

metal, his legs bound by a tight shackle, and its body was pinned by chains. From time to time, the shaking of chains echoed through the air alongside its breathing.

Wei Wuyin sat calmly in his corner, his disheveled hair and dirty clothes kept, looking at Bai Lin with a shadow of a smile. Bai Lin was quietly resting with her eyes closed, and they communicated mentally without end. Despite being trapped, sealed, and bound, the two were joking and reminiscing as if it was a vacation.

After being captured at the Darksword Hall's city, they were held within their dungeon for ten days before this Voidship arrived near the planet's atmospheric limits. The guards, at the cover of night, brought them and other prisoners away and placed them on this ship.

Since then, they've made dozens of stops at different planets that kept bringing in new arrivals, and have been traveling for over twenty days. They were all placed within cells, kept for an unknown purpose.

Some even cried out demanding answers, reporting their backers, but were beaten until their throats were unable to groan properly with the blood gushing from them. It was a brutal sight to witness.

The interesting fact, however, was that they were all men. And with his Celestial Eyes, he discovered a few key similarities. Notably, they were all extremely vigorous in terms of innate yang energies relative to their cultivation base. They were not all Astral Core Realm cultivators, with most being high-levelled Qi Condensation Cultivators.

"I can't wait to meet the others!" Bai Lin exclaimed excitedly.

Wei Wuyin softly laughed, "I'm sure they can't wait to see you too." Bai Lin had been gone for nine years, but hadn't seen the others in twelve, so many things had changed or happened while she underwent her phoenix transformation. While they had already talked about the events that happened, Bai Lin was deeply intrigued to hear about some of the individuals in Wei Wuyin's life.

Bai Lin rustled for a moment, hastily calming down after realizing the chains were fracturing. If she hadn't stopped herself, they would've exploded just off her casual movements. She was infused with excitement at the prospect of seeing Su Mei again.

She had known Su Mei for as long as she knew Wei Wuyin. After all, they met on the same day. And their relationship wasn't anything ordinary; Su Mei always treated her kindly. She had expectant thoughts that Wei Wuyin and Su Mei would become a pair like some other humans, and this was reinforced when she followed him after the Scarlet Solaris Sect despite him missing for ten years, her feelings remain strong and true. They seemed like the perfect pair of people to her.

Wei Wuyin was somewhat shocked that Bai Lin was getting riled up. He wondered what she was thinking. If Wei Wuyin knew what she was thinking about, he would instantly be at a loss.

Ermmmmm...

The propulsion formations were all halted, bringing the voidship to a stop. Wei Wuyin's Celestial Eyes pierced outside the hull, glimpsing at the sight beyond. He was welcomed by nothing.

However, the ship had come to a full-stop. Suspicious, his eyes dimmed before being lit by eight stars in both eyes, each with a different color. Seven of these stars matched the seven colors of the Alchemic Dao, denoting the existence of the seven aspects: Extraction, Growth, Containment, Refinement, Creation, Transformation, and Fusion.

However, these stars were no longer stationary, but highly animated in their movements, like charged atoms orbiting a nucleus. This nucleus was another star, but its color was unfathomable, nigh-indescribable by mortal words. At least the current Wei Wuyin couldn't determine it. Wei Wuyin unleashed his new ocular-based Alchemic Intent, the Alchemic Stars of Spiritual Transcendence.

After effectively concocting a transcendent-quality Everlore Ascension Pill, he was met with a phenomena that startled him greatly. His Alchemic Stars of Mortal Spirituality had evolved somehow, seemingly having reached the next stage of its Intent progression.

To better serve his own understanding, he considered Alchemic Stars of Mortal Spirituality as an Intent Seed, while the Alchemic Stars of Spiritual Transcendence was true Intent. If he went by this logic, then perhaps there was a third stage of its evolution, matching the Heart of the World, World of the Intent stage.

However, he knew that the Alchemic Dao did not follow the same logic of progression as normal cultivation or Intent. After all, even the requirements and bestowal were wildly different, including their fundamental applications. That being said, it makes sense.

Alchemical Energies were not natural from the world like the others, the first level of Intent that involved infusing will into pre-existing energies to exert better control or create it in a purer form using Qi/Astral Force was pointless. After all, all alchemical energies originated from oneself or others. At least, he'd never heard of any natural-occurring material produced from alchemic essence. The only thing remotely close to being an alchemic material was Utmost Purity Mist.

As for his evolved Alchemic Stars, while he hadn't figured out all of its abilities, he noticed that his clarity of seeing Alchemic Spirit Remnants were amplified ten-fold. He certainly needed to experiment more, invigorating his desire to see if there was a pre-existing legacy to use the Alchemic Stars. To learn why Wang Yutian, a Worldly Saint, described Mortal Sovereign Alchemists as terrifying existences after reaching that level.

As he peered through the ship's walls, he discovered numerous Alchemic Spirit Remnants within others bodies, bypassing the mystic-level concealment formation. It seemed there was a building there as the remnants outlined various levels and areas.

Wei Wuyin's eyes lit, "We're here."

Bai Lin's eyes opened. A scarlet-gold brilliance flashed within. "Is it time?" Her ardent excitement leaked through as a faintly projected aura, the chains trembling considerably as a result.

Wei Wuyin wryly smiled, "Not yet."

As he said this, a wisp of disappointment flickered within Bai Lin's eyes. She settled down. Patience...patience and then action. Glorious action.

Step. Step. Step.

A series of heavy boots clunked against the hard floor. It carried an oppressive feeling with it, causing every prisoner besides two to feel a feeling of trepidation. A figure stopped outside Wei Wuyin's cage, "She'll love you." A sinister, gruffy voice filled with a sneer resounded.

Wei Wuyin's silver gaze was normal as he lifted it, revealing his unearthly handsome visage that couldn't be ruined by a little dirt or messy hair. His eyes revealed a ferocious, unyielding glint as he stared into the darkness, pinpointing the origin of the voice.

The voice resounded again, "Oh! She definitely will."

Chapter 682 - 677: Delivered To An Ascended Beauty

"Move it!" An aggressive voice filled with rancor spat out, grunting out a forceful shove. Its target: Wei Wuyin. His hands and feet were bound with black rings that glowed with a restrictive spiritual power, runic markings sparkled from time to time. If a normal Gravity Emission Phase expert were placed in these restrictive bindings, they would find their Spirit of Cultivation suppressed to its limits, while their innate energies were in chaos.

The chaos would cause the body to experience jolting pain sporadically. Wei Wuyin felt the large hand press against his shoulders as he was ushered forward by three figures, two of which were unified guards in gray half-masks that covered the upper portion of their faces. The masks had a strange symbol at their glabella, an emblem designating their organization.

It was a three dimensional image of a slender hand with its palm upwards, its fingers facing up, and as if being grasped, a glaringly crimson sphere at its center. One of the strange thoughts that would surge into one's mind was how neatly trimmed the nails were, distinctively giving it a feminine charm.

The four were moving through the voidship's halls. With both guards in front, there was a short, portly middle-aged man with a heavy black beard. He didn't wear a mask, but had a bracer with the symbol, alongside a strange character that Wei Wuyin couldn't recognize.

Wei Wuyin glanced at the masks, his eyes recalling the memories of that young-looking cultivator. When he did, he kept a steady pace and walked as they did. They were currently docked in some building, likely a palace or castle within the Dark Void. It had ample shielding measures, both concealment and defensive.

It seemed heavily fortified. Just walking off the voidship, he was welcomed by a large docking area that housed several other voidships of similar design as the one he left. He knew the design of this voidship was high-end, something that requires sufficient resources and ingenuity to create. The one he possessed was archaic by comparison, lacking in means, efficiency, and quality.

Wei Wuyin first saw numerous men and women walking about, performing duties and en route to other areas of this building complex.

"Ayo! Settle down, beast!" A voice resounded behind him, followed by a light buzz of lightning energies flaring. Wei Wuyin glanced behind him to see Bai Lin being brought forward by a trolley with wheels. Her muzzle and chains were replaced, fixed after her nearly shattering them by accident.

There were seven guards surrounding her, with strange pole-like armaments that emitted lightning energies. The strength of such could incapacitate ordinary Light Reflection Phase cultivators with ease or those with fragile bodies. To them, it was enough as Bai Lin put on an act of whining pain with each jolt.

She glanced at Wei Wuyin, and he could see her wink at him. Inwardly smiling, he was pushed again by the impatient guard. "Sh*t! Do you not have ears? MOVE!"

Being shoved wasn't that unpleasant. The unpleasant feeling was having to react to it deliberately. Even if he stood perfectly still, this guard wouldn't even be able to move a strand of his hair.

The one leading them turned to the seven guards, "The beast likely consumed a Golden Phoenix Fruit, so take it to the Beast Extraction Room and take its essence blood."

"Yes, sir!" The guards shouted in acknowledgement. They took a different route as they pulled Bai Lin elsewhere. Wei Wuyin gave her one last glance before they separated. The path he walked was long, filled with cultivators with half-masks and uniformed attires. They were certainly of the same organization.

Recalling the details of the young-looking cultivator's memories, he inspected the location. This building complex was not stationary. Its location was constantly moving throughout the vast Ninestar Starfield. An elusive legend, some might say.

The headquarters of an organization said to operate in the shadows and have certain deals with certain cultivators. For example, the Darksword Starlord was in contact with this organization, trading vigorous men for certain resources. With his authority and strength, it would be easy to have some individuals just disappear, especially if they have no backing.

'It's a little unfortunate that oaths are so airtight and inviolable, or else organizations like these would collapse instantly. In fact,' Wei Wuyin thought as he traversed down a long, expansive corridor, 'If cultivators could investigate the mind effectively, organizations that hide in the shadows would vanish at the first transgression. Chaos would probably reign, though.'

The ability to infiltrate the memories of others wasn't just due to Eden, but the combination of his alchemical properties alongside Eden's specific mental energies. However, if others had access to this ability, there would be no secrets that could be kept, neither through sheer will or oath.

That being said, if it became commonplace, cultivators were certain to create defensive wards to protect themselves. Especially if it was something as valuable as their memories and mind.

Wei Wuyin's Celestial Eyes were in full effect as he searched. His eyes searched relentlessly, but to no avail. He slightly furrowed his brows, but remained incredibly patient. He had spent a month just to get here, what was a little longer?

As for Bai Lin, he didn't worry that she would grow restless. As for extracting her essence blood? That was laughable. Still, he knew this organization dealt in exotic animals with unique properties. To think that the Golden Phoenix Fruit was an item even in this stellar region.

If so, Bai Lin was definitely not the only phoenix-transformed avian. However, with their relevance reduced due to technological developments, perhaps only niche forces and unique cultivators nurtured or required essence blood. He heard from Wu Yu that there was a specific mystic-tier force in the

Aeternal Sky Starfield, one of the eight Noble Clans—Liu Clan—that specialized in beast breeding, mining, and farming.

They were supposedly a powerful clan that was relegated to a lower standard after their Earthly Saint was defeated, so they took up these arduous tasks and redefined themselves, bringing themselves back up.

After several minutes, Wei Wuyin was escorted through what seemed like a maze to a hallway which led to a five meter high double door at the end that was constructed from some unique oak wood variant. The wood energies within were quite pure, and even Wei Wuyin had to give it another glance.

The tall, portly middle-aged man looked back, his sharp eyes narrowed further into a sinister sneer. "You should be happy; you'll experience utter bliss in a bit." The man gestured to the guards who collapsed the link that bound Wei Wuyin's arms and legs together. While the restrictive shackles around his ankle and wrists remained, he was given full mobility.

Wei Wuyin lifted his left eyebrow a little.

Seeing the curious expression from Wei Wuyin, the man laughed and added: "Enough to die for." Then he pressed against the door. It lit up in brilliant runes. The man's spatial ring released spiritual light that emitted a unique fluctuation. Wei Wuyin noticed this.

'A key?'

A series of runes flashed briefly across the door's surface. Then, the middle-aged man stepped aside gingerly, his expression dignified. The doors proceeded to open with a brisk sound, pushing inward to reveal the beige walls and a portion of the opulent decor within.

"Go," the middle-aged man gestured. Wei Wuyin's curiosity was stoked. He walked forward and gave the man a glance, which was only met with an expression filled with schadenfreude. Such an expression was quite unsightly.

Ignoring that, he entered the doors.

BAM!

When he crossed completely, the doors slammed shut with a heavy thud, menacing and forceful. Unbothered by the abrupt act, Wei Wuyin unhurriedly inspected the room to see the beige-colored walls adorned with exquisite paintings detailing thrilling environments. The most notable was one that seemed to depict a forest ablaze. At the center was a woman with a willowy figure dressed in white holding a black umbrella, her back facing the observer while she watched the forest burn.

There were other paintings with strange, thrilling environments. Such as a drained, heat-ridden ocean floor. There were marine life laying flat or flopping in midair, struggling to live. That location will certainly become scorched, dry land or a desert in the future.

Wei Wuyin felt that he needed to obtain these two paintings. He brushed his messy hair aside, getting a closer look at the paintings. He was thoroughly enchanted by them. It was as if he was experiencing calamities captured forever in these images.

"Quite impressive, aren't they?" A lovely, music-like voice as smooth and soothing as silk on one's skin resounded. Wei Wuyin turned, taken aback by the figure that had avoided his senses.

When he saw the figure, his eyes widened and his heart raced.

He saw a woman. And what a woman she was. She was fair-skinned, with light-pink irises, as enchanting as a peony in bloom, pink lips with a cupid's bow, full and soft as water, thin eyelashes, sharp nose, and an hourglass figure that defined every curve as if meticulously designed by the divine.

The most notable feature, an impossible to miss for anyone with eyes, was those two mounds of proud flesh at her chest that were outrageously large, firmly placed on her upper torso, and seemingly as soft and delicious as marshmallows. Just those two weapons were lethal to the sane mind of any man.

She was dressed in a tight-fitting, deep cleavage revealing black dress that revealed her long, smooth legs, slender waist, and bare feet with white-painted toenails, standing with her head slightly tilted as if to inspect Wei Wuyin's everything.

Wei Wuyin's eyes were absent-minded as if thoroughly entranced, but his thoughts were circulating swiftly. 'She's an Ascended!'

The woman smiled, bright and enchanting as a full moon. She slowly walked towards Wei Wuyin, her steps were gentle yet seemed to cause the heart to beat according to her movements. When she arrived beside Wei Wuyin, she swiftly circled him with her eyes tracing him up and down, ending on his face.

"I must say, I've never seen a man as handsome as you. I wonder what else you have," she glanced down teasingly.

"..." Wei Wuyin stayed absent-minded, at a loss for words as his eyes followed her movements.

"Let's see, shall we? Take them off," she walked back to her bed, sat and looked at Wei Wuyin expectantly.

Wei Wuyin asked with a lifted brow, "Off?"

The beautiful woman nodded slightly, twirling her finger while tracing Wei Wuyin from bottom to top. She said: "Your clothes."

Wei Wuyin thought for a moment, seriously considering this scenario, and his eyes lit.

Chapter 683 - 678: The Hope You're Looking For

Noticing the excited light of realization dawn inside the eyes of the man before her, the beautiful woman leaned back slightly against the bed, her large, exceptionally tantalizing bosom bounced slightly, and revealed a small smile. However, within her lightly pink-colored eyes were a wisp of indistinguishable pity and disgust.

Her deliberate movements accentuated her body's exquisite curves and brought to the forefront her alluring features. She waited for Wei Wuyin to hastily disrobe himself in an attempt to find his happy, enjoyable ending to this scenario.

Like all the others.

"..."

Several seconds of silence ensued.

There was a distinct air in the room developing, an air that was brought about by a strange sequence of unexpected inaction. The beautiful woman's slim eyebrows faintly furrowed. She hadn't expected this silver-eyed man to remain frozen in place, staring at her with a bright, intrigued gaze.

"Are you worried I'll bite? Or is it that your 'thing' isn't as impressive as your face?" She spoke out, teasing the man before her with a glance at his groin. Her implication and teasing voice could provoke most men, especially since this beautiful woman was actively inviting all comers with every last movement.

Men and women, especially talented, handsome, and high-leveled cultivators, were all prideful figures. Oftentimes, when something of theirs is brought into question, they would jump at the chance to prove the other wrong. She had used this very simple trick to force many men to hop over to her with drooling tongues and provocative sneers, declaring their willingness to show her otherwise.

But as the silence from the man before her continued, the beautiful woman found herself unsure. Could it be that the man before her lost his soul after seeing her? Some would say they fell in love with her at first sight despite being captives, believing that they'll escape this dastardly place. They would spout nonsense.

Idyllic and hopeful idiots, all of them.

She added, "how unfortunate." She gave one last glance at his groin and sat slightly up as if disappointed at the silver-eyed man's inability. Her trick furthered, she waited for the inevitable fish to bite the lure. However, the silver-eyed man stayed quiet, observing her with a faint, interested smile. Her heart raced slightly.

'How can someone be so attractive? No wonder they sent him to me, he must've cultivated a powerful Yang-attributed Cultivation Method. But...he doesn't seem like the others. There's no explosiveness to his looks, just a unique grace. It's far more natural. I can't even see the lines of falsity outlined on his face.' Her thoughts swirled, causing her to lose sight of her purpose slightly.

The lines of falsity were a unique physical manifestation brought about by the gradual change of a person's appearance through certain beautification methods. Many females and males sought to have better physical appearances, so they would resort to altering themselves to an ideal version through artificial facial and body reconstruction. These operations would lead to lines of falsity, faint areas of natural inconsistency due to the body's repeated attempts to regain its original appearance and the method's continuous exertion to suppress it.

If a cultivator used this type of method, lost their bodies, and it was reconstructed, their original appearance would take shape rather than their altered appearance.

Quite a few vain cultivators resorted to such methods to elevate their appearances. But this silver-eyed man had none of it. She had doubts whether he even cultivated a yang-attributed method. 'It truly is a pity.'

Her thoughts aside, the silence continued. The silver-eyed man before her took no action, just observing her with that interested smile. After this continued for nearly a full minute, an air of awkwardness started to form. She was at a loss. It's not as if the man's a mute, he had just spoken, and he didn't seem to have any outright deficient yang aura, so he certainly wasn't unable, yet he remained where he was.

Was she not attractive enough to lure a hot-blooded youth? From his life aura that he released, he wasn't old.

Suddenly, the silver-eyed man moved and the tension finally shattered. She faintly smiled, regaining her confidence. But he didn't stroll over; instead, he turned to the numerous paintings that depicted an artistic uniqueness of calamities in action.

He waltzed over, using his hands to sift through his dark hair. "You painted these?"

The beautiful woman was so taken aback by the question that a topic she would normally avoid slipped out of her mouth in an unconscious reply: "I did." After speaking, she furrowed her brows.

"They're incredible," the silver-eyed man remarked. He finished sorting his hair, regaining a little bit of its volume and luster.

The beautiful woman grew impatient, a tad frustrated. She didn't like his compliments. To her, these paintings were...

"But they're also sad—limited. The lady of elegance, forced to watch the flames engulf the forest with a tool that only had hope, hope for rain to end her suffering."

"...!" The beautiful woman's expression changed on the spot, distorted by shock.

The silver-eyed man continued, "Or the fish that helplessly flailed to beg the sun to return its home, trying to survive off the small puddles that remained. Only an artist that knew suffering, knew what it meant to be trapped without an escape could paint this. Could paint any of these. An artist that lacks hope despite their means."

The beautiful woman frowned, her eyes released a forlorn look, but her expression soon returned to normal after the silver-eyed man's last words. It didn't resonate with her.

"No," the silver-eyed man continued, reaching out to the burning forest painting but not touching its edges, just hovering, "there's hope here. A strong hope, in fact. The strongest form of hope placed within each brush stroke." After hearing this the beautiful woman's slender fingers clenched her sheets, agitated by those words.

"Enough!" The beautiful woman softly exclaimed, her voice that was smooth as silk became faintly harsh. She didn't stand, merely ordered: "Remove your clothes and come, or I'll do it myself." A faint pressure was released from her. The pressure exerted was unseen by mortal eyes, a form of pressure only belonging to beings who've properly ascended.

"Why?"

She realized the man was looking at her, no, seeing through her as he asked, his eyes bright and mysterious. Her pressure seemed to have very little effect on him, shocking her as his cultivation base was merely at the Astral Core Realm, and the sixth stage of it at that.

The silver-eyed man before her gave her a glance, from top to bottom without restraint, "You act as if you want it, but can your virgin body handle it?"

"...!" The beautiful woman jolted into standing position. Her eyes widened, then became incomparably sharp. Her aura seethed, causing the air within the room to become wild. "Who are you?"

"Me? Just someone that can see your hunger," the silver-eyed man chuckled while his robes were buffeted by raging winds.

'Hunger?' It was as if a lightning bolt shot through her mind. This young man who arrived before her like tens of thousands of others was far too strange!

"You're not the one I'm looking for, but I'm interested in you now. So I'll introduce myself: Born from the Wei Clan of Red Dove City, I was given the name Wuyin by my parents before heaven and earth." With those eloquently put words, he bowed slightly in greeting.

"And you?"

"..." The beautiful woman fixated her light-pink eyes on Wei Wuyin's figure. She repeated his name in her mind several times, but it didn't ring any bells with those established or reclusive figures. There wasn't even a prestigious Wei Clan in the Ninestar Starfield. Unable to find any irregularities with his aura, she knew he was certainly a Gravity Emission Phase cultivator. This was an indisputable fact.

A mere mortal couldn't evade her senses!

"Yue Songli..." She didn't know why, but she gave her name. Even her exuded pressure settled down.

Wei Wuyin lifted himself from his slight courteous bow, inspecting the room with a renewed vigor. "Such a well-built cage, even an Ascended is unable to escape."

Yue Songli's exquisite brows twitched. She let Wei Wuyin walk around the room, looking at the opulent design, even inspecting the sheets. She blushed slightly when he touched it. No man has ever gotten close enough to touch them, but her curiosity prevented her from acting as usual.

Wei Wuyin got close to her, only a few feet away, giving her a look. "So what's your job here? Extracting yang energies?"

"..." She didn't answer.

Wei Wuyin backed away slightly, "So this organization doesn't use formations to do it? I guess it is more effective using cultivators suited for it. Potent yin can attract and extract weaker yang, vice versa. Your cultivation method must be quite unique to extract yang energies without intercourse. I've only heard of certain formations or tools, but the purity is heavily damaged or the energy extraction losses are far too high. Yours shouldn't be too far off from those."

As if vexed by Wei Wuyin's inaccurate statement, she pointed at Wei Wuyin. Her index fingertip emitted a faint pink light, a mist formed and shot towards Wei Wuyin. Before he could react, it entered his body and left with a mote of light with a golden hue in tow.

Wei Wuyin allowed all this to happen, curious. When the pink mist entered his body, instinctively, his Astral Souls were about to release their strongest means to obliterate it, but he held them back.

He saw the golden mote was a minuscule portion of his innate yang energies. It didn't originate from his Primal Yang, the source of his yang energies, containing his yang quintessence, but from his muscles instead. As for the process, it wasn't painful, more like a slight discomforting prick. However, this might be due to his own pain tolerance or strong body.

Wei Wuyin was amazed, never knowing there was a way to extract yang energies from flesh, giving a nod of astonished acceptance. There were boundless methods beneath the heavens and earth. Then, he looked at the floor. "You can't use your cultivation or abilities beyond a certain distance? A safeguard placed for the others who take care of your needs? Is that why you tried so hard to lure me over here?"

"..." Yue Songli remained totally silent. Wei Wuyin was in range, so she could suck him entirely dry if she wanted, especially since he was a mere mortal. But his earlier words and calm demeanor caused her immense hesitation.

She maneuvered her finger and the pink mist returned to her, when she did, she glanced at it and her eyes explosively widened. Her eyes sharply moved to Wei Wuyin. "This..."

Wei Wuyin gave her a faint smile. A cultivator's Primal Yang and Primal Yin are refined by the qualities of one's cultivation base. The stronger the cultivator, the higher quality their yin and yang energies became. The greater their physical, mental, essence, and spiritual energies, the purer, denser, and stronger the yin or yang energies emitted. While the quantity doesn't change much, the quality does.

The aspect of quantity was why Na Xinyi, who possessed multiple Primal Yins, was so valuable as a dual cultivation partner. Furthermore, they link together, strengthening their purity and quality beyond her cultivation base.

Even at the Foundation Establishment Realm, Na Xinyi's yin energies rivaled those at the Yin Form Phase, the fourth stage of the Qi Condensation Realm. Wei Wuyin had used only one of her primal yin to rise to the Yin Form Phase, proof of her extraordinary physique.

As for him, was there even a reason to delve into why his yang energies was impressive?

"Who are you?!" Yue Songli no longer stayed quiet. While she already asked this before, the meaning behind this was different.

Wei Wuyin brightly grinned, without any fear, he stared into her enchantress eyes and declared: "I'm the hope you're looking for."

Chapter 684 - 679: Unburying Hope

'The hope I'm looking for?' Yue Songli's facial expression froze, thoroughly shaken by those words. Her eyes unconsciously shifted to the paintings that she poured her heart, soul, and creativity into. She had envisioned many possibilities to break her current circumstances, but meeting a fellow prisoner, and a mere mortal at that, was not one of them.

Unable to reconcile with this situation, she deeply inhaled and released a stifled exhale that contained all her unnecessary thoughts. When she finished, her expression became firm, steady, and she turned to Wei Wuyin. Her situation wasn't something a mortal who had been captured could solve, there was no hope for her.

With those thoughts lodged into her mind, a byproduct of being suppressed, restrained, and snuffed of hope for several hundred years, she sought to continue the status quo lest it produce uncertain changes to her life.

Her slender fingers surged with pink light like liquid energy, slowly becoming pink mist. Yue Songli had decided.

She was about to act when her expression changed. This man...

Wei Wuyin was at the outer edge of her limit, smiling at her with both lips and eyes. While handsome, there was a hint of teasing within his expression. "So you decided to kill me in the end?" Wei Wuyin softly laughed, however he wasn't angered. "The life of the imprisoned. I understand. If an ant entered my cell, speaking words of freedom and hope, I'd be in disbelief too."

Wei Wuyin understood her perspective. He wasn't idiotic enough to remain at her mercy nearby. While his cultivation might be outrageous for a mortal, he was still that in the end—a mortal. Before a genuine Ascended, he was still a little too lacking. For now.

Yue Songli was startled. She felt as if she was naked before this young man, thoroughly violated by his gaze. Her mind and body weren't safe. She even folded her hands across her chest subconsciously after his words, trying to shield him away. She bore a slight smile, feigning her calmness. "Why would I kill my only hope?" While those were her words, her heart did not match it.

"Only hope?" Wei Wuyin shook his head. "Even your words are leaking your intentions now." If Yue Songli truly believed she had a chance at escaping her circumstances in her heart, carried that firm hope that couldn't be abolished, then he wouldn't be her 'only' hope.

He looked towards the painting again, "You must've painted these when you first arrived here. Now, your heart has sunken into a chillingly depriving belief. A belief that escape is impossible. Was it the absence of the arrival of a lover? A parent? A source of certainty crumbling to dust in your mouth? Or numerous other attempts ending in failure?"

Yue Songli's entire body shook. Her arms tightened up, causing her buxom figure, especially those mountainous peaks of flesh, to be firmly brought to bare. She looked downwards, feeling seen and defeated. She clenched her teeth soon after, lifting her gaze and affixed it to Wei Wuyin. "You don't know anything about me! Who are you to say you're my hope?! YOU'RE JUST A PRISONER! Your death, by my hands or theirs, it doesn't matter. It'll happen regardless."

Her temper flared. What right did Wei Wuyin have to speak words to her? He was just an insignificant insect. Even if he had potent yang energies, the strongest she'd ever seen, it only meant he was just a richer bag of resources for these people. He was just a mortal man. No amount of attractiveness will change that.

"You can stay there. They'll come in to bring your corpse away, and if you aren't one, they'll kill you themselves. It's all the same to me. You can choose though: die painfully by their hands or allow me to do it peacefully," Yue Songli offered.

Wei Wuyin turned his gaze away from the painting, looking at the gorgeous woman that could tempt gods and ghosts alike. He shook his head, his eyes losing their light of interest, "I'm interested in the one

who painted these; that's who I want. You?" He gave her a pitied look, staring into her eyes, "You're worthless."

"...!" Yue Songli experienced a frighteningly explosive jolt to her heart, even to her mind. But she bore her fangs, shouting out with extreme disdain: "Worthless? I'll enjoy watching them when they either kill you or bring you to me! Then we'll see who's really worthless!" Her anger had been stoked, but her heart was sinking into a river of raging waves. She couldn't even stand without faintly trembling.

Those words of Wei Wuyin struck in places she had repressed in the deepest part of her heart, that portion that contained her hope. It was buried. And it was banging on the casket to be let out, but she refused. She wouldn't allow it to suffer more damage than it already has. She much rather it not show up than to let it suffer again.

Wei Wuyin no longer bothered with Yue Songli. As she was, she was no different than a soulless puppet who's given up, unable to see any other path before her. He inspected the room again, using his Celestial Eyes to view the various formations embedded within it. There were quite a few larger, grander formations that he wouldn't see with his Celestial Eyes—Mystic-level Formations.

He didn't use the Alchemic Stars of Spiritual Transcendence, because it wouldn't give him any insight into the structure, just the fact he already knew: it was fueled by mystic-level spiritual energies. If only his Celestial Eyes could perceive it clearly, he could try to find the array that controlled everything and directly seize control. While it wasn't certain he could, at least he could try.

He kept thinking things through.

Yue Songli was pacing beside her bed, fuming and mumbling out words: "I'm worthless? You're worthless. I'm an Ascended, so I'm not worthless. I'm gorgeous and powerful, all-natural. Everything from my face to these twin beauties. I'm not worthless." Her mumbled words were trying to settle her displeasure, dislodge Wei Wuyin's words from her heart. She hefted her breasts with her hands. Even her hands weren't able to grasp it all. Yet it didn't help.

After a while, she realized that Wei Wuyin wasn't doing anything. "Oh? Is the 'hope' a little 'hopeless'? Can't figure out how to escape, huh? Need my help? Haha." She laughed, as if a mortal would have means to escape here. A High-Lord would find it difficult to even find this place, and its fortified to the teeth.

Wei Wuyin directly ignored her.

However, Yue Songli wasn't finished. "You're really working your little brain there, huh? Well, don't hurt it. This place is guarded by at least four genuine Ascended at all times. And the protective array is strong enough to defend against High-Lord seniors, and briefly resist an Earthly Saint. It's futile. Futile, F-U-T-I-L-E, I say."

Wei Wuyin continued to ignore her. He waved his right index finger in the air, silently mouthing out some words with furrowed brows.

Yue Songli harrumphed, "Fool. There is no escape. Do you not under-"

"You were a lot cuter when you were silent. Why don't you try to do that again?" Wei Wuyin indifferently interjected, giving her a brief glare. He returned back to his mumbling and waving, tracing the air.

Yue Songli was taken aback. Cute? Silent? This little...

"What are you doing?" After another minute, Yue Songli grew curious. For the last two minutes, Wei Wuyin has been doing something that her eyes and senses couldn't see. Could it be a profound secret that he possessed? Why else has he been so calm lately?

Wei Wuyin stopped. With a sidelong glance, he said: "What does it matter to you? I'm not your hope, so escape is impossible. I'm just counting the seconds till my death." Afterwards, he resumed.

"..." She was stifled by his words. Her earlier words and her current curiosity truly clashed. She wanted to harrumph, but she held back. Her fingers clenched into two firm fists, and after a moment of trembling, she mustered the courage to say: "You said earlier that I'm not the one you're looking for? Who are you looking for? Did you get captured on purpose?"

While she hadn't noticed, that light buried in the depths of her heart was slowly reviving.

Wei Wuyin stopped again, but this time, he put his finger down and formed an excited grin.

Seeing this, Yue Songli's heart throbbed intensely. "What is it? What did you find? A way out?" Her words were low, as if whispering so others couldn't hear. The light in her eyes wasn't just curiosity, but that hope that had been hidden away. The more she thought about it, the more she felt that Wei Wuyin wasn't just here to be killed. He must have some play, right? Someone that handsome can't just die, right?

Wei Wuyin turned to her, his smile incredibly bright: "So you're not worthless after all. I've decided then: When you're free, I'll court you properly."

"...What?" Yue Songli was confused. Court? Properly?

"I mean, I'm not going to get you to agree to be my woman in your current circumstance. I once did that before, forced by the situation and survival. It didn't feel right then, so I won't do it again in this life," Wei Wuyin answered. The image of a grey-eyed beauty flashed in his memory.

"That's not...what?" Yue Songli's confusion increased.

Wei Wuyin added, "As for those things I was doing? It wasn't much, just a show to see if you still had hope in your heart. It seems the woman who painted these isn't lost. That's enough for me."

"..." Yue Songli started to understand now. Was he doing all this to see if she would ask questions, to see if she still had the desire to escape? The willpower to risk it once again if presented with the opportunity? She settled down. She felt as if she was being schemed against in every exchange.

Wei Wuyin laughed, "See. Cuter. Drop-dead gorgeous, in fact." After that, he turned away and looked at the door that sealed them. Yue Songli blushed slightly. She had never been seen through and softly manipulated in such a thorough way. Her heart was pounding. Especially after digesting all of his words. Court her properly when she's free? This meant he was certain of escaping!

As for being his woman? He was a mere mortal. Even if one has an astounding foundation, enough to sweep the ages, reaching the Mystic Ascendant Realm wasn't about resources or backing, but talent and comprehension. Too many cultivators failed, even outstanding Chosen of certain elite forces. Even children of Earthly Saints. It was not an easy feat.

If she knew Wei Wuyin's mind wasn't even on the Mystic Ascendant Realm, but thinking that he might die during his Realm World Astral Tribulation due to his Astral Souls shenanigans, she might become mute with disbelief.

"...Fine. But how do you plan to escape?" Yue Songli decided to learn a little about his thoughts. If it was completely ridiculous, then she wouldn't settle her eggs in his baskets. Her current treatment might be forfeited, and her life might tank if things went sideways.

Wei Wuyin kept his gaze to the door. "Plan? I had a plan, but what you said made me realize I can't just stay as a prisoner. I was sent here to have my yang energies extracted, my corpse would then be disposed of. I can't feign my death, and if I did, I don't know if they'll just use fire force to incinerate my corpse, not toss me aside to be dealt with later."

"..." Yue Songli frowned.

"So," Wei Wuyin continued, "I'll go with plan A."

"Plan A? Isn't that the first plan?" Yue Songli immediately replied, the strangeness in his statement baffled her.

"Plan A? Yes, it's the first plan. The plan is very simple really, which is why it's the first." Wei Wuyin nodded.

"And that is?"

Wei Wuyin took a step towards the door, the shackles that bound him trembled. With a clink, they fell from his limbs and he pressed his right hand upon the door. From his fingertips, spiritual light flowed. The fluctuation was exactly the same as the spiritual fluctuation from the middle-aged man who threw him in.

"The key!" Yue Songli exclaimed in disbelief.

Creeeeek!

The double-doors started to open, revealing the light of the outside world. Wei Wuyin revealed a faint smile, turning to look at the beautiful countenance of Yue Songli, "As I said before, simple: Kill until I find him."

"Bai Lin, now's the time. UNLEASH HELL!"

Chapter 685 - 680: Nirvanic Flames Unleashed

"Ayo! Beast, settle down before I give you another jolt!" A half-masked guard angrily shouted. He walked beside the trolley that carried Bai Lin, rolling through the hallways while repeatedly threatening Bai Lin, getting a sick satisfaction from her crying wails or fearful flinches.

Presently, there were five men escorting Bai Lin to the Blood Extraction Room, a room designed for the extraction of essence blood of both beasts and humans. These cultivators were not above the abuse of humans or other humanoid races, including demons. At times, they would pass other escorted prisoners. There was a young human man tugged along by a neck chain by two half-masked men. He stumbled and moved with lifeless eyes.

All the half-masked men used his pole-type armament flowing with faint electric energies a wave. The one who threatened Bai Lin smugly smiled while giving off a threatening gesture before Bai Lin's golden eyes. After seeing Bai Lin's posture lower in a cowardly fashion, fearful glimmer in her eyes, he felt content at his intimidation. Still, he clenched his pole that surged with lightning arcs and stabbed it into Bai Lin.

"Kree!" She cried out in pain, trembling as she flinched away. Her shivering body and watery eyes were quite pitiable. Yet those around her showed no pity.

One of the other guards spoke out at this moment, giving Bai Lin some odd, inspective glances from time to time: "This bird is quite strange, don't you think? I've never seen one like it before. Golden Phoenix Fruits usually just give avian creatures faint golden characteristics, but isn't this too extreme? What's with it?"

Normally, winged beasts who ingested this fruit, having their bodies undergo faint transformations would merely gain certain color changes, such as golden feathers, beak, or eyes. But their overall features would stay the same, so their origins could be easily traced. A pigeon would still be a pigeon, just golden. A crane would still be a crane, just golden. The only trait would be their bloodline would be awakened, and they would gain certain abilities.

Yet Bai Lin wasn't any bird he could pinpoint. She looked like an aesthetically pleasing version of multiple birds, a creature that he had never seen before. His fascination and curiosity had merit. And for some odd reason, he felt disturbed and anxious being near her. To ease himself of his anxiety, he thrust his pole-type armament into the folds of her feathers, delivering another shocking jolt.

One of the guards shrugged, "Who knows?"

Another chimed in with a snuffle, "I think I heard about a bird like this before, my cousin once said he saw one on Blueglow. I forgot its name though."

"Oh? The cousin with the crooked nose?"

"Yeah, that one. Hehe, dumb as bricks but a bird aficionado."

They began to casually chat about Bai Lin as they moved along, but they were unaware that Bai Lin was unlike the other winged beasts who've taken the fruit. She had nurtured her bloodline of the phoenix using a large quantity of tailor-made alchemical products. Then, she had broken free of the restraints of a world and ignited herself to completion. A feat that most beasts would usually fail to accomplish.

She had earned her right to initiate nirvanic transformation and touched upon her origins of the Fire Phoenix, while those birds were merely beings who've bloodline awakened that dated back to phoenixes or outright just gained abilities of Golden Phoenixes, like Xiao Bai. They hadn't touched their origins, elevating to Genesis Beasts. Inwardly, she scoffed in her heart with contempt.

Her acting skills were impeccable. Bai Lin enjoyed this play, but her feathers were itching for some activity. She had been passive for over a month, pretending to be weak and fragile. A beast helpless to fight back. This was all for Wei Wuyin, and she similarly found this fulfilling. Yet the feeling of using her powers freely was also a fulfilling feeling she wanted.

Her thoughts returned to several weeks back, when they were prisoners in the city's dungeon. Wei Wuyin told her some words.

"Bai Lin, when I give you the signal, you have to promise me a few things. Okay? First, differentiate properly. Don't harm anyone at the Qi Condensation Realm, with weakened life auras, suppressed, or held captive. This is absolutely important. And don't harm anyone with my aura on them.

"Second, don't destroy the structure we'll be in. I can't deal with the situation if everyone gets shot out into the Dark Void and instantly dies from the chill. Third, and most important, have fun. None of those who work here deserve any mercy, so unleash hell.

"I'm unsure what we're getting ourselves into, and it might be too much for me or you to handle by ourselves. If you feel overwhelmed, facing difficult foes, make sure you prioritize your life before anyone and anything else. I'll be fine."

A surging flow of warmth entered her heart. But also a strong, steel-like and unswerving form of determination and resolve. All those years ago, she was powerless to help Wei Wuyin. When they escaped from that wall of natural calamity, ravaging the lands, her speed wasn't enough to escape. Wei Wuyin took it upon himself to carry her, and even protect her instead of himself, leading to him suffering such massive injuries that he had lost himself.

She was sorrowful during that time. If she was just stronger. If she was just faster. If she was just...

Yet her usefulness continued to decline. Not only could she not join Wei Wuyin in battles, her progression being too slow, her strength being too weak, but she couldn't even act as his partner in the sky. While she teased Xiao Bai, she was severely insecure about her position. Xiao Bai, who was younger than her, was also useful.

She had to be carried and left in the Sky Palace, unable to breach the Sky Layers herself. She lost her position as Wei Wuyin's partner in the sky for years. When she sensed her bloodline reaching a zenith, striving to touch upon her origins, Wei Wuyin didn't hesitate a single breath to support her, and she didn't hesitate to take the risk.

She had to.

Now, she had become a Genesis Beast. Now, she had reached the Second Stage of the Nirvanic Rebirth Realm. She was stronger. She was faster. And she swore in her heart that she would never disappoint or have Wei Wuyin risk himself to protect her. It was her turn—for the rest of their lives.

BUZZ!

"Oh?" A half-masked guard prodded Bai Lin, but received no response. "Is the beast dead?" The guard was fearfully shocked. Did he go too far? He moved to view her eyes, noticing they reflected a faint scarlet-gold flame. His heart violently quaked.

He felt a looming sensation of dread, fear, and anxiety overwhelm him.

"We're here!" One of the other guards announced to the others, causing the fearful guard to start. His skittish actions caused them to look at him. The one at the forefront asked, "What the hell? You okay?"

"Probably thought she's dead. But she's breathing yo, probably unconscious from the shocks." Another chimed in, chuckling in ridicule.

"I-I...we..." His words fumbled. The fear and anxious feeling started to elevate in his mind, the sensation of crisis became heavier and heavier. His instincts told him: Run, Run, RUN! His Spirit of Cultivation trembled without ceasing and his astral force was riled up to the point he neared cultivation deviation.

The others were taken aback. What's wrong with this guy?

Then, throughout the entire complicated complex that resembled a castle within the Dark Void, throughout every formation and the entire array, a faint mental tremor flowed out that was easily received by every living being in the castle.

"Bai Lin, now's the time!"

An unfamiliar voice echoed in their minds. They all looked around, wondering if they heard something or not. Seeing the curious and confused bodily movements from the others, it seemed they weren't alone.

Bai Lin's body faintly trembled. The chains and shackles that bound her clink and clanked about, giving off strange sounds of metal being pushed to its limits. They all turned to the feathered beast.

"What the hell was that?" A half-masked escorting guard asked.

At this very moment, another explosive mental transmission command erupted out!

"UNLEASH HELL!"

"KREEEEEEE!!!" Bai Lin's golden eyes emitted a bright, lively, and excited radiance that flooded the corridor, blinding the nearby men. They screamed in painful agony as the golden light scorched their optical nerves, blinding them instantly.

The sounds of chains breaking and metal being crushed resounded. Bai Lin lifted herself, her legs and talons. She crushed the floor beneath her, her claws digging into it like it was hot, melted butter.

Her pristine white and radiant gold feathers, a perfectly balanced ratio of which, started to faintly emit a scarlet-gold fire! It flowed throughout her body, traversing her until her body was engulfed entirely!

Nirvanic Flames!

She unfurled her wings and the heat emitted from her flames caused most of the guards to be unable to react before their bodies were burnt to a crisp, turned into ashes. They were merely beings in the Astral Core Realm, how could they survive beneath Bai Lin's nirvanic flames?!

They didn't even get the scream out before their body, clothes, and Spirit of Cultivation was incinerated. However, as the flames engulfed her, unleashing out into the surroundings, one individual was untouched. Out of the five guards, one of them was unharmed by the flames' heat and pulsating power.

"Argh! Wha-what is this?!" The guard that held a pole-type armament, the same guard that kept prodding Bai Lin without end for his own satisfaction was squirming as his escape routes were blocked by scarlet-golden flames. He stumbled and laid on the ground, the horror in his eyes were at its peak.

Hr had just witnessed his allies turn into ash before him. Unlike the others, he was unharmed by the golden light or flames that followed. Not able to comprehend why, he could only seek refuge at a nearby corner as he erected an astral ward.

Stomp! Stomp! Stomp!

A large, twenty-two meter tall phoenix stepped over. Her body wasn't as large as a being like Anu, being relatively tiny in comparison, but her aura was outrageously more imposing. Her golden eyes beamed out faint eyes, reflecting endless flames within, and they were all focused on one figure.

"You...!" The guard screamed in horror. Every stomp caused his heart to race. Unable to believe it, trying to regain some control, he questioned: "You foul beast! Wha-what are you?!"

Bai Lin arrived just a few feet from him, staring at him from above as he peddled back against the wall, pointing and trembling. Looking at this human, her eyes flashed with disdain.

"I sa-!"

SPUUSH!

Just as he was about to speak, his head was clenched by a golden talon. Like a watermelon, it burst apart with a flex. Brain matter, sanguine blood, and bits of bones were squeezed out and flooded her talon for a moment. The flames burned it away, turning him and everything about him into ash.

Bai Lin unfurled her wings wider, and released a trembling cry that shook the entire structure.

"KREEEEEEEEE!!!"

It was her time. Her nirvanic flames burst out of her body, thoroughly unleashed, flooding through every crevice, hole, and room! The screams of others started to resound!

Chapter 686 - 681: Free

"What was that?!" Yue Songli touched her right ear. She had just felt a strange transmission of words within her head. It was extremely intrusive and shocking. As an Ascended, no, as a cultivator, she communicated using spiritual transmissions, which were received and inspected with her spiritual sense before being translated into comprehensive words, carrying a person's aura and tone.

However, she had never felt a mental transmission before. It was strange, as if someone was within her thoughts, echoing to her in another voice. It made her feel insecure. Furthermore, the voice, tone, emotion, and other distinct qualities of a true voice was as consistent as if she had just heard it with her ears. Just abundantly more clear.

She recognized the voice too. It belonged to Wei Wuyin! This silver-eyed, outrageously handsome, unsettlingly perceptive young mortal man that seemed to be as indecipherable as an impossible cipher. However, for some reason, she felt that unburied hope flow into her eyes.

Wei Wuyin had just sent out a mental force burst to traverse throughout the entire complex. He was unable to sense Bai Lin's exact location through the formations, so he was left with no choice but this alternative.

KREEEEEEE!

A fierce rocketing clarion cry shook the entire complex. Wei Wuyin's eyes lit with a distinct brilliance. The double doors opened, but the usual guards were distracted and left baffled by the three events. The doors opening, the mental outburst, and the clarion cry.

Confused, the two Light Reflection Phase experts that were designated to wait for Yue Songli's methods to run its course before grabbing the drained corpse, turned to see the inside of the room. Their expressions and reactions were incredibly slow, and they first saw Wei Wuyin standing there at the entrance, unharmed and unshackled.

They caught a glimpse of the gorgeous Yue Songli, further staggering their reactions. However, before the half-masked guards could even speak out a series of questions or sounds, a ray of piercing light arrived at their foreheads.

PSUUSH!

The saber light pierced through their skulls, painting the wall behind them in their brain fluids and sanguine liquid. The two crumpled like ragdolls without knowing how they died. Two thuds resounded.

Wei Wuyin walked forward, exiting the room as he inspected the two's bodies and spatial rings. After finding nothing of help, he slightly frowned. But he did discover a few cultivation methods and arts that were quite blunt, such as: "Yin Siphon Evil Method."

A sinister dual cultivation method of the evil variety. There were other methods included, including self-harming arts that could wildly increase one's power at the cost of things like life force, essence blood, or yin energies. All of which was stolen from others, sealed through a variety of methods, then used for these arts.

He couldn't help but recall the Evil Cultivator back in the Myriad Yore Continent—Phantom Rogue of Evernight. He had stolen and kept Spirits of Cultivation of others, galvanized their unique energies to fight against the Mortal Star Formation Tribulation, the first astral tribulation.

His efforts brought him great power, but he failed to survive in the end.

'The methods of Evil Cultivators...' While he knew this organization practiced evil methods, practiced a variety of plundering, he now verified something beyond a doubt: this was an organized association that thrived on Evil Methods. The memories of that young-looking cultivator were mostly lacking regarding knowledge of this organization, just its existence and his dealing with trading certain characters.

This included exotic beasts and women. However, the city officials themselves were highly suspicious. The young-looking cultivator was aware that certain figures, men and women of a certain cultivation, practicing certain methods, would vanish from their captive dungeons and be explained away with resisting arrest or suiciding themselves if someone came along to seek answers.

Due to his attractiveness, the young-looking cultivator thought he belonged to the Immortal Hero Ranking, and thought about reporting it to the city officials. This was why he was disappointed, and so were the guards. There was an underground bounty for those on the Immortal Hero Ranking.

In fact, he learned from those same memories that the Immortal Hero Ranking figures were heavily targeted, many disappearing or dying unexplained deaths. If this organization was responsible, it wasn't anything ordinary, that's for sure.

As for why the Immortal Saintess Ranking wasn't targeted, that was because the women were often Chosen, their beauty outstanding, but their backing were almost always impressive with far too many connections or raving fans. Furthermore, beautiful women were difficult targets to disappear without a commotion following. There were too many people jumping at the bits to gain the favor. If they went missing, the number of suitors that would react in full throttle wasn't small.

But the Immortal Hero Ranking listings were usually the result of age, talent, and appearance. And this was usually the result of them cultivating certain Yang-attributed Cultivation Methods.

Wei Wuyin didn't have time to delve into why the Golden Gate Pavilion set listing parameters in such a way, perhaps the issue was that it was fair between men and women without distinctions. So the benefits of being their dual cultivation partner was attributed heavily, including their personal potential. Who knew?

The entire ranking was shrouded in a gloomy shadow.

"Hey!" Yue Songli called out from inside the room.

Wei Wuyin snapped out of his thoughts and turned, seeing her exquisite figure and pink eyes observing him. "The door's open," he said.

Yue Songli bit her lower lip anxiously, her barefoot right leg moved slightly. As she lifted her painted toes upwards, she paused and her leg froze, shivering a little.

Wei Wuyin saw the hesitation in her eyes and body language. With his Celestial Eyes, he once again inspected her room, including the walls. "Are you restricted by a formation to leave?" He couldn't see all the formations, so he wasn't aware if there was. He had to be cautious. If there were formations that would activate upon her attempting to leave, then he might be in danger.

KREEEE!!!

BOOOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!!!

BOOSH! KREEEEE! SUUUUUUUUBOOOOOSH!!!

The sounds of fighting and Bai Lin's rampage resounded. She was active. Wei Wuyin's spiritual sense was sent outwards, and his senses were immediately immersed in scarlet-golden flames that were flooding the halls.

His expression changed. With haste, he retreated back to the room. The nirvanic flames were like a raging tsunami! It came from around the corner at a mind-boggling speed. Wei Wuyin arrived before Yue Songli, much to her surprise, and her eyes noted the nirvanic flames incoming. Her heart raced.

She felt lethal danger. A heat had already crept on her delicate skin, singed by its temperature. A wisp of horror emerged in her eyes. She wanted to retreat in fear, find a place of safety, but Wei Wuyin was faster. He wrapped his arm around her waist, and she felt the room spin.

WOOOOSH!

The nirvanic flames burnt the two corpses into ash, burned the ash into nothing, and then rushed into the room to engulf the two.

Yue Songli exclaimed in a soft, panicked scream as she saw the flames arrive before her. But a gentle warmth wrapped her body, her head pressed against a strong, firm chest by a steady hand. Despite her fear, her emotions settled down. She went absentminded as the scent of a man blasted into her nostrils.

"..."

'The flames? It's not...burning me?' Yue Songli could see flames at the corner of her eyes, flowing across the chest of the young man, engulfing them whole, and her room was enveloped in its raging power. When the hand relented its hold on her head and waist, she freed herself to observe the handsome visage of the man who held a faint smile at close proximity.

Wei Wuyin looked away, observing the flames, "I almost forgot."

He had almost forgotten about Bai Lin's Nirvanic Flames. The instructions he gave her was to not harm the structure, those with his aura, and those captives. Her Nirvanic Flames were deeply connected to her existence, and she could distinguish as she wished. If she wanted, she could have her flames emit life-infused flames or death-inducing flames at will, to choose who was subjected to either.

If he hadn't reacted, he would be courting burnt ash right about now, not a heaven-shaking beauty. Especially since Yue Songli's powers were restrained.

Yue Songli was still somewhat absentminded. She had never had a man embrace her so fiercely before, and she couldn't fathom how they were standing inside flames that didn't burn them. In fact, she felt her body being infused with wisps of life energies. It wasn't powerful enough to extend her lifespan, but she could use it to heal injuries.

The dual events left her speechless.

Before she could even react, a hand grabbed hers.

"Let's go!" Wei Wuyin said. He was on a clock. He needed to find what he was looking for before the Ascended and Bai Lin engaged in further battle, likely destroying the structure from inside out. While Bai Lin's flames weren't melting the structure deliberately, she might not be able to choose freely in a few moments.

He didn't have time for Yue Songli's mental struggle to choose freedom at the cost of risking herself. He'd choose for her. With that, he pulled her forward, and then flew through the raging flames.

Yue Songli was brought along. There was no formation that activated to prevent her escape. The door was all it was, and beyond a certain limit of the room, she was unable to exert her strength without the formations retaliating. But with the door open, with the guards dealt with, there were no other restrictions present that would stop her from walking out. At least, the ones externally. The ones in her heart were still there.

But that strong hand that brought her along by her own, braving the flames that she felt fearful of with a smile and utmost confidence, left those internal struggles buried, replacing her long suppressed hope. As for that hope? It was now within her heart as a source of light.

'Am I...really going to be free? After hundreds of years? Am I finally...Am I finally...'

When she passed the doors, exiting into the outside, her eyes grew misty until tears fell... The image of the tall, dark-haired, firm back figure of the man bringing her away amidst scarlet-golden flames was etched into her memories forever.

Chapter 687 - 682: Phoenix's Cry Of Rage!

KREEEE!!!

BOOOOOM! BOOOM! BOOOM!!!

BOOSH! KREEEEE! SUUUUUUUUBOOOOOSH!!!

"ACCURSED BEAST!" A harsh, vehement roar of unfathomable might rippled through the world, shaking the structure floating in the Dark Void at its foundation. From outside, after the concealment formations were rocked by the raging flames and abrupt explosions, outlines of the structure became visible during the chaos.

It was a concentrically designed castle, with an outer wall and an inner wall, four towers positioned in the four directions, however the inner area contained a large, black-colored sphere. The entire sphere was roughly the size of a tiny-sized planet, being large enough to house tens of millions of lives.

Littered across the surface of this black sphere were square-shaped vents, and they seemed to absorb the essence being emitted by the Solar Stars. Periodically, the sphere would briefly expand and then contract forcefully with a hissing sound. It was as if it was breathing. When the pressure seemingly released, the sphere's surface lit with violet-colored runes tinted with a sanguine glow.

HISS! BLURG! DUUSH!

Strange sounds emanated from the sphere, especially as it tried to expand. The vents that numbered the hundreds of thousands, large enough to fit an average-sized man, were spewing out scarlet-golden flames. The contraction was halted due to this, the essence being burned to fuel the Nirvanic Flames!

The inside of the sphere was complex, fitted with numerous cultivators, living, working, and thriving within, and its environment was varied. Even forests and lakes were present. Yet at this moment, those areas etched out to emulate real life environments were set ablaze by nirvanic flames. The trees burned, the lakes dried, and countless cultivators that wore masks, from Qi Condensation to Astral Core Realm were met with their deaths.

Only those suppressed, shackled by restriction formations and considered non-threats were met with mercy. In fact, Bai Lin bestowed them with gifts. Her life energy was extremely potent, so those prisoners who were near-death, in constant and unbearable pain from their injuries brought about by torture, extractions, or other evil practices done upon them was healed. With the infusion of life energies, their body's natural recovery abilities were elevated to wild levels.

To those on their last legs, this was a blessing from the divinities from beyond.

While engulfed by flames, those restricted in rooms watched their captors, interrogators, wardens, and torturers burn in the flames before their eyes were first shocked, and then they cheered. It was unknown who started it, or if it was just a coincidence, but they all cheered in joy. The feeling of obtaining one's revenge was euphoric.

While the sounds of fighting continued to rumble through the sphere, the sounds of jubilant shouts mixed with happy cursing rampaged just as loud. When they started, a symphony began. A beautiful, joyful symphony that sung of freedom and hope.

"SHUT THE FUCK UP!" A thunderous shout swept the entire sphere, causing its runes to alit with a sinister radiance. The sound caused numerous individuals shouting out their heartfelt hope and dreams to be met with the last straw that broke their lives. They died with brilliant smiles and one last screaming shout. It wasn't their death throes, but their freedom throes.

They would no longer suffer. To them, that was enough.

A particular male cultivator had a high cultivation base and a special physique, the Yang Renewal Physique. It was the exact opposite of the Yin Renewal Physique, allowing his Primal Yang to recover after being exhausted or expended, making him the best form of cultivation partner for women. Yet due to this, he was siphoned for more than five hundred years in this location.

Forced to act as an renewable bag of yang energy, his cultivation continuously raised through special means. He wasn't even able to die during the tribulations, the Ascended could interfere with their treasures and means. His value was...invaluable.

When the cheers began, he was the absolute loudest.

Immersed in scarlet-golden flames, he was a tattered mess. He had no limbs, severed hundreds of years ago, and even his manhood had been removed, forcefully keeping his yang energies sealed within his body with no outlet or medium and forcefully elevating it through special methods.

For so long, he was like an undead existence, forced to live despite his desire. Enlivened by the cheers, he coughed out violently. The life energies were healing him, and while he was happy, he wasn't willing to continue living. His eyes reflected as much. Just knowing that those outside were dying in droves, going to hell...that was enough.

He spoke out in a soft whisper, trying to communicate with the flames. "I don't...I don't know who you are...or if you can even hear me, but thank you. But...I have a request. A small, little, insignificant request to someone like you." Bound by the neck and torso without limbs, hung over thirty meters in the air, he swallowed.

The flames were surging but it didn't seem to hear him. He hoped the spiritual sense of the expert causing this chaos was listening. He was hopeful.

"If you can do this, I'll give you my Yang Source Quintessence...You should know what that means..." The man offered. If anyone heard this, they would be sent into a startling shock. The Yang Source Quintessence was the most crucial component of a cultivator, and ripping it out was the same as damning one to endless suffering. It was adhered closely with one's soul, and while not directly a part of it, it formed after one's birth.

The flames still remained silent.

"Please hear this...hear me..." The man begged. Tears left his eyes like a flowing river. He begged, longed for his request to be fulfilled. But if he tried to die, they would always stop him. Even if he tried to extract his Yang Source Quintessence, they would halt him instantly.

The flames stirred.

Feeling the slight change, the man's eyes lit. "Release my shackles. I'll give it to you! I promise!" He begged again, emboldened by hope. The flames seemed to hear, slowly growing hotter. The man was startled when his shackles and chains were burnt away. He fell thirty meters, smashing against the ground in a thud.

The man didn't hesitate. His iris and pupils faded, his eyes became a sea of gold. With a fierce roar, from his glabella, a perfectly spherical globe of gold the size of a children's marble emerged. His body soon lost its masculinity, even its femininity that brought balance to himself had vanished.

His head sagged as the gold sphere left.

"Kill me..." He hoarsely asked. The damage from his self-extraction would destine him to endless suffering and health complications, both physical and mental. If he had done this before, those bastards would benefit, but he...he would be kept like this until his lifespan ran out. He didn't wish for either outcome.

He rather suffer than to let them benefit.

But now, he had hope.

"Please..." his hoarse, androgynous voice sounded again, "...please kill me..."

KREE!!!

Bai Lin released an enraged cry filled with unfathomable emotions. Her heart, while facing her enemies, was beset by this tragic scene. And it wasn't the only one. Few thought she could save them, so they begged that the flames take them too. They cried out loud. They made offerings. They did everything they could in the hopes that the expert in control of the flames was listening.

But she wasn't sure what to do. Wei Wuyin said not to kill. She had to even hold back to ensure the structure didn't collapse, forced to fight in these narrow spaces.

However, a voice exploded in a timely manner. "I've found him!"

Bai Lin's eyes brightened. She released an explosive phoenix cry that sent the flames in a frenzy. She acted to those who wished for it to end. Because she knew that saving them wasn't all too likely. There were tens of millions of prisoners, and almost five percent were asking for her help to end it all.

With a faint glimmer of tears in her eyes, she changed the qualities of the nirvanic flames around them. She tried to up the heat to the highest level so their deaths were instant.

The limbless, genderless expert felt the shift. He smiled brilliantly. "Thank y-" His body was incinerated.

The black sphere trembled and from a portion of it, a protrusion formed that started to rapidly change color. The material it was constructed from became superheated and in a raging explosion, the protrusion became a hole.

Kree!

A river of scarlet-golden flames geysered out in a violent manner, and the violet runes with a sanguine tint were vanishing one by one, the entire array was being destabilized. From the greyser of flames, a bird made of entirely scarlet-golden fire, at the height of twenty-two thousand meters, emerged at startling speeds.

It shot into the Dark Void and sharply turned, its golden eyes were radiant as two burning solar stars.

Fire Phoenix Transformation!

"I'll kill every last one of you!" Bai Lin sent out a vast mental tremor, filled with pure, unadulterated killing intent. Before, she just wanted to fight and prove herself as useful.

Now?

SHE WANTED TO EVISCERATE!

KREE!!!!

Chapter 688 - 683: Burn, The Hunted And Hunters

Burn it all down!

A gargantuan, grand, gorgeous array of fire, form, and ferocity occupied twenty-two thousand meters of space. Bai Lin's fire phoenix form transformed her into an embodiment of scarlet-golden nirvanic flames! Her previously recognizable features weren't distinct, there wasn't an ounce of white, just an existence of fire and light. The only thing that retained herself, expanded alongside her, was her golden-colored radiant eyes that torched the world with every glance.

She stared with unmasked violence and rage at the black sphere surrounded by concentrically-designed castle walls and towers. The violet runes on the surface tinted by a sanguine color were affected by her internal rampage, causing most to dim and some to be erased after a burning flicker, vanishing outright.

From the giant hole she had burst out from, still spewing geysering flames, were two comets of light, one black and one grey that broke out. They escaped the limits of its burning heat and put vast distance, almost a hundred miles of distance between them and the pillar of fire.

The two lights hovered in the Dark Void. The lights around those existences started to rapidly fade, conserving their strength while safe.

"What the hell is that beast? Its like an entity of fire!" A gloomy, hostile voice resounded. It belonged to a female, and her grey light revealed her figure. She was of slim build, roughly five feet four inches, dressed in a conservative white and grey-colored attire carrying strong resemblance to religious nuns of some mortal monasteries. Her eyes, however, were as dark-red as congealed blood.

"How the fuck am I supposed to know?" An icy, indifferent voice resounded. Despite the vulgar language, the tone of the voice lacked all forms of passion, almost emotionless if not for the chills it could induce. It belonged to a male, garbed in loose black robes, his face covered by a half-mask like the others.

"..." The woman snorted, executing a few hand-seals. The violet-colored runes lit for a moment before dimming even greater than before, and some had been stressed to the point that they shattered, exploding and taking bits of the black sphere with it. From those holes, pillars of flames were forcefully expelled.

Her expression darkened considerably. She announced in gloom: "The Infernal Star-End Array is heavily damaged. I can't activate most of it."

The black-robed man's eyes narrowed to the point it had become slits. There was a dangerous glint hidden within. His spiritual sense was affixed to the twenty-two thousand meter embodiment of fire just hovering there, seemingly observing them. Despite the rippling waves of anger flowing from it, it didn't attack them immediately.

"A bird that's made of fire? Could it be a phoenix?" The woman asked. She kept performing hand-seals, her hands becoming shadows as she executed thousands in the matter of mere seconds. She wasn't holding back. The power emitted from her body caused fixed space to tremble ceaselessly.

"Can you repair the array?" The black-robed man coldly asked, ignoring the woman's question. The Infernal Star-End Array was an extremely high-level Array that maintained the offensive, defensive, and supplementary formations. If used adeptly, with a cultivator of sufficient cultivation level, it could directly repel Demi-Mortal Lord Phase experts, even briefly resist an Earthly Saint.

"I'm trying," She curtly responded. Adding with a heavy breath, "the fire within the Shadow Egg is causing interference. I can't expel it quickly—I need time."

The Shadow Egg was the black sphere, a forged construct of epic proportions, rivaling a tiny-sized planet. It was made with Shadow-Terror Ore, a mystic-graded material. It was only at low-grade Mystic-Earth, but its value and uses couldn't be underestimated.

It was infused with shadow essence, making it extremely difficult to perceive by spiritual senses of both mortal and Ascended alike, and capable of effective camouflage, hiding from visual and mental senses. Its cost and design was both unfathomably high and incredibly intricate.

"..." The black-robed man remained silent for a long, long moment. After a while, when he noticed that the fluctuations from Bai Lin were continuous and inconsistent, his eyes opened with a snapping ferocity. "Its manipulating the fire from afar! Its deliberately eroding the formations from the inside!"

The woman's expression drastically changed. She executed a few special hand-seals, forming flickering mystical runes around her until they numbered far beyond ten thousand. With a push of both hands, the runes flew towards the black sphere like miniature suns. When it touched black sphere, they adhered to its surface, the geysering fire started to abate in intensity.

"You're right! But how?!"

The two were sent into shock. When have beasts been so adept at dealing with formations? When have beasts ever reached this level of power? It was targeting the formations with unerring accuracy! If this continues, the Shadow Egg will be ruined.

KREE!

Bai Lin's clarion cry shook the world. With a flap of her flaming wings, she blitzed towards the two as a streak of fire. She was extraordinarily fast.

However, the two were experts at the Soul of Mysticism Phase, genuine Ascended! They didn't engage, but directly retreated backwards in an almost unified step. As they did, they shot towards a specific direction while facing Bai Lin. The woman refused to stop forming hand-seals, the space around her still fluctuating without end. She was focused on repairing the array.

The black-robed man was trailing her, slightly in front of the woman. Clearly, he was determined to protect the woman and buy her what she needed: time! If the array was repaired, even somewhat slightly, Bai Lin's fate was to be suppressed. There would be no escape. At least, in their minds.

Bai Lin chased.

They soared through the Dark Void, circling the Shadow Egg, one chasing, two retreating. Neither side executed long-range attacks, both with their own reservations. The two couldn't escape the Shadow Eggs orbit without abandoning it, and Bai Lin couldn't unleash her full strength without endangering Wei Wuyin.

As she chased for nearly ten seconds, three lights exited from the Shadow Egg, two blue and one gold. They formed three men, all of which had half-masks protecting their identities. With their black robes, even their figures were concealed.

They were three Soul of Mysticism Phase experts, all at the Second Stage of the Mystic Ascendant Realm. Their auras were robust. They all weren't inferior to the likes of Venerable Kun Yiming and Venerable Bluecloud, two experienced and aged Ascended.

"Is that a freaking fire phoenix?" The man covered by a faint golden glow ludicrously asked.

"Impossible! They're legends! How could it be?" While the Golden Phoenix Fruit existed, that was only awakening the bloodline potential of certain avian species, capable of allowing their strength to elevate and develop certain unique abilities, but that was fundamentally different than seeing a live phoenix!

This was similar to how some dragons had the bloodline of a True Dragon hidden within, but wasn't actually one themselves. Until they stepped onto their Ancestral Path to their origins, becoming genuine Genesis Beasts, they were merely awakening a tiny portion of their true potential.

"..." The last Ascended remained silent. But his aura started to fluctuate wildly, excitement betrayed by the shimmering light he emitted. His thoughts were as clear as the stars in the Dark Void!

The other two noticed this. There was no need to speak any words between them. They were cultivators who plundered with abandon, reaching their levels and strength with vicious means. How could they not want to capture, enslave, or just extract the essence of a genuine phoenix?!

The three lights exploded outwards, chasing after Bai Lin with incredible speeds. They zipped and zoomed through the Dark Void. In mere moments, they were already on Bai Lin's tail. When they felt the power of Bai Lin's flames, their expressions changed, but after reinforcing their own protections, they flew forward with dark glints in their eyes.

The black-robed man traveling alongside the woman observed this development, a smirk surfaced on his lips. It was effusing rambunctious greed.

Two being chased; three tailing behind; Bai Lin in the middle as they traversed in circles. There was a strange, almost agreed upon stalemate formed. The three men behind didn't launch attacks, also reluctant to unintentionally damage the Shadow Egg, while the two in front merely used their greatest movement arts to buy time.

Bai Lin was still enraged, but she restrained herself. She feared what they feared. Yet two different groups were entirely unaware of the others' intentions.

"..." However, this balance started to cause the smirk on the black-robed man's face to become a neutral expression. There was something amiss. Is this fire beast unable to launch long-range attacks? He was prepared to defend and redirect these attacks, but none came.

Then, that neutral expression became a downward arc filled with an anxious feeling. This feeling became more uncomfortable the longer time passed. Something wasn't right. When he saw the three lights behind the phoenix, his head tilted slightly to the side, seeing the Shadow Egg.

Then...

Without warning...

His pupils constricted violently!

"No! The heat its emitting isn't right!" He fearfully shouted, causing the woman to turn to him, confused by his words. She kept her duties well, infusing her power into the array to repair the formations that comprised it while simultaneously isolating the fire raging within the Shadow Egg to prevent it from influencing the formations.

Without hesitation, the black-robed man diverted his path of retreat. He directly left!

"..." The four Ascended froze as they watched the black robed man turn into a comet of black light, then vanishing into the distance in a flash. He had used his spatial powers to move a vast distance!

Speechless, the four were unable to react properly. While they thought about leaving too, it was too late!

An explosive burst of power erupted from far, far into the distance. The aura was quite distinct, but also weak. It felt as if it belonged to a Gravity Emission Phase expert, unleashing their aura out wildly!

The others gave the area a brief glance, but they were unable to sense anything in particular. It was strange. But then they heard something sizzling.

"AHHHHHH!" A shriek of horror brought the three men's attention back to their target, and what they saw shook their entire hearts!

"HELP ME! AHHHH! GAAAH!! HE-HELP!!!" In bursts of screams, cries for help rung out in their senses. Their eyes all shrunk into needlepoints. At the moment, they witnessed the sight of a large fire phoenix engulfing the woman entirely, as if she was eaten whole. She was trapped within the confines of its body, unable to escape as she formed continuous wards around herself.

She raged and raged, releasing everything she had, but those wards were burning, sizzling as if being cooked. Her skin that was soft, pristine, was bubbling as if roasted in an oven. Her defenses were useless! The harsh heat ravaged her body, her clothes, and her life.

In moments, her mystic-graded attire was incinerated into nothing, combusting into flames! It caused the woman to become a flaming person, and no one could enjoy her nude body as she shrieked out in pain and panic! Even if one wanted to look, they would only find burnt flesh and melting bones.

Ghastly.

The three felt their scalps tingle.

An...Ascended...

...Burned alive?

It was only then that they realized that the fire phoenix's heat was pulsating, distorting fixed space until it seemed as if it was quaking like a mirage in the distance. The sides of the Shadow Egg in close proximity were melting with a bright redness!

The words of the black-robed man that escaped resounded in their heads. The heat wasn't right...

Chapter 689 - 684: Burn, Phoenix's Might

"It was waiting for a signal!" One of the half-masked Ascended shouted in realization. That weak, far and away aura had changed the circumstances of everything. In a mere moment, the Fire Phoenix had rapidly accelerated and mercilessly swallowed the female Ascended into it.

She was now entrapped in its flaming body, unable to escape while within its domain. Her shrill screams and pleas for help resounded, sent out in the form of pulsating spiritual transmissions. Even those prisoners locked away for decades or centuries, tortured and abused, was able to hear the pain and suffering carried in it.

A few recognized that voice. Those were high-level experts, mostly Mystic Star Phase experts, the so-called false Ascended. These experts had either personally met or suffered at the hands of that female Ascended. They hollered and howled in undisguised joy!

The half-masked man shrouded by a gold glow visibly trembled. With clenched teeth, he tried to rally the others in haste: "We're not going to suppress this beast without Lady Holysign and the Shadow Star-End Array active! If we do, the benefits will be immeasurable!" His powerful, beyond Mortal Limits aura erupted as if he was about to launch himself into the fire. His tone was courageous and fierce.

However, the other two men engulfed by a blue glow exchanged glances. They could see the doubt and concern within each other's eyes. They were experts who lived for thousands of years, not easily manipulated cultivators.

One of the half-masked men sneered, "Go on then. Save your lover." After he said this, he added: "I'll send a message for reinforcements." At this moment, he had no feeling of camaraderie. That woman wasn't his. Screw her. His life was far, far more valuable in his mind. And while he was greedy, he wasn't an idiot to risk himself to save her or face an unknown threat. Who knew if this beast was the only one?

Considering the hasty escape of one of them already, it was enough to suggest that this beast, whose aura and strength they were unable to gauge or determine due to its unique cultivation path, wasn't to be underestimated. He didn't even want to be severely injured, let alone die for a damaged base or a woman that wasn't his.

After saying this, the half-masked man shot off into the distance, escaping with a trail of blue light. The other man engulfed in a blue glow sighed, "She never accepted you. You shouldn't risk yourself." After saying those words, the half-masked man shot off in the same direction. They escaped at top speed.

The man shrouded by a golden glow let loose a low, primal growl. He was indubitably conflicted, unable to make a choice while awashed by the spiritual screams of Lady Holysign. Memories of their interactions flashed in his mind, all his attempts at courting her, all her rejections and dismissals. Even the thought of lending his hand at this moment, earning her favor, nursing her back to health, and achieving his dreams of being with her pounded his mind.

As for reinforcements? He'd be a fool to rely on that, especially since the Shadow Egg was being exposed. It wouldn't take long before others noticed it and investigated. If that happened, the base would be abandoned without hesitation by the higher-ups.

Through violently clenched teeth, he looked at Lady Holysign's burnt body, her skin boiling with blistering bubbles, and her eyes being roasted with every passing millisecond. She was trapped without an escape.

"...PLEASE! DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!!" Lady Holysign was resisting with all her might, but the flames were relentless. They burned away her mystic energy and incinerated her arts. She had to protect herself at all times to prevent being forcefully infused by the flames seeking to incinerate her, while warding off the heat the best she could. If it wasn't for her refined body that exceeded Mortal Limits, she would've become ash by now.

If she wanted to escape, she'd need outside help to distract the beast, allowing her to gather enough power to break free.

She didn't want to die.

Not here.

Not now.

She used one last trump card in her arsenal, knowing that the others would leave her behind in a single breath without a moment's hesitation. There was only one man who'd struggle and could be persuaded.

"Tan Guangting!"

The half-masked man's entire body trembled. The glint within his eyes became firm, brilliant, and strong. He formulated a plan, his thoughts focused on the present, and hopeful of the future. If he saved her now, so many paths would be opened!

With a renewed vigor, his aura that had been accumulating thus far fully exploded. He shot towards Bai Lin with a terrifying determination and speed.

Bai Lin twisted her body around, seeing the comet of gold shot towards her with its aura fluctuating as if preparing a frightening move. However, all this consideration...all this drama, none of it factored in the one variable that mattered.

Bai Lin's golden eyes were forever suffused with rage and violence. She opened her flaming beak, and with a faint wave of heat, a tsunami of gushing nirvanic flames, enough to engulf a tiny-sized planet, was sent barreling towards Tan Guangting.

Tan Guangting's entire body grew cold as regret filled his mind, sea of consciousness, and very soul. The rushing flames were too big, too fast, and the heat distorted fixed space. Instinctively, he tried to tap into his means to traverse space in a hasty attempt to escape, but his formerly impressive momentum and the destabilized space meant he had selected his own end.

With his thoughts on escape, his body wasn't suitably protected. In less than a moment, he met the breath of flames that engulfed him whole. Unlike Lady Holysign that was being refined, Tang Guangting's Ascended body and Mystic Soul was incinerated...

Instantly...

"..." Fairy Holysign's heart stopped. Her last fleeing hope had been vanquished by a fearsome assault.

"DIE!" Bai Lin sent a mental message carrying her anger to the one within her flaming body, and the heat of her nirvanic flames rose by several times. The Fairy Holysign couldn't even scream out again, her body burned and refined into nothing but ash in almost an instant.

While all this took time to describe, from the moment Bai Lin captured Fairy Holysign to now, less than three seconds had passed.

Bai Lin glanced at the Shadow Egg, then a mournful look appeared on her eyes, before changing into one of outraged intent of murder. She flapped her wings and chased after the two blue lights. If before, she was both the hunted and hunter, now she's only the hunter.

After a few seconds, Bai Lin realized that the speed that Ascended could move was terrifyingly fast. She couldn't catch up, and the distance grew greater and greater with every passing second.

If a genuine Ascended focused on purely escaping, it was incredibly difficult to catch up. Wu Yu, a quasi Demi-Mortal Lord, proved this when he was chased by a Demi-Mortal Lord and having escaped across

multiple domains without being captured. While there were other factors considered, such as Grand Transformation, the difference between phases were massive. Just the feat alone demonstrated the difficulty.

Bai Lin suffered even worse. She had no access to spatial energies, relying solely on her physical body to soar through the Dark Void by force. While she could fly for longer with a more consistent speed, the short-term burst potential of Mystic Ascendants was far, far too high.

The only reason she captured Fairy Holysign was due to her carelessness and the element of surprise, while Tan Guangting ran head first into the fire, and her own Nirvanic Flames destabilized spatial movement arts. If not, even as a Fire Phoenix at the Second Stage of the Nirvanic Rebirth Realm, she wouldn't be able to deal with them so easily.

That being said, her Nirvanic Flames offensive power was terrifyingly high, absurd even. Most Demi-Mortal Lords would avoid meeting any outburst of fire from her with extreme caution.

The more she chased, the more she realized a cold, harsh fact: She wasn't fully developed or understood all her powers. Still young, she hadn't refined her own physical energies to their limits or unlocked all her bloodline powers. This was not the limit of the Second Stage of the Nirvanic Rebirth Realm, not even close.

POP!

Just as her heart wavered, filled with unwillingness, a Void Portal appeared before her. Her golden eyes widened slightly, and then was suffused with joy. If there was one person that was reliable, that knew her heart, it was Wei Wuyin!

She deactivated her Fire Phoenix Transformation, returning to her small, twenty-two meter form, and shot into the Void Portal without hesitation. When she reappeared, she didn't even hesitate to reactivate her Fire Phoenix Transformation, returning to her glorious form of twenty-two thousand meters!

"KREE!"

"WHAT?!" Two simultaneous outbursts resounded, belonging to the two half-masked, blue glowing men from before. They had momentarily stopped to investigate the Void Portal that had abruptly emerged before them. They had never seen a Void Portal surface without a Void Gate, and even when they had seen Void Portals, usually the other side, the location in which one exited, never revealed a Void Portal.

It was typically as if someone exited out of thin air.

But something exited out of the Void Portal! How could they not be shocked? Furthermore, it was the Fire Phoenix!

Bai Lin was too close.

They were too close!

The two were aghast as they tried to escape, but the heat radiating from the Nirvanic Flames was hellishly fierce! They were forced to establish defenses to prevent themselves from being melted or combusting, their hearts pounded in abject fear. What was this?!

"Kree!" Bai Li unleashed her planet-sized tsunami of flames at them both!

Chapter 690 - 685: An Evil Blessed?

"Are...you okay?" The voice of Yue Songli sounded out, tinged with confusion.

Far away from the Shadow Egg, far from the battle between Ascended and flaming beast, there was an archaic Voidship anchored in the Dark Void, unactivated except for its life-sustaining formations. The main deck of this ship contained three auras. One was quiet, unconscious. One was settled, beyond Mortal Limits. One was waning, inconsistent and sputtering.

"Huff...huff...huff..." heavy, exhausted breathing filled the air. Wei Wuyin was drenched in cold sweat, his muscles trembling, and his silver eyes quivered ceaselessly. He had never been so exhausted before, even when he had pushed his Bloodline Source to its limits.

Yue Songli was standing a few meters away, her pink irises observing the situation. She recalled the events prior. Wei Wuyin was a picture of health, exuding brilliance and exuberant energy, but after searching the Shadow Egg for this unconscious individual, a mere mortal amongst mortals, a cultivator at the Qi Condensation Realm, at the Yang Growth Phase, not even at the False Reality Phase.

She couldn't fathom why this individual was important. But after finding them, she witnessed an unexplained event. Somehow, a Void Portal manifested directly before them, and they entered and left out of another. Her understanding of Void Portals were overturned, completely stupefied by this development.

She was hesitant to enter, but with Wei Wuyin's firm hand and confident, comforting smile, she felt dragged along by his pace. He had pulled her out of imprisonment, and then reignited her hope for freedom. There was no reason to doubt him now.

When they exited, they were far, far away from the Shadow Egg, and Wei Wuyin instantly summoned an archaically designed Voidship. She hadn't seen one of these before in real life, they were truly ancient, at least outdated by five thousand to six thousand years.

Settled onto the Voidship, he released his aura, but it was rather weak. She didn't understand the drastic change, but after he erupted with grey radiance that temporarily blinded her, she felt something akin to time and space energies but wasn't, and then when it dimmed down, his current state was the consequence. Drenched in cold sweat, barely standing, and breathing heavily without respite.

Then, raging flames erupted hectically in the distance. Two planet-sized balls of fire brightened the world considerably at different areas, shocking her thoroughly. If it wasn't for her own ability to create Solar Stars, to conjure planets, she would've been even more shook. She felt that this was the result of a fire-attributed Ascended fighting the others belonging to that organization. And since those flames stimulated her instincts, she felt it belonged to a Demi-Mortal Lord cultivator, fiercely surprising her.

While confused by his state, she couldn't help but realize that this silver-eyed man that had popped abruptly in her life, given her hope, gave her freedom, had come prepared from the beginning.

Wei Wuyin took a deep, steady, gulping breath before exhaling out an air of stress. Standing upright, he turned to Yue Songli and gave her a smile, "I'm fine. Just a little exhausted." In truth, his current state

was horrendous. His cultivation base was terrifying in comparison to the average cultivator at his level. Even terrifying couldn't describe it.

After reaching the Gravity Emission Phase, using the last bits of his remaining alchemical products during the last six years to enhance his cultivation base, his sixty-nine centimeter-sized Astral Cores had heightened to seventy-three centimeters. While only four centimeters of difference, his astral force overall strength had elevated, becoming far, far denser and richer through the refinement of his Gravitational Central Mass, the Black-White Hole.

If one went by ordinary standards of Gravity Emission Phases, from the golden age of the Everlore Starfield to even the Aeternal Sky Starfield, it was fairly consistent that the average was half a centimeter.

With four Astral Cores at the equalized state of seventy-three centimeters, he had roughly 584 times the reserves of the average cultivator at his level. Not counting the absolute difference in their astral forces strength, his World Seas contained enough astral force to drown some smaller starfields.

Yet the strain of opening a Void Portal was outrageously high, unfathomably difficult. This wasn't just because of the mystic essence emitted by the nine Solar Stars with Mystic Radiance Belts strengthening the stability of space overall, but the resistance given by the starfield's protections to prevent spontaneous invasions. He had met this when he first arrived, blocked at the Ninestar Starfield's boundary.

Just the sheer fact he could use brute force here as a mortal told of his incredible strength and huge reserves of his Void Force. There was a specific frequency required to bypass this strain, but he wasn't aware of it. While it didn't seem to limit spatial energies or forces, it deeply targeted Void Portals.

The core issue stemmed from the crushing attempt to continuously shatter his Void Portal, not the act itself. To sustain it, he had to use far too much power. Furthermore, he had helped Bai Lin catch up to the two Ascended, creating two Void Portals at two different locations that he wasn't present in, a first for him.

Due to this, he had exhausted almost all of his astral force, converting most of his power into Void Force. Fortunately his Bloodline Source was perfectly fine. At least he didn't have to spend time recovering.

Wei Wuyin gathered his breath after some effort, turning to Yue Songli and earnestly asked: "Are you okay?"

Yue Songli was taken aback by the question. She found herself so shook that she was unable to respond. She even stuttered out some words, baffled by it all. When was the last time someone asked her this? The issue was...she didn't know.

Looking at her palms, she felt the invisible shackles that bound her tightly slowly loosen. When she looked at the vast Dark Void, the beautiful stars in the distance, and the artificial air from a new environment, she felt her entire body shiver at the dawn of realization.

"I'm...free? I'm free!" After centuries of imprisonment, forced to strip impressive men of their yang energies for others, used as a surgical knife for their needs, she was given back her autonomy! HER FREEDOM!

Her twin mounds trembled from her excitement and let loose nose-bleeding movements. The tight-fitting, revealing black dress was far too stimulating. Wei Wuyin couldn't help but wonder what she ate to be so impressive. Regardless, her genetics were blessed.

She hadn't realized it, and before Wei Wuyin asked her if she was okay, she was crying. When she asked him if he was okay, her tears were ceaselessly falling.

She was in tears yet unaware of it. The phenomenon shook Wei Wuyin, which was why he feigned his recovered state, and asked her this question. Her subconscious had noticed, but her conscious mind hadn't yet reached that conclusion. He had to push her to that conclusion. A simple question to have her reflect on herself was enough.

He gave her time to process it.

'It's unfortunate that Bai Lin wasn't able to deal with all of them.' His Celestial Eyes allowed him to observe the fight, well, more of a burning slaughter. He had witnessed one of the Ascended escaping before his signal was released. His timing was impeccable.

Wei Wuyin's eyes narrowed.

It was a little too impeccable.

A little too coincidental.

"..." Wei Wuyin's thoughts were clear, and he was ninety percent certain that the timing and reason was far too accurate, and very difficult to deduce. Either that individual's intelligence was absurdly high, his survival instincts were extremely sensitive, or the most likely: the Heavenly Daos influence.

An Evil Blessed?

His narrowed eyes became sharper, glinting with a cold light. But, he soon calmed down. His thoughts were almost driven in the wrong direction, and his understanding of what Evil Cultivators had almost subtly changed. While the events and atrocities happening within that black sphere was horrific, the concept of Evil Cultivators only meant the way they cultivated, at the expense of other cultivators.

But planets had life, so did plants. The way of alchemy enabled breeding, nurturing, and extracting of herbs for one's own usage, then twisting and ending that life for their own goals. Everything had a potential for life, even a drop of water or a rock, this was clear by the existence of demons born from the Soul Impartation of the Heavens. Since this could happen, every destroyed pebble or water sipped was a potential life snuffed.

Evil Cultivators were given this designation due to using cultivators as resources, like cannibals who ate their own species for survival in a cruel world. If he went down the road of believing it was truly evil, then he would walk down the path of a hypocrite, picking and choosing what he wanted to believe without understanding anything.

He refused to live with deliberate ignorance. He refused to not understand what cultivation truly meant. While he could live by his own principles and morals by not practicing Evil Methods due to his own disinclination towards them, he couldn't dismiss it so strictly for others. It was outright disrespectful to what it meant to cultivate.

The Heavenly Daos was unfair.

But they were also fair.

They treated everyone from the onset as equal, and only those who either broke or kept to their 3000 commandments were punished or rewarded. This was the cause and effect bestowed by the authority of the Heavenly Daos.

Evil Cultivation Methods had little to do with it. They were just heretical methods judged on the basis of current society. Perhaps in some civilizations in this vast world, Evil Methods might be orthodox, and using plant life to extract essences and energies might be heretical.

Wei Wuyin's ability to see the truth of cultivation allowed him to see Ying, his Shadow, and the evil he believed was within his soul, as well as pull him out of his shrouded haze.

"A Blessed that cultivates Evil Methods..." Wei Wuyin muttered out, intrigued by this individual.

Kree!

As Yue Songli basked in her newfound freedom, a clarion cry sounded through the Dark Void. A white and gold feathered bird soared towards the voidship. Clamped at the tip of its beak was a small golden-colored bead.

Wei Wuyin warmly smiled, "You enjoyed yourself?"

"I did!" Bai Lin smiled with her eyes, and added: "But I wanted to kill them all. Despicable." Her killing intent leaked in her mental transmissions. An Ascended had escaped, but not a single cultivator within the Shadow Egg had escaped incineration. She had just slaughtered millions of Evil Cultivators, but just one escaping left her dissatisfied.

When Bai Lin entered the Voidship's atmospheric layer and landed, Wei Wuyin shook his head. He didn't disagree. Those who kill should be aware that they could be killed. He was always ready for his time to come. He would have no regrets, and every step in his life was to ensure that would remain the case. Walking over to Bai Lin, he curiously looked at the small golden bead.

"What's that?" He reached out, not to grab the bead, but to give Bai Lin a soft rub, but when their bodies came into contact...

OOOOOM!

Time froze!