

M. Slaying 782

Chapter 782: A Thief in the House (I)

Xuantian Monastery.

At the highest peak of the Western Continent, mist billowed like waves, and ancient vines clung to the sheer cliffs. From time to time, eagles with wingspans over three meters would be seen gliding past. The place felt like a forgotten land, undisturbed for millennia.

Now and then, a streak of golden light would flash across the sky. When it reached the cliffs, it would stop and form an inscription seal, activating the enchanted formation. The thick vines covering the cliffside would then slither away like snakes, as if they had a mind of their own, revealing a narrow crack in the rock.

Within this narrow crack was a hidden realm. It was here that the ancient Xuantian Monastery stood, concealed from the outside world.

Major immortal sects would rarely choose to build their headquarters in hidden realms as isolating themselves in such places meant cutting off ties with the wider cultivation world, making it difficult to stay connected with the outside. On top of that, the spiritual qi in hidden realms was often too thin to support large factions, making them more suitable for smaller sects.

However, there was one undeniable advantage—absolute security.

For nearly a thousand years, Xuantian Monastery had remained hidden from the world, safeguarding its cultivation legacy in seclusion. But the moment they set their sights on joining the Terrestrial Ten, their era of peace came to an end.

Whoosh!

A brilliant streak of swordlight tore through the sky, stopping abruptly at the mountain's peak, where it hovered in midair.

Whoosh! Whoosh! Whoosh!

One after another, nearly a hundred beams of swordlight streaked across the sky, weaving a dazzling curtain of brilliance. They hovered in perfect formation above the cliffside, their restrained sword qi rippling through the air, scattering the drifting clouds.

Atop each flying sword stood a woman clad in flowing blue and white robes. Leading them was a woman with a high Lingyun bun. Her crescent-shaped brows were slightly arched, and her expression was cold and sharp. As she fixed her eyes on the cliff ahead, her gaze was as frigid as frost.

When the final sword light settled, the lady at the forefront raised her index and middle fingers in a fighting stance and shot a streak of white light through the air.

At the same time, she commanded, "Show yourself!"

Swish!

The streak of white light that shot from her fingertip became sword qi, slicing through the thick, ancient vines clinging to the cliffside. As if writhing in pain, the ancient vines shuddered and twisted before swiftly recoiling, revealing a dark, narrow crevice hidden within the rock.

Rumble, rumble!

The cliffside shook, followed by a deep rumble that echoed through the mountains. A burst of golden light flared from the crevice.

Then, from within that glowing fissure, a bald head cautiously peeked out, its smooth surface gleaming under the divine radiance.

Then came a second and a third...

At the forefront stood a middle-aged monk in a calm and composed expression. He was draped in a kasaya[1], and the nine ordination scars on his shaved head shimmered with a faint divine light. Behind him, a line of younger monks stepped forward and stood in a straight row.

"Sect Leader Han," the middle-aged monk called out. "What brings you here in such an imposing manner? Has Xuantian Monastery done something to offend the Ice Soul Sword Sect?"

His gaze lifted toward the woman with the Lingyun bun in the sky. That was indeed Han Qinglin, the current sect leader of the Ice Soul Sword Sect.

"You truly don't know why I'm here?" Han Qinglin's eyes flashed with anger. "Your dear disciple abducted my eldest disciple, and you are telling me that you have no idea?"

As she spoke, she took out a letter and threw it at the monk. The parchment sliced through the air with a faint hum, carrying a sharp trace of sword qi.

Fortunately, the middle-aged monk's cultivation level was comparable to hers. He extended his fingers, channeled his qi to his fingertips, and caught the letter midair with a muffled thud.

He unfolded it and read it.

The letter revealed that Liu Xingzhu, the eldest disciple of the Ice Soul Sword Sect, and a disciple of Xuantian Monastery had fallen in love with each other. Knowing that neither sect would approve of their relationship, the two had chosen to elope.

The Ice Soul Sword Sect was located in the northern lands. Though founded only two centuries ago, its founder had once been part of the Greater-Yin Cult before establishing her own sword cultivation legacy. The sect had always been exclusively female. However, due to its sword-based cultivation, it maintained strong ties with the Endless Sword Sect.

Because they were backed by these two immortal sects of the Divine Nine in the northern lands, the Ice Soul Sword Sect had the power to act as they pleased across the region. Even so, their disciples rarely caused trouble, as the sect's rules were notoriously strict. Even leaving the sect required formal registration and approval.

When it came to matters of love, their stance was even harsher. It was strictly forbidden.

In comparison, even the Greater-Yin Cult was not as strict in this regard. Disciples who failed to attain the Cultivation of the Supreme Mind as they grew older were granted considerable freedom in matters of love. However, the Ice Soul Sword Sect's founder had imposed even harsher rules. Any disciple who chose to pursue romance had to leave the sect permanently and was forbidden from ever using its divine techniques again.

Liu Xingzhu was the Ice Soul Sword Sect's eldest disciple, and Han Qinglin had taught and raised her personally. So, it was no surprise that her sudden elopement had left Han Qinglin fuming.

Upon finishing the letter, the middle-aged monk looked up and said, "Sect Leader Han, please don't be angry. I will look into this matter at once."

With that, he turned to the disciples behind him and ordered, "Find out where Tongwen is."

Two of his disciples immediately bowed and flew back into the hidden realm.

Not long after, an elderly monk in simple robes arrived, accompanied by several middle-aged monks whose cultivation was clearly of high level. When the great monk from before saw the elderly monk, he stepped back and respectfully greeted, "Esteemed Teacher."

The elderly monk was Dhyana Master Chiyue, the abbot of Xuantian Monastery.

Han Qinglin, however, showed no courtesy toward him. She fixed a sharp gaze on the old abbot and scoffed, "What! Are you the one who stole my disciple? I'm looking for that bald little brat, not you."

Dhyana Master Chiyue pressed his palms together and said calmly, "Please, Sect Leader Han, let us not be hasty. We have searched the entire monastery, but Tongwen is nowhere to be found. He must still be outside and has yet to return. He is one of our finest disciples. Rest assured, we would never allow him to simply vanish without a trace."

"You can't find him?" Han Qinglin let out a cold snort. "I knew this would happen. My disciple has always been disciplined and has never once violated our sect rules. How could she suddenly do something this outrageous? Clearly, you all planned to steal my head disciple!"

"How did you even reach that conclusion..." Dhyana Master Chiyue responded. "Sect Leader Han, please give me a moment. I will open my Heavenly Eye and use Searching the Heavens and Earth to locate them both. I will definitely give you an explanation for what had happened."

Han Qinglin's face was cold and sharp, radiating an imposing aura when she snapped, "I'll be right here waiting! If you take too long and that brat tarnishes my disciple's purity, undoing all the years of her Cultivation of the Supreme Mind, I'd like to see how you explain yourselves then!"

"Impossible," Dhyana Master Chiyue stated firmly. "Tongwen was born with a deep affinity for Buddhism. For him, such an act would be no different from destroying his own cultivation. Sect Leader Han, you have nothing to worry about."

Before he even finished speaking, he formed a series of intricate hand seals, summoning a golden screen of light. As his eyes snapped open, divine radiance burst forth, merging with the shimmering screen and sweeping his vision across vast landscapes.

As Dhyana Master Chiyue's gaze traveled farther and farther, the images on the light screen flickered and changed. Yet, there was no sign of the two missing disciples.

Han Qinglin's expression grew darker with each passing moment. Then, suddenly, a woman in plain robes flashed across the screen.

"Xingzhu!" Han Qinglin called out sharply. "There—right there!"

The woman on the screen was her beloved eldest disciple, Liu Xingzhu. However, her condition was dire. Her robes were stained with blood, she was covered in wounds, and she lay unconscious. She was trapped in a dark underground prison, bound by thick golden ropes engraved with talismanic scripts.

As Dhyana Master Chiyue's vision panned outward, the prison's location became clear. It was within a grand, golden-lit temple. When he expanded the view on the light screen further, he saw that the temple was nestled deep within a heavily guarded hidden realm.

When he expanded the view even further, he saw an elderly monk standing at the entrance of the hidden realm, casting a golden light screen for a group of people.

But within the light screen, the same scene played out—a reflection of the elderly monk casting the same golden light screen for the same group of people. And within that reflection, the cycle repeated endlessly, each screen containing yet another identical image, stretching into infinity.

Dhyana Master Chiyue's expression changed. I am looking at... myself?

Before the Xuantian Monastery disciples could even grasp what was happening, Han Qinglin's brows shot up in fury.

Han Qinglin shouted, "How dare you! You bald frauds preach about mercy and virtue, yet behind the scenes, you commit such vile acts!"

Immediately, her sword qi surged into the sky and she declared, "Disciples of the Ice Soul Sword Sect, gather up in a formation! Follow me! We're storming the temple and rescuing Liu Xingzhu!"

"Sect Leader Han—"

Dhyana Master Chiyue tried to interject, but his words were met with a blast of razor-sharp sword qi.

The sword formation activated, its chilling presence filling the air!