock in free fall was comparable to an all-out attack from a Nascent Soul cultivator, and she couldn't help but shudder

internally at the sight of the 20 to 30 translucent giant rocks that were rapidly approaching from all directions.

However, right at this moment, Han Li's voice rang out beside her.

"Focus on protecting those two and leave the rest to me."

Before she had a chance to reply, Han Li had already risen up from the spirit ark with golden light glowing from his hands, and he spun around as he threw punches at the air all around him.

A string of resounding booms rang out in all directions as all of the giant yellow rocks were struck by a burst of tremendous force almost at the exact same time, then exploded into countless rock fragments that rained down from the sky.

"So you really are a body cultivator." A cold harrumph rang out, but it was impossible to determine where the voice was coming from.

Gu Yunyue hurriedly inspected her surroundings, trying to find the owner of the voice.

Meanwhile, a hint of derision appeared in Han Li's eyes, and he abruptly turned around before flicking a finger through the air, unleashing a burst of azure sword qi that shot forth like lightning before striking a certain corner of the translucent yellow world, exploding upon impact.

The air there rippled violently, and a burly man dressed in black stumped out into the open.

The man had a very sturdy build with a short beard on his square face, which was currently etched with shock.

The burly man's expression quickly returned to normal, and he asked, "I didn't think that you would also be a sword cultivator. It's quite remarkable that you were able to see through my illusory array as a mere Nascent Soul cultivator. Based on that alone, I'm sure you're not just some nameless cultivator. Who are you?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. A dead man like you doesn't need to know too much," Han Li chuckled coldly.

"What a joke! I was only putting a fraction of this array's power on display, don't think that you've got the better of me! I'm going to crush you to a pulp with this next attack!" The burly man was infuriated by Han Li's provocation, and he made a hand seal, upon which yellow ripples surged over his body, and he vanished into thin air once again.

A hint of surprise flashed through Han Li's eyes upon seeing this.

This array was quite an intricate construction, and the burly man had most likely concealed himself somewhere deep within it. To Han Li's surprise, he was no longer able to detect the burly man even with his spiritual sense.

However, he then gave a cold harrumph as golden light appeared all over his entire body. His plan was to destroy the array with brute force, leaving the burly man with nowhere to hide.

However, right at this moment, an unexpected turn of events suddenly unfolded.

The entire sky abruptly darkened, and five enormous creatures with black qi surging around their bodies emerged, surrounding the spirit ark from five different directions.

Han Li's pupils contracted slightly upon seeing this, and piercing blue light flashed through his eyes.

Beneath the black qi were five giant black ghosts, each of which was around 300 to 400 feet tall. If it weren't for the curved horns growing on their heads, they would be the spitting image of apes that had been significantly enlarged. Their bodies were covered in short black fur, and their mouths were filled with sharp fangs, while their eyes were bright red in color. They were extremely fearsome to behold, but their expressions were quite blank and vacant.

Each of the giant ghosts was holding a miniature black mountain.

Compared with these five ghosts, Han Li was made to appear as tiny as an ant.

Gu Yunyue's expression changed drastically upon seeing this.

Every single one of these five giant ghosts was giving off an aura that was superior to hers, and a layer of cold sweat instantly appeared on her forehead.

As for Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan, they were unable to withstand the combined spiritual pressure being released by the five giant ghosts, and they had fallen unconscious on the spot.

The five giant ghosts let loose a collective deafening roar, and a vicious gleam flashed through their bright red eyes as they swung their ape arms violently to hurl the five miniature mountains that they were holding through the air.

The miniature mountains glowed brightly with spiritual light, and they swelled rapidly in size as soon as they left the hands of the giant apes, expanding to over 1,000 feet tall in the blink of an eye as they crashed directly toward Han Li and the spirit ark.

Even before the giant mountains arrived, an asphyxiating sense of pressure had already descended upon the spirit ark, and the space around the ark was buzzing incessantly as gusts of fierce wind were instantly swept up. magic

Gu Yunyue was almost unable to suppress the urge to cry out in horror, and all she could do was summon a series of treasures in a panicked frenzy, conjuring up several layers of light barriers of different colors around herself and the two unconscious young women on the ark.

Han Li's brows furrowed slightly upon seeing this, and golden light flashed from his palms as he extended his hands nonchalantly toward the oncoming mountains.

A string of five deafening booms rang out in rapid succession, and incredibly powerful shockwaves surged through the air one after another.

The entire yellow space began to buzz loudly while warping violently, and finally, it reached a breaking point, shattering with a dull thump.

With the yellow space destroyed, the environment reverted back to the desert, and countless bursts of yellow light scattered erratically in all directions.

The formidable shockwaves were released upon the desert, proliferating outward in all directions, causing the surrounding sandstorm to churn violently.

Even though the yellow space had been destroyed, it was only an illusion to begin with, and the glowing yellow array on the ground was still standing.

The five giant ghosts were also still hovering in mid-air, but their expressions had become vacant and aloof again.

The burly man emerged out of thin air, and a pleased smile appeared on his face.

In the face of these five ghosts, even a late-Deity Transformation cultivator would definitely struggle immensely unless they possessed a powerful spirit treasure.

However, in the next instant, his smile abruptly stiffened, and his eyes widened as he looked down with an incredulous expression.

As it turned out, the five enormous mountains had been stacked in a pile on top of one another, and Han Li was standing casually in mid-air beneath the base of the fifth mountain, casually supporting it with one hand as if he were carrying nothing more than five feathers.

As for the spirit ark beneath Han Li and the three women on it, they were completely unscathed.

Before the burly man had a chance to react, Han Li exhaled nonchalantly, releasing a burst of white energy out of his mouth, and the five giant mountains were blown away like leaves in the wind.

The surfaces of the mountains flashed with black light, and they rapidly shrank back to their original size.

Han Li casually flicked his fingers through the air, and the five miniature mountains were instantly sent flying toward the burly man at an incredible speed, reaching him in the blink of an eye.

The burly man's expression changed drastically upon seeing this, and dazzling black light erupted from his body as he plummeted rapidly toward the ground, just barely evading the five miniature mountains.

All of a sudden, Han Li's body blurred, and he appeared in front of the five mountains in wraith-like manner, and he casually reached out again to stop the mountains cold in their tracks.

He then swiveled around before kicking two of the miniature mountains with his feet, and the two mountains instantly descended from above like a pair of

shooting stars, flying close to twice as fast as they had been when they were launched through the air earlier.

The two miniature mountains flashed with black light as they abruptly expanded once again, swelling to over 1,000 feet tall in the blink of an eye, and the whistling sound that they produced as they flew through the air was also heightened into a terrifying rumble.

One of the mountains was crashing toward the array down below, while the other was hurtling toward the burly man.

A resounding boom rang out as the former struck the yellow array with devastating force.

The array immediately began to glow with dazzling radiance in an attempt to resist, but the astonishing power imbued within the giant mountain crushed its resistance with ease, and it instantly exploded into countless bursts of light.

With the array destroyed, the spirit ark was instantly freed, and it was carried away far into the distance by a gust of fierce wind.

Meanwhile, the other mountain was hurtling rapidly toward the burly man, catching up to him before he had even landed on the ground.

The burly was greatly alarmed by this, and he opened his mouth to expel a mouthful of blood essence. His entire body was instantly enshrouded in a layer of crimson light, and he transformed into a burst of serpentine spiritual light that sped through the air, boosting his speed by severalfold.

The second giant mountain crashed into the ground, and vast volumes of sand erupted in all directions.

In the instant that the giant mountain struck the ground, the streak of serpentine spiritual light flew over the ground, appearing over 1,000 feet away in a flash. The burly man was encompassed within the streak of light, and his entire body was already drenched in cold sweat.

Before he had a chance to catch his breath, a dark shadow suddenly appeared over him, and he looked up to see another giant mountain rapidly descending upon him. At this point, it was already too close for him to evade.

Chapter 28: Alarmed

The burly man let loose a desperate cry as he swept his hands through the air, releasing two bursts of light, one yellow and one black.

It was a pair of treasures, one of which was a black cane, while the other was a large yellow seal with countless runes flashing on its surface, and both of them hurtled directly toward the giant black mountain.

The two treasures were giving off astonishing spiritual power fluctuations, and it was clear that they were the burly man's trump cards.

He made a hand seal before letting loose a thunderous roar, and two enormous bursts of light appeared, one yellow and one black, and they were able to slow down the descent of the giant black mountain.

The burly man took advantage of this opportunity to flee back in retreat.

However, the two bursts of light only managed to resist for a brief moment. The burly man had only just managed to fly over 100 feet away when the giant mountain crushed the two bursts of light, then slammed into the ground, causing sand to erupt in all directions once again.

The burly man flew out of the sand, but he was no longer moving as quickly as before. His face was as pale as a sheet, and half of his body was drenched in blood, while his left arm was hanging limply by his side.

Even though he had reacted very quickly, the giant mountain was far too fast, and he was still grazed by it in the end, resulting in severe injuries.magic

The burly man threw up a large mouthful of blood as he fell onto the ground with a horrified expression. However, he then immediately gritted his teeth and flipped a hand over to produce a white talisman. Countless densely packed runes were inscribed onto the talisman's surface, and it was giving off powerful spatial fluctuations.

The burly man quickly chanted an incantation, mustering up all that remained of his magic power to try and activate the talisman.

However, right at this moment, another massive shadow appeared over his head, and yet again, he was faced with a falling mountain, this one descending at an even more alarming speed than the previous three mountains.

The burly man's expression changed drastically upon seeing this. He needed some time to activate this spatial talisman.

In his desperation, he hurriedly made a strange hand seal, and black light erupted from his body to form a black array.

All of a sudden, the five giant ghosts that had been standing in mid-air just a second ago appeared around him, forming a protective encirclement.

The eyes of the five ghosts flashed with crimson light, and they roared in unison as they swept their enormous claws through the air, unleashing a series of black claw projections that sped toward the base of the black mountain.

As soon as the claw projections struck the giant mountain, they were instantly shattered, and the downward momentum of the mountain was hampered slightly, but it was still crashing down with tremendous force.

The five ghosts roared in unison as black qi surged over their bodies, and the muscles on their bodies bulged, particularly those on their arms and legs.

They reached up with their thick, musclebound arms to resist the giant mountain with no regard for their own lives.

As soon as their arms came into contact with the giant mountain, they were instantly shattered by the enormous impact. However, the five ghosts were still roaring valiantly as they resisted the mountain with their bodies, refusing to take a single backward step.

The giant black mountain struck their bodies with ferocious might, and a sickening grinding sound rang out as blood and flesh flew in all directions.

The giant mountain was finally stopped.

The upper bodies of the five ghosts had been completely destroyed, but they were still standing with their feet buried deep in the desert sand, resembling five enormous pillars that were supporting the giant mountain.

The burly man heaved a faint sigh of relief upon seeing this, and he hurriedly injected all of his remaining magic power into the white talisman.

The talisman began to glow with white light, and he was ecstatic to see this.

However, right at this moment, a resounding boom rang out as the final mountain came crashing down, landing on the fourth mountain.

A burst of terrifying force descended from above, and what remained of the five ghosts' bodies instantly exploded into dust.

The burly man felt the air constrict around him, rendering him completely immobile.

The two giant mountains then came crashing down upon him, and his body was crushed into a pile of mincemeat before he even had a chance to cry out.

All of a sudden, a burst of golden light shot out of the sand beneath the giant mountain, then sped away rapidly into the distance.

Han Li focused his gaze on the streak of golden light to find that it was a miniature golden figure that was only around three inches tall. Its appearance was identical to that of the burly man, except its hair was completely disheveled, and it wore a horrified expression as it flew toward the northwest, clutching a silver storage bracelet tightly to its chest.

It was none other than the burly man's nascent soul!

"Go!"

Han Li made a grabbing motion, then with a casual flick of his wrist, he sent a streak of black light flying toward the burly man's nascent soul at an incredible speed.

Meanwhile, Gu Yunyue had only just managed to stabilize the spirit ark, and she just so happened to cast her gaze toward Han Li's direction. She heard a sharp screeching sound in her ear, but her eyes were unable to follow the trajectory of the streak of black light.

In the next instant, a resounding boom rang out in the distant sky, and the burly man's nascent soul exploded into a ball of golden light.

A black palm-sized object also fell out of the sky, and it was nothing more than a piece of normal iron essence.

As for the burly man's silver storage bracelet, it was drawn into Han Li's grasp with a casual wave of his hand. He then flew over to the five scattered

mountains, shrinking them back down to their miniature forms and stowing them away before returning to the spirit ark.

All the while, Gu Yunyue was staring blankly at him as if she were looking at a complete stranger.

Earlier in her panicked state, she didn't get a chance to try and identify the burly man. However, thinking back to the cultivation arts and secret techniques that he had unleashed, she was able to identify him as an early-Deity Transformation Stage elder of the Heavenly Ghost Sect by the name of Lu Ya.

He was particularly adept in the art of manipulating ghosts, and it was said that over a decade ago, he was able to hold his own in battle against two Origin Realm Temple cultivators of the same cultivation base.

Despite all of his accolades, he had been slain by Han Li with ease, and this had already exceeded the boundaries of Gu Yunyue's comprehension.

It had finally become clear to her that there was no comparison whatsoever between her and Han Li, and she was utterly astonished.

After a long while, Gu Yunyue finally returned to her senses, and she asked with a wry smile, "Fellow Daoist Han, are you really only a Nascent Soul cultivator?"

The awe and veneration in her eyes were clear to see.

"I'm sure you can tell that for yourself, can't you, Fellow Daoist Gu?" Han Li replied in an ambiguous manner.

"I'm naturally able to discern the level of your magic power fluctuations, but your prowess in battle far exceeds what should be possible for a Nascent Soul cultivator! Even among all of the Deity Transformation Stage elders of our sect, I can't think of any who would be capable of slaying other Deity Transformation cultivators so easily," Gu Yunyue sighed.

"My only advantage is that I possess a physical body slightly more powerful than most, I wouldn't dare to compare myself with the powerful elders of the Cold Flame Sect," Han Li replied with a shake of his head, then spoke no further on the subject.

Instead, he directed his gaze toward Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan, who were still laying on the ground in an unconscious state, and he swept a sleeve through the air to release a burst of azure spiritual light that passed over the two.

Both of the young women slowly awakened, but as they opened their eyes, they were a little disoriented.

As a Foundation Establishment cultivator, Liu Le'er quickly recalled what had just happened, and she sat bolt upright with an alarmed expression.

"Brother Rock! You..."

"Don't worry, everything's fine now. We can continue onward," Han Li said in a gentle voice, looking as if nothing had happened.

.....

"Peak Master, according to the message that Martial Niece Gu just sent back, that vagrant cultivator with the Han surname definitely isn't just some ordinary Nascent Soul cultivator. Who could've thought that she would run into such an interesting character on this trip?"

Inside a conference hall within a certain mountain in the Cold Flame Sect, a burly man with a coarse and rugged appearance was speaking to a middle-aged man in a scholarly robe.

The middle-aged man was clean-shaven and was wearing an azure robe, holding an ancient azure scroll in his hands, giving him the appearance of an elegant and refined scholar.

"The fact that he was able to kill an early-Deity Transformation cultivator with the power of his physical body alone indicates that he's clearly a high-grade body cultivator," the azure-robed man replied with a nod.

"In any case, it's certainly great news that the Heavenly Ghost Sect has lost one of its Deity Transformation Stage elders. I must say, I'm very interested in this vagrant cultivator," the burly man chuckled with a hint of triumph in his eyes.

A faint smile also appeared on the azure-robed man's face upon hearing this, and he said, "In that case, I'll get you to greet him in person once he arrives. I'm sure you know what needs to be done."

"Yes," the burly man replied.

Chapter 29: Spiritflame Mountain Range

At the same time, in a certain cave abode, a thin elderly man wearing an ochre robe was situated on the main seat gently blowing into a cup of tea that he was holding in his hand.

In front of him was a middle-aged man with a pair of narrow eyes, standing with his head lowered slightly and a respectful look on his face.

"Given how much time has passed, Lu Ya should be done on his end," the thin elderly man mused.

"There's no chance that anything could go wrong under Elder Lu's watch. Only someone of such a lofty status as yourself would be able to request such a favor from Elder Lu," the middle-aged man said in a respectful voice.

"Out of all of my descendants, Hao'er is the only one who possesses the aptitude to be destined for great things, yet to think that he would die such a premature death! That bastard should be killed thousands of times over for what he's done!" the elderly man said in a furious voice as he slammed down his teacup.

"Look on the bright side, Patriarch. Once Yu Menghan is captured, you'll be well on your way to attaining full mastery of your cultivation art," the middle-aged man hurriedly consoled.

The fury on the elderly man's face eased slightly, and he said, "Come to think of it, she's partially to blame for Hao'er's death as well, but I'll spare her for now, seeing as she possesses a constitution that's useful to me."

As soon as his voice trailed off, his expression suddenly changed slightly, and he cast his gaze toward the gates of his cave abode.

Moments later, the sound of footsteps rang out, and a young female servant appeared at the cave abode's entrance, then extended a respectful bow as she declared, "Elder Qi, Elder Mo has come to see you."

Before the elderly man had a chance to reply, a cold male voice rang out from outside the cave abode.

"To think that you're still in the mood to be sipping tea in your cave abode at a time like this. I must say, your composure is very remarkable, Elder Qi."

Immediately thereafter, a middle-aged man in a black robe with a tall hat on his head appeared outside the entrance.

Qi Xuan raised an eyebrow at the sight of the man, and he gestured for the servant to leave before asking, "What business do you have with me, Mo Chen? Unless I'm mistaken, I don't believe we arranged a meeting at this time."

Instead of answering Qi Xuan's question, Mo Chen raised one of his own. "Elder Lu Ya's soul badge suddenly cracked not long ago. Do you have anything to say about that, Elder Qi?"

"What did you say?" Qi Xuan immediately sprang to his feet with a stunned expression.

"According to those who last saw Elder Lu, he went to intercept a group of people at your request, and that was what led to his death. May I ask who you requested him to intercept, Elder Qi?" Mo Chen asked in a cold voice.

"That's impossible! How could a pair of Nascent Soul cultivators possibly have been a match for Lu Ya?" Qi Xu was absolutely incredulous.

"Elder Lu Ya was an early-Deity Transformation cultivator, yet not only was he killed, even his nascent soul was unable to escape. Am I supposed to believe that you had no idea at all about how much danger you were placing Elder Lu in? I hope you haven't made a powerful enemy for the sect all for your own selfish vendettas. In any case, I'll have to ask you to come with me on a trip to the Enforcement Hall, Elder Qi," Mo Chen said in a cold voice.

.....

Several days later, Han Li's group finally emerged from the Yellow Billow Desert.

Along the way, they were attacked by several swarms of Flying Sin Ants, but they were easily taken care of by Han Li through Mo Guang, and they encountered no further pursuers from the Heavenly Ghost Sect.

Furthermore, given that Han Li was able to slay a Deity Transformation cultivator so easily, Gu Yunyue was not surprised at all to see that Han Li was able to deal with the Flying Sin Ants as well.

The consecutive days of travel had left Yu Menghan and Liu Le'er feeling rather exhausted, and they were cuddled up together, sleeping soundly on one side of the spirit ark.

Han Li was seated with his legs crossed at the tail-end of the spirit ark with his brows slightly furrowed and a rather peculiar look in his eyes. In front of him seven or eight vials of different colors and materials, all of which had been completely emptied.

"How did it go, Fellow Daoist Han?" Mo Guang's voice rang out in his mind.

"Most of these pills came from that Deity Transformation cultivator, and there's no lack of pills of a decently high caliber among them, but not a single one has had any effect on me," Han Li sighed.

During the previous battle, he was able to kill his opponent with his immense physical strength and the help of those five mountains, so he hadn't expended much magic power, but it was still naturally a problem that he was unable to increase his current reserves of magic power.

"What about the top-grade spirit stones?"

"I can't absorb them, either," Han Li replied with a wry smile, spreading open his hand to reveal a spirit stone that had already become completely devoid of luster.

"It seems that only certain special pills will have an effect on you," Mo Guang mused.

"Perhaps. So far, only that Sharp Watch Pill and that golden pill I found in Qi Minghao's storage bag have been effective. Once we get to the Cold Flame Sect, I'm going to get another Sharp Watch Pill and study it thoroughly. Perhaps I'll be able to find out the underlying reasons then," Han Li replied as he absentmindedly stroked the small vial that he wore around his neck.

.....

Half a month later, a spirit ark sped through the air above a lush mountain range.

There was one man and three women on the ark, and they were none other than Han Li's group.

"This Spiritflame Mountain Range is the entrance to our Cold Flame Sect," Gu Yunyue introduced with a smile as she swept her gaze over the forest down below.

"The spirit veins are very stable, and there's a vast abundance of spiritual qi. This is indeed a fantastic place," Han Li mused with a nod of approval.

Yu Menghan was ecstatic to hear this, but after looking around, a puzzled look appeared on her face as she turned to Gu Yunyue.

Liu Le'er was holding onto the side of the spirit ark, leaning her body over the edge to inspect her surroundings, but she couldn't see any signs of a sect amid the lush greenery, either, and she couldn't help but ask, "Brother Rock, I can also sense that the spiritual qi here is very abundant, but I don't see any sect."

"All major sects are concealed by powerful arrays. We are currently situated outside the array, which is equivalent to standing outside the walls of a city, so we naturally can't see what's inside," Han Li replied with a smile.

Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan didn't fully understand this concept, but they still nodded in response.

"Fellow Daoist Han, please wait for a moment while I inform the sect of our arrival," Gu Yunyue said.

She flipped a hand over as she spoke, producing a palm-sized golden badge with a flame design etched onto its surface.

A burst of light emerged on the badge, and the flame design suddenly began to sway as if it were an actual flame.

A streak of light shot forth from the badge, flying directly into the mountain range down below.

Moments later, a burst of ripples suddenly spread through the air below the spirit ark, and a semi-spherical golden light barrier that was barely visible slowly emerged.

The entirety of the Spiritflame Mountain Range, which stretched for several hundred kilometers, was completely encompassed within the light barrier.

"As expected of one of the most dominant sects in a realm," Han Li remarked with a hint of approval in his voice.

Liu Le'er and Yu Menghan were both gripping onto the edge of the spirit ark, looking down with awe and amazement in their eyes.

Beneath the golden light barrier were countless palaces and pagodas interspersed throughout the lush forest.

Some of the buildings were situated individually atop sheer cliffs, while others were connected together in a cluster. Some were positioned in canyons and gorges, while others were built halfway up mountains.

At the center of the entire mountain range were around a dozen mountains that were far taller than all of the other ones, and there was white mist and purple qi rising up from those mountains. It was clear just from a glance that those peaks were particularly abundant in spiritual qi.

"This place is beautiful!" Yu Menghan couldn't help but exclaim.

Liu Le'er also nodded eagerly in agreement.

Gu Yunyue was clearly in a very good mood following their return to the sect, and she turned to Han Li with a smile as she said, "Fellow Daoist Han, Elder Luo is already waiting for us on Cloudrise Peak. Let's go see him right away."

Han Li nodded in response.

Right as the spirit ark passed through the light barrier, he felt a burst of spiritual sense sweep over his body, and he presumed that it belonged to the aforementioned Elder Luo.

After Han Li and the others officially entered the Cold Flame Sect, Liu Le'er took a curious glance upward to find that the light barrier had already

disappeared, and all that was left to be seen were the pristine blue sky and the drifting white clouds.

The spirit ark flew toward the center of the mountain range, then descended onto a lush mountain peak that extended all the way up into the clouds.

At the foot of that mountain was a spacious white plaza, where an imposing man was standing, casting his gaze toward the spirit ark from afar.

The man had a set of rugged features and was wearing an ochre robe with a black belt around his waist, accentuating the outline of his pronounced pectoral muscles. Judging from the aura that he was giving off, he was a Deity Transformation cultivator.

Chapter 30: Raising the Land

After stowing the spirit ark away, Gu Yunyue made her way toward the burly man as she extended a respectful curtsy. "I pay my respects to Martial Uncle Luo."

"Thank you for your hard work, Martial Niece Gu. You must be Fellow Daoist Han, right?" the burly man asked as his gaze fell upon Han Li.

"That's correct," Han Li replied.

"My name is Luo Jun. Peak Master Nangong wanted to welcome you in person today, but there were some matters that he had to attend to, so I had to take his place. I hope you won't mind, Fellow Daoist Han," the burly man said with a smile.

"Of course not," Han Li replied with a smile.

Luo Jun's gaze then fell upon Yu Menghan, and his eyes lit up slightly as he remarked, "This must be your new disciple, right, Martial Niece Gu? She's quite a good find!"

"Junior Yu Menghan pays her respects to Elder Luo," Yu Menghan hurriedly said as she extended a curtsy.

"As long as she works hard in her cultivation, I'm certain she'll surpass me someday," Gu Yunyue said with a pleased smile.

After that, Luo Jun greeted Liu Le'er as well, and a strange look appeared on his face once he learned that she and Han Li referred to one another as brother and sister, but he offered no comment on the matter.

Having witnessed Han Li's power on the way here, Liu Le'er was no longer as anxious and uneasy in the presence of unfamiliar human cultivators. She was confident that as long as Han Li was with her, no one would be able to touch her.

Luo Jun's gaze returned to Han Li, and he said, "Fellow Daoist Han, not only were you able to kill a Deity Transformation Stage elder of the Heavenly Ghost Sect, you've also ensured a safe return to the sect for Martial Niece Gu. Given your powers and the contributions you've already made to the sect, we would be honored to accept you as a guest elder.

"There are around a dozen cave abodes for guest elders currently available for you to select from. Do you have any special requirements or requests that you'd like to raise?"

"Truth be told, I'm currently carrying some injuries, so it would be ideal if I could have a more peaceful and secluded cave abode to aid in my rest and recovery. Aside from that, I'm also somewhat familiar with the art of pill refinement, so it would be even better if I could have a cave abode in close proximity to a plot for spirit farmland," Han Li replied in an unhurried manner.

Luo Jun faltered slightly upon hearing these requests, following which his brows furrowed slightly as he said, "That might be a problem. Out of the remaining cave abodes, there are several that are quite peaceful and secluded, but unfortunately, none of them have any adjacent plots of spirit farmland.

"On top of that, most of the spirit farmland on Cloudrise Peak are looked after by our disciples, and the majority of those plots of land are situated on some sloped areas that receive the most sun exposure during the day, and I can't say they're very peaceful areas."

Han Li's brows also furrowed slightly upon hearing this, and it seemed that he was grappling with a dilemma.

Luo Jun could see the change in Han Li's expression, and after a brief moment of contemplation, he suggested, "How about this? Choose a plot of spirit farmland that you like, and I'll get some disciples to construct a brand

new cave abode on that plot of land right away. What do you think, Fellow Daoist Han?"

Han Li was silent for a moment, then suddenly chuckled, "There's no need for that. If there are no available cave abodes with adjacent plots of spirit farmland, then I can just carry a plot up there myself. Is that something that's allowed, Elder Luo?"

Gu Yunyue and Yu Menghan both faltered slightly upon hearing this, unsure of exactly what Han Li was proposing.

Meanwhile, Liu Le'er was snuggled up close to Han Li's side, inspecting her surroundings with an intrigued expression, paying no heed to the ongoing conversation.

Luo Jun clearly wasn't expecting such a response from Han Li, and he burst into laughter as an intrigued look appeared on his face. "So instead of conforming to the land, you're going to make the land conform to you! How bold of you, Fellow Daoist Han! Of course that's within the rules. Please come with me."

Thus, Luo Jun led Han Li and his group to a valley halfway up the mountain. There were several plots of spirit farmland in the valley that had been clearly separated, amounting to a total of around an acre in area, and there were some servants toiling away as they tended to the farmland.

"Fellow Daoist Han, these plots of spirit farmland once belonged to a guest elder who perished unexpectedly during an outing several years ago. In the wake of his passing, I've been looking after these plots of spirit farmland. If they catch your fancy, then you can do with them as please," Luo Jun said as he casually gestured toward the valley. up ahead.

"Thank you, Elder Luo." Han Li's gaze roamed over the valley as a hint of a smile appeared on his face.

For some reason, Luo Jun couldn't help but feel a sense of unease upon seeing this.

Han Li strode forward as he took a deep breath, then leaned down and raised his fist before slamming it into the ground.

A resounding boom rang out as the entire valley trembled violently, and a crater had been smashed into the ground by his fist. It wasn't a very large crater, but it was so deep that its bottom was entirely out of sight.

Yu Menghan swayed unsteadily, and if Gu Yunyue hadn't caught her, she would've fallen onto the ground.

Liu Le'er's also swayed slightly before hurriedly steadying herself.

Most of the servants who were working on the plot of farmland were Qi Refinement cultivators, and they had no idea what was happening. All of them cried out in alarm as they hurriedly fled the valley.

Meanwhile, Luo Jun was watching Han Li in silence.

Han Li made his way around the plots of spirit farmland as he strode into the valley, throwing a punch into the ground once every several hundred feet.

During the subsequent span of around 15 minutes, resounding booms rang out incessantly across the entire valley, and Han Li made a full lap of the valley before returning to the original spot that he had set off from.

Despite the manual labor that he had just completed, Han Li wasn't showing any signs of exertion at all, much to Luo Jun's amazement.

Without any further ado, Han Li crouched down before plunging his hands straight into the ground beneath him.

He then raised his arms violently, and the valley rumbled incessantly as a rift was instantly torn into the ground, gradually extending outward from Han Li's hands.

The rift connected all of the craters that had been punched into the ground by Han Li, ultimately the entire plot of spirit farmland in the valley.

Only now did Liu Le'er realize what Han Li was doing, and a look of admiration surfaced in her eyes as an excited flush appeared on her cheeks.

Gu Yunyue's mouth gaped open in shock, but she was unable to utter even a single word.

One final burst of rumbling rang out as the entire plot of spirit farmland was uprooted and lifted vertically upward.

From afar, it would appear as if the plot of spirit farmland were hovering in mid-air.

Yu Menghan's jaw had already dropped straight to the ground at this astonishing sight.

"Let's go check out my new cave abode, Elder Luo," Han Li said as he turned to Luo Jun with a nonchalant smile.

Luo Jun looked at the uprooted plot of spirit farmland and the severely ravaged valley, and he had no idea how to feel about this.

He had thought that at the very most, Han Li would've only chosen one of the plots of spirit farmland, then moved it using some type of treasure or secret technique, and it never occurred to him that he would uproot the entire plot of spirit farmland with the power of his physical body alone!

However, he had authorized Han Li to do as he pleased, so he naturally couldn't say anything now. Thus, he could only give a wry smile as he led the way up the mountain.

Han Li carried the enormous plot of spirit farmland and wandered over Cloudrise Peak for over an hour before finally selecting a cave abode that was situated in a peaceful corner near the peak of the mountain.