

DEMONS 1071

Chapter 1071 Bang, Whap, Bop

“MENG! Protect the kids!” said Kat.

“We’re not kids!” shouted an annoyed Feng.

Kat felt like strangling that idiot. Meng hissed, throwing javelins of starlight around the area that Feng had spoken up from, but Bang was fast and illusions were fragile. With daggers in hand, Bang slashed through the breams of light even Kat sprinted after him.

FENG YOU FUCKING IDIOT! Kat managed to abuse her speed to get close, and prayed that her quick departure hadn’t left Bing stranded. Bang was letting shards of ice whirl around him and it was clear that Feng was in trouble. Kat grit her teeth and accepted the shards of ice that slammed into her as she charged, and then barrelled straight into the man. Kat knew if she engaged him in a more proper fight, Bang would find a way to strike at Feng while they faced off.

Kat ignored the shards of ice digging into her skin as they hit the ground. Bang clearly hadn’t expected her to just charge at him, and he was paying for it. The impact of their strike sent the snow flying in every direction as Kat pulled the cultivator in close and tried to limit his movements. Her tail had wrapped itself around his legs, and Kat managed to pin Bang’s arms to his side.

“Kat will you be alright!” shouted Meng even as she picked up the kids.

“YES! Just GET TO SAFETY!” shouted Kat back.

Meng didn’t wait. If Kat said she’d be fine, Meng was going to believe her, if just to have an excuse to save her children if nothing else. Sadly, Kat’s response was enough of a distraction for Bang to sneak in an attack. He blasted ice straight into Kat’s face, crystals digging into her eyes, and skin, but bouncing off her bones, rattling her skull and causing her grip to loosen.

Bang wasn’t going to let a chance like that escape him, using all of his strength he threw off Kat’s arms, and sliced down at her tail, hoping to cut straight through it. Bad luck for him, Kat’s tail was made of sterner stuff. The dagger bit into flesh, but it was only a shallow cut. Kat’s tail reflexively constricted, causing Bang to cry out as his muscles were crushed against his bones.

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Kat was fighting blind for a few moments as her regeneration got to work on fixing her eyes, so she missed the follow up slash that slice across her neck. *Fucking FENG! I will BEAT THAT BOYS ASS FOR THIS.* Kat coughed, spitting the blood in the rough direction of Bang and decided enough was enough. Kat pulled up her demonic energy, despite the pain, and let her fire loose on the surrounding area. If the kids weren’t far enough away... well Kat could only hope her intent not to harm them would be enough.

Bang reacted quickly, a shield of qi forming around him and protecting him from the blast, but the fire didn’t simply go away, it clung to his body, eating away at his qi and making him feel a cold chill for the first time in over a century. This didn’t mean he could magically get away though, despite his fear, Kat still had a tight grip on his legs, and it while it was somewhat costly to maintain this qi shield, it was much cheaper than regrowing a leg.

While Kat was still recovering her eyes, Bang downed a recover pill that helped replenish his qi. This one was quite rare, and gave him not just enough to offset the drain from Kat's demonic fire, but enough to gain back some of what was spent on his earlier attacks. Qi filled him as the pill continued to dissolve in his stomach. He just needed a plan.

The blood Kat had tried to spit into his eyes had landed harmlessly on his chest, and meant he could now see Kat visibly healing in real time. That was not good. He could trade her blow for blow, and likely come out behind if she had some sort of technique to recover. He was doubly sure of this when he saw her eyes were fixing themselves without issues. Such advanced regeneration was to be feared.

Bang cursed the heavens mentally. Bodeir Sr was a lucky fucker, and those kids just had to fuck things up for him. Of course, that didn't mean he was out of options at all. Reaching back into his bag of tricks, Bang hurled a talisman off to the side. Then, a moment later he was pulled from Kat's grasp and teleported to the paper. He didn't waste a moment, and immediately took off after Meng. Knowing that she had to carry four passengers, Meng would keep to safe levels for Rank 2's. So catching her would be easy.

On Kat's end of things, she felt Bang escape of course, but she couldn't see just yet. *Dammit. I might've wanted to save this but I can't let him go. KatE go!* Kat pushed down the fatigue she felt as KatE exploded from her chest. Instantly, Kat knew where Bang was, seeing him through KatE's eyes... only for Kat herself to collapse into the snow. Kat wheezed. Her demonic reserves were still filled, but that hollow, gnawing feeling was much worse than normal.

Curses. I bet I didn't have enough time to recover from summoning KatE whenever that was. Shit. I'll keep that in mind for next time. Go for him KatE. KatE didn't need telling twice, she knew the desires of her counterpart. Even as Kat fell face down into the ice, body healing but something else, shuddering. It wouldn't kill Kat, but unless KatE retreated to Kat's body right now, Kat would be out of the fight for a bit.

"I'll just have to make this count then..." said KatE with a grin.

Fire exploded under her feet as she took off after Bang. Using her full speed, it didn't take long to find him, trailing through the air. His senses were sharp enough to detect the danger when a flaming copy of Kat blasted through the space he'd just been floating in. KatE wasn't deterred. She simply stopped in place and slashed out with burning fingers. Bang tried to block the attack with his knife, but KatE simply let it enter her body, taking no damage and wrapping her own, burning hand, around Bang's wrist.

Bang howled in pain as his wrist quickly froze over and then was crushed beneath KatE's grip. Bang tried to retreat, but KatE had no mercy for him. She sprinted into his back, hoping to envelope Bang's whole body in flames. Bang pulled up a shield of qi in response, knowing that it would keep him safe... for a few moments. KatE surrounded his body with her own. Demonic flames burning purple and desperately trying to seep into the shield.

Bang's Rank 4 physique was helping him withstand the pressure, and his affinity with ice was chasing away the chill, but the drain was no longer something he could easily ignore. The pill he swallowed earlier simply allowing him to lose qi slowly instead of in massive chunks. With that one in his stomach though, he knew he'd be unable to eat more without greater risk.

Bang tried to do something, he stabbed and slashed through KatE with his dagger, hoping to do some damage but the fiery construct simply ignored the purely physical damage. When Bang tried to stab her with ice qi, KatE felt like laughing. The idea that ice could hurt her was laughable, and that Bang would even try just showed her desperate he was. *novelNext.com*

Bang, seeing the futility of this, reached into his spatial ring looking for another talisman to teleport him away. He grabbed the paper and made to flick it away, but KatE knew Bang had escaped once, and the purpose of the talisman was easy to guess. Even if she was wrong, it was a simply task. KatE sent her tail stabbing through the paper, causing it to catch fire and shatter.

"Fuck you demon bitch!" hissed Bang.

"I feel no desire to engage in coitus. Certainly not with yourself. Your struggles are useless, please cease them," said KatE

"Hahahahah! I've come to far for that. Let's see what happens when I go out with a Bang!" laughed the cultivator. Bang reached into his ring and instantly found the item he was looking for. It was a bomb. It didn't have the best range, no it was never for that. It had always been intended for exactly one purpose. Bang had been offered such a weapon by his organisation for if he ever found himself in an unwinnable situation.

"You're mad," stated KatE with her usual deadpan. KatE was referring to the fact Bang though a bomb would do any sort of damage to her, seeing as KatE was just made from demonic energy...

But Bang hadn't seen Kat's split, and he was too far gone. His laughter simply increased in volume and insanity as he pulled the pin, and everything went white.

Chapter 1072 A Distant Bang

Bing

BOOM. A large explosion could be heard in the distance, and when Bing turned back, she was horrified to see a large pillar of light some ways behind them. It was too far away for Bing to see, and the pressure of moving so fast already made her chest feel tight. Now that she'd seen the remnants of a powerful explosion it felt like her chest was bound in a steel vice, slowly doing its best to crack her ribs. "M-mum, is Kat ok?" asked Bing shakily.

Meng looked back, "I can't see any trace of Kat from here," Bing felt her heart clench, "but the angle is bad and there are quite a few trees around. It seems your father was determined to be a sore loser even in death,"

"Hope the demon bitch was taken out," grumbled Feng, so low Bing wasn't entirely sure that she'd heard it until a loud crack followed up. Meng was now beside Feng, arm raised and the red handprint of Feng's face made it clear what the sound had been.

"Feng Jingzi Baofengyu, I can't believe you would say such a thing," hissed Meng.

"Oh, look who showed their true colours as soon as the demon was clear. Already looking for an excuse to beat me," grumbled Feng.

Meng's expression went stormy, and Bing could see actually storm clouds gathering behind Meng's head. Perhaps it was a reflexive mechanism to release her emotions? "I raised you better than this!" hissed Meng.

"You lied to me my entire life!" shot back Feng.

"I did no such thing. I lied about a minor issue that frankly, you were too young to understand. Even if I had been completely honest about your parentage, you were children, and I would never want you to think of me as a monster, but my patience is wearing a bit thin with you right now Feng," said Meng with clearly restrained rage.

"Oh, your patience is wearing thin just now?" asked Feng. "What happened to the woman who would love us no matter what?"

Meng's glared intensified, and Bing could only watch as several minor explosions and pops happened behind Meng's back. Bing could see her mother's hands twitching, reaching for something that wasn't there only to force them back to a more neutral position, but it was a constant cycle. "Feng. I can forgive a lot. I can forgive your dislike of me. I can forgive your disbelief. I can forgive the fact that you tormented your sister instead of letting her sleep..."

Feng's eyes went wide but Meng just continued on, "Oh yes I know of that. I can and have forgiven you for stabbing me in the neck. However, not only did you disrespect your sister's friend, you insulted the woman who gave me a real chance to keep my children. You insulted the demon that saved you from your own stupidity not even ten minutes ago. You owe that woman your life, because I'm not sure I would've been fast enough.

"She took horrific wounds to ensure that you lived through your stupidity. And while I do still live you. I am also your mother. Not your friend. Not your girlfriend or love. Certainly not your concubine. I will let you get away with much, but I am a Rank 4 cultivator that has lived for a long time. I will not let you sit here and denigrate someone you owe your life to. You are acting with such blatant disrespect that once we are out of immediate danger I will be disciplining you for this. Harshly."

"What gives you the right?" asked Feng, with calm he didn't feel. To others though, it sounded like he was asking what the weather was going to be like today. "You're not my mother,"

Bing could swear she heard the air crack in that moment. Meng's entire body tensed. Every part of Bing was screaming that she needed to protect her brother, that this woman in front of her was about to kill him. Bloodlust seeped into the air, so thick that Bing could see it. Though that might just have been part of the illusions. Still, Feng stared her down. Daring her to do it. Daring her to prove him right.

WHAT THE FUCK FENG! You might have gotten Kat killed... and now you're hear saying the most hurtful things you possibly can to Meng, the woman who raised us just because you want to be a bit pissy? Can you not see just how horrible I feel for leaving Kat behind! I have to trust that she's fine, but I could see that she was heavily injured when she tackled Bang of course. I cannot fucking believe that you're really doing this right now.

Bing was thoroughly displeased, but Meng was apoplectic. She was angry, not just with Feng, but with herself. How could a son she had raised so such blatant disrespect? Such lack of honour? A dark part of her mind whispered that she was a spy, an assassin, a killer. That she had no honour and this was part of

her karma. Meng's jaw was clenched tight, and if she hadn't fully strengthened her bones as part of her foundational cultivation, Meng was sure they'd have cracked under the strength of her jaw.

"Feng-" the word burned as Meng spoke it, the moment was tense, and Feng was almost certain he was going to get it for his words. He was too angry to regret it right now... and perhaps he wouldn't have the chance. A blink later and he was standing where Meng had just been, and the sharp crack of thunder seemed to boom out nearby.

Bing watched in horror as something too fast for her eyes to see smashed into the side of Meng's chest, in the spot Feng had just been standing. Meng heaved as the air was drawn out of her lungs, both from the impact of whatever that was and from the broken ribs now puncturing her lungs.

Before anyone could react properly, Meng had directed them downwards at a blistering speed. Before Bing knew it they were down on the ground. Feng had fallen to the floor, the pressure from the speed too much for him. Meng was finding it hard to care right now. The pain was intense, and she'd been too caught up in her argument with that idiot's son of hers to notice the attack coming. What they needed to do was get ready. "Bing, you and your brother need to run. I don't know how many people are following us, nor how powerful they are. I suspect Bang gave them one of the trackers designed to follow you. I'll need to burn a good deal of qi to disguise your signature, but I can't defend you both as easily as Kat could," *NOVeINext.cOm*

"Why Mum? I don't want to leave you behind," whispered Bing, heart in her throat. She also wanted to ask a dozen other questions, like why are you hurt. Why did you take that hit for Feng even though he was being an ass. Why can't I leave Feng behind instead? But Bing didn't have time, not even to contemplate them mentally. They were on a clock, and she knew that.

"Bing, illusions are by their very nature fragile. I can do a lot to hide you, but if things start escalating the collateral damage will be more than I can defend you from. A stray arrow, or perhaps more bombs if they take after Bang. I simply can't protect you well from that sort of thing. All I can make sure of is that you won't be found by anyone other than myself for the next two or three hours," explained Meng.

"Promise me mother... promise me this isn't you trying to die a martyr. I swear I will find a way with Lian to curse your soul to be denied the afterlife," hissed Bing with anger. If Meng noticed her voice cracking then that was obviously just because of how angry she was. Fear had nothing to do with it.

Meng gave a cocky grin, "Ah my daughter, didn't you hear my bragging partner? I'm the best assassin alive. I'll not die here," said Meng.

Bing smiled back, not able to, or perhaps, not willing to notice that Meng did not make any promises, and that an assassin always fights with the advantage of stealth. Something Meng was very much lacking right now. Assassins certainly weren't involved in defensive actions, unless they were set to kill anyone who came near. No, this was a fight Meng really didn't want to participate in right now but she had no choice.

"Ok Mum... just... come find us soon," said Bing as she ran over to her brother. His ankle was sprained, and Bing felt mildly annoyed at the damage. *This is going to slow us down. It is a lenient punishment considering the shit he said, but now it might be our downfall. I'll need to carry the ass and I'm not feeling particularly generous right now.*

Chapter 1073 Now, I Just Wanna Talk

Meng's in charge.

Meng waved her hand, the weaker qi signatures fluttered for a moment and all fell to the ground, their minds wrapped in illusions so tightly that they would be lucky to escape before the sun exploded. There were just two remaining. "Come on out, we can have a little chat. I'll even swear on the heavens not to attack you first!" shouted Meng.

If they agree that should help me buy Bing and Feng plenty of time to get away from here. I don't know if they have any others chasing us so far, but I doubt it. It's not like they have infinite manpower to throw around.

"I'll take your deal!" shouted the voice, Meng could vaguely recognise. "If you also promise not to trap is in illusions unless we attack as well,"

Damn. Well, I didn't expect to get away with it anyway. "I accept. In the name of the heavens, I promise, that for the next 24 hours, or until I am attacked, I will not place illusions down without permission, nor will I attack first," said Meng.

The sound of lightning crackling above seemed to prove that her vow had been accepted... but she'd seen more than one person get out of promises to the heavens. Why people trusted them so much, she wasn't sure.

It didn't take long for the two attackers to make their way there, and they were easily recognisable to Meng. The first was an older man, Elder Shun. He had a long thin beard that he kept neatly trimmed and a head of slicked back black hair. Of course, Meng knew he used dye for the hair... the fact that his beard was grey made it easy to figure that out. Meng really wanted to know why, but had never asked just in case the original Meng had asked once before. Apparently he was a mole, so it might not have mattered.

The other attacker was both more, and less, of a surprise. It was Jian, Master Marksman. He'd belonged to the organisation almost as long as she had, and it was a surprise to see him standing there so casually. "It seems my betrayal was anticipated if you're already here Jian. I'm surprised, really, what gave me away?" asked Meng.

"Technically Meng, nothing. This was a test. You were given what you desired... a family. You didn't exactly hide it, and you made it very easy for the higher ups to figure out how best to put you on a leash. If you'd told them you wanted to keep the kids..." Jian was interrupted when...

Meng cut him off, "Yeah they'd have been used as a perpetual weight around my neck. They would be hostages in all but name, and perhaps including name, and I wanted nothing to do with that,"

Jian shrugged, "You are a powerful cultivator Meng, and apparently you can raise powerful children. You could have had a much greater role in the running of the organisation and sure we'd implant a bomb into your kids, but they'd get the best of resources and only have to run a few missions every now and then. It's a pretty good deal... if you were loyal to the organisation at all,"

Meng let out a barking laugh, "Oh Jian, all I've ever wanted was a family, yet being barren meant I couldn't even have that. Then you just hand me children on a silver platter and you expect me to be anything less than the best mother I can to them? I'm sure you saw me arguing with Feng's blatant disrespect before, but I still took the arrow for him. Why would your offer look even remotely enticing if I'm willing to take a potentially lethal hit even when I'm furious with my kids?"

"Oh it wasn't an offer anymore Meng, that was what you're missing out on. Besides, it might've been lethal for the kid... but it's not particularly lethal. Well, not by itself anyway," said Jian with a grin.
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Meng rolled her eyes, "It's poisoned isn't it,"

"Indeed, I have managed to harness perhaps the deadliest poison the continent has ever seen. While I was stationed here watching over you I didn't have much to occupy my time so what I did was I took some venom from a Swamp Alraune, blended it with-" once again, Jian was cut off.

By Meng of course, "With Undead Manticore Venom and Thousand Needle Berry picked on the night of the full moon?"

"How!" hissed Jian.

"Oh, Jian, you sweet summer child," Meng's smile stretched wide and madness started to glint across her eyes, "You think I've never been contracted to kill a Rank 4? Of course I have you fool. Plenty of times. One of my riskier missions was killing a Rank 4 cultivator while I was still Rank 3... I'm sure you've heard of it... didn't you ever wonder how I managed it?"

"The silent killing of Master Shoa..." whispered Jian in horror.

"Yes," hissed Meng, her tongue snaking out, with an illusion wrapped around it to look even more like a snake. She was after all, willing to have illusions placed on herself. Perhaps it would spook them a bit too, if they noticed. "I've forgotten more about exotic poisons than you've ever learnt Jian. You were always so... lazy when it came to anything that wasn't cultivation.

"Even your little baby hobby about poisons... it's sad honestly, that you thought babies first Rank 4 mixture would be enough to off me. It's actually a little insulting," Meng let out a long sigh, like she was disappointed in a naughty child.

"Impossible! I made it so that poison has no antidote! It doesn't matter that you know what it is, you shouldn't be able to escape from death!" yelled Jian.

Meng nodded and explained, "Sure, you're right there's no antidote... but it's super easy to build up a resistance to this stuff. I think I only needed ten batches? Then again, even the first time I suffered through it, I barely needed to use my poison purging techniques. It's a strong poison sure, but it takes forever to activate. You need to get someone while they're asleep otherwise it doesn't work properly. Honestly, it uses Alraune extract. What were you expecting?"

Jian just grit his teeth and didn't say anything so Meng turned to face Shun. "Anything you want to add elder Shun? I'm a little surprised you were a mole, I didn't take you for the type..."

Shun just shrugged, "Eh, I cut a deal with the organisation. It's nothing personal against you, and I don't even mind the sect... but I'm old Meng. I've been stuck at Rank 4 for over a thousand years. I've been lucky and found quite a few precious treasures to extend my life, and I can stick around at least another 500 years... but I'll never make it to Rank 5. So... when they made the offer to help my kids get there... I took the chance,"

Meng scoffed, "The organisation hasn't had anyone at Rank 5 for centuries, I doubt they can help you with it,"

Once again Shun just shrugged, "Eh, if they can help that's great, if they can't I'll just live with the disappointment. I was the only elder that worked out you'd replaced the original... and I had a good guess as to who was pulling the strings. So I jumped onto their ship. I don't care much for the sect, it was likely going to die this generation anyway. Too much mismanagement from the grandparents you know? Better to leave with my wealth and a few bonuses. I'm sure you can understand,"

"I'm sure you realise I can't just let you go Shun?" said Meng.

Shun shrugged, "Are you sure about that? I already said, nothing personal. If you break my legs and steal my storage ring, I won't be able to chase after you for some time."

"Why are you giving her ideas!" hissed Jian.

"Because unlike you Jian, I'm not getting emotional over one deserter. This is purely a business transaction on my part, and clearly your poison wasn't up to scratch. If she gets away, sure maybe I'll get punished but I'm an old man, and I'm used to it. If your lot tries to go after my kids? I'll just make a few more and try to deal with you guys a few hundred years later," said Shun with a careless shrug.

"How can you not care?" asked Meng. "Why would you want them to reach Rank 5... if you don't care?"

Shun smiled, "Ah but I do care, somewhat. You see, to be a cultivator is to walk the fine line between respecting, and attacking the heavens. I love my children, but if they should be slaughtered as punishment for my actions, then that too must be the will of the heavens. If they defy that fate, their cultivation will be strengthened, and my love for them will grow. I want them to have chances Meng, not a free ride,"

Meng growled, "I can see why you're buddies with my old organisation now,"

Chapter 1074 Is it a Bird?

Meng Meng Meng Meng

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At this point Meng was just confused. Nobody had risen to her rather biting comment, or tried to attack her in five minutes. This had given her plenty of time to fix the damage from Jian's attack. Meng was a veteran Rank 4 cultivator. Standing around for five minutes was plenty of time to recover when there was only one issue. Especially when she didn't need to waste qi keeping herself alive while dealing with mortal wounds. No, it was a simple fix. Meng just couldn't work out what the plan was.

*Seriously what are they doing? Does Jian think I was just bluffing about being practically immune to his poison mix? Shun's inaction at least makes sense. He's just here as support, and doesn't actually care who wins. He'll fight me if he has to, but he's fighting more out of obligation, and has no plans to risk his life on the battle. Jian... this seems a tad personal for him. Apparently I pushed his buttons a bit too much. So what's the play here? I'm happy to stand around for as long as they like. That's more time for Bing and Feng to get away.

Oh shit. Bing's leading the way. Fuck ok, I can't stick around here once the obscuring illusions I pulled over them run out in a few hours. Bing will be completely lost by that time and anyone with a tracker can head straight for her. Dammit Bing, I love you but how is your sense of direction so bad! Bang thought I'd done something to cause it! It's that bad Bang thought it was more likely I created a unique and annoying illusion... but she's just that bad at directions!*

Meng blinked just as a black spot rose up into the sky. Meng couldn't make out any details from here... but the direction was enough of a hint. That's probably Kat. How do I get her over here? I can't just throw up a big illusionary sign because of her stupid Truesight. Do I have like a banner or something in my ring I can make invisible to the others? No... probably not because that might be poking a bit too close to breaking my oath. Making my tongue a bit longer for a gag is one thing... but preventing them from seeing important information might be crossing the line. Hmm... what else can I do?

How do I get something up into the air that's easily visible and not all that suspicious? Meng pondered for a few seconds before she was just about to break out into laughter. *Oh I have a great idea. I wonder if the idiot and his sidekick will notice that I'm doing anything strange.*

Reaching into her storage ring, Meng pulled out an old kite that Bing and Feng had painted for her. It wasn't the prettiest thing around, but they'd made it back when they were still very young children and Meng loved it all the same. Part of her winced at the idea she was using this as a signalling device. If Jian decided to be a cunt and shoot it just for a laugh she might have to rip out his entrails... but she didn't have anything better on hand. Kites were common in the sect, but she didn't keep spares in her storage ring. It wasn't something that came up usually.

Trying to look normal, Meng unspooled the string a bit, noticing that despite her care the kite had seen better days. The material it was made of held strong, but the string itself was old and yellowed, fraying in places, and just generally in need of replacements. The kite itself had a badly drawn blue and green yin-yang Taijitu. The dots were smeared, and it wasn't really a circle, but it still warmed Meng's heart. "Mind if I just fly this kite for a bit? You guys are getting really boring,"

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"No, go ahead," said Shun with a shrug.

"Why are we letting her get away with it?" hissed Jian.

"Because we can't really stop her?" said Shun.

"Well it's dumb," said Jian.

"Not any dumber than trying to attack Meng in the first place. I didn't have a lot of faith in this plan before, but it is dwindling by the second," retorted Shun.

Taking their arguing as her chance, Meng threw the kite up into the air and let it catch on the currents. There was plenty of wind here on the side of the mountain, and Meng had no trouble getting it up into the air. A minor fight with the wind for control, and the kite was gliding smoothly up in the air. "Shut up! We still have a plan!" insisted Jian.

"We do? I was under the impression that we were just wasting time," said Shun. *Novelnext.Com*

"Of course we do! How could you forget?!" growled Jian.

"You're going to have to enlighten me Jian, I genuinely don't know," explained Shun with a sad look on his face like he was talking to someone that was slowly, and obviously losing their mind but was too polite to say it.

"Don't give me that look! I ain't going to say anything, I'm not letting you trick me into revealing the plan. You just want me to spill the beans so that when we start brawling again Meng goes for me first! I'm on to you," complained Jian.

"If that's what you want to think," said Shun with a smile, "I thought it was those guys Meng knocked out at the start of the fight, and that we were waiting for them to set up some explosive talismans or a restriction array, but I mean... that couldn't be it... because they're still unconscious. Hmm... nah, the plan has to be something else... surely you wouldn't make such an amateur mistake..."

Jian glared and focused on the surroundings to find... Shun was right. They were all still knocked out. "Wait... didn't you promise not to illusion people?" asked Jian.

"Yeah, but they were trapped before I made that promise? Why would that suddenly let them break out?" asked Meng.

"But don't you need to keep applying the illusion? Shouldn't that contradict your oath?" asked Jian.

Meng just stared at him like he was an idiot. *Is... is he serious? I feel like I may have been vastly overestimating his intelligence.* Meng could also now confirm that the dot in the distance WAS Kat, and she seemed to be heading for the kite so that was good. "Jian... you know what? I feel a good deal of pity for you at the moment so I'll explain, I put them in the illusionary equivalent of a room with a hidden door. I don't need to throw in toys to keep them entertained, the room does that for me,"

"I thought we got top of the line anti-illusion talismans for this mission," mumbled Jian. "How come those aren't working?"

"Jian... where did you get them?" asked Meng already knowing the answer.

"Our organisation supplied them of course. Those things aren't cheap," admitted Jian.

"Right... and who is likely to have MADE those talismans?" asked Meng.

Jian had a moment of horror and realisation. "Fuck... you made them didn't you?"

"Yup," said Meng, making sure to really pop the 'p' in yup.

"But... but it's been like a century!" whined Jian.

"Yeah? I make good money selling 'Wind Shield Talismans' to the organisation in my Meng identity. I've kept up with my work, so those ones were likely made sometime in the past year if I had to guess. Why would you think otherwise?" asked Meng.

Jian groaned into his hands. "I don't even know if I can live with the shame. Like, I know I'm probably not going to get away at this point but can you just do me a favour and kill me now? It'll be less painful,"

Meng raised an eyebrow. *Is this a bluff to try and get me to break my oath?* "Nah, you can suffer," said Meng trying not to give away that she was worried Jian might have actually come up with a decent plan there. *If I was a tad more pissed off I might have taken that as an invitation. Sadly I worded my oath poorly, for this at least. Permission to attack is not permission to be illused.*

Kat was getting close now, and Meng was pretty sure Kat could find them without trouble so she started to reel in the kite before something happened to it. Technically she was taking an unneeded risk, and a whole slew of her instincts were screaming at just how wrong it was to risk death, or discovery of her hidden ace because she didn't want to damage a kite... but Meng shut that voice down hard. It was more than just a kite. It was a precious memory of her children and she would risk a hell of a lot more to keep it safe than having her plan go a bit array.

Especially when Meng took into account Kat's personality. There was very little chance that the demon would just attack the two stooges that were keeping her here. It was much more likely, in Meng's mind at least, that Kat would ask what was going on, destroying the element of surprise. Annoying, but something Meng would just have to accept.

Chapter 1075 No Fight?

Meng

Kat dropped down from the sky like a vengeful angel... and then proceeded to say hello like nothing was wrong. "Um... hello guys? Meng what's going on here?" asked Kat, sounding a little confused.

Urgh... Kat you were so close to greatness there. You just needed to drop down on one of the two idiots, preferably Jian, and then we could've been done here! They didn't hear you, didn't look up. They were completely unprepared.

Meng then took in Kat's form, and tried to keep the frown off her face. Too Meng's trained eye, she could see that Kat was not looking well at the moment. Her skin, normally a pale ivory was now edging towards grey. Meng could see bags under Kat's eyes, something she hadn't even know it was possible for a demon to acquire, and Kat's stance was loose and closed off. With her shoulders slightly hunched over and Kat's tail had wrapped itself around the tree Kat had landed next to, perhaps helping her stay upright.

*It seems the fight with Bang was harder on her than I thought. Perhaps the explosion was a bit much for her regeneration and this is the aftereffects? Shit. Do I need to buy more time? Can we attack now? Should I send her looking for Bing and Feng? I'm not sure how she'd find them... but I could use it as an excuse to let her get away if she needs time to recover. I'm confident I can take both of these guys now

that my kids aren't at risk. The help would be nice but... Bing would be very sad if I got Kat killed. Sue might retaliate... and Lily... hmm... depending on how things work I might not have to worry about Lily.*

Meng wanted to slap herself. *No. Stop planning for the deaths of your allies. You know the step after that is planning how to get away with killing them. Bing and Feng's safety come first, and their happiness second. Killing is not the only answer. Now. Can I risk keeping Kat here? It's not so danger I need her help... I just don't have any way to measure her health. Dammit. I'll trust Kat not to be stupid. Perhaps a vain hope considering she just dropped down here, but I'll do what I can.*

"Well Kat, these guys are attempting to kill me, sort of. One more so then the other, and we came to a bit of an agreement earlier. I made an oath not to attack first, and they have stuck around hoping that the poison will kill me. Sadly for Jian, it won't, so now we're just killing time. There was some more reinforcements, but if they wake up before a century is passed I'll be impressed," explained Meng.

"I'd like to make it known that I'm the one with the least interest in any killing happening right now," said Shun, lying of course because Kat had even less interest but he was making the argument in good faith at least, "I'm here mostly for business reasons. If you disable me, I'll just let you go,"

"Yeah because you're a fucking traitor!" hissed Jian, "If it wasn't for the fact that you do good work, and that I'm standing across from TWO enemies now, I'd take you out myself for such blatant disrespect,"

Shun just shrugged, "Eh, you can try. I've got plenty of tricks stored up in my old age. Just because I don't think we can win against Meng doesn't mean I can't ensure that I won't lose,"

keep my word for petty reasons, or try to run from a fight completely it will be very bad for me in the future,"

"Um... if you're not interested in killing Meng... can't you just... not?" offered Kat with a confused smile.

Shun shook his head, "No demon, I'm afraid not. Oh, I mean no offence," Shun continued when he noticed Kat's glare, "I was not informed of your name, so I cannot be any more accurate then 'demon'. As for why I can't? Politics mostly. I have made my vow, and I will follow up on it. If I can't keep my word for petty reasons, or try to run from a fight completely it will be very bad for me in the future,"

"Kat is my name," said Kat in leu of a more elaborate answer.

Shun just nodded, but Jian seemed to take offence at the answer, though it seemed he was actually angrier with Shun. "Why do you need the names of your target? And why did you answer him demon? Urgh... I don't suppose I can convince you to just let us fight Meng by herself? From what I know you are only charged with keeping Bodeir safe,"

"True... but well, I don't mind going out of my way a bit. Though, where is Bodeir?" asked Kat with a raised eyebrow.

"Wherever Bing is," answered Meng easily. She'd simply tied the 'balloons' she was keeping those two trapped inside to Bing. They were a bit fragile though, so she could only hope that her daughter was keeping a proper watch on them. It would not be good for Kat to find out Bing had lost the Mountain Shaker heir.

Kat nodded as if she'd expected the answer, and she probably had. Keeping Bodeir with Bing would make them both safer in Meng's mind. It meant that even if Kat's goodwill faltered, they would be bound together and allow for the demon to keep them both safe even as the pragmatic option.

"Is she lost?" asked Kat suspicious of the answer.

"Probably," admitted Meng with a sigh. *noVeLnext.CO*m

"Shun... why don't you go kill the brats?" offered Jian. "I can stay here keep these two busy, you can handle a few Rank 2's right?"

"Ok firstly, no. Secondly, there are things worse than death and I have no desire to experience them. Finally... you do know that while Meng promised not to attack you... nothing is keeping her in this area. If I leave, she can just chase after me," Shun pointed out to his 'friend'.

"I see that you at least can be trained," said Meng with a nasty grin. Shun just rolled his eyes at the response.

"Do I have to do everything myself?" asked Jian with a growl.

"Perhaps, honestly, we could just call this whole thing off and pretend to be injured for a while. It's not like they're going to ease up much on the punishment if we're actually injured in the attempt. Plus, you ARE the watcher for Meng. I doubt they think we're in need of such close watching, and if they do? Well they should FUCKING HELP," said Shun.

Everyone waited a moment to see if Shun would magically conjure more reinforcements with his words... but nobody appeared. "Hmm... you have a point," admitted Jian.

"Wait? You're seriously just going to let me go? Where was all that fire about proving yourself?" baited Meng.

"Meng don't rile them up. Isn't it best we don't fight anyone here?" asked Kat.

"No, of course not Kat. I want assurances they won't quickly follow us and forcing them into a coma is by far the best way to do that if you're not going to let me kill them," answered Meng.

Kat glared, and Meng just glared back, unrepentant. Sure she was trying not to plan the deaths of her allies, but enemies were more than fair game. She wasn't going to just smile and let bygones be bygones. *This fucker tried to shoot Feng, through the heart! I'm not going to let him off without a beating. And if he dies from it? Well that's just a tragic accident.*

"I'll admit, I do desire to bring you down Meng... but I've calmed down since this conversation started... and Shun is right. I don't like our chances, especially now I know your attainment in poisons is drastically higher than my own. Hmmm... I can't believe I'm thinking such treasonous thoughts... but we were taught to retreat from impossible missions... what sort of illusion would you need to cast on us to leave us alive?" grumbled Jian.

"I'd want nothing less than an illusion that is impossible for you to break by yourself," answered Meng easily.

"Fuck off," said Jian with no hesitation. "You'd just leave us here on this god forsaken mountain, and while the beasts aren't around at the moment, unconscious and unable to fight back we'd be devoured! And I doubt you'd be so kind to drop us off somewhere safe, heck even if you did they might make moves on us anyway,"

I really don't see a problem with that outcome. Meng shrugged externally as if to say 'not my problem'. "Come on Meng," said Kat. "Isn't there a way you can agree to some form of compromise here?"

Meng thought for a few seconds. *Is this Kat's way to saying that she isn't strong enough to fight them? Or is she just trying to avoid bloodshed.* "I am afraid Kat, that I am very good at killing people. Jian here tried to kill my son, and despite being angry at him during the incident, I'm rather angry about the whole thing. Agreeing to leave them to the elements is perhaps the kindest I'm willing to be towards these fools,"

Chapter 1076 Inner Monologues and Snowlilys.

We're back to Kat.

Kat spent twenty minutes trying to hash out a compromise between everyone here, but it wasn't to be. Meng was unwilling to allow Jian and Shun to retain any short-term functionality. Her suggestions and 'compromises' were all about how to most effectively cripple the other two cultivators, ensuring they couldn't chase after Meng. Though it wasn't just Meng that was the issue. Jian wasn't willing to accept anything harsher than a slap on the wrist. Shun might have accepted some of the options, but Jian was having none of it. So... Kat moved off to the side and started to make a snowman of Lily, while chatting with Lily.

I just don't know what to do here Lily. It's been half an hour and they're just staring at each other. I've finished like five copies of you and I'm getting better at ice sculpting, even if I'm massively cheating with my demonic energy and strong nails. I think we're going to fight in the end.

[It's quite understandable Kat. Jian doesn't trust Meng not to kill him, or get pretty close to that, while Meng doesn't trust Jian not to be a problem in the future. It's easy for us, we won't have to deal with a lot of the consequences when we leave. Meng will. Giving Jian any sort of 'reasonable' deal is just asking for him to come and stab her in the back later.]

*I know, I know. It's pretty obvious that Jian doesn't like her, and just as obvious that Meng can't think of killing someone as anything other than 'efficient removal of obstacles' or something like that. Sure Jian has calmed down a bit, and not so easily tricked anymore... but his anger is just a cold anger now. It's still burning and I fear that Meng might be right, he will stop at nothing to hunt them down and be an endless source of issues.

The real problem, I suppose, is that he goes away powers up and then comes to attack Meng. Perhaps with a suicide technique. Just grab a shit tonne of bombs and tackle Meng. I could see it happening after Bang's attempt at killing me. So... it seems like a much more reasonable fear. I wonder if I should just kill them myself.*

[I'm still annoyed at that by the way.]

Hey, you've been fighting off the occasional cave monster, don't complain about me. We've both been trying to hide our fights from each other.

[Hang on, I told you eventually.]

Indeed. EVENTUALLY. I told you what happened to me as I was flying around looking for Meng.

[Yeah but everything died under a barrage of paper. The critters here haven't been too strong. You however, took a massive explosion to the face and just said 'it didn't hit me'. Well, I'm pretty sure KatE getting hit counts as you getting hit.]

I bet I could say it out loud without getting choked. Still, it really isn't a big deal. Honestly, summoning KatE at all was the bigger drain on my body. Though, I will also say that having her, or that part of me, tank the explosion was much better in the long run. Not sure how much damage it actually would've done to me... *novel* Ext.cOm

[Kat, stop thinking of ways to injure yourself to test your durability. This is why I'm annoyed. Your attitude isn't 'Glad I wasn't in that' but 'Huh, I wonder if I would've survived that' which are two very different mindsets. One is vastly preferable, if Meng has an issue with seeing people as obstacles, and obstacles as things to kill, then you have a problem with seeing a deadly situation and questioning HOW deadly it would be to you specifically.]

But it's useful information! I need to know what attacks I have to avoid, and what I can just let hit me.

demon's back was turned. Meng planned to intercept the attack with her body, freeing herself from the oath and then going on the offensive. Of course, if she took a moment to think about it, getting Kat to punch her on the shoulder would be just as effective, and much less deadly. Sadly, Meng was too focused on the other two.

Jian had taken out his bow and was performing basic maintenance. He had a backup weapon in case Meng made a move, and he hadn't taken his eyes off the older female cultivator even as he worked, but it helped keep his mind sharp. Arrows were also checked over for bends, and Jian took far too much glee in pointing them at Meng in order to check how straight they were. Jian was still itching for a fight and didn't trust anybody here. Despite that... he was starting to lose track of Kat amongst the snow-Lilys. It was just weird to see, and his instincts didn't know what to make of it.

Unlike the rampant paranoia of the other two, Shun thought the standoff was going to continue for quite some time. So Shun had pulled out a pair of sunglasses earlier and gone to sleep. Nobody had noticed this fact. They just thought he was getting sick of the sun shining in his eyes, but in truth, he sneakily added planks as support under his robes and was leaning against them, and sleeping. His eyes were shut under those glasses, and he was paying no attention whatsoever to the goings on [Exactly.]

09:34

Kat nodded at the words and stood up, taking in her most recent snow-Lily. It was alright. Not her around him. Shun was perfectly content to sleep like this for however long was necessary.

So what do you think I should do Lily? You sort of avoided talking about it, but I could just go up to Jian and shank him. Well, he probably wouldn't just LET me shank him, but I could make the attempt. If I wanted to get serious I suppose I could just throw demonic fire at him till he froze to death. Shun is... probably fine.

[I don't understand why they haven't run away. Sure we'd need to chase after them, or at last Meng would insist that we do, but they've both acknowledged Meng as the superior combatant. With our help, I doubt it'll be much of a fight.]

I think it has more to do with the fact Jian feels he can't run, and Shun feels he has to stick around as long as Jian is ready for a fight. If we could take out Jian, Shun would either run, or allow himself to be put in a long-term illusion. So really, we just need to take out Jian. Probably. What I want to know is... lethal or not?

[Kat, this really should be your decision.]

Fine. I still want advice but if it's purely my decision? I want to just freeze him, possibly to death, and then continue on. He's an assassin that was trying to kill a child. I have very little sympathy for him.

[Kat... do remember that Feng and Bing are both MUCH older than us.]

Oh... right. Forgot about that part. They still act like teenagers though, and isn't that what really matters? There's also the fact that Jian is still an assassin. Even if he's not a child-murdering one. He might be, but we've got no proof either way.

[I won't think any less of you for killing him. This is not a peaceful world, and we can't just hand him over to the cops. There is a very real chance that leaving Jian alive would cause the deaths of innocent people, or more importantly, deaths of people we care about.]

Hmm... I agree. Do you think we're becoming a bit too ruthless though?

[I don't know. As much as I'd like to blame it on our racial changes, I was pretty apathetic towards people I don't know before. I don't care to watch the news because so much of it is bad, and I just don't care. It annoys me more than it informs me. Then again, if we want to take a 'letter of the law' argument. Meng is basically the head of the government here. If she tells us we can kill people, we are legally allowed to kill people...]

And seeing as she's an assassin the idea that she wouldn't give us permission to kill HER problems is ridiculous.

[Exactly.]

Kat nodded at the words and stood up, taking in her most recent snow-Lily. It was alright. Not her worst certainly, but not quite her best either. Part of her wanted to just keep practicing to pass the time, to put off the confrontation they were soon to have... but that was silly. Kat was ready, and if Meng gave a signal she was as well? It was time to kill an archer.

Chapter 1077 FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT FIGHT

Kat breathed in deeply, and then in the same breath let all the air leave her lungs. Kat poured demonic energy into the snow on the ground, letting it sink down until hitting dirt. Once it was there, Kat let her

energy flow into the construct, as it started to inch around the group in a tight circle. Kat felt a mild twinge, which for anyone else would be closer to a stabbing pain, as she flexed her metaphysical muscles. Her recent use of KatE twice in the row had apparently not been kind to her body... but Kat didn't really care. It was only a bit of pain.

Of course, even as Kat was setting up her trap she could practically hear Lily mentally berating her. The fact that it wasn't literal could be chalked up only to Kat's inability to worry about her own pain, thus it wasn't picked up by the real Lily on the other end. When the fire got to the edge of her limit Kat brushed herself off and slowly walked over.

Kat made sure to angle herself more towards Meng, making it look like she was just returning to the position she had nearby the spy and not that she was trying to get to the centre of the area to trap them all in with her demonic fire. Kat did briefly glance at the two enemy cultivators, but Shun didn't look suspicious at all, and Jian was too busy looking at Meng.

Wait hang on... Kat couldn't be certain, the angle wasn't great for it... but... *is... is Shun sleeping? It's hard to tell underneath the sunglasses but.* Kat focused her hearing on Shun, the slow, regular breathing that seemed awfully well matched to someone who's sleeping. Kat wasn't sure what to make of that so she kept up her walk to Meng.

Kat could feel her demonic energy thrashing against her control. It wanted to burst out. To burn. It was already 'free' in the world and no longer contained inside her. It wanted a chance to freeze, to burn, to consume. Kat kept a firm mental hand on the energy, and even then, it seemed that she only had as much success with holding it in place as she did because her course was set. The promise of violence soon seemed to be a tempting lure for the energy.

Perhaps it was strange to assign personality to an energy source inside of herself, but it did always feel like it had its own thoughts and agendas. KatE was a good example of that. Sure it was Kat's energy, and it listened to her on commands... but only so much. It was more like a dog that was particularly fond of her, or a very well trained wolf. "Hey Meng, how are things over here," asked Kat as she kept walking forward.

The clearing was nearly completely covered in her demonic fire. Just a few more steps. It was draining on her reserves to set this up, and it would be even more so when Kat let the flames turn into a dome, but it felt like a good step. A way to keep Jian from escaping, and intimidate Shun a bit... if the man wasn't sleeping.

"I see you're getting bored of your sculpting," said Meng as a non-answer. "I'm content to wait until my time limit is up before attacking. I am nothing if not patient," despite her words though, to Kat's ears it sounded a bit like a plea for Kat to do something.

Hopefully I'm not just reading into it... because I AM ready. Kat spoke, "I see, well if this goes against your plans I apologise," Kat released her hold on the energy and fire exploded out around them in a circle. Rather than hold it, Kat fed more energy into the flames and tempted them to curl around the top trapping them in a dome. Jian had knocked his bow and was already pointing at Kat's head, but seeing as she made no move other than to trap them, he didn't fire, not yet.

"I see you've finally shown your true colours demon, are you going to face us? Two on one?" asked Jian.

Kat looked over at Shun, who was notably NOT moving at all. "Are you sure about the 'two on one' thing?" Jian turned and glared at Shun who remained unmoving despite the roaring, and slowly encroaching flames.

"Shun you prick, what are you doing?" hissed Jian. No response. Jian strode over, still watching Kat and Meng. Jian glared at Shun, and still seeing no reaction from the other man, knocked his sunglasses off. This revealed to everyone that Shun wasn't exactly paying attention.

Jian growled at the man and raised his arrow, stabbing it down towards the other cultivators neck. Shun reacted to that. As if sensing Jian's murderous intent, his eyes shot open and he moved. Light blazed from his hand in a sharp, dagger like construct, and was moments away from impaling Jian when he pulled back. "Ah, might I ask why you're attacking me?" said a confused Shun. *NOVELNext.COM*

Before Jian could answer, Kat decided to ask. Kat shot over to the archer fire burning across her arms and tried to slam into him. Jian spun, dodging to the side and trying to bait Kat into hitting Shun. Kat flared her wings and followed the archers movements, making sure to keep forcing him to move, using her tail and arms to corral him backwards towards the wall of flames.

Jian kept up his graceful dodges until right before the fire would touch his quiver, and instead he leapt high and up over Kat. Kat tried to catch him, beating her wings to rise up and get at Jian's ankles, but she was too slow. Jian, seeing this, unleashed an arrow towards Kat, who easily spotted it coming and slapped it away with a fan.

This cat and mouse chase around the arena continued, Kat had shrunk her fire zone as much as she could, until it was just half a metre away from Shun and Meng. Jian was dodging her well, his superior combat experience playing dividends, but Kat's superior position meant that blocking his attacks was quite easy.

Kat was really starting to feel the drain on her energy at this point. She'd dipped below 50% of her own, and Lily's combined reserves. With Shun still up and about, Kat was starting to feel worried, but it was Jian that broke the stalemate first, "Shun you useless fuck HELP ME!"

Shun shrugged at the profanity but pulled out a sword from his storage ring and used his qi to set it pulsing with light. Kat raised her eyes at the proto-lightsabre, she had only a moment to admire it before she was beset on two sides. Kat, forced to block two attacks at once, was still confident until that blade of Shun's sliced right through her fan and into Kat's hand. "Shit" hissed Kat, as she dashed backwards.

Kat glanced at the approaching figures and let her wall of fire wash over her, closing in around everyone, even if just from one direction. Kat waited a few moments for her hand to heal, and then jumped back into the fray. This time, Kat set herself alight, letting her fire extend around herself in an aura that reached out and seemed to grasp for her opponents even as she herself missed.

Flecks of fire seemed to catch on Jian's boots, Shun's robes, before being extinguished by there qi. Kat growled as she dodged, not really paying attention to her movement and bumping into Meng as a result. In truth though, it might have been fortunate. Kat's stumble was capitalised on by Jian who shot an arrow straight for Kat's eye, and before she could properly right herself, Meng's hand was in front of her face.

The arrow cut straight through Meng's hand and the battlefield seemed to pause. Kat closed her front of her face.

The arrow cut straight through Meng's hand and the battlefield seemed to pause. Kat closed her eyes to prevent the blood dripping down but Meng was smiling. "Ah, free to act at last. HAHAAHAHA"

Kat couldn't see it but Meng exploded into movement, afterimages left wherever she went until even that chain split into two, three, four extra branches. Copies of Meng filled the fiery dome. Shun cursed under his breath and readied his sword, but Jian was already attacking, straight for the area he thought Meng would be in.

Kat was chasing him behind, when Meng blasted him with a tense wave of illusions. Jian stumbled a bit then charged forward... straight into Kat's wall of flames. Jian screamed as the flames bit into his skin. His qi was unprepared for the assault and his limbs were already icing over. Kat, seeing her opportunity collapsed her flames down onto Jian, focusing solely on the cultivator that was screaming bloody murder. Meng turned her eyes to Shun, but he'd already dropped his sword and lifted his arms in the air. Jian was beat, and Shun had no plans to follow the archer to his death.

Chapter 1078 The Letter of the Agreement

"Stand down," said Meng with a growl.

"I am, in fact, very stood down. My weapon has been dismissed, my hands are in the air, and I have no desire to resist. I'm perfectly willing to accept being sent into an illusionary coma, as long as it's not so deep that my body will just shut down. Recovering doesn't have to be likely, just possible," said Shun slowly and calmly.

"Hmm... yes you have been remarkably cooperative, do you have any further requests?" asked Meng.

"I wouldn't want to presume," said Shun with somewhat false modesty.

"No, you've made it clear this was a business decision for you. As such, it will cost you some years in payment for acting against me, but I agree it isn't worth your life. I won't go too far out of my way for you, but I shall not attack you for overstepping in your requests," said Meng.

"In that case I'd like to make two requests, I believe will be accepted, and one I am unsure of," said Shun.

"Get on with it. I'm feeling pretty good about Jian getting taken out, so I'm willing to hear you out. I said that. Stop beating around the bush like you're trying to buy yet more time," said Meng, noticeably less pleased with the continual deferring of her offer. *nOvElnext.com*

"Right. My apologies," Meng glared at Shun as he spoke, "The first request is permission to pen a letter, infused with my signature qi, explaining the minimum to my family. That I am fine, that I accepted this punishment for my action, and that I will live through it and have no desire to seek retribution. I am even willing to allow you to look over my writings if you so desire. I seek to hide nothing," Meng nodded easily.

"My second request," Shun continued, seeing Meng's lips tick upwards ever so slightly at the corners, "Is to get permission to activate one of my teleportation talismans. I have a hidden bunker on the

mountain, and I am able to activate it on a delay, of your choosing. I would like to set it up to take me there once you have applied your illusions to your satisfaction. I have other treasures that can save me, but it is while valuable, less so then the others. Additionally, I believe myself to have the best chance of surviving if I use it, especially in conjunction with the letter."

Meng tapped her cheek a few times "As long as you swear by the heavens that the talisman will not activate before whatever time limit you give me, and swear not to chase myself or my children for... fifty years," offered Meng.

"That is a most generous offer, I accept," said Shun, bowing forward though still with his arms raised into the air and open palmed.

I don't know how to feel about this. I mean, is this a good deal? Fifty years, is a long time... but it's not that long if you're sleeping I guess. It's just... feels super weird to be having this conversation after we murdered his... what work companion? Acquaintance? At least it wasn't in cold blood but... cultivators are weird.

Lily sent a feeling of agreement over the link. As Meng spoke up again, "Good. Do you have any request as to the type of illusion you wish to be subjected to?"

"You would allow me such a boon?" asked Shun. Meng glared at him, hard, and Shun winced, understanding it looked like he was delaying things again. "Of course, you would not have offered otherwise milady... though... if you will permit me... why are you asking for requests? Is this not to be a punishment?"

Meng shook her head with gritted teeth. "Yes... but I am not out to torture you for decades with horrible illusions. I want a certainty that you will not be able to harm me and mine for at least a decade, hopefully longer. If you choose the illusion you will be more likely to let it run its course. Though... I hesitate to jump straight to a pleasant illusion, many would consider knowing that joy is fake worse torture then any amount of pain,"

"Yes... I understand..." mumbled Shun with a nod. "If you had offered me an illusion of my Dao partner I would've been insulted, and aggrieved. I... hmm... is it possible to have you prepare an illusion based on the stars in the night? I wish to meditate on the meaning of my light,"

"That feels a little like a chance to power yourself up..." said Meng with a hum, and Shun just shrugged in response. "You know what? I can respect it Shun. That's what I'll give you. Now, please write out your letter and then we can begin. My goal will be keeping you under for a century, but I doubt my illusion can truly hold up against someone of your power for so long, especially if you decide to actively unravel things. Of course... if you wish to keep meditating..."

Meng let the knowledge hang in the air, and Shun accepted the offer with a deep bow as he pulled out a small desk that could be used while kneeling and started on his letter. Shun understood the offer. Meng would set up her illusion well, an offer, a temptation of power. If only he allowed himself to remain imprisoned for just a little longer. Shun felt his respect for his, now no longer, matriarch of the Holy Icy Wind sect.

What he knew, as a mole, was that Meng had been good for the sect in the long run. If she had not been forced out of her roll, despite the 'sabotages' she had attempted, she'd just been a cut above the

original Meng in terms of operational efficiency. If the sect managed to survive this blow, it would likely come back stronger. Of course, the chance of that was low. Many other sects would circle like vultures, and with him gone, many of the elders confused, and the rest of the sect in a panic... it was unlikely they would survive.

Still, Shun had hope for the future. Perhaps in the unlikely event this illusion provided him with unique enlightenment it would allow him to break into Rank 5. Shun doubted it, but he did believe it would provide him unique enough insight to pass down to his descendants and allow them a real chance at cultivating to such a height. Shun thought he was getting off extremely lightly.

As such, he didn't try to leave any hidden messages in the letter he was writing. Shun was straightforward and wrote out exactly what he felt his descendants needed to know. It read as follows:

""Greetings children, I am unsure which of you will receive this letter but I ask as your elder that you pass it around to all of my descendants. I have come up against Meng, who you will soon know as a traitor. This both, is, and is not true. Meng who has run the sect for most of your lifetimes, is not the original Meng of this sect. None the less, I was tasked, by the same organisation that hired her, to take her out when she went even further rogue for the sake of something precious.

I lost, this should not be a surprise to any, as I am but a mere elder and she is the matriarch of our great sect. Her departure will leave us weaker, and while I would love for you to remain within the sect and bring it to greater heights, a safer, and more practical course of action is to abandon the sect and find another to take you in. Something that will likely be easier now than at any other point in history.

I am not dead, so do not morn me. I have taken a penalty that will allow me to live, though I will not be free to act for quite some time. I do not regret the course of action that led me to this outcome, and I am hopeful that it will have been a boon once this is over. The organisation that hired myself, and Meng, may contact you with an offer of resources in exchange for the assistance I provided...

Yet they also may not. Assuming that I am dead and thus cannot apply pressure on them to provide what was promised. Know that while I did make deals to benefit my descendants, without my active and provable presence, anything they offer you may have a massive number of hidden strings attached. I say this not to scare anyone away, but as a way for you all to understand the dangers, and benefits better.""

Meng looked over the note as it was offered to her and nodded, seeing nothing objectionable. "The oath please," Shun nodded and recited the oath as promised, before bringing out the talisman and

Chapter 1079 Meng has Questions

Kat was once again building snow-Lilys to pass the time. Meng had decided that if she was crafting an illusion for Shun, she was going to do it properly. His note was passed off, the talisman was primed and Meng cast a minor illusion just to force Shun into a sort of semi-sleep state.

Once that was settled, Meng cleared away the snow, then summoned a massive slab of rock from her inventory that glowed slightly with power. It was at this point, Kat realised the process was going to be a bit more involved, so she stopped paying much attention. Still, Kat did manage to see the highlights. Meng started carving an array into the stone, with Shun in the centre.

Then, for quite some time afterwards, Meng poured a constant stream of qi into the formation, while performing martial arts moves. Kat wasn't sure if the moves themselves did anything, or if that was just Meng's way of keeping the flow of her qi steady. It could be either in Kat's mind, as she was no expert. Even without much in the way of attunement to qi, Kat could feel the power just rolling off that slab.

Eventually, Meng finished and there was quite the lightshow. The slab had lit up with a rainbow of colours that all funnelled themselves into Shun's temples. Then Meng just sat back and waited. It took a few more minutes for the talisman to activate, but it eventually did so. With a warping of space and a loud pop, Shun disappeared. Kat thought that was the end, of that, but Meng was frowning over the slab.

"Meng? Is something wrong?" asked Kat softly as she approached the spy. **NovelNext.com**

"Indeed there is Kat... what do you make of this?" asked Meng as she pointed to a particular spot on the stone slab. Kat looked at it, and noticed that it was clearly blood. Presumably Shun's.

"Is... is that Shun's blood?" asked Kat.

"I don't know," answered Meng.

"What do you mean you don't know?" whispered Kat, feeling that suited the atmosphere better than just yelling back.

"Well nothing I did should result in him bleeding, and adding his blood to the array could have majorly fucked with my work. But now he's teleported away somewhere and I can't even double check things. Did you cut him at all during your fight?" said Meng.

Kat shook her head, "No... at least I don't think so. I was more focused on Jian, and I was using my demonic fire more than my weapons because I needed the fight to be over fast. I burnt a tonne of energy keeping them contained and I didn't have the time to go anything less than full lethal. As such I mostly ignored Shun where I could... but I can't think of any reason for him to be bleeding,"

"Hmm..." Meng hummed, "I'm not sure if this is going to be a problem or not. My technique is not so weak that it would be completely destroyed by a stray bit of blood from the person I'm using it on... but if this ISN'T Shun's blood and there was intent behind it then I can't be certain of things. I really hope someone isn't trying to turn him into an enemy for me... but I'm not sure how they'd go about doing that if that's what this is about..."

"Well... is it enough blood to really disrupt things?" asked Kat.

"No... but it's right over my array lines and that combined with the blood might be enough... not to disrupt things majorly... but perhaps give things a nudge in a less ideal direction. Part of what took me so long was ensuring the quality of light in my illusion to help with Shun's enlightenment. If the blood was specifically targeting that somehow, it could ruin him for life... and that's grounds for him to hunt me down for the rest of his life..." hissed Meng.

"Is there anything we can do?" asked Kat.

"No... I don't believe there is. The teleportation talisman hid the destination wonderfully. If I hadn't seen Shun disappear in front of my eyes I wouldn't even know he'd used such a powerful talisman. Without

knowing where he is to check my work... I can't do anything to assist. I suppose I will have to warn his descendants when I hand over the letter. Annoying..." grumbled Meng.

"So... shall we head off then?" asked Kat.

"Yes, we need to find my wayward children. Nothing on this mountain is capable of seeing through the illusions I placed upon them, but those should be running out shortly. We also need to pick up Lian. Do you know where she is?" asked Meng.

"Well I know she's with Lily but..." Kat said as she turned her focus to the bond she had with Lily. Kat examined in and then tried to mentally 'strum' the connection, hoping it would give her a sense of where the pair was. Kat was pleased when it seemed to work... and less pleased when it became clear that Lily was quite far away. "Seems they aren't even on this peak,"

"I see... so we can grab that group second?" said Meng, clear that she was asking a question. Kat nodded, despite her desire to go find Lily right now, Bodeir was her charge and he was also closer.

With that they took off, with Meng in the lead and Kat following up behind. Meng was following the strongest, and only currently accurate, link to Bing. It didn't take long to find the area it was pointing to... but Kat couldn't see Bing anywhere. Which was rather confusing for Kat, considering her ability to see through illusions. Meng didn't look any happier.

"Kat... I'm not just failing to sense an illusion correct?" asked Meng with worry lacing her tone.

"I see nothing here, no Bing, and no sign of anyone else," said Kat with a frown.

Meng's own frown deepened as she circled around the area and found that it continued to point to this general area... but after a few more circles Meng determined the signal was still moving around. Meng followed this for a while then groaned. "She's in the fucking caves isn't she,"

"Um... perhaps?" said Kat with a shrug.

"How did she even end up in the tunnels here? There aren't any cave entrances around here, at least, none that I saw. Where the fuck did they enter from? Hmm... Kat, if I start doing something stupid like digging straight down in panic, please stop me," grumbled Meng.

"Um... why? Wouldn't that get us closer," said Kat.

"Yes, and it would also drastically increase the chance of a cave in Kat," said Meng bluntly.

Hmm... I didn't consider that. Nor did I consider that it would be a big issue... surely Bing can survive a bit of rock right? I doubt they're all that deep... and she IS a cultivator. Is she really at much of a risk? If she was, surely she can run deeper into the caves right?

"I suppose I wasn't considering that fully," said Kat diplomatically, not wanting to point out that Meng was potentially being overly cautious in this situation. Especially if they were able to wake Bodeir up. He could probably get them out of any amount of rockfall with minimal effort. Alas, Kat was also sure that Meng had no desire to be anything other than overbearing careful until her children were out of the sect and at least somewhat safe.

"Do we split up, or stick together? We don't have a good way of contacting each other..." said Kat.

"Hmm... that is not the case. I can give you one half of a paired talisman that points towards the other half. It will heat up if additional qi is introduced, and can act as a beacon if I want you to come find me... sadly, if you find the entrance you'll have to figure out some other way of notifying me, but we could split up this way," explained Meng.

"Sure... though if the temperature difference is too small I might not feel it. I'm not really effected by them, so if I'm not actively trying to feel the difference I might miss it," said Kat.

"It also starts to glow red, so that should be a good enough indicator," said Meng.

Hey Lily, just got to find Bing... because she managed to get lost in just a few hours and found herself in the tunnels like you. So... just stay safe for a bit I guess?

[I'll be fine Kat. We haven't seen anything trying to kill us in hours, and as long as I know you're fine I'm not too worried about it. Just take your time.]

Yeah but Sue and the servants will be freaking the fuck out, so we really shouldn't delay too much.

[True... wouldn't want Sue to take out her... pent up frustrations out on the poor butlers.]

I hate you for putting that imagine in my head.

[No you don't.]

Still hate the image.

Chapter 1080 The Brother's Bing

*Bing chapter

"You know sis? I think we're lost," said Feng for the fifth time in just twice as many minutes.

"Look Feng, I am not blind to my faults. I'm fully aware of the fact that I get lost all of the time. I haven't suddenly lost my mind wandering these tunnels. Of course we're fucking lost!" hissed Bing.

"You know I can walk now as well right?" said Feng.

"Is this criticise Bing time? Of course you can walk Feng. I'm carrying you around like a child because you were acting like one and it gives me great amusement to know that you needed my help to run away from problems you caused," said Bing with a grin.

Feng winced slightly but managed to hide it. Mostly because his face was behind Bing, and she it was a bit dark in the caves. "I'm just trying to wrap my head around exactly how lost we are. Frankly, this part is entirely your fault,"

"Look, I don't really recall the moment we entered into these caves either, but it's not my fault," said Bing.

"No sis... we had you checked for like... all the curses. There wasn't any, therefore, you're doing this yourself," said Feng.

"It could be a blessing!" said Bing without really believing it herself.

"Ah yes, blessed with the ability to wander forever. What a truly thoughtful gift!" said Feng as he rolled his eyes. **NoVeINext.coM**

"Look, we were told to get somewhere safe... and I'm getting us there. Eventually. Probably. I mean, who would come looking for us in these caves if not Mum?" said Bing.

Feng was tempted to make a comment about Meng not being their mother... but at this point Bing would probably stab him a bit for a comment like that. Feng still felt a potent mixture of shame, anger, and embarrassment from being scolded by Meng. Part of him wanted to war against Meng's dressing down. To ask who she was, and why she thought she had the right to ask him to do anything...

But Meng had a point. Regardless of if he accepted her as his mother, Meng had raised him for decades, and just recently she had taken an arrow that surely would've been lethal if it had hit him instead. It was hard to argue that Meng had NO right to make requests of him after that. Of course, Feng couldn't just let Bing say something without a witty retort, so he had to improvise. "Oh I don't been taking. "We get missions to clear them out whenever they get too close to the mortal villages,"

22:41

"Most of them don't even have a beast core," said Bing with a dismissive snort, "They barely count as know, perhaps one of the monsters that live underground in caves and happen to eat people?"

"We haven't run into a single thing," said Bing

"Bing, you had to kill two of those worm things just five minutes ago," retorted Feng.

"Eh, those don't count. I just had to poke a little bit of razor sharp air into their brains and shred their nervous system by forcing it to follow along the pathway of least resistance. I probably burst their hearts as well in the attempt," said Bing normally, like she hadn't just explained how she had viciously destroyed any hope of those worms surviving.

The comment did give Feng a moment of clarity. As he heard Bing describe, with ease, the way she completely ensured the death of those worms, it hit him in that moment. 'I was raised by an assassin. "They're still spirit beasts!" said Feng instead, getting his thoughts away from the turns they had been taking. "We get missions to clear them out whenever they get too close to the mortal villages,"

"Most of them don't even have a beast core," said Bing with a dismissive snort, "They barely count as spirit beasts, and I'm convinced the only reason they are even mentioned in the same breath is because if they were just classified as the pests they are nobody would bother taking the mission. I mean, I know normal farmers that have killed those things before. It's really not a big deal,"

"You say that, but just wait till a Rank 2 one shows its ugly mug in one of the tunnels we're using, in fact, we could be using a worm tunnel to move around right now. It's certainly the right shape," insisted Feng.

Bing shrugged, looking around at the obvious stalagmites visible on the ceilings. If this was actually a worm tunnel, it hadn't been used in decades, maybe centuries. The spiky bits of rock would've broken off. *Still, I guess it could be dangerous if we go too deep. Find some lava monsters or something. I

mean, I've never seen one, but that doesn't mean they don't exist. This area was probably volcanic at some point in the past so... maybe? Or we could wake up some ancient evil! That sounds interesting. Dangerous, but interesting.*

"You do remember I'm basically Rank 3 right? I could make the jump right now, if needed," said Bing.

"Yeah but that'd wreck your cultivation," said Feng, correctly.

Bing found she didn't really have a comeback for that. It was true, and sure they both knew she'd do it if it meant keeping them both alive, but it was a shit plan. So the silence stretched on for a while until Bing worked up the courage to ask, "Do you really mean it?"

"Mean what? That it'd wreck your cultivation?" asked Feng, trying to dodge the obvious question, to steer Bing away from just asking.

Bing wasn't playing those games though, instead she just straight up asked, "Do you mean it when you say Meng isn't your mother?"

Feng sighed, "Can you at least put me down if we're having this conversation?"

"Hmmm... do you really deserve it though?" asked Bing, "I mean, you're avoiding my questions, and you really do deserve a punishment after what you did..."

"Are you going to let me down or not?" asked Feng.

"I will... if you promise to actually answer my question," said Bing.

"Fine," grumbled Feng. Knowing Bing as he did, he reacted quickly when she just dropped him off her shoulder. Feng managed to steady himself on the nearby wall and avoid falling on his face. "Yeah... yeah I expected that..." Feng mumbled in a quiet voice.

"Right, you're off my shoulder now, so talk," said Bing as she continued walking forward.

Feng let out a long sigh. "I ... don't not mean it?" offered Feng in way of an answer. Bing just pulled out a large cream pie and raised it up as if she was about to throw it at Feng. "Wait why the heck do you even have that?" Bing stopped in place and pulled her leg back, like she was a pitcher at a baseball game, "FINE FINE, I'll talk," Bing kept walking... and the pie in her hand.

Feng let out another sigh, but this time he was determined to give a more complete answer, "I do mean what I said just before... in that I don't not mean it. A bit confusing perhaps... but even if I feel like I'm wrong for saying it... I don't think I'm completely out of line either. I'm not sure how you can be so cool with this... but... Meng captured, and likely killed our real mother...

"And I'm not totally sure that's something I can get over? Especially not after being lied to my entire life. And yes, I do understand that the Meng we have now cares, that she is willing to put her life on the line for us. I'm not doubting that part... I just... how can I ever trust her fully? How can I ever treat her the same way again?"

"I'm not sure you have to treat her the same," said Bing. "I know I certainly won't. It's true, she's not the person we thought she was... but that doesn't mean she can't be our mother. I feel like even if she was

our real Mum, Meng wouldn't have been telling us that she was an assassin when we were like... five or whatever you're imagining.

"In fact, if I had to guess, Meng probably wouldn't have told us at all unless we started showing an interest in going into that sort of business. Sure that's a guess on my part... but I know, in my heart, that Meng would protect us from anything, including herself. Sure this whole thing forced the issue, but what I understand, and perhaps you don't yet... is that the fact we're not biologically her kids? It doesn't change anything, not really,"

"Are you trying to make it seem... that I'm... that I'm what? Annoyed that I'm technically adopted?" asked Feng confused.

Oh for fucks sake Feng. "No Feng, that wasn't the point I was making at all. Are you just being deliberately obtuse now?" asked Bing, trying to keep the annoyance from her tone and only partially succeeding.

"No I'm not," said Feng petulantly, and making it really hard to tell if he was being truthful or not. "I'm genuinely listening,"

I doubt that brother... I really doubt that.