

F Disciples 381

Chapter 381.: First Crisis

Chen Wentian discussed the matter with Zhou Ziyun until the next morning. Out of all disciples, he valued her advice the most. She viewed matters differently from him yet the result was often similar. Her sensibility suited his style of being cautious and prepared for all possibilities. She considered all factors. She calculated the reactions and responses of all parties involved. She was the one he trusted the most in this situation.

The first point that they both agreed on after lengthy discussion was that the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms was the culprit for the demon's abnormal reaction and that the palm arts contained a secret.

Lin Qingcheng should not have been able to dominate that jiangshi so easily, given the gap in cultivation levels as well as her poor fighting instincts and lazy practice. There must have been something in the palm strikes that were especially effective against demons which raised a primal fear within it. This something was so effective that even Lin Qingcheng was able to win.

The second point they concurred on was that the message talisman probably was not completely destroyed. Chen Wentian knew of at least one way to allow a message talisman to persist after being intercepted. His way involved teleporting a portion of the message away using space-attribute spiritual energy, the same energy that the void bee queen was capable of producing. Since there was one method, there was bound to be more known to higher realm immortals. Chen Wentian was still a Spirit Lord and incapable of using brute force to overwhelm something created by a higher power.

This led to the third point that some kind of danger was approaching. They both knew this to be true but they were unable to guess when it would come or in what form. It was even more difficult to gauge the true level of danger. They didn't know how much of the original message survived but was it definitely was not the whole message. Less information sent back meant less danger while the opposite was also possible. The unknown enemy might only know the general direction or they might know the general area. Perhaps they knew the exact location already. It was impossible to tell.

Regardless of the possibilities, they both agreed that they had to react appropriately. They had to be prepared. They were both people that wouldn't be satisfied with sitting still and waiting for lightning to strike them down in a storm. They would rather seek shelter and ask questions later.

The first reaction was increased vigilance. If something was coming, Chen Wentian wanted to know about it as quickly as possible. Chen Mo would be responsible for this task along with the void bee queen. Profits from void-attribute spiritual crystals were suspended for time being and the queen's efforts would be solely focused on working together with Chen Mo.

This effort would be most arduous of all and would require the full attention of both immortal souls for the duration. Chen Mo would have to control as many shadow anchors as he could handle and the queen bee would have to manage a massively expanding hive. They were not allowed to slack off even one bit, not until Chen Wentian could get some assurances that the unknown danger had passed.

Thankfully, Zhou Ziyun had already thought about the matter of Chen Mo and the queen void bee working together for this kind of task. She came up with a cooperative system where the best strengths of both could be utilized. Chen Mo's shadow anchors were great at instantaneous feedback but they weren't able to scale to extremely large numbers. Bees, on the other hand, were naturally adept at producing hives in the millions, even billions. A single hive could cover a vast area and the queen could make multiple hives.

The system called for the bees to use their existing method of communication which involved intricate dances. These dances allowed scout bees to tell the hive where sources of void nectar were and where potential enemies were. They even had a set of dances to warn of overwhelming enemies in the vicinity. All Chen Mo had to do was learn these dances and place shadow anchors in each of the hives. If the bees found anything, he would know of it in almost real-time.

This was such a good idea that Chen Wentian promised Zhou Ziyun a big reward when they met up again. She wasn't quite satisfied and made him agree to a bigger reward than what Lin Qingcheng was going to get. Stuck in a pointless competition between two women, he could only agree.

The second reaction was to gather more information. Zhou Ziyun had only casually read about demons before now. There were many more resources available that she had not studied yet. Chen Wentian could also use his status as an immortal to ask around and hopefully get information from his peers. They would both be responsible for finding as much information as they could about demon slayers, demon slayer arts, and what kind of demon could potentially be interested in them. The chances of actually finding anything useful were low but it was better than sitting around and doing nothing.

The third reaction would involve the remaining disciples. All of them, Jasmine especially, would focus on practicing the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms as much as they could. Chen Wentian wasn't hoping for

them to gain any special insights that he or Zhou Ziyun couldn't. Instead, he simply wanted them to be well-practiced in these palms since they were highly effective against demons. If worst came to worst, they would at least be able to fight back.

The only caveat was that they were not allowed to use the palm arts against actual demons lest it triggered another, similar reaction as the jiangshi. The last thing he wanted was for the unseen enemy to get another piece of information about him and his disciples. As long as this rule was in place, he didn't have to worry about another accident happening.

And lastly, demon hunting activities that had already begun across several provinces would continue unabated. Each disciple would be responsible for their existing demon hunting tasks in addition to these brand-new ones.

Chen Wentian had wanted to stop these activities but Zhou Ziyun convinced him otherwise. It was best to stay the course and not make any obvious moves. Anything out of the ordinary would be picked up by unseen enemies. The best reaction was to not react at all and play dumb. If they were alarmed, then their enemy would be alarmed as well.

The next morning, Chen Wentian sent word to all of his disciples informing them of the recent developments and how the sect would respond. He didn't want to frighten them but the matter was too serious so he told them the simple truth.

Ten Thousand Flower Valley was facing a crisis, the first one in its short history and hopefully the one out of many in a long future.

Chapter 382.: His Sect and His Province

Chen Wentian stopped by Dragon Flower Province as the crisis started to unfold, on his way to the eastern provinces. He didn't go visit his disciples at the sect and instead chose to fly around the province and take in the sights from up high. This would no doubt annoy Jasmine but he wasn't thinking of her at the moment. Instead, he was thinking of the sect as a whole and this province which he now called home.

Over two years and three months had passed since he created Ten Thousand Flower Valley. One year after the establishment of the sect, the Immortal Sect Competition took place where his disciples dominated their peers. An entire year after that was dedicated to the Monster Fighting Competition and repelling the monster invasion that devastated the nine frontier provinces to the east. And in between all that, he managed to destroy two Spirit Lords and take over their sects, bring a superpower sect led by two Spirit King to its knees, and even defeat a Spirit King.

So many exciting things happened one after another that two years barely registered in his mind. Time was a different concept to an immortal compared to a mortal. Even for Spirit Lords who merely doubled their original lifespan, two years was a drop in the bucket, a small blip in their existence. But it had been an amazing time.

Chen Wentian managed to find so many amazing disciples and, through their hard work, raise Ten Thousand Flower Valley into an amazing sect. The sect's fame, and perhaps infamy, spread across the subcontinent and its name was known by all. In just two years, his sect was the strongest Spirit Lord sect in the land.

His disciples were unparalleled. It was difficult to even one good disciple with the potential of reaching the immortal realms but it was easy for him. It almost seemed as they fell onto his lap by sheer luck. It was also difficult to earn money and find resources to raise disciples but it was easy for him. He was able to make obscene amounts of money, enough to give each of his disciples the best cultivation resources. A normal Spirit Lord wouldn't be able to achieve all of this in their entire life but he managed to in just a little over two years.

But... continued growth was impossible without challenge, without forces seeking to take him down. Ten Thousand Flower Valley was facing its first crisis from an unknown demon entity but it could have easily been another source.

All cultivation sects faced crises, some more than others, but it was inevitable for all. Some crises were small matters such as lack of good disciples, competition with rival sects, and lack of resources to properly provide for the disciples. Others were more serious, perhaps existential, such as human wars, beast waves, demon infestations.

Some sects survived and thrived afterward. Some perished outright. Many suffered permanent damage and loss that would forever put a stopper on their growth potential, leading to a long and painful decline. But this wouldn't be the case for his sect, not as long as he was alive!

Chen Wentian zipped through the sky, his blue flames leaving a fiery streak in his wake for all to see, a declaration of his presence, a lord surveying his domain.

Dragon Flower Province was shaped roughly like a potato lying on its side.

Ten Thousand Flower Valley was located to the northwest. Further north and west were forested mountains and river valleys that extended to the border, home of mountain people including Wu Qianyu and the Great Leaf Sect where she came from. This area was sparsely populated by humans but filled with plenty of wildlife and natural resources. To the south and the east lay the fertile river plains. Farmland stretched from horizon to horizon, interrupted by forests, lakes, and hills here and there. Villages, towns, and cities dotted the landscape for a thousand kilometers until the eastern border, where the capital of the Bright Moon Kingdom, Moonlight City, was situated.

This vast land, filled with millions of human souls, used to be a chaotic place filled with danger. The residents lived in fear of bandit raids that would rob them of women and girls. They had to defend against demon infestations that would pop up from time to time that would wipe out whole regions. They were at the whim of local cultivation sects that ruled the area like lords and kings. They were also subject to droughts, pestilence, famine, war, an endless number of threats to commoners.

Ten Thousand Flower Valley changed all of this. In just two years, this province was transformed for the better.

Existing demon infestations were wiped out for good. All of his disciples contributed to this at one point or another but it was mostly done single-handedly by Wu Qianyu. If one had to talk about demon slayers that may or may not exist, she was a true demon slayer. No demon, large or small, was safe if she was on a pain-driven rampage. Now, only evil demons with the ability to hide within human populations remained.

Bandits were gone as well. They no longer ruled the land with impunity. The demand for their services no longer exists after Lin Qingcheng took over the Bright Moon Kingdom and implemented her reforms. Those that stubbornly remained were destroyed by the kingdom in a massive campaign that swept the entire province clean.

Dragon Flower Province was now in a golden period of peace and prosperity. Zhou Ziyun's excellent management, combined with his money and the influx of refugees from the frontier, improved the economy of the province greatly. Capable people now had every chance to survive and flourish without the dangers they would face in other provinces.

As a result, within the ordinary human population, there was nobody that could find fault with their immortal ruler. Chen Wentian's name as well as those of his disciples were spoken with reverence. From the east to the west, south to the north, all the commoners loved Immortal Blue Dragon and his Ten Thousand Flower Valley.

Opinions were more mixed within the cultivation sects that existed before Chen Wentian's arrival. The lower-ranked and less capable sects welcomed him and readily accepted the benefits he provided. Better sects looked on in helplessness and jealousy as their power and influence were stripped away in an instant. Some sects even left the province altogether, choosing to seek a new path in another land without an overlord, while other sects moved to the province instead in hopes of establishing relationships with a brand-new immortal.

Chen Wentian didn't pay attention to the coming and going of other sects but he didn't suppress them either. His own sect was too selective and would never have many disciples. These cultivation sects were a necessary annoyance. They absorbed all the excess cultivators that couldn't even join his branch sects, let alone Ten Thousand Flower Valley. At long as these ragtag sects behaved and didn't cause him trouble, they were allowed to exist.

All in all, Dragon Flower Province was now a great place.

Ten Thousand Flower Valley was doing great too.

This sect he created and this province he ruled, he wouldn't let them fall to ruin. He had already put a lot of effort into everything and he wasn't going to let a bunch of dirty demons mess it up.

He welcomed a fight. As a cultivator, he wouldn't grow by hiding in a hole, without finding opportunities in the face of danger. Sometimes, danger was unavoidable and only option was to confront it head-on.

As long as he prepared, he didn't fear any beast, demon, or human. He was Immortal Blue Dragon Chen Wentian. He wielded unfathomable secrets that would make the whole world tremble. There was nothing that could stop his ascent towards nirvana!

Chapter 383.: Side Story: Difficulties of a Woman (I)

The first light of dawn sliced through a sea of clouds and cast its warmth onto an immortal sect called the Tower of Swords. This sect was located on a rocky mountaintop where natural erosion over eons left behind narrow towers of grey stone. These stone towers were then further elevated by human industry, creating narrow, flat spires of stone blocks that pierced the sky. From the distance, it looked like a forest of gray, towers of swords.

Each tower, large and small, was the residence of families, disciples, seniors, elders, and core disciples. And within the tallest tower, its tip hidden in the clouds, resided the venerable sect master Peng Yuefeng, an expert swordsman from a long line of expert swordsmen that had few equals in the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent.

He wasn't as strong as a Spirit King but it could be said that his understanding of the way of the sword was peerless, that nobody alive could best him in sword skill alone. As a result, the Tower of Swords was filled to the brim with sword fanatics and sword lovers of all shapes and sizes, male and female, of all ages, all under one name... Peng.

This morning, amongst the thousands of sword practitioners waking up and preparing to hone their sword arts, there was one person that stood out in particular.

This young woman was no older than eighteen. Her cultivation was impressive for her age, at the beginning levels of the Mind Focusing Realm. She wore the same gray robes as the other female disciples, with wide sleeves and long dresses that flowed in the wind. It was an adequate outfit, obviously feminine but not too colorful or distracting, illustrating the serious nature of the path of the sword. Yet somehow, she was able to clearly stand out amidst a sea of similar outfits.

Her eyes were bright, filled with intelligence and determination. Her lips were small but plump like a red rose ready to be plucked. A straight nose, sharp eyebrows, slender neck, and rounded jawline that led to a perfectly oval face with skin as white as snow... Her features dazzled in the morning light, outshining the orange brilliance from the eastern horizon as well as the combined beauty of all the female disciples gathered in the courtyard.

“Morning, Sister Lingxi!”

“Good morning!”

“Sister!”

Lingxi was her name, or more accurately, Peng Lingxi. She was, like many others, a distant relative of the sect master. The sect was filled with branch families and branches of branches. Cousins, second cousins, third cousins, aunts and uncles, everyone was related to someone else.

Her family was small compared to others, with only a mother who was a commoner and a father who died early, a casualty of the difficult path that all cultivators took. Her background was ordinary but she was anything but. She had to be as it was only her talent that allowed her family to remain in the sect and survive.

Peng Lingxi nodded to her peers as she walked past them wordlessly. She carried with her an almost untouchable aura. Eyes filled with admiration as well as jealousy followed her steps until she eventually took her place at the front row.

“Attention!” A stern voice sounded from the raised stage.

A stout matron with graying hair pulled back in a bun stepped forward, her sword held behind her right arm, her left hand carrying an unfurled scroll.

“Morning, Elder Peng Lei!” The gathered female disciples said in unison, a hundred voices combining into a titillating chorus.

Elder Peng Lei was their master in all but name. The Tower of Swords had tens of thousands of disciples and it was impossible for the sect master to teach everyone. He only taught the core disciples while an army of elders took care of the rest.

"We will have a joint practice with our male cohort this morning..." Peng Lei began.

Squeals of excitement and fervent chatter erupted among the gathered female disciples. It was as if this was the most exciting thing they had heard in many months. Indeed, at their age, the opposite sex was perhaps the only thing that could distract their sword heart and occupy a greater place in their minds than the pursuit of cultivation.

"Quiet down, quiet down." She repeated this a few times until even the most excitable maiden shut their mouth, "For the joint practice, we will begin with some matches as a few of you need practice partners."

She paused and stared down at Peng Lingxi. All the heads turned and stared at her as well.

"Lingxi, this cohort that is coming today is the best within the Mind Focusing Realm. All of them are at the upper levels. Lingxi, I hope you can learn something from these male disciples and finally settle your sword heart. Perhaps you will finally be able to find a suitable partner."

Peng Lingxi looked up with an even expression, "Respected elder, my sword heart is firm as steel, keen like a blade's edge. If there is someone suitable for me, I am naturally willing to practice the sword with him. I hope that your optimism can hold true."

Elder Peng Lei's face contorted into a frown. She wanted to say something but couldn't figure out what. It wasn't like she could reprimand Peng Lingxi for her reasonable and respectful words.

Peng Lingxi wasn't like the other female disciples. It wasn't because she was stubborn or disliked men. She was simply too talented to pair up with ordinary male disciples. She was undisputedly the best disciple among the younger generation by far and it wasn't close.

But time was ticking and Peng Lingxi wasn't a little girl anymore. She couldn't delay this matter much longer. It was impossible to go on without a partner.

The problem lay in the sword art that female disciples of the Tower of Swords cultivated, the Sword of the Noble Lady. It was a sword art created by the sect ancestor's wife specifically for female sword

practitioners. It was a complementary sword art to the male form which the sect ancestor wielded, the Sword of the Gallant Gentleman.

A gallant gentleman and a noble lady, it was a perfect pairing, a complementary union that benefitted both sides. It was one of the best sword arts for mortal cultivators that instilled righteousness, integrity, bravery, and loyalty. One relied on the other and it was impossible to attain the highest levels of understanding without a partner.

There was also one other sword art, the immortal sword art that was the foundation of the sect. However, this was reserved for the sect master and his core disciples. Named the Lonely Sword Wanderer, it was the polar opposite of the Sword of the Noble Lady and the Sword of Gallant Gentleman. The Lonely Sword Wanderer was a solitary sword Dao that required no partner. Its path to immortality was one of loneliness. Its immortal sword was lonely from beginning to end.

But Peng Lingxi wasn't a core disciple. She was just an ordinary disciple that had never even met the sect master in person. There was no other option for her.

Elder Peng Lei stared at Peng Lingxi. Peng Lingxi stared back without emotion. Neither backed down.

The awkward silence was eventually broken by the arrival of steady footsteps. A venerable male elder with long white hair arrived with around a hundred youthful male disciples in tow. They took up the space on the opposite side of the courtyard while the male elder walked up the steps to the platform in the middle.

"Elder Peng Lei! Morning!"

"Elder Peng Feihe!" Peng Lei greeted him.

The two elders conversed briefly, leaving their disciples to silently ogle their counterparts.

The attention of the female disciples varied. Some were staring at their practice partners while others examined the most handsome young men amongst the crowd. Practice partners were not set in stone and those that were unsatisfied with their current partners couldn't help but let their eyes roam toward better candidates.

The men, on the other hand, were all staring at Peng Lingxi like hungry wolves. She was the prize in everyone's heart and it had been this way for many years. She was the unattainable maiden that rebuffed all suitors. She never had a practice partner that lasted more than a single morning. No male disciple of equal cultivation and skill existed. Even direct descendants of the sect master that wished to practice their sword arts with her were denied time and time again.

As such, her status became somewhat legendary amongst the mortal disciples of the Tower of Gods. There were even wagers between those with influential backgrounds and deep pockets. Everyone was waiting for the day that someone could pluck this beautiful, stubborn flower.

Peng Lingxi closed her eyes and let out a steady breath, preparing for the matches that would soon start.

She didn't care what others thought of her. They could look but that's all they could do. Her heart would never waver from the path of the sword. This was her Dao and these talentless men all around her were useless distractions.

Elder Peng Lei's words soon came as expected, "Disciple Peng Lingxi! Come up to the stage to receive your first challenge!"

Chapter 384.: Side Story: Difficulties of a Woman (II)

Peng Lingxi climbed up the short stone steps as all eyes followed her every movement. Her long ponytail swished behind her, brushing past her narrow waist and across her wide hips which swayed from side to side. Her movements were confident and her face showed no emotion.

"Disciple Peng Lingxi, please instruct me." She said after bowing to the elders.

Elder Peng Feihe soon called the name a male disciple from his cohort who bounded up excitedly and bowed.

"Disciple Peng Feiwen, please instruct me."

Peng Lingxi's sharp brown eyes studied her opponent.

Peng Feiwen was obviously a relative of that elder. Their features were similar. He was tall and broad, with a wide face that couldn't be considered handsome but he wasn't bad looking either. He was around the mid-twenties and at the upper levels of the Mind Focusing Realm.

"Disciples, the stage is yours." Elder Peng Lei said as the two elders stood to the side, "No spiritual energy is allowed, only use your physical ability and sword skills."

"Yes, elder!"

"Yes, elder."

Peng Feiwen faced Peng Lingxi. He withdrew a broadsword that was strapped to his back. It was longer and much heavier than hers which was only two fingers wide and one meter long, a standard sword which was the most popular.

"Little Sister Lingxi, here I come!" He said and lifted his sword.

He rushed at her, swinging his sword in a wide arc like a rushing bull.

Peng Lingxi didn't even bother to draw her sword as she dodged the first blow, then the one after, and then several more in quick succession. The male disciple's sword form was unpolished and his steps were sluggish. She could easily tell how he intended to attack as soon as he made the slightest movement.

To the uninitiated, it seemed as if Peng Feiwen was dominating her and forcing her to dance to his tune. In reality, she was merely avoiding a mad dog that was trying to bite its owner. She could have chosen to turn it around in an instant but chose to give her opponent some face.

The elders knew what was happening and both shook their heads. It was a sad display for experts like them.

The bout was mercifully stopped after a few minutes.

Peng Feiwen stumbled to a stop, gasping for breath, his hair now unkempt from the exertion, his grey robes a mess. His initial optimism was completely crushed and his face was a mask of shame. He made one last glance at the impeccable Peng Lingxi before fleeing off the stage.

Peng Lingxi, who still hadn't drawn her sword, who didn't have a single hair out of place, also got off the stage. She got nothing useful out of her useless opponent. It was a waste of time and these male disciples were all incompetent in her eyes. She would rather practice by herself but she didn't have a choice.

The joint practice continued. Pairs of disciples were called up one by another. Each fight lasted no longer than five minutes and soon it was her turn once again. She dispatched this new challenger with barely any effort, only drawing her sword once to disarm him.

Several more turns followed until, eventually, it was close to lunchtime and the practice was almost over. Peng Lingxi was called up for the last bout and her opponent was someone unexpected.

"Disciple Peng Feihong, greets junior sister!" A young man said as he strode up to the stage, exuding a kind of confidence that no other male disciple so far possessed.

His age was the same as the others but his demeanor was completely different. His movements were sharp, his eyes even sharper. Everything about him was like a sword, a true practitioner of the path of the sword, a core disciple.

Peng Lingxi turned to the elders. "What is going on?"

Peng Feihong was a core disciple. He was already at the 1st Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm. She didn't know why somebody like this showed up at a random practice session for ordinary disciples.

Elder Peng Feihe laughed, "My nephew Feihong just happened to be visiting me so he tagged along this morning. Lingxi, please excuse his manners but he felt inspired by your talent with the sword and wanted to give you some pointers."

“Actually, junior sister Lingxi,” Peng Feihong spoke up, “I am a straightforward man so I will not mislead you. You know who I am and I have also learned about you. The truth is, you intrigue me.”

This drew several gasps from the female disciples. It was almost a confession, a declaration of his intent. As if that wasn't clear enough, his next words cast away all doubt.

“Lingxi... I want you to be my sword partner!”

The courtyard erupted into squeals of excitement as well as groans of disappointment.

The male disciples all knew that they had no shot at Peng Lingxi now that Peng Feihong had shown his face. The status of a core disciple compared to an ordinary disciple was like heaven and earth. One had an opportunity to seek the immortal path while the other had no chance whatsoever.

The female disciples were mostly excited as this was a hugely beneficial development. Peng Lingxi would become a core disciple's partner and she would no longer compete with them for other male disciples. She would no longer be the queen bee that attracted all attention to her and the other female disciples would be able to have a fair shot.

Peng Lingxi ignored the noise around her and measured this man from top to bottom. He was undoubtedly handsome, with a long face and slender features. His demeanor was clearly that of someone focused on cultivation. She could find no fault at all in him but this didn't mean her heart was moved. Her sword heart was like cold steel. It couldn't be moved by good looks alone. She wanted to see if this person was the real deal, a savant of the sword that could equal her, that could impress her to the core.

“Senior Brother Feihong,” She finally replied, “Thank you for your kind words. I wonder, though, the Lonely Sword Wanderer is a solitary sword art. Why would you need a partner when I cannot cultivate that sword art?”

Peng Feihong chuckled, "Junior sister does not know so you have misunderstood the situation. The Lonely Sword Wanderer is a solitary sword art but it also requires complete mastery of both the Sword of the Gallant Gentleman and the Sword of the Noble Lady to progress past the initial portions."

"Then, why does senior brother need me? Would you not have more suitable partners among other core disciples? I am merely an ordinary disciple with low abilities. Surely, there are better options?"

"Master does not accept any women as core disciples. All core disciples have to seek sword partners from ordinary disciples."

"Why is that?" She asked sharply.

Peng Feihong looked stunned for a moment but he quickly shook his head, "Apologies, junior sister. I do not know the reason and it is not my place to speculate as to why. Now..."

He drew his sword and swished it in the air. "I would like you to be my sword partner. Please give me this opportunity to show you my sincerity."

Peng Lingxi drew her sword as well, twirling it under the sunlight and making it flash with a rainbow of colors.

"Please instruct me."

Chapter 385.: Side Story: Difficulties of a Woman (III)

It was high noon. Sunlight shone down on the two sword disciples as they faced each other in the middle of the stage. On one side was a beautiful maiden. On the other was a handsome young prince, a perfect couple.

They both moved at the same time, their swords glittering with radiance. In a flash, they met in the middle, their blades crossing together with a clang. The two stared into each other's eyes, trying to gauge their opponent's next move. The air between them was still but filled with sword intent. Neither side was afraid of the other. Both were intent on proving their ability.

The two broke apart and the duel started in earnest. Sword clashed against sword, so quickly that individual strikes all melded into a smooth melody. One side wielded the Sword of the Gallant Gentleman. The other wielded the Sword of the Noble Lady. Their footsteps and movement perfectly mirrored each other like an intricately choreographed dance.

Without any use of spiritual energy, relying purely on physical ability and understanding of the sword, the pair were perfectly matched. She was his equal in every way. To the onlookers, it seemed like they were connecting their hearts and souls. Many couldn't help but sigh at this stirring scene.

Peng Lingxi had to admit that this Peng Feihong was talented. As she blocked and parried and attacked, she could feel his understanding of the sword being transmitted through his blade. He was far better than the rabble she had to deal with every day, that was for sure.

But that was all he was. He was good. He wasn't great. He was far from amazing. She had expected much more from a core disciple but it seemed that they weren't as good as she had imagined.

Everything she could have learned about the sword from him had all been exhausted in the first few minutes. There was nothing else she could gain from this duel so it was time to end it. Besides, she had already given him enough face.

Peng Lingxi's moves shifted.

The onlookers gasped as her speed increased and her sword became a blur.

She went on the attack, utilizing the flaws in Peng Feihong's sword to press him back. She was faster, more accurate, more relentless. Her sword intent rose precipitously, far above her opponent's much to his shock.

Her understanding of the Sword of the Noble Lady far surpassed his of the Sword of the Gallant Gentleman. In fact, she had also mastered the male sword form as well, something that went far beyond what was expected. These two sword arts were supposed to be complementary. The male side led and the other followed. The man fought and the woman supported. They were supposed to work in conjunction, a dance of perfect harmony.

Instead, she was performing both roles. She needed no man to lead her, to protect her, to assist her. She could do all of it herself. She was a solo dancer following her own tune. There was no room for another at all!

“Enough!” Peng Feihong huffed as he broke away.

He put some distance between them and glared at her, panting softly, trying to hide his shame.

Peng Lingxi tilted her head slightly and peered at him with a serene and carefree expression as if mocking his inability to impress her.

Peng Feihong wiped his brow and stood up straight. “Junior sister Lingxi, do you want to know the truth? The way of the sword is a lonely path. As someone who practices the Lonely Sword Wanderer, I will eventually have to leave behind my family to explore the world, seeking the way of the sword. It is a sword heart that is incompatible with women as its practitioner cannot be distracted by family, children, and others. Master, in all his wisdom and experience, has yet to find a woman who is capable of this. This is the truth, why there are no female core disciples.”

By the time he was finished speaking, his smug demeanor had returned, oozing the superiority of a core disciple. The onlookers were hanging onto his every word and even the elders seemed impressed.

Peng Lingxi, however, remained unfazed.

“Since senior brother spends more time practicing the Lonely Sword Wanderer, perhaps you can show it to me and let me see its power?” She asked.

“Lingxi!” Elder Peng Lei admonished her disciple.

She was about to go up and drag Peng Lingxi off the stage when Peng Feihong held up a hand to stop her.

“Why not.” He said casually, twirling his sword, “But if I beat you, you have to be my sword partner.”

“If your sword can beat mine...” Peng Lingxi answered.

He chuckled and stepped towards her, full of confidence. His sword held casually in front, he made two more steps before he suddenly attacked. His blade was ferocious, going straight for her throat!

She retreated rapidly and knocked the sword away at the last moment. She twirled her body in the air to regain some space but his follow-on attacks didn't give her any room to breathe.

The Lonely Sword Wanderer was fundamentally on another level than ordinary mortal sword arts. The Sword of the Gallant Gentleman was filled with flashy, superfluous moves intended to impress others. The Lonely Sword Wanderer, on the other hand, only had moves intended to defeat and kill the opponent!

“Not good...” Elder Peng Feihe muttered, watching the fight with a worried expression.

“Whatever, let them fight,” Elder Peng Lei snorted and waved her hand, “Lingxi is always so arrogant, it's good for her finally meet her match.”

“En...” Peng Feihe nodded reluctantly.

Peng Lingxi found herself being pushed around the stage. Everything she did was useless and she was at Peng Feihong's whim. If he wanted her to go left, she had to go left. If he wanted her to go right, she had to go right. His sword art was far superior and the sword intent it generated completely suppressed what she could display with the Sword of the Noble Lady.

“Fine!” She said fiercely.

She forcefully disengaged from her opponent, pushing away his sword. She somersaulted backward until she landed at the edge of the stage.

Peng Feihong didn't follow and looked on with an amused expression. "Are you admitting defeat?"

She didn't answer and instead asked, "This is what you call your sword Dao?"

"That's right..."

"Don't make me laugh," She retorted.

Before he could wipe away his shock and respond, she cut apart the long, ungainly sleeves of her outfit and slashed the long, puffy dress into pieces. Ignoring the gasps and furious whispering all around her, she cast aside her ruined outfit to reveal a more formfitting one underneath, not dissimilar to the ones male disciples wore.

"Here I come!" She shouted and charged at Peng Feihong.

"You... what?"

Their swords clashed.

His eyes bulged out in shock. He couldn't believe what he was seeing and experiencing. He could barely hold off her attack.

Without even a moment of pause, her sword flashed around his guard, forcing him to retreat in a panic. She chased after him, her sword swinging fiercely, without a bit of kindness. Each of her sword strikes was filled with awesome power and ruthless sword intent.

Her sword art was clearly not the Sword of the Noble Maiden. This much was clear to everyone. But to Peng Feihong and the elders, they immediately knew which sword art it was...

The Lonely Sword Wanderer!

“You dare break the sect's rules?” Peng Feihong bellowed in disbelief, “Even if master is not here, I will punish you in his stead!”

He counterattacked furiously. He brought the full force of the Lonely Sword Wanderer, intending to teach her a lesson she would never forget.

The two traded blow after blow, utilizing every move they knew within the immortal sword art.

First move, Crossing Streams and Rivers!

The two of them were evenly matched with Peng Lingxi losing out a little in raw strength.

Second move, Rambling Past Hills and Valleys!

Peng Feihong cursed as his shoulder was nicked by her attack.

Striding Across the Great Plains!

He shouted in pain as she once again drew blood while his attack landed on thin air.

Scaling All the Mountains!

Ascending the Skies Alone!

“The... the second wandering!” Elder Peng Lei muttered in sheer disbelief.

“Genius... absolute genius!” Elder Peng Feihe exclaimed.

“You bitch!” Peng Feihong shouted, finally losing it completely.

He couldn't lose to a little girl. He couldn't lose to a nobody. He was a core disciple!

His spiritual energy surged, filling his body with the strength of a Spirit Initiate Realm cultivator. Just the aura alone forced Peng Lingxi all the way to the edge of the stage. They were never equal to being with but now, she stood no chance. A single attack from him at full strength would end her life in a blink.

Peng Feihong bellowed like a madman and charged at her.

“Not good!” Both elders shouted at the same time and made to intercept.

But before anyone could react, an invisible force exploded across the courtyard, freezing everyone in place. This power was overwhelming and meant only one thing!

“Sect master!”

“Sect master!”

Everyone fell to their knees and bowed to the ground, Peng Lingxi included. She dared not look up but sensed a figure land in the middle of the courtyard, between her and Peng Feihong.

“Master, you came! This slut dares... Ahhh!” Peng Feihong began before he let out a wretched scream.

There was the sound of a body flying through the air followed by a rough impact with the ground some distance away.

“Idiot! Be silent!” A rough voice sounded, clearly annoyed. “Disciple Peng Lingxi, stand up.”

Peng Lingxi rose and, with a calm expression, faced the fearsome man in front of her, “Sect master.”

Immortal Desolate Sword Peng Yuefeng studied the disciple in front of him and snorted, "Who taught you?"

Peng Lingxi bowed, "Reporting to sect master, nobody taught me. The Emerald Sword Forest where some core disciples like to train is close to my residence. I often sneaked out at night to watch them practice the Lonely Sword Wanderer and I picked it up like that."

"Hmph, you knew that this was against the sect's rules. Were you not afraid of being discovered and suffering severe punishment?"

She looked at him without fear, "It crossed my mind a few times in the beginning but I soon discarded such thoughts. My heart told me that I was doing nothing wrong. All I did was seek the path of the sword, the best one that was available to me. This is my sword heart. If there are more dangerous opportunities to learn the way of the sword, I will also seek it. Even it means a chance of death, I won't ever be afraid!"

Peng Yuefeng's expression softened and he eventually let a bellowing laugh, "Hahaha! Sect rules are important but talent is even more important. Your sword heart is brilliant and cannot be extinguished by a mere rule. You don't know but I have watched you for several years already. It would be a shame to lose such a good disciple!"

"Thank you, sect master!"

He held up a hand, "But... there are still some rules that cannot be broken. I, Peng Yuefeng, have never accepted a female disciple in my one hundred years of life..."

Peng Lingxi fell to her knees, "Master, I am willing to whatever is necessary!"

"Good!" He stroked his beard thoughtfully, "The name Lingxi is too feminine. I dislike it. Let's change it. From now on, your name is Peng Xiling and you are a man. You are not allowed to disclose the truth to anyone. You are not allowed to be a woman for the rest of your life unless you reach the immortal realms."

“Yes, master!”

Chapter 386.: Bite Me (I)

“First palm, Demon Subjugation!”

“No, no, that's wrong. Do it again!”

“Second palm, Dominate Demons!”

“Don't slack off!”

A cherubic voice resounded through the tall, ancient trees. Several barks and yelps followed which resulted in more admonishment from the owner of the beautiful voice. Upon closer inspection, in a grassy clearing, beneath the snowy cliffs of Snow White Plum Peak, a peculiar show was taking place.

Several beasts, large and small, were lined up in three rows. The back two rows were occupied by giant dire wolves, hulking beasts with pitch-black fur. They were as big as bears with fangs as large as kitchen knives. In the front row were three diminutive foxes; one tan-yellow, one brilliant red, and one snow white.

“Fengsha, that's wrong, you have to use your hips!”

“Huoling, get up! Don't give me that face. Look at how hard Snowy is training!”

More pitiful howls and cries came from the gathered beasts but it was futile. Their master was a stubborn fox whose will could not be denied.

Jasmine stood in front of her brood, hands on her hips, a frown gracing her angelic face. Three fluffy white tails flicked around behind her, signifying her annoyance. She was trying to teach them the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms but, so far, things were hardly going according to plan.

It was difficult for beasts to comprehend human methods of cultivation unless they had obtained wisdom and her beasts were far from that point. The wolves of the pack were each as dumb as a block of tofu and her foxes weren't much better. Their paws were also not suited for a set of martial arts designed for a human physique.

The best she could do was cram it down their throats and improvise where necessary. They complained loudly and often but they had to learn. It was a direct order from the sect master after all.

"Really, Jasmine? This is just sad!" A voice called from the sky above, interrupting her thoughts.

Chen Wentian floated down and landed amidst the practicing beasts. The wolves and foxes instantly stopped what they were doing and gathered around him. They pushed and shoved against each other in order to reach him and lick his fingers and his face, showing a degree of affection he rarely received.

"Haha... hey! No biting! Hahaha..." Fengsha leaped onto his shoulder and he rewarded it with a few scratches between the ears, "Look at you, poor girl, I won't let her bully you anymore!"

"Scram!" Jasmine bellowed, her spiritual energy scattering the beasts in an instant, "Don't try to spoil them. It was you who wanted everyone to learn those palm arts!"

She stomped over to him and poked him in the chest. Her eyes were fierce but lacked any real anger behind them. Her pouty cheeks were far more adorable than intimidating.

"Jasmine!" He caught her before she could react and embraced her.

Her small body pressed tightly against him and her arms wrapped around him. He could feel her anger dissipate as she sniffed his scent and buried her face into his chest.

"Asshole..." She muttered, "You were gone for eighteen days straight, I almost thought about finding another mate."

"Fine! I'll go find another nine-tailed fox!"

Jasmine snorted and pushed him away, "You took a bath before coming to see me... but I can still smell the scent of Zhou Ziyun on you."

"What? Come on! I told you. I had to set up monitoring systems Red Bamboo Province after Cloudy Mountain Province was done. I couldn't come back until that task was done. Plus, Zhou Ziyun wanted some pointers on her Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms. I have to say, she's getting quite good. I don't think you can beat her if it was solely a contest of skill and comprehension."

He finished with a smirk as his words had the intended effect. Jasmine flicked back her silvery hair and stamped her feet in annoyance.

She then raised her small fists up in an obvious challenge, "Fine, I want some pointers on my Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms too. I'll show you who's better than who!"

Chen Wentian chuckled and beckoned her, "Come!"

Jasmine let out a cry of annoyance which merely sounded like a sweet melody to his ears. She attacked him with the first palm and put her full power behind the strike.

He didn't expect her to be so ruthless and dodged away unceremoniously.

She chased after him, kicking and punching furiously, letting out all the frustration that had been building up over the many days.

The pair dashed through the shaded forest floor, across streams, lakes, and even up the side of the mountain. She chased and he fled. He focused on defending, letting her utilize all the moves she knew, teaching her all the while.

Jasmine had definitely been working hard the last few days and not just slacking off and playing with her pets. Her moves were crisper, filled with conviction and understanding, not static moves memorized

through thousands of repetitions. She was finally starting to comprehend the ubiquitous flexibility and all-around nature of this martial art.

This was good news. She was his greatest asset, especially in these uncertain times. Ten Thousand Flower Valley was facing its first dangerous crisis and against an unknown enemy, the only thing that mattered, in the end, was absolute strength. Zhou Ziyun's ideas and designs were helpful but if three or four demon Spirit Lords showed up looking for trouble, nothing she did would be of any use. If it came down to a real fight, as it often did, Jasmine was the only one he could truly rely on.

The two of them kept sparring for a long time. Both immortals felt an innate sense of competitive spirit, neither willing to back down and admit defeat in front of the other. Their fists and palms connected together over and over. Her strikes landed on his body without restraint. He retaliated in kind until there wasn't a single spot on her body he had not touched.

Eventually, Jasmine was the first to give up. Despite her superiority in speed, agility, and strength as a divine beast, Chen Wentian's expertise and experience from countless souls were still able to best her. She was a bit unwilling but she could live with it for now since she lasted far longer than before.

"Fine, fine!" She shouted, throwing her hands up in surrender, "You win."

"Giving up already? Why don't you fight me in your beast form, like how you were teaching your pets? Maybe you'll get better results!"

Seeing his wide smile, she rolled her eyes, "Bastard... and what? Give you more excuses to touch me inappropriately? Pervert, don't think I didn't notice!"

Chen Wentian caught her hand and pulled her to him.

"Do I need an excuse?" He said, his voice dropping down to a soft growl as he hugged her small waist, "I can touch you... where ever I want."

"You dare? I'll bite you!" She retorted, staring up at him with glittering turquoise eyes.

“Then bite me!” He replied and leaned down to capture her lips.

Chapter 387.: Bite Me (II)

At first, Jasmine's lips remained stubbornly closed. She was leaning into him but was playing hard to get. Chen Wentian smirked and bit her first, kibbling her lower lip just enough to make her gasp.

“You... mmm...”

He caught her lips again just as her cute little mouth opened in admonishment. He pressed against her, savoring her sweet flavors against her playful protestations. They were floating in the air above the sect but he didn't really care at the moment. He just wanted her.

Her hands went from punching his chest to being wrapped around his neck. She clung to him and didn't let go. Her legs wrapped instinctively around him and she became a limpet on his body.

He was painfully hard in an instant. He growled softly as he grabbed her butt and pressed himself into her, making his desires known. She simply giggled and teased him without mercy, grinding her hips against his erection from atop several layers of clothes.

The initial tidal wave of desire eventually washed over and both of them broke apart, gasping for breath.

“Bedroom...” Jasmine mumbled as she proceeded to nibble his chin.

“What?” He asked, playing dumb.

“Bedroom, now!”

“What about our usual spot atop the mountain. I thought you liked the outside?”

She slapped his chest, “Asshole! That was one time!”

Chen Wentian laughed. He didn't delay and zoomed down to the ground. They were inside the Moonlit Sanctum before Jasmine could make another complaint. They fell onto the bed with him on top. He straddled her possessively and pushed her down.

"Mmmm..." She moaned softly as his needy lips found hers once more.

His restless hands, in the meantime, divested their bodies of pesky clothes. And when he was done, he pressed her against him once more, letting her feel the length of his shaft resting between her legs.

After a little bit of teasing, both of them were ready for the real deal. They broke apart and stared into each other's eyes, one brilliant turquoise, the other a deep brown. Without words, they conveyed their feelings to each other. Their heavy breaths were in sync and so were their hearts.

"Jasmine... you're so beautiful." He finally said.

She grinned and reached down to give his little dragon a gentle greeting.

"You beast." She answered cheekily.

"I am." He replied.

With a swift motion, he pushed himself up to kneel on the bed and then grabbed her hips with both hands.

"Hey! What are you doing?"

Ignoring her complaint, he spread her legs apart and took in the unforgettable, soul-stealing sight. Perfectly bare, with just a hint of pink, her pussy lips pressed together to form a perfect vertical slit across her mound.

His fingers reached up and spread her apart. Her pussy opened up like a blossoming rose, displaying all of her glory to him and only him. He enjoyed the stunning scenery for just a moment before leaning his head down.

He started at the base and ran his tongue up, all the way to the top. Her hiss of pleasure was simply music to his ears.

Her pussy gushed like a mountain spring, wetting his tongue with her desire. She was sweet and he couldn't get enough. He lapped every drop and plunged his tongue into her warm tunnel, seeking more.

He continued prodding her over and over, making her sing continuously so that he could be rewarded with her nectar.

“Pervert...”

“Bite me...”

“Ahh, don't stop...”

Every noise she made doubled efforts until she was helpless under him.

He knew she was close but he didn't want her to have all the fun. He had been painfully erect for far too long. His own pearls of arousal had long since dribbled down his shaft to form a puddle on the bedsheets.

Without any more delay, he pulled her hips to his and lined himself up with her. In one smooth thrust, he buried himself inside her without warning.

“Ahh!” Jasmine yelped, not from pain but shock, “Asshole!”

Chen Wentian ignored her complaints as he savored the feeling between his legs.

Her pussy was impossibly tight. She was wrapped around his cock like vice. Every small quiver and undulation squeeze she made shot radiating waves of pleasure down his shaft and through his whole body.

He started thrusting at some point, long and slow movements, filled with power. She gasped and panted beneath him, her eyes closed, her lips quivering with pleasure.

She was small and shallow and he still could only fit two-thirds of his dick inside. This didn't matter as she fit him snugly like a glove. She was made for him. Every single part of her was perfect.

"Harder..." She whined.

This elicited a wide smile from him and he obliged, thrusting his cock into her pussy with the strength that only an immortal possessed. He pushed against her inner walls, making her cry out.

"You like that?" He asked.

He wanted to tease her but Jasmine wasn't someone who could be teased easily. He felt her silent response as her pussy constricted around him. Unbelievable pressure surrounded him from all sides, almost as if she was trying to wring his cock dry.

"Harder!" She demanded, slapping his chest.

With a growl, he flipped her on her stomach and plunged back into her. At this angle, she couldn't keep hitting him. He fucked her hard and fast, just the way she wanted.

In and out, in and out. Like a farmer drawing water from a spring, he continued steadily. Her pussy gushed with each thrust until it was overflowing. He was already close to the brim but he wanted to make sure he could tap into her source of pleasure.

“Ahh...”

“Ahh...”

She moaned into the bed; her fingers clenched into a fist. Her pussy began to tremble uncontrollably as her release finally came. He welcomed it with renewed vigor behind his thrusts as he was also at the brim.

“AhhhhhhHH!” She screamed hoarsely as her walls constricted around his cock.

The weight of her love and ecstasy pressed down on and washed over him, driving over the edge as well.

As he came inside her, she let out a wail and finally surrendered. She let out continuous cries like a fox and thrashed unconsciously underneath him. He held her arms down and pressed his weight against her, his hips jerking against his, riding out both of their orgasms in perfect harmony.

“Hehe!” Jasmine eventually let out a giggle.

Seeing that she had recovered, Chen Wentian pulled out of her and let her go with a slap on the butt. This drew a cry of complaint. It also caused her to squeeze her pussy and his cum inside her poured out like a white fountain and pooled on the bedsheets.

It was an intoxicating scene; her lying on her stomach, small and slender legs still spread wide apart, her most precious place stained with the gift of his love. He committed it to memory forever with a silly smile.

Chapter 388.: Bite Me (III)

“Jerk...”

“...”

“Scoundrel...”

“...”

Chen Wentian and Jasmine were still snuggled together in her bed, enjoying a moment of calm bliss after a thrilling moment of passion. She was spooned against him, his body covering hers, her three fluffy tails proving them cover instead of the blankets. Their legs were intertwined while his arm was wrapped around her waist, holding her tight.

She was mumbling something but he ignored her. He buried his face in her silvery hair, enjoying her scent which couldn't really be described. It was simply divine.

He wanted to stay like that for a little while longer, at least until his little dragon gained enough strength for another battle. With Jasmine, he was never quite satisfied with just one round and she never was either.

“Hubbyyyyy.” She whined.

“What's up?” He finally replied, since she asked so nicely.

He wasn't going to reply to jerk or scoundrel or asshole or anything like that. He had principles, even while in bed.

Jasmine loosened his arm and turned around to look at him. She had something on her mind. Her eyes were filled with an uncanny fierceness and passion.

“Listen closely, Chen Wentian!” She said in a serious voice, “This unknown enemy, demon or whatever, I will allow you do whatever you need to protect the sect. However, if you get into a fight or if you want to look for a fight, you come and get me, understand?”

“Jasmine...”

“No! No ifs and buts! You better not leave me behind this time. If you are going to fight, then I will fight too. Otherwise, I will really bite you!”

He studied her. Her expression was fierce and determined. He wanted to deny her at first but quickly gave up on the idea. He knew she wasn't backing down. She was straightforward and stubborn. She was rough on the outside but, inside, she was really kind. She was passionate and loyal to the ones she loved.

Jasmine was his disciple in name but she was also an immortal as well as a divine beast. She had her own ego and ideas. If she really wanted to do something, he couldn't stop her. She was the only one that was his equal in every way.

“Alright,” He said softly, his decision having already been made for him. He brushed the hair off her face and stroked her cheek. “I agree. If there's going to be a fight, you'll be the first one I call.”

Her lips widened into a grin. She showed her happiness by tackling him, pushing him onto his back. She was ready for another round and he obliged.

“Mistress Long, we have arrived.”

Long Yifei opened the curtains of the window by a sliver and peered out.

A few steps from her horse carriage were the carved metal gates of the mayor's residence of Dragon River Town. It was surrounded by tall white walls that were capped off by royal-yellow roof tiles. From the street, it was impossible to see anything inside the mansion.

She preferred to travel by horse carriage even though the town was right outside the sect. Unlike her fellow disciples, she tended to get ogled by every passerby, whether it was male or female, old or young. Even with a face veil hiding her heavenly features, just her presence alone was enough to cause chaos

among the mortal population, to the point that crowds would spontaneously appear in the middle of empty streets.

Also, ever since she started studying the various secret arts of the Virtuous Order of Chunzhen, her magnetic aura had only increased in potency, drawing more stares and weird behavior. This annoyed her to no end and she couldn't wait to start her formal schooling at the order.

Long Yifei straightened her dress and opened the doors. Wooden steps were already prepared for her, as well as two columns of female guards standing to either side, blocking her movements from the view of others.

She walked up the stone steps. As soon as she approached the metal gates, they swung open with a swish of spiritual energy. She went through and the gates quickly shut behind her.

She made her way through the familiar courtyard and arrived at a shaded pavilion overlooking a clear pond filled with rainbow-colored fish.

"Disciple Long Yifei, greets Prioress." She said with a bow.

Immortal Glass Melody Gui Li, Prioress of the Virtuous Order of Chunzhen, looked up from her book and studied Long Yifei for a moment.

"Something on your mind?" She asked.

Long Yifei shook her head, "No, Prioress."

Although Gui Li taught her many things regarding the order, she was not Long Yifei's official teacher. That privilege would go to someone far more powerful. As such, Long Yifei did not voice casual thoughts and feelings to this woman.

"Well, I had something I wanted to ask you." Gui Li said, unruffled.

"I shall answer to the best of my ability."

"Good. My sources tell me that your sect is currently undergoing a large-scale operation of some kind. Do you need any assistance? If your master faces any new difficulties, the Order is willing to help." Gui Li said.

Long Yifei paused before answering. The Order was willing to help because of her but this help would only deepen the debt that Chen Wentian owed. Based on his personality, he obviously would not be willing.

"I'm sorry." She replied with a bow, "Master is handling everything. He has instructed me to say that we do not require any assistance."

"Will you be participating in these sect activities? Don't forget, the start of the school year is just a month away." Gui Li continued.

"No, Prioress. I am exempt. Master understands that I need to prepare for the order."

"At least he is sensible..." Gui Li mumbled to herself before looking back at Long Yifei, "But I have to warn you. If he is not ready to head for the Martial Brilliance Kingdom by the end of the month, I have been instructed to take you there alone. I am not going to wait for him and potentially have you be late for the opening ceremony."

"Understood, Prioress. Master has anticipated this and he has no objections."

"Good!" Gui Li seemed much happier at this. She dug into her sleeves and produced a black orb that was covered in faint inscriptions. "Here, this is an early gift from the Order. You'll get more good stuff at the school but since your status is too special, they sent this to me."

Long Yifei took the orb which was slightly larger than a chicken egg and studied it. It pulsed with spiritual energy of an attribute she couldn't grasp.

“What is this?”

“It is called the Ebony Elude. It is a one-time-use spatial treasure that allows you to escape even an immortal up to the Spirit King Realm. It is keyed to the school and if you are anywhere in the Martial Brilliance Continent, it will return you safely to the school. In this subcontinent, it might not reach as far but it will still allow you to escape any immediate danger. And don't think about refusing, you must absolutely take it.”

“... Thank you.”

“Mmm, that was all I had for you today. You may return and continue your studies.”

“Yes, Prioress.”

Long Yifei turned and left the pavilion. Her feet moved automatically towards the gate but her mind was elsewhere. She gripped the orb in her hand tightly as she considered the ramifications of such a powerful lifesaving treasure.

The sect was facing a crisis, an unknown demon enemy. Having survived the loss of one immortal master, her confidence in her current master wasn't very high at that moment. Life was uncertain and these were uncertain times.

She didn't think of herself as a disloyal person. She wholeheartedly followed Murong Aiyin in the past and now she obeyed Chen Wentian. But in her heart, she was a realist, someone who cared about her own dreams and ambitions above all else.

She wondered what would happen if Chen Wentian or the sect met some kind of disaster. Some of the other disciples might follow him to their deaths. Wu Qianyu was certain, perhaps Lin Qingcheng as well. She wasn't sure about the others but she was quite sure about herself. She wasn't someone to sacrifice her life for others, the Ebony Elude notwithstanding.

She hoped she wouldn't get reach such desperate straights again. She hoped that master would be able to resolve the crisis soon.

She looked to the sky and let out a frustrated sigh. "Why is everything so complicated?"

Chapter 389.: Demonized Locusts

At the southern region of Dragon Flower Province, a mass of cultivators and soldiers pushed their way through a dead forest. Bei Yingluo was leading on horseback, clad in a light-pink battle dress. Two older women rode beside her, her aunts and members of the Bei Clan. Behind them were several strong male cultivators as well as at least a thousand soldiers clad in a mishmash of armor and weapons.

Bei Yingluo looked around and side to side, her hand clutching the reins tightly. Just a few weeks ago, this forest had been verdant and vibrant, teeming with life. Now, the only thing that was left was the dead trees and barren ground all around. This was her first assignment outside of the sect and also the first one without her master. Her stomach was fluttering with nervousness though she tried to not show it.

They were on a demon extermination mission as a part of the sect's large-scale demon-hunting effort across several provinces. This mission wasn't a large infestation, just a swarm of demonized locusts. Demonized locusts were normal insect beasts that had been touched by demonic spiritual energy. In addition to eating all plant material in a region, it also developed a taste for other beasts as well as humans. They weren't strong individually but strong in a group, hence the large force with her.

She left Ten Thousand Flower Valley with just the members of the Bei Clan. The small army behind her had been gathered from the local towns and villages. As mortals, they couldn't refuse the will of their lord immortal. Nobody was unwilling, not when an immortal's disciple was leading the charge. They also wanted to get rid of the demonic scourge that had destroyed vast farmlands and precious forests.

"Relax, Ying'er," A voice beside her chided, "As a leader, you have to display confidence. Sit up straight! Look sharp!"

Bei Yingluo shot a look of annoyance at the person, aunt Bei Hao. She didn't reply but she couldn't refute those words. She looked back towards the front stubbornly, reluctantly straightening her posture.

Bei Hao was already over forty but maintained youthful features due to her cultivation at the 2nd Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm. In the past, Bei Hao had been an influential member of the clan but now she

had to answer to a junior. There was definitely some friction beneath the surface but it couldn't be helped. Bei Yingluo was the immortal disciple and there was no point trying to argue.

She shook her head and turned to address two male cultivators behind her, "We're getting close to the locusts. Fen Lang, Er Lang, I will rely on you both to control the right-wing."

The strong-looking men nodded confidently. Their cultivations were both at the upper levels of the Spirit Initiate Realm and among the strongest in the army.

"Aiya! I can't believe that my sister Hao managed to find herself two strapping young men to warm her bed. She is truly the tigress of our clan!"

The voice came from Bei Yingluo's other side. It belonged to aunt Bei Chen, a woman whose beauty was already starting to age. She was of the same generation as Bei Hao.

"Noisy!" Bei Hao shot back, "It's not my fault that they come knocking on my door. And it's not my fault that I found them acceptable. You're one to talk, your fiancée is quite the catch himself."

Bei Chen giggled, "That he is. He is very powerful... in many aspects!"

"Oh? How powerful?"

The two older women then engaged in heated whispers, comparing and contrasting the prowess of their men.

Bei Yingluo rolled her eyes but couldn't help but eavesdrop. The Bei Clan had always been liberal with regards to matters of sexuality. The women often talked to each other about their husbands. There were also no objections to Bei Hao taking two husbands.

Since their newfound status allowed them to attract talented loose cultivators, the women of the Bei Clan took advantage of this to the fullest. Aside from Bei Yingluo's mother, all the other clan members were already married or engaged. Bei Hao was the first to take a second husband but she surely

wouldn't be the last. Since Chen Wentian didn't care how the Bei Clan was run, there was no downside to another husband!

"Speaking of which..." Bei Chen broke off and nudged Bei Yingluo, "Ying'er has the best man out of all of us. It is a little embarrassing trying to brag when Ying'er is listening. Hehe!"

"Third Aunt!" Bei Yingluo muttered, blushing, "Master is my master, not my husband. It's different!"

"Small details. Small details! As the months become years and the two of you get to know each other and share more tender moments in the bedroom, there won't be any difference!"

"Yingluo, we are all relying on you. You have to work hard. The clan can perish at a moment's notice if you fail." Bei Hao added.

"Second Aunt..."

"Report!" A scout appeared in front of Bei Yingluo. "Lady Bei, the demonized locusts have been sighted!"

Bei Yingluo raised a hand signal and the army behind her ground to the halt.

"Where, how far?" She asked.

"Very close. Just over the hill, there is an open field. I think they are breeding there. We returned immediately and did not alert any of the locusts."

"How many?"

"Thousands... maybe hundreds of thousands... Can we fight them with just our forces?" The scout asked nervously.

"Do not worry, Ten Thousand Flower Valley always comes prepared. Second Aunt?" Bei Yingluo turned to Bei Hao.

"I will go now. The right wing will circle around the field. At your signal, we will unleash the lord dragon's flames!"

"Good, go now!"

The right wing, consisting of roughly a third of the army, slipped away into the dead forest to encircle the field with the locusts.

The main army followed by getting into a long battle line. Each soldier and cultivator carried with them a bow and several quivers of arrows. They then slowly advanced, making sure to stay silent so as to not startle their prey.

The open field soon came into view. What used to be a grassy meadow beside a stream was now devoid of plant life. Instead, the ground was a writhing mass of black carapaces, spiky red limbs, and shiny translucent wings. The demonized locusts were in the middle of a mating frenzy. Soon after, their numbers would explode and the swarm would cause even more devastation.

Bei Yingluo steeled herself and raised a message talisman into the air. It shot into the air with a streak of blue flame.

At her signal, her army on both sides of the field let loose a storm of arrows at the swarm. And as the arrows slammed down, they exploded into bright blue balls of fire, consuming everything in their path.

Chapter 390.: Banishing Evil

Boom!

Boom!

The open field was consumed by blue flames. These explosive arrows contained just a tiny bit of Chen Wentian's immortal power but this was enough to cause widespread devastation. Each blast wiped out dozens of black insects in an instant while the flames left behind would incinerate anything nearby in a few moments.

With just one volley, the locust horde had been cut down by a quarter!

Incoherent screeches of fury spread through the field. The insects that survived were enraged and burst into action. Several black clouds swarmed together and rose into the sky, looking for the culprit. Unfortunately, they flew straight into more arrows that came down like a rainstorm.

Balls of blue flame took huge bites out of the black swarm until nothing was left. The swarm was forced to the ground and forced to look for another way out.

“Here they come! Get ready!” Bei Chen shouted.

Sure enough, hundreds of individual locusts started flying in their direction, staying low to the ground, seeking a path away from the carnage. Standing directly in their way were Bei Yingluo's forces.

Bei Yingluo leaped down from her horse. On her side were around six hundred cultivators and soldiers, all around the lower Spirit Initiate Realm and the upper Mind Focusing Realm. She was probably the weakest at the 1st Level of the Mind Focusing Realm but this didn't mean she was useless.

Her battle dress was a Spirit Initiate Realm treasure. It was flexible and yet offered great protection. With it on, she could only be hurt by an expert at the peak of the Spirit Initiate Realm. She also had a spear at the peak of the Spirit Initiate Realm residing in her spatial bag but she didn't need it quite yet. She would use her fists for this battle, utilizing the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms.

Bei Yingluo picked out her target, a particularly fat locust that was as long as her arm. It was the biggest of the bunch and the one leading the small pack that was trying to escape.

“Kill!” She shouted and charged ahead.

“Kill!”

“Kill the demons!”

A chorus rose behind her as her people followed suit.

Bei Yingluo jumped in front of the locust; her palm drawn back for a powerful attack.

Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms, 2nd Palm, Dominate Demons!

Her attack, infused with special attributes of demon slaying, slammed into the gnashing jaws of the hideous black insect face. The demonized beast was at the peak of the Mind Focusing Realm and, full of confidence, did not even bother to dodge. It attacked her palm strike, expecting to bite through her fingers with brute strength.

Instead, her palm shattered its mandibles and crushed its head into a bloody mess.

Bei Yingluo paused momentarily and looked at her hand in astonishment. She had expected a much more difficult battle, not for it to be over in an instant. A demon slaying art was truly unparalleled against demons!

“Ying'er, pay attention!”

She heard the angry shout of her third aunt and jerked to attention. All around her, humans and demonized insects were locked in a fierce battle. Blood and guts flew everywhere as the smaller locusts suffered massive losses.

A nearby soldier struggling against three locusts gnawing on his armor. He was an ordinary cultivator at the Mind Focusing Realm and did not know anything about the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms. He was waving his sword wildly to little effect.

Bei Yingluo charged over to assist. With a few punches and kicks, the locusts were destroyed and the man heaved a sigh of relief.

“Thank you, Lady Bei...”

“Are you okay? Can you still fight?” She asked, looking around for the next threat.

“I can fight!”

“Good!” She said and barreled headfirst in the fray once more.

The fierce battle continued. The explosive arrows continued, turning the barren field into a blue firestorm. The human forces surrounded the flames, killing all the locusts that were still alive and trying to escape.

Thousands of locusts died every minute but the human side also suffered some losses. Most of the fighters conscripted for this offensive were ordinary cultivators from local sects. Their background was ordinary, their training was lacking, and their martial arts was flawed at best. They were fine when they stuck together but if one was caught alone by a pack of insects, they would be quickly overwhelmed.

On the other hand, the members of the Bei Clan were performing admirably. Bei Hao and her two husbands as well as Bei Chen and her fiancée were all above average cultivators to begin with. As members of the newly founded branch sect, the Bei Clan, they were given pills to improve their cultivation foundation and allowed to practice a select number of powerful martial arts.

Among these martial arts was a modified version of the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms. It consisted of only the first nine palms and the name was changed to Banishing Evil. And as experienced cultivators, they all managed to understand the basics in a short time and were utilizing Banishing Evil to its fullest extent.

The five of them were immovable pillars of strength for Bei Yingluo's forces. Just the five of them alone had slain more demons by hand than all of the soldiers. No demonized locust dared to fly within ten meters of them and they were instantly able to stabilize a section of the frontline with their mere presence.

Bei Yingluo still had a way to go to match their strength. She was proud of her aunts and in-laws but she was also frustrated with herself.

If only she could use her realm-hopping ability... Then, she would be able to fight alongside them as equals.

But try as she might, her heaven-defying ability had never shown up again after that day. She had no idea why and her master was equally as stumped. As the weeks and months dragged on, she was getting more and more frustrated.

She knew that her value lay in her secret ability. If she couldn't use her ability, then what use was she to the sect and to her master?

"Yingluo!" The shout came from her third aunt.

"What?"

Bei Chen rushed up and grabbed her shoulder.

"Look!" She shouted, pointing at the sky behind them.

Bei Yingluo's confusion turned to horror. Black dots appeared over the trees, quickly growing in size and number. It soon became a massive black cloud that billowed over the horizon, rising into the sky until it blotted out the sun.

It was more demonized locusts! Heading straight for them!

“How are there more of them?” She shouted.

“I don't know!” Bei Chen screamed back.

“What do we do?”

“They are closing too fast... archers!” Bei Chen bellowed, “Archers, fire! Turn around, turn around and fire!”