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Chapter 24 The Blood Ghost Hands

Gui Bingwen pulled out an aged wooden tablet with scribbling that seemed to have been written with a sword. The markings were sharp and smooth. The words on the tablet were "Mountain river strike."

Dong Yanlin frowned once he saw that tablet exerted a faint pressure on him as compared to the bark in Peng Zhen's hands. Gui Bingwen's hand that was holding the tablet ignited into a green flame that covered the tablet.

"Ignite," Gui yelled as a huge change happened to the wooden tablet. The green flames covered the whole tablet then they immediately got swallowed by the Mountain river strike markings.

Gui's face got paler by the minute as he kept feeding flames to that tablet. He had to swallow some pills to boost its intensity before the markings seemed satisfied. The tablet broke apart and disintegrated into ashes but the words Mountain river strike floated in the air as green sword markings.

The words combined to form a green-blue bamboo sword that released an overbearing pressure on Dong Yanlin before it struck him bringing forth a tremendous wave of water that had the heaviness of a mountain. The wave fell on Dong Yanlin who ferocious look on his face as he charged straight at the wave aiming to rip it apart with his hands.

The head-on charge resulted in Dong Yanlin being pushed back a couple of steps before he halted the charge of the sword attack. His robes were torn apart at his chest as for his hand, it was bloodied with a deep gashing wound that revealed bone.

"Good, good it seems you came prepared huh Peng Zhen? I always wondered what you told straight-laced Gui Bingwen to make him join your betrayal. You even prepared a core formation attack just for me too bad it still fell a little short. The technique doesn't seem like Cheng Yuan's style. Did you get some outside help? Doesn't matter both of you DIE!!" Dong Yanlin said with a malicious grin as he charged slashing the bone saber forward with the Ao Yin silhouette throwing a matching punch. The green smooth bark unleashed a bright white gentle glow that covered both Peng Zhen and Gui Bingwen before it twisted to form a 10-meter-tall tree made of alternating colored lights. The colors were red, orange, and green.

A gonging sound was produced when the fist from the Ao Yin clashed against the white glowing light from the tree. A deep crack was produced from the collision point between the two which grew wider and wider like a deep crevice. The white glow from the tree kept flickering like it would shatter at any minute.

Peng Zhen and Gui Bingwen had grim looks on their faces. If the white glowing barrier were to crack they would be decimated by Ao Yin's attack leaving no corpse behind. The white glow flashed repeatedly with the light dimming a little after every flash just as the barrier was about to crack completely Dong Yanlin felt a change on the leopard pouch by his waistline.

Just as he was about to investigate what was wrong he had a yell come from Peng Zhen.

"Tupelo NO DON'T DO IT. It doesn't matter what happens to us, you have already helped us plenty. Don't do this?" Peng Zhen hurriedly pleaded as he tried to make his way over across the barrier but he couldn't pass through no matter how much he tried.

Dong Yanlin's pupils froze once he heard what Peng Zhen was saying.

"Is something happening to the tree ?" he wondered to himself. He quickly used his spiritual sense to inspect the leopard pouch only to be shocked at what was happening. The tupelo tree was rapidly shrinking in size and emitting the same white glow as its projection outside.

"No No No this can't be happening. Stop it you dumb tree." Dong Yanlin hurriedly yelled before he pulled the tree out of the pouch which was already half its original size. He produced multiple seals with his hands which attached themselves to the tree trying to halt whatever it was doing but they all shattered like glass the moment they approached it. The Tupelo tree launched itself towards where the green bark with its projection was. The bark completely melded itself into the tree like it belonged before the projection shrunk and surrounded the tree itself. The barrier that seemed to be only moments away from shattering was renewed and seemed multiple levels stronger and brighter. The tree continued to shrink before it stopped at almost 2 meters from its earlier 30 meters. A huge power seemed to be concentrating from within the tree.

Dong Yanlin detected an overwhelming danger from the tree. He hurriedly reacted and made a huge gushing wound on both his abdomen as he allowed the tendrils of the saber to rapidly swallow his blood. He couldn't care less about the risks he would suffer or the damage losing so much vitality and qi would do to his cultivation. He knew if he didn't go all out he would die. The Tupelo tree was radiating the energy waves of a peak core formation stage expert.

He madly roared as he fed more blood and qi into the saber. Veins were protruding all over his body as more of his hair turned white rapidly. His face got sunken as his body rapidly aged. He looked like a 30-year-old just seconds ago but currently, he seemed to be in his 80s rapidly approaching his death bed. Meanwhile, the silhouette of Ao Yin got more distinctive there was even some faint color on its coat. It had a black and red coat albeit it was still faint as the projection still looked like an illusion and not the real thing. The red coat seemed like a pure flesh muscle that wasn't covered in any skin.

The silhouette roared before the saber broke free of Dong Yanlin's hand. The tendrils still lurched into his navel. The roar traveled for miles producing thundering airwaves all around the area.

A green, red, and orange light was released from the Tupelo tree the moment the Ao Yin made its roar. The light streamlined itself into the shape of a smooth branch before it charged straight into Ao Yin who met the incoming attack by trying to grip the branch of light in between its massive palms.

BAAM! An explosion sounded from the clash with the ground beneath Ao Yin caving in. It roared ferociously as it tried to break the branch but to no avail. Both sides seemed to be at a stalemate but neither Dong Yanlin nor Peng Zhen had a good look at the moment. Dong Yanlin was continuously drained and at the rate, it was going if Ao Yin didn't end this soon he would end up with a crippled cultivation or worse the saber would swallow him completely like what happened to happen to Hao Ye and Jia Tingfeng.

Peng Zhen on the other hand had an expression that was on tenterhooks as he stared at the Tupelo tree with worry, regret, shame, and a pained expression on his face.

"Why did you do this? You are at a critical stage in your cultivation and are about to go into dormancy. If you don't have sufficient energy before you go in, you may never wake up." Peng Zhen said with pain in his voice. There was nothing he could do at this stage, the die had been cast. All he could hope for was the Tupelo tree to end this as fast as possible to minimize the amount of energy it would need to expend. But from the look of things, they weren't that optimistic that they would end soon.

The stalemate that was being maintained for a few minutes had reached a tipping point. The tupelo tree increased the intensity of its attack with the glow growing brighter than the blinding sun As for Ao Yin its conduit the bone saber had almost drained Dong Yanlin to death. His skin was saggy loosely attached to his bones. His whole body seemed to have been swallowed by his robes. He was laying weakly on his knees but there was a fire in his eyes. He removed a jar from his storage ring. He weakly unsealed it and removed some creatures that looked to be pale white leeches from it and madly devoured them like

some ravenous wolf. His complexion changed and got a tad bit rosier from his earlier paleness. However, the paleness swiftly returned immediately after.

Dong Yanlin on seeing gritted his teeth as a small grey crucible that had engravings and patterns of a 3-headed vulture on it appeared on his palms. He cautiously removed the lid as he lifted it above his mouth to swallow its contents. Something dark grey, with a slimy texture with grey and white rings over its body, wriggled back and forth. It looked like an earthworm covered in a slimy mud puddle. The moment Dong Yanlin swallowed that creature his eyes turned hollow like a ghost as his skin turned ash grey. The tendrils attached to him squirmed almost as if in fear before they dislodged themselves from his body.

Despite the saber now losing its energy supply the Ao Yin silhouette did not seem to have weakened one iota. It was still madly clashing with the Tupelo tree and seemed to be gaining a narrow lead.

Peng Zhen and Gui Bingwen were staring at Dong Yanlin with horrified expressions. They recognized the worm he had just swallowed. It was a rare worm used by the blood ghost hands sect. This was an infamous sect known for its brutality and evil techniques. One of their vice leaders once massacred a whole province to advance the grade of one of his cultivation techniques.

Even though it was an evil organization it had a lot of dealings with the so-called righteous sects, clans even some kingdoms and empires. They undertook assassinations, kidnappings, robbery, and all other sorts of missions that these sects and clans would not want to be tied to directly. Due to their high success rate, and the ability to undertake any missions despite the range of difficulty, the secrecy, and the abilities of their members to meld anywhere, many employed their services as long as they could make sufficient payment.

The blood ghost hands rarely fail their missions. A supreme elder of the Mao clan which is a rank 1 clan was successfully assassinated by someone from the organization. The elder was a domain-level expert. The assassination created waves throughout the southern continent. Domain-level experts were considered extremely powerful as a single expert could level an entire Rank 3 kingdom with a flip of their palm. But an expert of this level had been assassinated. This meant Domain experts whom normal people thought were immortal could also be killed just like any other person and as long as you paid the price you could get the blood ghost hands to do it for you.

After the assassination, members of the blood ghost hands sect were continuously hunted by the Mao family and their allies but it was unsuccessful. Only a few low-level branches and members were captured as for the real talents of the sect or even their headquarters none was caught. It is also

rumored that their leader is a soul formation expert which is why even their main hideout has never been found.