

## DEMONS 1061

### Chapter 1061 Mother?

Bing's perspective!

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Bing wanted to say she was dealing with the whole 'mother was replaced at birth' thing... but she wasn't. Bing was pushing all of her feelings down right now, because as poorly as she was taking this information? Feng was taking it much worse. In fact it was her budding friendship with Sue and by extension, Kat and Lily, that let her believe it. Kat was trustworthy in her eyes, and True Sight was a powerful ability. Bing just wished it hadn't been her own mother that turned out to be hiding under powerful illusions.

It called into questions so many things, and Bing felt the need to rage and scream just as much, if not more than Feng but she pushed it down. Bing couldn't be certain just how much was the truth at the moment, nor even if the heartbroken expression on Meng's face when Feng stabbed her was real. For now though, she just had to take things as they came. Bing knew she could have a breakdown later.

What they needed to do was establish what was now happening. What was true, how much was a lie, and what they were planning to do in the future. Kat had already given her answer, but Meng had been avoiding doing the same. Perhaps it was time to force a few concessions from her 'mother' "I'd like to see what you look like mother," said Bing as she stared at the woman.

Meng swallowed but nodded and let the illusion drop, Bing's first impression of the woman was that she was tiny. Meng was not really short... but she lacked so much of the presence she had when pretending to be the matriarch of her sect. It felt like Meng was desperately wishing to not be looked at so closely, and her cultivation was doing what it could to make that happen without a proper technique. Considering what Bing had been told about Meng so far, it might even be a genuine technique, and not a matter of just body posture.

"Tell me something that you'd only know if you were my mother since birth," said Bing firmly.

Meng winced but nodded, "Well daughter... I could tell you quite a few things but I'm not sure how much it would help, neither you nor Feng have techniques that allow for the viewing of such memories, it would prove nothing," Bing held her head up high and glared at Meng. Meng cracked in under five seconds. "Fine but you asked for this!

"When you were both little, really little, you used to hate each other. Always biting and slapping each other if you were put in close proximity. I had to breastfeed you both separately because I couldn't count on you both sitting quietly during the process. Didn't matter if I was feeding you both at the same time, or if I took it one at a time, you would hit and kick and bite at each other. I thought it was my fault for quite some time, but reviewing my memories of the short time you were with your biological parent revealed you both had always been like that," explained Meng.

"We got along great!" hissed Feng, "We did everything together until... well until that one thing, that I don't want to bring up with an imposter and a fucking demon,"

"Rude," grumbled Kat. Feng glared at her for it but Kat just stared back, letting her eyes glow.

Meng, jumped in with, "You warmed up to each other during the first truly bad storm we had around the compound. The thunder was especially loud and you both clung to each other like if you let go the world would end. It was a terrible pain to feed you for days after that event because you would not let go of each other. It took a week... and you hit each other once more each, frowned for some reason and started crying. You were quite taken with each other since that point... though obviously you stopped being so friendly later on. Though, you both have different ideas about what point in time is the cause of your separation,"

"Wait a minute," asked Bing quickly, with a confused look on her face, "How did you manage to breastfeed us? You aren't our r-" Bing cut herself off, the slight twitch of Meng's face, and the pain in her own traitorous heart wouldn't let her say it. It had been a mistake anyway. \*I did not mean to say that. I shouldn't have even thought about it.\* "You aren't our biological mother; you didn't get pregnant... so how did you manage to feed us? I mean... you didn't... didn't..."

Meng shook her head and said, "To the question I suspect you're struggling to answer, no. No I did not get pregnant and abandon or abort the child. I am infertile, have been for my entire life. It might be one of the big reasons that I have always been so enamoured with having children of my own. The answer is a lot simpler, well, I personally think it's a bit of a silly question anyway.

"Even if I didn't know a technique to produce breast milk, which I very much do, you were two babies. It would be quite literally the easiest thing I've ever done with my power to convince you both you were drinking from breasts while feeding you goat's milk or something else of that nature. Actually, that's something I lied about doing to my superiors. I wasn't to breast-feed you. I might get attached. Of course, it was a valid concern, I did get attached, but that was always going to happen so," Meng ended her thought with a shrug.

"Wait... WHY do you know that sort of technique?" asked Bing.

"It was for spy work right?" answered Kat. Meng grinned. "Right?" Meng grinned wider. "Um..." Kat looked away not wanting to hear the answer.

But instead, Meng slid forward so that she was standing next to her daughter's ear and started to whisper. "Can't you imagine it? I did quite a few seduction missions you know. Can you just imagine it? Having two over-engorged melons that you can just burry your face in and then suck on. Just imagine it... pressing your face into a set of nice tits and then getting rewarded for your efforts,"

The words licked at Bing's ears and she couldn't help but imagine herself in that position with Sue. Bing's throat dried as she imagined the process. Her thoughts were going from zero to sixty real fast then Feng shouted, "Why are you telling that nonsense to Bing? Why would she care about that sort of technique?"

"You're sister is a lesbian," said Meng deadpan.

Bing squawked in indignation, "I AM NOT" shouted Bing. Nobody believed her.

"Bing, it's ok. Your brother is entirely straight and he can deal with giving me grandbabies... though I'm also pretty sure I could find a way for you to have kids with another woman if you wanted. I certainly know how to give myself a fake dick. Wouldn't get anyone pregnant but I mean..."

"MOTHER!" shouted Bing as she let Feng go and started to block her view of Meng.

Meng couldn't be happier at the chastisement. It wasn't 'Meng' or 'Spy' or any horrible word that Bing could use. It was a pure, untainted, purely reflexive cry of 'mother' and it was the most glorious prize. Meng would treasure this moment forever. Even when Feng interrupted, "Wait my sister is gay? Why didn't anyone tell me!"

Meng shrugged, "I've known for a while but Bing here has been in denial for a long time, though, based on her lacklustre defence of herself, less in denial then before,"

"Is that why you spend so much time with Lian?" wondered Feng.

"Ewh, gross," hissed Bing as she blasted Feng with air to get him further away. "Gross, gross, gross, gross, she's basically my sister Feng! That's like you having fantasies about me!"

"Sis why!" hissed Feng as he comedically clutched at his eyes, "Why would you put that thought in my mind!"

"You started it you little shit!" retorted Bing.

"Why you!" said Feng as he jumped at Bing arms outstretched, and at mortal speed. Bing let him, taking the impact but stumbling over something behind her she didn't see... couldn't see because it was a solid illusion Meng made. The two fell to the ground and started to tussle with each other like five year olds. Pulling hair, pushing, shoving, and rolling around on the dirt.

Meng smiled at it like it was the most beautiful sight in the world while Kat shimmied to her side. Too curious not to ask, "So did you really learn that lactation technique just for sex?"

Meng shrugged, "It WAS on a list of sex spells the organisation gave me to learn. Though it was in the 'optional' section and I've never once needed to use it for anything other than feeding my children. So... take that as you will,"

Bing and Feng though, weren't listening instead they just kept playfully fighting with each other trying to blow off some of the emotions burning inside themselves.

Chapter 1062 Meng Take the Wheel

What's this? Meng's perspective?

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"I love for these moments," said Meng with all the love she could manage. In fact, for everyone that wasn't Kat she had actual hearts in her eyes that were beating in time with her own. It was a cool effect. An intentional effect that Meng was playing up for affection, but only partially. Bing and Feng weren't looking, Kat couldn't see it. It was basically just for herself.

"Don't you mean, 'live' for these moments?" asked Kat confused.

"Oh, well, that too," said Meng with a dismissive wave, "but honestly? Living is easy, loving is much harder. As a cultivator, if I just wanted to live I could find some place in the ground, seal myself up and

meditate for a few hundred thousand years, maybe even a million if I got lucky. It's barely living, but I would be ALIVE.

"No, I meant what I said, I LOVE for these moments. This nonsense with my kids right here? I would do just about anything for them Kat. My little babies have been so serious in the last few decades and they really need to lighten up sometimes. Sure they're old enough be adults, but cultivating slows down the aging process. They're mentally... maybe 20 if they're lucky," said Meng.

"Wait what?" said Kat.

Meng shrugged, "Why do you think young cultivators are known for making rash and poorly thought out decisions even as they age hundreds of years Kat? The answer? It's because they aren't aging normally. They are the rough equivalent of teenagers. Why do you think the elves haven't suddenly taken over the world Kat? Sure there's a fertility issue, but a much bigger problem is the extended puberty and childhood that makes it seem like dumb decisions are good ideas,"

Kat glanced down at the pair on the floor. Feng's robe had been removed from his shoulders and was hanging loose, but Bing was missing a sleeve. What little dirt had been on the ground seemed to have ended up on their faces... wait. Kat narrowed her eyes and realised that Meng had been carefully dropping dirt out of her storage ring... for some reason. "I suppose that's fair. I've watched over a lot of kids, and it's always great to see them in good spirits. It... can be rare in an orphanage,"

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Meng nodded, empathising with the issue even if she couldn't really understand it. Her own time in the orphanage was a memory she didn't truly possess anymore. She was all but certain it HAD happened, but there was nothing more than vague impressions. She remembered no one and nothing from her time there, her training drowning out all earlier memories, for better, and for worse.

\*Sometimes I wonder how many other children were recruited into the program. Too many in all likelihood. At least I know that they don't take anyone under ten. Too hard to train when they're younger than that 'inefficient' they said. I wonder if I was picked up before they implemented that policy or after.\*

"Why are you adding dirt to the ground?" asked Kat.

"Because my kids are rolling around on the ground like they're five and while I do approve of this behaviour because it's adorable, and they're not going anywhere close to all out, their spatial awareness is atrocious. I taught them better than that. They have so much dirt on them already and yet they still haven't noticed," said Meng.

"Should... should you really be turning something like that into a teaching moment?" asked Kat. Meng of course went to answer in the affirmative but... \*Perhaps not? That is all I did as a teenager. Train. Fight and Train with the occasional practice mission. Hmm... should I stop then?\* Meng smiled down at her children. \*No. This amuses me greatly and gives me a sense of warmth in my chest. A bit of extra laundry is a cheap price to pay. Though... I will have to start doing that myself again. Annoying.

Makes me wish I could go back to the days I wore fake clothes around, or the time I just used my illusions to make my clothes look clean. Not a good idea. Just because they LOOK clean doesn't mean

they are. How I missed the smell for so long will forever be a mystery, and I'm lucky that knife only managed to cut me lightly on the hip. Two harsh lessons learnt for a cheap price.\*

"It amuses me Kat, and I'm willing to take that joy where I can so... should I be doing this? Perhaps not? Am I going to stop? Not way," said Meng, unsure of what Kat's reactions would be. To her relief, the demon chuckled and gave an understanding nod. Kat could understand that sometimes watching kids be kids could be very amusing, even if it might be better to stop them.

Eventually though, they did have to get off the ground. Feng growled when he saw the state of his clothes, but Bing just got to changing, "Bing! Have you no decency!" hissed Feng.

"Well you're my brother and you've seen me naked plenty of times, Kat is asexual and probably finds my naked body to be about as appealing as the wall behind, and the only other person here as our mom, so really, what am I doing wrong?" asked Bing.

"First off, that is not our mother," hissed Feng and Meng flinched but didn't interrupt. "Secondly, Kat is a DEMON I don't care if she's asexual, you shouldn't be displaying yourself in front of one. Thirdly, yes I have seen you naked but that doesn't mean I WANT to,"

At this point Bing had removed everything, and Kat did mean EVERYTHING before pulling out a portable shower. Bing stood under it and scrubbed the dirt off. "Well, let me correct you on some things," said Bing as she swallowed, "Firstly, that woman changed our diapers. She fed us, trained us, and loved us. And you know what? It does hurt that part of our relationship is built on a lie, but I can't hate her. I love my mother too much for that. If you want to disown her fine, but she's MY mother and you can't take her from me.

"Secondly, I am in no danger from Kat. Sue perhaps, but not Kat. Not only would her girlfriend be unhappy about it, something Kat would never risk, but you do know what asexual means right? No sexual desire. None. Nada. Zip. In fact, I think it's more likely you'd have a reaction to seeing me naked then Kat would. Which is my final point. If I can't trust my twin brother not to molest me in the shower? Well fuck who can I trust?"

"It's just not proper!" hissed Feng. "You are an heir of the sect, and should be more careful about who you display your body to!"

"We have an army of servants Feng! I've had people watch me bathe for as long as I can remember! Who the fuck cares if it's you three instead?" said Bing.

"The servants have a duty! They would not compromise themselves like that," hissed Feng.

"I've pretended to be a servant plenty of times, and quite a few of those times I used my position to seduce the people I was serving. That's not even going into the cultivators that treat their servants like their own personal harem. Honestly, I taught you better than that Feng," said Meng.

"You taught me lies!" hissed Feng.

Meng winced at that but looked to her daughter for comfort and found Bing looking at him like he was the dumber than rocks. \*Ah! My lovely daughter! Now I just need the other one and I can be happy. Feng has apparently decided that I'm a no good harlot but at least one of my daughters still love me.

Hmm... a bit more seriously... I can live with that. Not happily, but I can leave with that.\* “Daughter, your brother is an idiot,” said Meng with a grin.

“It seems that way mother, truly I wonder how we can be related to such a fool,” said Bing with a sigh.

\*Um... well... technically I’m not... but I really don’t want to bring that up when Feng is so much less accepting of the situation... so... hmm...\* “Personally I think he gets it from his father,” was Meng’s compromise. “Men, such fools. Though, I suppose you won’t have to deal with that sort of issue will you Bing?”

Bing blushed, covering herself up a bit with her hands and legs. She was mostly clean now, and Feng was looking at the ceiling ‘in protest’. “Mooooom! You can’t just say stuff like that while I’m showering... but... um... what about you?”

Meng shrugged, “Eh... I guess I’m closer to Kat? Probably? I don’t think I could ever truly love someone the way I should. Sex does feel pretty great, but like... I don’t really look at anyone and go ‘yeah I’m down to fuck’. It’s more like a favourite sporting activity of mine. I don’t hate it, and I DO have a sex drive but romance? Pretty sure for me that’s dead,”

Chapter 1063 Stuff, Things, Happenings. Other Words

Back with Kat.

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Once Bing was cleaned and dressed, she turned to Meng and asked, “So what’s the plan now? Do we just wait for Bodeir to wake up then leave? Presumably through the secret exit”

“Ha... yeah... about that...” Meng gave a wry smile and ran her hands through her hair “So... thing is? I have no idea where the secret exit is, and I’m only seventy percent sure that it exists at all. Then, assuming we DO find it, my guess would be that the array is bloodline locked, or worse, soul locked. The chances that Kat, myself, or even the other two could use it. You and your brother might be able to use it... but that’s assuming we can find it. No, we’ll probably have to wait for Bang to get here,”

“Why would you not know that? Wait, why do we WANT Bang to get here? Is he also going to be running away with us?” asked Bing rapid fire.

Meng winced and said, “Well... to answer the first question. I had to spy on Meng for quite a while before I felt comfortable pretending to be her... but there was no reason to reveal any of the secret exits the sect surely has set up. I have guesses about where a number of them are just based on experience... but I never found them, or proved they exist. I didn’t really have the time for that sort of work.

“At the beginning, when you were both too young to notice me doing anything strange I had to take care of you both. Like hell I was letting the maids do it. Then, as you got older I was expected to do more and more things, and really it just kept me busy. Sneaking off for days at a time to try and find secret exits is a horrible use of my time. That and I’m not all that great at arrays, so I’d be wasting even more time to try and get it to a usable state.

"It just wasn't worth it in the end. Not only was it more my partners job to deal with those sorts of things, excuses to come down here to this vault specifically? Well they are pretty rare. Remember, the collapse of this sect was meant to be really subtle,"

"Sure, I can believe that..." said Bing with a nod, "...but I noticed you didn't answer my second question,"

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Meng winced again, "Right... well... I'll just call them Bang for now but... they are much less invested in you both. In fact, I'm pretty sure Bang hates kids, so I don't know why he was sent on this mission. Maybe to balance me out? I never made it a secret I wanted kids one day, and it was a surprise that I got a mission where I could basically adopt my own. I don't think I could do or say anything to convince Bang to turn traitor."

"Why do you get a free pass?" asked Feng, not as outwardly angry, but clearly still not pleased with the situation. "Why are we just writing off Bang because a spy is telling us so! She's not in any better position than 'Bang' is. So why are we just accepting her word for it? Heck, she could be lying about Bang being an imposter! So why are we all just treating it like suspecting our father is a spy is a completely reasonable thing to suspect!" Bing opened her mouth to answer, but didn't have a good one so she closed it right after.

\*Perhaps because Meng knows 'Bang' well? Perhaps because the chance that both of the spies watching over you are actually nice is unbelievably low? Perhaps the fact that Meng genuinely looks like she has your best interests at heart? I don't think anyone can fake the pure bliss and love she had on her face just watching you and your sister rolling around in the dirt! I can't even be that content watching Sylvie play with the other kids at the orphanage, though hugging Sylvie does come close.\*

Despite Kat's thoughts, she held her tongue. The facts didn't really matter to Feng, or at least, in Kat's mind they didn't. Feng was clearly angry at this whole situation and wasn't willing to calm down and think about what this might all mean. Instead, he just wants to yell at the world for a few moments, and trying to find problems where there was none. Kat was pretty sure throwing out her reasonable arguments of Meng's clear affection would fall on deaf ears.

The silence continued. Meng didn't know what to say either. 'I just know' or 'I'm your mother' were catastrophic answers. Just like 'I've known him longer than you' would be, despite that one also being true if Meng and Bang were their original parents. Emotional pleas would be useless, and so many of the logical examples were tainted by Feng's knowledge that Meng was, and has been, a spy for many years.

That wasn't even getting into the other issues, like how can she look Feng in the eyes and tell him his father never loved him. It's true, from a certain angle. The original Bang wasn't great with kids either, but he likely DID love his children. This fake one? Certainly not. Meng couldn't just SAY that though. It would sound a lot like the pot calling the kettle black. There were so many things Meng wanted to say but couldn't.

After the silence had definitely got awkward Kat just rolled her eyes before clapping her hands together loudly to get everyone's attention. "Right, enough of that. Bing, stop moping and hug your mother she needs it. Feng, despite the fact that you're not really thinking about this at the moment I AM willing to compromise here. The person who will need to fight Bang in the end is almost certainly ME, but before

we start an epic fight to the death, or whatever it ends up being, I can give YOU the chance to talk him down. Is that fair?"

"What gives you the right to fight my father?" asked Feng.

\*Really? Really Feng?\* "Well, considering the fact that I need to protect Bodeir, I'll do anything necessary for that goal. Then, Bing is my friend and I want her to escape this place without getting hurt or killed so delaying the biggest threat seems necessary. Finally, I'm perhaps the strongest person in this room, so if a fight does need to happen? Who would you rather leave it to?" said Kat.

"Perhaps we should make Meng fight Bang, fake or not. That way the heaven's could decide" grumbled Feng.

"Feng, I'm pretty sure that a fight between them would have nothing at all to do with the heavens," said Kat with a sigh. "On top of that, what would that even prove? If you're really so worried about Meng's loyalties I'm sure it's very easy for her to fake her death, or fake Bang's death and have him secretly trail after you. Honestly, she could screw you over in so many ways if she really wanted to. Why are you trying to pain her as the bad guy?"

"She killed our parents!" shot back Feng.

Kat cracked her neck, not actually eliciting a sound as she did so. \*Note to self. Can't crack your neck when you're a demon... or maybe it's the regeneration?\* "Right Feng? First off, she didn't kill your parents, she captured them and someone else probably killed them. Slight difference. Secondly, you don't KNOW your parents and you never have. You're angry that the idea of them you have in your head has been tarnished. The thing is? Lashing out like this? You will remember it for the rest of your life.

"Meng has cared for you. She has allowed for you to strike her without retaliation, and she has loved you for years and you are being mighty rude to her at the moment. Why is it, that you cannot wrap your head around the idea that she could care for kids that she basically adopted? Plenty of people do it. I grew up in an orphanage Feng! The people who look after me now? They're great! It's awkward sometimes, and I can't think of them as parents, but that's because I'm old, and I've never known parents.

"You, you have grown up loved. You have grown up cared for. You're adopted parents, or parent in this case, don't need to prove they love you. That they care. Meng has already proved that with years of love and affection. So why are you trying to make this hard for yourself?"

"Well, I don't see how you all can be fine with this!" hissed Feng. "It's this sort of thing that the Holy Ice Wind sect is supposed to protect against. Spies, saboteurs, those lacking in honour. Meng is all three! And yet apparently a bit of love makes it all better,"

Bing gulped, swallowing down her nervousness but spoke, "Yes Feng. Yes it does,"

Chapter 1064 Bing's Ascension

BING TELL IT LIKE IT IS!

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“What did you say?” asked Feng, raging building. He was giving his sister a chance to go back on her words. To answer differently.

He chose poorly. Bing’s eyes started to glow, wisps of wind started to surround her form as she stood proud in front of her brother and spoke, “I said that it DOES matter. The fact that Meng loves us IS the difference!”

“How can you say that? Everything we’ve ever known about her is a lie!” hissed Feng.

“You don’t know that Bang has lived in truth either. What does it matter though? Were we not raised on the same stories? The same legends? The tale of the ‘Tired Soldier and the Broken Woman’ or perhaps ‘The Spy and the Peasant’ is more relevant to this case? ‘Love Conquers All?’, ‘How to Repair a Broken Dream’ these are all stories I know you’ve heard with me,” stated Bing, her voice taking on a slightly ethereal quality.

“Those are just stories Bing! This is the real world! Somehow who can so happily admit to being a spy should have no place in our family. We were taught how to spot spies from a young age. Taught about the damage they do. The havoc they can wreak. We were told of the tragedies, of sects bought low because one person failed to notice a spy within their ranks. We have used those techniques to find spies before, and we should treat the one we have found now with the same tactics!” stated Feng.

At this point, Feng was also bringing up his qi, but it paled in comparison to the unconscious collection Bing was managing. Her cultivation technique was one unique to the Holy Icy Wind Sect, and it was ‘Celestial Maiden of Heavenly Winds’. Something in this moment was resonating with her heart, her soul, and her cultivation. The winds were gathering, and Feng could not hope to stop it with a bit of his own qi.

“Why do you think we were so good at it Feng? Our mother is a spy! Own up to the fact that you love her despite her profession. She has taught us well and LOVED us. We are her children just as much, and likely more so, then the woman who gave birth to us. While it is a tragedy she will not see us in life, if she yet lives I suspect she is proud of who we have become. I will happily stand by my mother, or run with her if the situation comes to it. There is power in love, power in compassion.

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“If you truly have such an issue with her cultivation style, why not ask mother to change? Ask her to be better! I might not think she needs to change, but you seem to. If you care about her, wish Meng to be better! Don’t just throw in the towel and say ‘I want nothing to do with this spy’. That’s called RUNNING AWAY FROM YOUR PROBLEM!” boomed Bing. Somehow a great deal of wind had found its way into the bunker, and Bing spoke with the full weight of it.

Kat had wrapped her tail around her legs to prevent her kimono from flying up and pulled her wings in tight, while Meng had loosened it a bit around her shoulders so that she could stand on the bottom of her own outfit, arms crossed to hold the top in place. Feng wasn’t paying attention and his clothes whipped around him in the increasingly turbulent winds.

“It... it goes against everything we stand for,” said Feng, though it was clear his anger was breaking against the force that Bing was projecting.

"No Feng. You do," said Bing, the raging winds falling silent, despite the speed continue to increase. It was as if the world was forcing Feng to acknowledge his sisters point. He could not escape from it any longer. He must confront the truth instead of bathing in anger, pulling the pain of betrayal to the forefront of Feng's mind and forcing him to focus on what it really meant. Not just in the superficial sense, but for everything.

Feng went to say something in response, to scream at Bing, to tell her off for picking someone else over him, her brother, her twin... but the words caught in his mouth. Heavier then any weight he'd tried to lift. Even as he tried to break out of this stupor, he felt this pressing holding him down, and the words inside his throat.

Then Bing fell forward, like a puppet having her strings cut. The fact that she'd started floating at some point not helping matters. Meng didn't waste a moment, she dashed in front of Bing and let her daughter fall into her arms carefully before throwing down an real-illusion chair and hopping onto it with Bing being bundled into Meng's arms.

\*So warm. So fuzzy. What's happening to my head? I... what was I doing?\* Meng couldn't help it, so she gave her lovely daughter a kiss on the forehead and continued to run her hands through Bing's hair. "It appears my little whirlwind has had an epiphany. It will take a bit to stabilise, but she will end up either at peak Rank 2 or scrape into Rank 3. What a productive day this has been,"

Bing was still reeling from the experience and her thoughts were out of order. Meng was gently infusing a bit of her own qi to help stabilise her daughter's foundation. It was only a miniscule amount; the illusionist didn't want to risk hurting Bing's future by interfering too much. Just the slightest nudges here and there to keep things going on their optimal course. If Meng had been less familiar with Bing and her qi, or if Meng had even the slightest idea of foul intentions this technique would be almost impossible to manage as only a Rank 4.

"It will take her quite some time to match my skill at Rank 4... but perhaps if my dear daughter is rushing to catch up with me I should finally make the push for Rank 5? Hmm... but I doubt I could deal with the tribulation lightning and any pursuers we might have. That sort of lightning is very noticeable after all... best to save it for when we are all settled again," mumbled Meng.

"Is there anything you'd like to say Feng?" asked Meng, after a few moments of silence. Her voice was soft and non-judgemental despite all the things Feng had been saying up till this point.

"Yes? No? Maybe? I don't know? I... no I do know that I have things to say but I don't want to say them. These feelings are tearing me up Mo-Meng, and I don't know what I am to do with them. We have just been told that our entire life is a lie... and somehow Bing was able to overcome this. I am not so easily able to dismiss the greatest shock I have ever experienced. If this doesn't solidify into a heart demon I will perhaps be the luckiest cultivator under the heavens," said Feng, foot tapping rapidly on the ground.

Meng sighed and said, "Feng, your sister is not immune to these issues, and they have not truly been dealt with yet. While I admit she is doing MUCH better then you at handling those feelings, she's running away by instead focusing on feelings of love and family. What is going to happen when she meets Bang and we are forced to fight him?" Feng went to interject but Meng rolled her eyes and added, "Yes I know Kat agreed to talk him down, but I doubt it will help.

"That means that Bing will have to figure out a new way of dealing with everything once it is proven that Bang is not coming with us. It will be a different problem... and one I do not know how your sister will overcome,"

"Bing always was so a mummy's girl. She got lucky with which parent had the weaker loyalties," grumbled Feng.

Meng shrugged, "I cannot help you with a number of... exclusively male problems. Sure I've pretended to be a man more than once but it is infinitely easier to stick to my own gender. There are many things that I will simply never understand. So while that means that Bing was more willing to come to me for that sort of thing... I understand if you might feel that sometimes you were left out of the conversations,"

"That's not why I'm saying it at all," returned Feng with a huff.

"Sure you're not my little snowman," said Meng fondly.

"I'm not FIVE Meng, my name is Feng," grumbled the ice cultivator.

Meng just shrugged again, "I don't see any reason for that to stop me from using your old nicknames. I had to pretend to be a loving, but somewhat cold and busy sect matriarch. Now I can spoil my kiddies without all the stupid elders decrying favouritism. OF COURSE it's fucking favouritism you blind fucks. Why would I not favour my children? Honestly some people..."

"Should you really be badmouthing the elders? They perform important rolls to keep the sect running," said Feng.

"Bah, that's nonsense. They like to pretend they're important just because they're old fucks. In truth, they're just old men and women with no hope of advancing their cultivation further so they play games with the younger generation and live vicariously through their chosen descendants. It's pathetic really,"

Chapter 1065 Questions for Meng

B-back with Kat

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Kat found herself rolling her feet forward and backward as she dealt with the silence. After Meng's comment about the elders, Feng had decided to just... not deal with this anymore. He had taken out a sleeping bag and requested entrance to the vault, and Bing had stumbled after him with murmurings of needing to meditate and solidify his foundations. Meng agreed as long as they promised not to interrupt Bodeir, and they agreed.

So that left Kat and Meng, once again, alone in front of the big vault door. There had been a lot of traffic going through it today, and Kat didn't see it as quite so secure anymore. Thick and imposing it might seem, but apparently it was easily opened from the inside, and on the outside, it wasn't much harder to gain entrance if you were keyed in.

\*Well... I've got more than a few questions to ask but it seems like everyone else is taking a break so...\*

"Did you want to get some sleep?" asked Kat.

Meng shook her head, "No certainly not. I have too many emotions running through me to rest, and even if I did not, my cultivation means I can go a week without sleep before any side effects start cropping up, but even then I can push myself to stay awake for a month before it starts to become a real issue. Right now I have enough things to occupy my mind, and sleep would not come easily to me. Well, not without forcing the issue with techniques, but that just opens up a wholly different can of worms,"

"Well... I don't need the sleep either, and I do have questions so... I'm going to ask some of them. Starting with the obvious bait right there. Why can't you use a technique to force yourself to sleep? Clearly they exist," asked Kat.

"Indeed, they do. The primary issue with many, is that they force the body to rest and fail to allow the mind to rest as well. Many are bastardised versions of techniques designed to render your foes unconscious. They were never for a GOOD sleep, just an instant one. Some more advanced techniques I know are based around sleeping for less time and essentially... speeding up the process of sleep.

"The issues with those techniques is that they REQUIRE you to sleep for specific lengths of time. You cannot wake else the technique backfires and you wake up further exhausted. Something I certainly don't want to risk. The closest I have to a natural technique for sleep, are sleeping drugs, but the ones I have aren't really intended for personal use and I'm no alchemist. I can make a select number of common poisons and that's it," explained Meng.

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"Well, they say the difference between poison and medicine is all in the dosage," offered Kat.

"I know that intellectually, but I simply don't have the training. I barely understand how things react to produce the recipes I do know. I cannot simply make up new ones using only existing stock to get a good result. Using untested sleeping drugs right now seems like a horrible idea," said Meng.

"Makes sense, I just assumed this would be something that would get researched heavily," said Kat.

"Oh it is, but most of those investigations were performed in the past. A perfect sleeping technique has been sought after for a long time, but unless you have an innately compatible affinity such as Time, or maybe something really niche like, Sleep or Home there doesn't seem to be anything just yet. The problem is that techniques of that nature take a lot of time to develop and test so there just ends up being other, more important techniques to investigate," replied Meng.

"I understand. Next question then?" Meng nodded and Kat continued, "Right so... what did you mean when you said Bing had an epiphany? How is that different from like... a breakthrough or just increasing in power and Rank more normally?"

"That's a bit of a complicated subject..." said Meng. "It's more something you know when you see it then something you can just go searching for. It's... almost like a crystallised moment in time. Think of it like several things all slipping into place at just the right moment. In this case, Bing was acting in tune with her cultivation technique, her core beliefs, and she was experiencing an onslaught of emotions.

"Then you must take into account her own comprehension. All of those things can line up quite regularly for people who dedicated themselves to a certain Dao. Just imagine if you had the Dao of a hero,

constantly saving people, that rush of emotion, adrenaline, cultivation and cultivator working in step... but such heroes don't simply find themselves constantly beset by enlightenment.

"It would need to be a meaningful moment. Even the job of a hero can be routine when you repeat the same actions over and over again. What made this moment special was likely a combination of Bing's understanding of the world shattering, yet reforming stronger than before in a short timeframe, and then being tested on her new understanding of the world right after. Though, that's just a guess.

"If we knew how to achieve such a state every cultivator would constantly be aiming for it. I'm also not saying Bing is magically over everything that has happened. I mentioned before that I think the real test will come when Bing is forced to confront the lack of love and care Bang has for her head on. While Feng is the one trying to force those answers before we fight, it is likely that he is expecting to be disappointed.

"Bing, despite saying otherwise, likely has not truly understood what it means for Bang to be so... apathetic to her life and desires. I would say he dislikes children, but perhaps it is more accurate to say that he will not take the twin's interests into consideration at all. That... sort of malicious apathy, at least from their perspective, will hit quite hard. The idea that their father doesn't, or cannot care about them and never has is something that I suspect will hit them both hard, though Feng will likely deal with it better.

"Not well, but better. Bang will be a more... 'acceptable' target for his anger. What is causing such conflicting feelings in Feng at the moment is that he can't JUST be angry at me. If he was just angry he could scream it out a bit, or attack me for a while and get it all out of his system. Anger is not truly self-reinforcing. Anger is exhausting and keeping that flame burning is a lot of effort... unless you find yourself bursting with so many emotions that feeding them to the flames seems like a less painful option,"

"When we get out of here it's all going to happen at once isn't it?" said Kat with a sigh.

"I'm afraid so. I worry, for your sake really, that Bodeir will not be ready to move when Bang arrives. I know not how long the repairs will take, and if he tries to engage us in a fight before we're ready... I do not what your contract would require you to do. I do not know how Bodeir could remain safe during such a fight," Meng intoned.

Kat shrugged, "Let that be my problem. I don't have as much on my shoulders as your family does at the moment. A bit of worry for Bodeir is something I can spare without issue. That was however... dodging the question. Right now we're in a nice little bubble where the outside world only matters a bit. When it all goes down... everything is going to happen, and it's all going to hit you three at once,"

"I will likely have no issues. I was trained to kill my partner if ordered, and it has happened a few times in the past. Usually younger recruits that thought they could run away, and didn't know I was assigned to watch them for treachery. Despite my time in close proximity with my current partner I have no love for them. In fact, if anything, I am less fond of them now than before. I expect to have more problem dealing with how my children will treat me should I be the one to kill Bang than the act itself," explained Meng.

"Is that something I should be aiming for? The kill?" asked Kat.

"I will not push you to end his life for my own piece of mind. I suspect it might be necessary, and while you a demon, and stronger for it, he is still Rank 4. Unless you have a skill that lends itself well to restraining the person you know as Bang, I doubt your ability to bring him down without death," said Meng.

Kat nodded slowly, "Indeed, I have similar thoughts,"

Chapter 1066 Inside the Vault

Bing, just after the vault shuts.

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Bing marvelled at the increase in cultivation. She was so close to Rank 3. The slightest push would send her over that edge... but now was not the time. With everything that was going on right now Bing knew that she couldn't produce a stable foundation at Rank 3 so instead Bing compacted her current foundation, forcing her current gains to settle and strengthen what she had already.

It would still leave her at the peak of Rank 2, just a hair's breadth away from Rank 3. A good meditation session on a windy day would get her passed this hurdle in the future... but with all of the nonsense happening at the moment it really wasn't the best time. \*I want my cultivation to be perfect. Any issues I introduce now will just slow me down in the future. If I knew for certain I had the time Rank 3 isn't out of the question, and my foundation is already extremely solid... but it wasn't perfect and things are tense right now.\*

Bing felt the power inside of herself threatening to lash out as she finished up with the last of her foundation. It was already close to perfect and it didn't want to just stay down and remain at Rank 2. It was pushing to be unleashed, to reach Rank 3. It was a challenge Bing knew she had to overcome. She'd gotten this far, and she wasn't going to give up yet.

"Hey Bing?" Bing's control snapped when she heard her brother's word. What remaining qi hadn't been pinned down exploded out of her in a whirlwind directed at the sound. Bing gritted her teeth, struggling to keep the rest of her qi in working order. Her foundation was shaking, but solid. Just a bit of time needed to pass. Bing could hear the grinding of wind against the defensive formations but couldn't pay it any mind right now.

A push, there, a twist there, and a lot of willpower holding it all down, Bing managed to stabilise her foundation. It would stay put as it was for the foreseeable future. Bing slowly opened her eyes, while trying to keep her face as expressionless as possible. That was made harder by the look of terror on Feng's face when he realised, he done fucked up. \*Keep it together. We're supposed to be angry. If I'd been pushing for Rank 3 instead of just peak Rank 2 that could have crippled me! God bro, you should know better than this! I get it's stressful, but this is basic shit!

I also probably shouldn't be enjoying just how scared he looks. I mean, it looks like he's about to be eaten. Though... hmm... I guess if I went and tattled to Meng, our assassin mother... yeah that's a terrifying thought. I don't know how far she'd go, and that uncertainty is probably what's scaring Feng quite so much.\*

Bing of course, hadn't heard when Feng asked for permission to rest in the vault. He was given one rule, and that one rule was to not bother anyone. He was lucky that underneath that layer of light, Bodeir was now also encased in a layer of rock and didn't hear the potential interruption but it would not have been pretty. If Bodeir had been hurt, Meng would've been displeased and Kat might have been obligated to DO something about it.

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"So, foolish brother of mine, what were you trying to ask me?" asked Bing sweetly.

Feng fell forward into a seiza, head on the floor and spoke. "Nothing. This foolish brother of yours requires nothing,"

"While that reply does confirm that your memory is equivalent to that of a goldfish, I do wish to remind you that I have already been interrupted. Are you sure you wish to communicate to me that the reason you were interrupting my cultivation was so easily forgotten in just a few moments? Or worse, that there was never a reason to begin with? I'll have to let Meng know that you're suffering from some malady of the mind," returned Bing.

Feng gulped, "I... I wished to pick your mind about Meng now that she won't be able to hear what we are saying... but I understand that I was wrong to interrupt your meditation," said Feng, voice shaking.

Bing sighed, letting her face return to normal before speaking. "Look Feng... it worked out, and I didn't damage my cultivation... but god that was dumb. You know better than that Feng. If I wasn't your sister, I would probably be inclined to get you harshly punished for that! Heck, I'm still somewhat tempted. It's only because I understand you're stressed and no damage was done that I'm going to keep quiet about it... but come on Feng, that sort of mistake will get you killed one day,"

"I'm sorry," said Feng as he sat up, regret written over his face. "I... I don't know what I was thinking. I couldn't see any wind around you like normal... so I was just... well I guess I was assuming you were just using meditation to relax or something... I wasn't thinking,"

"That does seem to be a frequent occurrence today doesn't it Feng?" said Bing with a bit more bite to it than she'd intended. Bing brushed the minor bit of guilt aside. Unintentional it might have been, but not unwarranted. "Look, even if you have problems with Meng why would you SAY THAT TO HER FACE. If she was lying, or just taking advantage of us, she could easily wrap us in an illusion, or just kill you for being a little shit.

"Now obviously she's not going to do this if she really loves us... but that was the whole point of the argument! You've been insisting she's an untrustworthy spy, and if you were right? Well you were risking death trying to prove a point that you desperately needed to be wrong about? And the worst part? If she really does love you, as I'm sure she does, what you said was immensely hurtful. Probably more hurtful than when you STABBED HER IN THE NECK,"

Feng flinched back at that last point and sighed, taking a bit of time to gather up his thoughts again.

"Look, it wasn't my best moment," Bing just rolled her eyes, unwilling to dignify that with a response.

"Just... do you really think going with her is the right thing to do? Is she... is she really someone we should call mother?"

It was Bing's turn to sigh, "Honestly Feng, I think that's something you have to decide for yourself. Meng laid most of it out on the table there. I'm sure we could ask for the specifics of her missions if we want to make it hard on her, and ourselves, but I don't know what else needs to be said. She's a spy, and she has always been a spy. The fact that she isn't spying on other people, but us? It barely matters when I feel like she's proved to be a good mother to us,"

"I... just... has she though? Has she really proved anything of the sort?" asked Feng.

"Feng, she raised us. Never before today have I ever worried about not having my parents love. After talking with her, I don't worry about losing her love once again. Meng has always had our best interests at heart, and now well... now the past is catching up to our mother and as good kids? It's our job to support her in times of trouble, even if we can't help much. We should do what we can... not... not drag her down and throw metaphorical shit in her face," insisted Bing.

"Well what about Bang?" asked Feng. "I never thought father didn't love us... and now suddenly we're hearing that it was all an act. If we didn't notice his disdain, why would we notice Meng's? Siding with her IS a risk. She could be lying, she could be wrong... and we've proven that we can't actually TELL,"

Bing winced at that accusation. \*That's not something I really wanted to consider. THANKS Feng. Just... well. I trust Kat. I trust that she would be able to tell if Meng was lying, at least, about big things. And she seems so genuine.\* "Well... she IS an illusion mistress. It's possible, perhaps even likely that she pretended to be Bang a few times to make it seem like he cared more than he did,"

"That's just something you WISH were true. Maybe it is, maybe it isn't, but we can't exactly ask Meng now can we? Plus, isn't that further proof that we can barely be trusted with our memories? If we didn't just miss Bang's lack of love, but also Bang being played by Meng and still not noticing?" grumbled Feng only half willing to push the point. It didn't matter how true it was, he didn't want to admit to being blind either.

Chapter 1067 If We Run Away...

Still with Bing

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Bing sighed. \*So apparently Feng does have a way to make me doubt the path forward. I... hmm... no... but... maybe... is there a way to see if Bang is the real deal? Kat could probably tell if there is an illusion? Right? I'll ask her about it once we leave the vault. That should give us some closure. If Bang is also a fake, like we're assuming, and Kat talks to him before everyone starts fighting... that should be enough confirmation.

Even if it means we were a bit blind as children, and as teenagers, that's fine. Who expects to find out their parents hate them despite not being abusive or neglectful? Neither of us know what to look for when it comes to good parenting... we just know that our childhoods weren't BAD. Lian's parents provide ample examples for that. Which I guess means Lian will be coming with us. I mean, Meng said as much but... \*

"Do you think we're ready to leave the sect?" asked Bing.

"What? Are you just trying to change the topic because you don't like the answers?" asked Feng.



"Oh, nah I thought my way through that. Kat can just tell us if Bang is also using an illusion, plus we'll be talking to him... so either he turns out to be cool, he turns out to be not using an illusion, or he just attacks us. You're at least right in the fact that we didn't notice... but while Bang may or may not like us... he's not a horrible parent. And I think I can live with that knowledge. You know?" explained Bing.

Feng tapped his finger against the floor as he thought it over. "It's... a sound line of thinking I guess. It's not really the way I'd like to look at things... but with Kat to check for illusions, and to give him a chance... I suppose things will be sorted out one way or another... unless Bang agrees to follow us and pretends to love us like Meng is doing," retorted Feng.

"Meng is NOT pretending Feng," insisted Bing.

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Feng just shrugged as if it wasn't his problem anymore. Perhaps he was willing to simply let things play out before making a second, and final, judgement. Until then? Feng was going to treat Meng coldly, and watch her closely for signs that she's been lying about the depth of her feelings.

"Fine whatever," grumbled Bing when it became clear that Feng wasn't actually going to engage in the argument anymore. \*Apparently trying to defend my mother's honour is something you don't want to allow Feng. Fine. Whatever. If that's how you want to play things I can deal. We'll see who comes out looking better when all this is over.\* "Now, answer my question. Do you think we're ready to leave the sect? It's our home and... I'm just not sure,"

"It's too late to back out now," said Feng with a grumble. "Sure you might have Lian tagging along, but I've got to leave all my friends behind. It's too late to back out. Even if Bang happens to be our real father, and Meng was lying to us, it's too late. Kat already blew the whole thing wide open. She's really limited our options,"

"It's not Kat's fault this all happened," insisted Bing. "It's just unfortunate that it turned out this way,"

"Sure you say that now... but if she was hired to destroy our sect? This is the best way to do it. No matter what, Bang and Meng's time as our sect leaders is over. Meng for being a spy the whole time, and Bang for either being a spy, or not noticing his wife was a spy for decades. We might get let off, but only if we denounced both of our parents and agreed to some sort of concessions. I doubt we could ever get to Rank 4, let alone Rank 5. Heck, I might not even get to Rank 3. You're lucky you're so close to advancing, you might be able to break through... or they might shatter our cultivation and be done with us.

"Lian would probably be killed... or worse. So there's no escape for her. My friends? Well... I'm not too sure about them. I've never been as close to any of them as you are to Lian. Heren is probably my best mate... but I wouldn't want to live with the guy. He's such a slob when nobody is riding his ass about it, and his grandfather is on the council of elders. So he'll probably be fine if he stays...

"Look it's just not a great situation for me all around... and if Kat did want to do some damage, I don't think there's a single better way to drag our name through the mud. Not saying it's her fault... maybe she was ordered to do it maybe not... but the possibility is there..." explained Feng.

“She can’t lie though, and she told me that her job was to guard Bodeir!” insisted Bing. “And this really wasn’t what I wanted to get into. I wanted to discuss seeing the world, having less cultivation resources, less time to meditate and practice,”

Feng waved off Bing’s defence, “True, that is clearly ONE of her orders. She might have more than one objective though,”

“Look, I think you’re being stupid, and we can just ASK her,” insisted Bing. “That will prove she’s on our side,”

“Eh... I think ‘on our side’ is a bit of a stretch. At BEST she’s on YOUR side not OURS. Besides, asking at all is a risk you know? What if she IS here to destroy us and now that we’ve forced her to answer she just attacks us?” said Feng.

“Meng will protect us,” answered Bing without hesitation.

“Oh sure, the spy will protect us. I feel so safe. The spy that admitted to likely not being able to defeat Kat in a fight. Truly, I feel protected,” said Feng with a shrug.

“Look Feng. I see you’re trying to be an ass about this. I had some reasonable fears about leaving the sect behind. Meng will likely have plenty of stuff thrown into her spatial ring, and give us stuff to carry as well... but what if we get separated? What if we get caught? How are we going to make our money when that runs out? How long are we running? Can we deal with the pressure of running away for possibly years or decades? I don’t know if I can, and I wanted you’re support in dealing with those fears, but apparently you just want to look for potential issues with my mother, and my friend.

“And you know what? If that’s what you want to do with your time I might as well just get some sleep. At least any nightmares I have will just be dreams. While I’m awake I have to listen to you spouting nonsense and deal with the fatigue I feel from fighting all day, then binding an artifact and then dealing with your nonsense after you destabilised my cultivation a bit, in case you’ve forgotten,” ranted Bing.

Feng sucked in a deep breath, before saying, “Sorry for sharing my valid concerns with my beloved sister,”

“Oh go jump in a volcano you ass. You’re concerns are barely valid, and easily solved. If you’d brought up most of them before entering this vault then they could be cleared up. They are not long term problems, they are minor speedbumps that you’re insisting we go over,” retorted Bing.

“That’s only in your favoured version of events sis,” Feng pointed out. “In fact, things could go very pear-shaped if even one of my concerns turns out to be valid,”

Bing glared at Feng but didn’t deny the truth of the statement. \*Still, it’s adding ridiculous worries to a situation that’s already tense. Why couldn’t we have just talked about the dangers and risks of travel, or how to deal with the fatigue of being constantly on the run? I’m not looking forward to sleeping wherever we happen to stop for the night, or heck for the week.

When we first set off, we’ll probably be forced to run as fast as we can, and then a bit more with Meng carrying us. The teams sent to capture us will have at least one Rank 4 on them... what a scary thought. I hope Meng knows how to run and avoid detection. She should have training for it... but she likely has no experience with... extras.\*

"You know what Feng? Why don't you get some of that sleep you came here for. I don't want to talk anymore," said Bing.

"Oh? Don't want to talk ow that things aren't looking quite so great for you anymore?" asked Feng.

"No brother dear. I want to rest before I start to get annoyed with you. So far, you've only added to my worries instead of lessening them, and I need to calm down somehow. If we keep chatting, I'll sick Meng on you so I can get some peace and quiet," hissed Bing.

Chapter 1068 Bodeir Awakens for a Moment

Still with Bing. Again.

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Bing woke to the sound of crumbling rocks. She shot up and readied a handful of compressed air... until she remembered what was going on. Bing quickly dismissed the wind as Bodeir stumbled forward out of the rocky cocoon he had entombed himself in. Before she could think of what to do, the vault opened and Meng strolled in and tapped Bodeir on the head. Bodeir collapsed forward, heading for the ground, but Kat moved to his side and prevented the collision.

"Why did you just let Meng do... whatever that was?" asked Bing with genuine curiosity. "Actually Meng what did you just do?"

"I let it happen because I was watching the whole time and my Contract wasn't screaming at me to act. Bodeir wasn't going to be harmed by whatever it was... and I do need to extend some amount of real trust towards Meng, not just words. So I let it happen," answered Kat.

" 'It' happens to be one of those sleeping techniques I was telling Kat about before. The one I chose makes it nearly impossible for Bodeir to wake up until 8 hours have passed. Plenty of time for us to get out of here... hopefully. Bang should have an excuse for an array master to look it over and grant him permission to sneak through. Probably something that has already happened. That being said... I just didn't really want to bother explaining anything to Bodeir," explained Meng.

"That's..." Bing didn't really know what to say. Was it good? Bad? Careless? Careful? As she looked at Bodeir's peacefully sleeping face, the answer was rather unclear. He would have caused some amount of trouble certainly, but Meng didn't even give him a chance to not be an ass. Though, from what Bing had learnt about Bodeir recently... that might have been a big ask.

\*I just... I didn't realise that Meng would be so quick to act. No time to regain his bearings. No time to ask questions just. 'I don't want to deal with this sleep'. It's very different to the Meng that would take time out of her day to here complaints from the outer sect disciples, or tour the towns and help pass judgement on people accused of various crimes.

Maybe I'm just reading too much into things. I mean, she didn't kill him, or even attack him. Bodeir is just asleep and he's going to be fine when he wakes up. Why am I worrying about this? It's not like he's hurt and presumably they did the same thing to Voldar right? Though... I guess I didn't really ask. He was just in the corner and I... didn't care. Hmm... perhaps I'm not quite the virtuous person I like to think I am. I didn't even think about Voldar at all until now.\*

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Despite this revelation, Bing did not in fact ask about Voldar. She did at least pull out one of the pillows in her storage ring... but that was as far as her care went. Meng, seeing her daughter in action did the same for Bodeir and Feng... was also asleep. Something Bing was thankful for. She didn't want to argue more with him right now. Bing rolled her arms to chase away some of the lingering fatigue from her rest. "Hey Mom?" asked Bing, choosing her form of address intentionally. It wasn't exactly her normal way of referring to Meng, but it was still something she wanted to acknowledge.

"Yes darling?" returned Meng.

"So... we're going to run. I've accepted that. I'm sure Lily is convincing Lian that it's a good idea as well. What I want to know is... what can I expect? How often will we just... be running? How will this effect our cultivation? What sort of speed will we be traveling at?" asked Bing, one question after another.

"At the moment I've decided that we should catch a ride to the Mountain Shaker sect, not to stay of course, but to simply inform Bodeir Sr of what's happened. I do this not because I particularly care what Bodeir Sr thinks of us, but because we need to leave fast and their airship will take us quite some way without any effort on our part. I'll exchange what information I need to with Bodeir Sr and then we will continue from there.

"Sadly... I suspect we will need to be on the move for at least a year once we take off. I will be doing a lot of the work, either acquiring a good mount for you and your brother, or carrying you myself using my illusions. The second is likely faster, but more draining and I need to be ready for an attack at just about any time. I'm not so skilled that I can travel for days on end at my top speed without rest and still keep my qi in good shape. Picking when and how we rest will be key... unless I happen to have information that is surprisingly valuable to Bodeir Sr, I suspect I'll need to do the running at some point.

"As for your cultivation... we should have enough resources to keep you from falling too far behind... but the real question will be if you can meditate while traveling. If you can't... then at least that first year of running will see you making no progress. It's annoying but I can't see any way around it. Then the final question? Speed? As fast as we can of course," explained Meng.

"How... how at risk are we?" asked Bing.

Meng shrugged, "It really does depend on who they can send after me. I'm one of the strongest spies on retainer and I'm not sure they can send anyone low profile after me... and the organisation only has the one Rank 5 connected to it. My defection is annoying... and I'll be taking a lot of cultivation resources when I leave, I did grab a bunch before Kat got here... but ultimately if it's clear that I'm running and have no further plans to screw over the organisation? They might not be able to justify the cost of attacking me...

"I assume they'll try and grab you or your brother, and Lian once they learn I'm taking her as well. They won't try too hard, just send a few words into the underworld that they'd pay well for your capture and hope that someone can get lucky... but I'm not too worried about that sort of thing. You're basically rank 3 and I myself am solidly in Rank 4. Feng is most at risk... but he is a combat savant, and Rank 2. The sort of people likely to risk it all on those sorts of jobs tend to be weak or desperate, and both are easily managed," explained Meng.

"Is there a reason we're leaving well... anything behind?" asked Bing.

Meng frowned at the question. "Daughter darling... I feel like I've taught you better than that. How about we use this as a teaching moment. Why do YOU think I'm not just taking everything when we leave?"

"Um... hmm... we don't have enough space in the rings?" offered Bing.

"That's part of the reason Bing, but I've not aimed for the things with the highest value, but ones that are most useful to you and Feng. Now... why might that be?" asked Meng again.

Kat looked on from the side. She was pretty sure she knew the answer to the question after Meng had phrased it like that, but she chose to hold her tongue. "Um... hmm... because that's more important to you than the money?" answered Bing.

"Once again, yes, that's partially true but you're still missing that I was taught when I was quite young myself. Would you like to take another guess?" offered Meng.

"Um... don't take everything because then you can't rob them again later?" offered Bing with a wry smile.

Meng shook her head, but she was forced to look at the ground to hide her grin because it was an amusing sort of picture. "No, it's because we'd be worth too much money otherwise. Remember how I said it wasn't worth chasing us if we were clearly intending not to cause problems? Well if we ALSO have a number of priceless relics then suddenly it isn't just a rogue cultivator and her kids, but a rogue cultivator and an entire vault's worth of items. All worth more than some sects manage to collect in a year,"

"Oh!" intoned Bing as she nodded in understanding. "That means we're taking only what we need, and maybe a bit more... but nothing extravagant?"

"Yes exactly. One particularly noteworthy artifact is the Heavenly Nature Robes we have locked up in another vault. That's a priceless artifact prized for its ability to speed up the growth of rare herbs. If we had a powerful nature affinity cultivator we would be handing it off to them, as it stands, we just have it placed near some crops and it works, just to a much lesser effect. Not worth taking,"

"I understand," said Bing with a nod.

Chapter 1069 Bang on the Scene

Bing's perspective.

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A glowing crackling sound came from down the hallway and everyone got ready. Meng picked Bodeir and Voldar up with her illusions. Kat couldn't see it, but they were resting in balloons that bobbed behind the illusionist. Feng had woken up some time recently, and wasn't quite prepared for the morning just yet. He was still emotionally rung out but he was holding a bit of hope for this meeting.

Bing was up and ready, rolling her feet forward and back as she waited for the array to finish transporting what everyone was assuming had to be Bang. On Kat and Lily's end, they were still very

lost. While Lian knew which direction to head if she wanted to meet up with Bing, that didn't account for twists and turns in the tunnels, nor the fact that Lian didn't want to head for the vault, but the outside air. It was too risky so the pair decided to just camp out for now. Kat or Meng could cover the distance in a short time, so waiting for rescue seemed the safest at this point in time.

Bang dashed out of the array, with a halberd in hand, only to pause when he saw everyone arrayed and watching him. "Hmm... it seems I'm rather late to the fight, assuming there even was one,"

"No father, it seems that we've come to an agreement," said Feng with a bit of a smile on his face. Already quite pleased that Bang hadn't made a move to attack anyone.

Despite that though, Kat and Meng could see a very different appearance when comparing the two. Bang, as seen by the others, was a young-looking man with a broad chest and long flowing green hair despite his ice affinity. To the kids, he looked like an aged up version of Feng with a larger build, and a good deal of height over his 'son'. To Kat, he still looked quite young, but his head was shaved clean and he had a tattoo of a scythe that ran up his left side and curving down his hand.

"I see... could you enlighten me to this agreement? While I do trust your mother, I do need to do some work myself to be satisfied with the outcome," said Bang.

"Well 'husband'" Meng said with a bit of spite, "I agreed to run away with the kids because Kat here has Truesight. The Mountain Shaker sect already knows and I'm planning to get out before the organisation forces me to do something I'd rather not. They were already pushing it when they wanted me to keep the kids occupied for an extended period of time with badly matched relics, and I already ignored that. I did hold myself back from telling them your real name, and that of who we work for... but I'm washing my hands of the lot,"

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"Really?" asked Bang with a raised eyebrow, "Surely you don't think turning your back on the people who raised you is a good idea. They have their fingers in little pies all across the continent. Even if you run... they will find you. You should know this Meng, considering you were one of the people that was asked to hunt down the runners,"

"Well Bang, I'm betting that it will simply be too much of a hassle for them. I don't hate the organisation, I don't have any true ill will towards it, and I'm leaving most of the good shit here. Even if I didn't run, the mission would still be collapsing because the Mountain Shaker sect already know we're fakes. So I'm getting out, and keeping what matters to me, the kids. The organisation has known for years I've wanted children. I never made a secret of that because I was too stupid to know better when I was younger, and then when I was older the cat was already out of the bag.

"Frankly? If they're surprised in any way by this turn of events then they don't deserve to be in charge. They handed me everything I've ever wanted on a silver platter. Made it my mission to just keep them safe for decades and suddenly, when they want me to make a move against them, I'd refuse? The writing was on the wall, Bang. If they find this to be a shock, they deserve to be replaced. My original masters would not have been so stupid. I don't know who replaced them, but they've been getting sloppy, and now it's time for that to bite them in the ass," said Meng with no hint of shame or regret.

"You realise they will punish me for this regardless, right?" asked Bang.

Meng shrugged, "Technically speaking I'm the one in charge of this mission so I could order you to make things easier for me if I wanted. Sure, I'm certain you will be punished, but that's because they're idiots who no longer follow protocol. You'd be punished for listening to me, punished for disobeying me. Punished for letting me get away, punished for not following along like a good little dog. Punished for betraying them along with me. Yup, I think you're going to get in trouble no matter what. I suppose it depends just how you will be punished, and how much,"

"You're putting me in a position where I can't win," yelled Bang, "What exactly do you want me to do?"

"Frankly Bang, I don't care. You can do whatever you like. I don't care if they kill you over this, nor torture, or just a slap on the wrist. You are not important to me Bang, and your future is not my concern. Now, what are you going to do?" asked Meng.

Bang carefully looked around at the people standing in front of him and shrugged. "I suppose I'm coming along for now,"

Meng frowned at that but nodded, and gestured for everyone to go ahead. Kat stuck next to the bubble holding Bodeir, Feng moved to stand with Bang and head through the transport together, Bing however stayed closer to Kat and Meng. Something about this wasn't sitting right with her.

\*As nice as it is to have Bang coming with us... I can't help but feel like there's something else going on here. It's odd, he seems genuine at the moment... but I'm still worried.\* Bing kept her thoughts to herself, even if some of them were obvious. The group stepped on the transport pad and everything was light.

Bing stumbled as she tried to regain her bearings on the other side, only to feel herself being shoved away. Bing went flying, her control over the wind barely responsive to her muddled mind. When she managed to recover her wits it was to a disturbing scene. They weren't in the portal room, they had been sent somewhere else... but that was the least of Bing's worries.

Standing atop the array, was Kat, except she wasn't just standing under her own power anymore. She had a large spear of ice that had pierced straight through her wing and into the ground. The damning bit of evidence though? Kat was standing where Bing had been just a moment before. Meng's eyes were glowing, illusions of herself blurring out and around the area, keeping Bang penned in... but they were making no move to attack.

The reason for that was Bang. He had taken Feng into a chokehold with a dagger made of ice pressing up against Feng's neck. "I see I missed," mumbled Bang.

"Why dad? Why?" asked Feng, pain in his heart, but not all that surprised. "You could've just come with us,"

"No I couldn't foolish boy. Meng has likely attempted to poison you against me, and she would be right to do so. I don't much care for you, and I certainly have no interest in being forced onto a family road-trip for the next decade. Meng made her choice, and I'm making mine... of course... I had hoped for Meng to be injured in the attack against Bing... but it seems that the little demon is friendlier then she should be. I left Bodeir alone for a reason you know?" said Bang without a care in the world.

"I'm afraid you miscalculated," said Kat with a grin despite the large hole in her wing. "Bing is a good friend of mine, and I was closer than Meng. A bit of wing damage is nothing compared to her life. Shame I wasn't quite quick enough to just get out of the way, but I needed to make sure I didn't turn her to paste with my speed in moving her, so here we are,"

"You seem remarkably unconcerned with taking such a crippling blow," pointed out Bang.

Kat shrugged, not even wincing as the motion disturbed her wound greatly, causing more black blood to flow out onto the ice. "I get great medical," retorted Kat with a grin. "Nothing more than a flesh wound,"

Chapter 1070 Bang, Slam, Bap

KAT ATTACK!

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\*Hmm... I might want to use my water transformation when I escape from this. Bang doesn't seem to be aware of my advanced regeneration so I can use that to surprise him at some point.\* Kat's thoughts were interrupted by Bang continuing to rant, "They won't be able to piece you back together if I kill you first!"

\*Does he really think he can kill me? I thought Meng and Bang, which... yeah I'll just call him Bang. Meng was remarkably tight-lipped about his real name. But what was I saying? Oh yes, he seems to think for some reason that he could actually kill me. Not only am I ridiculously durable but there's no way D.E.M.O.N.S would let someone die on a summon. I guess Bang really is the junior partner in this.\*

"I find myself unimpressed by your bosting Bang. I simply don't see a world in which you manage to kill me. In fact, the only reason I got hurt is because I didn't want Meng to waste any qi. I already said it, this is a minor thing at worst, and you just seem like a braggart at this point. I mean really? Using a child as a hostage? Guess you're just a scared little rat," Kat said with a grin, letting a bit of fire appear behind her teeth to give them a slight glow.

"Oh? A rat am I? Well if that's the case I might as well own my rat traits. I'm willing to do what I can to take you down... so I'll make you an offer. If you don't move... I'll let Feng go. Just ten seconds. Ten seconds of not moving, not using your energy, nothing. Do we have a deal?" said Bang with a wicked grin.

\*Hmm... I mean why not?\* "As long as nobody else is getting hurt during those ten seconds I don't see why not," said Kat with a shrug. Bang grinned as the snow underneath her started to glow. Kat didn't know why it was glowing, but suddenly chains appeared connecting her to Bang. Her frown deepened as they curled around them both. \*What the heck?\*

"It seems you've agreed to my little challenge. WONDERFUL!" said Bang with a sneer. Then Kat felt the ice in her wing start to move. The qi was pushing itself into her veins and Kat could feel it squirming around through her wings. It would be simple to force it out. Kat could already feel her demonic energy chipping away at the qi without any effort on her part...

But Kat could also feel herself being bound by that contract. If she moved, Kat could tell that Bang would be free to act against Feng. \*Dammit. Why did he have to be Bing's brother. I don't really care what



happens to him after all his disrespect to Bing and Meng, but fine. Whatever I'll suffer whatever this is for them. I just wish I knew how he managed to set up the contract. I've agreed to stuff before without starting one.\*

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Kat did nothing. She waited, and just as the ten seconds was up, Bang activated his trap. Spikes of ice exploded out of Kat's body. Most of them were focused around her wings and back, but he had managed to get a few as high as her neck, and down her arms. Kat found herself rather uncomfortable at the moment. The pain was quite intense, and she decided to make a move. Kat let herself explode into water, the ice crystals that had been inside her body falling in place as Kat reformed a moment later, whole.

Kat did wince a bit at the cost of her little display, but it was worth it. Bang no longer had a hold on Feng but... odd... he still looked like he was holding something. \*Wait a minute...\* Kat didn't dare glance around, but she had a guess, "What are you doing Bang?" Kat gave her voice just a bit of demonic growl to make it seem like she was angry rather than just confused.

"Well, I only agreed to let Feng go... not that I wouldn't simply grab him again while you were reforming... nice trick by the way. Really, what did you expect? If I let the little shit get away, Meng would jump straight into attacking me... and we can't have that right now. My reinforcements aren't here yet!" said Bang with a grin, not realising that Meng had already got one over on him.

Kat hadn't been paying attention, so she couldn't be sure where Feng was without looking around. Her current guess was that Meng had pulled him to her side, but that was just a guess on Kat's part. The real Meng was standing behind her, hovering over Bing, and Kat didn't want to give the impression she was looking around for something. As long as Bang knew she had True Sight, and she kept up the charade, Feng should be fine.

\*The real question is, when, or if I should fight him. He's waiting for reinforcements, he said as much which means part of me doesn't want to drag this out... but Bing and Feng are too close. This whole place is covered in ice and I bet that if he got a bit more serious he could attack them from a distance. He's probably keeping that as a trump card... so do I stall? I can't see Meng right now so I don't know what's she's doing.

How close does she need to be to maintain an illusion that Bang can't see through? Apparently Meng is the more powerful of the two... but I don't know how easy an illusion is for normal people to break. It just hasn't come up. That is something I really should've talked with Meng about. Do I just keep stalling? Meng might not be able to send messages just to me because I'd need to be focusing on seeing the illusions again and I really don't have the safety to focus on that right now.\*

"I suppose I shouldn't be surprised considering your profession," said Kat with a sigh.

"Why? You trusted Meng easily enough didn't you? I'm sure she made sure to tell you about all the people she's murdered before you teamed up," said Bang with a grimace.

"She did in fact warn me that she's not a good person," said Kat easily.

“Not a good person? Not a good person? She’s got the highest kill count of anyone on the continent!” retorted Bang.

“I resent that. I likely have the highest body count among professional assassins, but I partook in NO genocides, and that really pads the count for quite a few psychos. I’ll accept that my count is high, but not the highest!” hissed Meng.

This was a mistake on her part, as Bang hurled an ice lance straight at the sound of Meng’s voice. Apparently in her anger she didn’t manage to properly maintain the illusion around her voice. Meng did manage to bat the icicle away with by pulling out a hammer, but Bang wasn’t letting up. Wave after wave of spikes flew at her, covering the area nearby as well. Kat went to rush forward but Bang shook his head and jerked down towards his empty hands.

\*Oh right. That’s probably why Meng isn’t flinging them back at him. He’s supposed to have Feng captured. Shit... what do I do then? Meng can’t you give me a sign or something? It’d be really useful to know if I’m meant to go on the attack!\*

The rain of icicles ended abruptly when one strayed over towards where Bing had been hiding and Meng shot that one back at Bang. Bang, being the asshole that he was, simply raised what he thought was Feng up into the way. Of course, Feng wasn’t there to take the blow so it sliced through the air, impaling Bang in the stomach. “Ah... cheeky shit. I should’ve known better... well... my mistake. I guess I’ll just have to ATTACK YOU ALL!”

A wave of power exploded out of Bang, and then a moment later the snow started to freeze together, turning into an icy sheet even as the wind picked up and the snow seemed to triple in quantity. Kat looked around, and noticed it creepy towards Bing. Shit. Kat dashed over, slamming the ground with a fist and letting her demonic fire explode around the two. Bang’s ice was diverted around them both, like high pressure water meeting tougher steel. The ice did continue past Kat, but it wasn’t a major concern at the moment.

Meng had moved to protect Feng, pulling him up into the air where she’d left the two unconscious cultivators. Kat had to suppress a wince at that. \*Woops. I seem to have forgotten about Bodeir... eh it’s fine. My contract didn’t start complaining before now so it’s probably fine... probably.\*