

Stranger 491

Chapter 491: The Turtle of Sleep

Ye Qing thought for a moment before raising his hand and slapping Yi Pin across the face, leaving behind a bright red palm print. When Yi Pin didn't wake up, he slapped his other cheek with the same amount of strength as before. Now this was what he called symmetry.

"Brother! Wake up!"

Slap!

"Wake up! Brother!"

Slap!

Every time Ye Qing called out to Yi Pin, he would slap him in the face. It was easily the most fun he had in a while.

"Ugh... whas goinon, rada...?"

A few breaths later, Yi Pin slowly opened his eyes. He flinched when he saw Ye Qing raising his hand as if he was going to slap him at any moment.

Ye Qing stopped hitting Yi Pin and tilted his head to one side. It took him a second to recognize that Yi Pin was saying, "What's going on, brother?" because his face was swollen.

While he was talking, Yi Pin's head and eyelids began drooping again.

Slap!

This time, Ye Qing didn't hesitate to slap him to full wakefulness. By now, he could do this all day with eyes closed.

"What are you hitting me for?!" Yi Pin yelled angrily at Ye Qing.

"Get up, brother." Ye Qing pulled Yi Pin to a sitting position before asking, "Don't you realize yet? Something is off."

Even as he said this, Ye Qing was forced to bite the tip of his tongue to chase away his drowsiness.

Yi Pin was a veteran of the *jianghu*. He too noticed that something was amiss and immediately produced a giant bell from his sleeves. There was a melodious ringing, and Ye Qing felt the drowsiness pressing down on his mind lifting a little.

"Do you know what this is, brother?" Ye Qing asked.

Yi Pin wore a severe expression as he looked left and right and sniffed the air. Then, the blood drained away from his face, "A creature that inflicts drowsiness and smells of flowers... Is it the Turtle of Sleep? Yes, it has to be!"

"The Turtle of Sleep?" Ye Qing was shocked to hear this. "But I thought this Stranger could only be found in the deep sea?"

He knew of the Turtle of Sleep, of course. The Turtle of Sleep was a Phenomenon-class Stranger that lived tens of thousands of meters underneath the sea. Shaped like a giant turtle, it had a shell that was covered in colorful, fragrant flowers.

The Turtle of Sleep enjoyed floating on the sea surface and exposing its flowers in the open. If a merchant ship or fisherman boat happened to be passing through the area, and its passengers saw its flower and smelled its scent, they would immediately fall aslumber.

The deeper one slept, the brighter and more fragrant the flowers would become. At a certain point, the Turtle of Sleep would consume the best flower on its back. When this happened, the most afflicted person would fall into eternal slumber, never to awaken again.

As if frozen in time, the victim would not perish even if they didn't eat or drink, nor would they age like a normal human being. They just wouldn't wake up, that's all.

In fact, there were old people who were reluctant to die despite nearing the end of their lifespan who willingly subjected themselves to the Turtle of Sleep's spell to delay their death indefinitely. They hoped that one day someone would be able to awaken them and increase their lifespan.

Unfortunately, no one had found a way to break the Turtle of Sleep's spell to this day.

If someone were to run into the Turtle of Sleep, they must do everything in their power to resist falling asleep. If they failed, then their companions must wake them as quickly as possible. Otherwise, the victim would fall into an eternal slumber that was no different from death.

"Who knows? This is the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin. Anything can happen in this place."

Yi Pin said, "If one of us falls asleep, then the other person must wake them up at first notice. Otherwise, we will die."

There were two ways to handle the Turtle of Sleep. The first was to kill the Turtle of Sleep and end the spell at its source. The second was to stay awake.

Killing the Turtle of Sleep was obviously the optimal solution, but it was one of the absolute strongest Phenomenon-class Strangers out there. It would take a not insignificant amount of effort to defeat it. Not only that, they were inside the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin right now. If they caused too big a commotion or attracted the attention of a far greater danger such as the Soul Collector, then it would truly be over for them.

This meant that they could only weather the storm until the Turtle of Sleep was gone.

"Got it." Ye Qing nodded solemnly.

"By the way, did you hit me just now?"

It was only now Yi Pin noticed the burning pain on his cheeks. They were as swollen as a bun.

"Hit you? No, I was saving your life." Ye Qing defended himself, "If I haven't smacked you awake, you might be dead already, don't you agree?"

Yi Pin: "... *Yeah, I don't think so.*

As they were talking, a new wave of drowsiness assaulted Yi Pin's eyelids and blurred his vision. Despite this, he could see a slap descending from above like the judgment of the heavens.

"I'm still awake!"

The shock was enough to jolt Yi Pin back to reality. When his eyes cleared, and he noticed that Ye Qing's hand was inches away from his face, he couldn't help but break out in cold sweat.

"Aw man..." Ye Qing withdrew his hand a little disappointedly.

Yi Pin was speechless for a moment. "Just how much do you want to slap me, you asshole?"

"What do you mean, brother? Do I look like that kind of person to you? I was saving your life!" Ye Qing said seriously, "You're the one who said I should wake you at first notice if you fall asleep, right?"

"..." I can't refute that, but there has to be a more civilized way to wake someone up!

Yi Pin ranted in his head before saying just as seriously, "In that case, you better not blame me for returning the favor if you fall asleep, alright?"

"Of course not!" Ye Qing nodded. *You will never get the chance.*

At first, the two men were able to stave away their sleepiness using the Hill Mover Bell. However, its effects kept diminishing until it eventually became completely useless. So, the duo began mutilating themselves.

Ye Qing bit his tongue to keep himself awake with pain, and at first, Yi Pin copied his tactic and also bit his tongue to stay awake. The problem was that Yi Pin couldn't recover as quickly as Ye Qing even though the young man was injured, so it wasn't long before he was forced to stop. If he kept going, he was going to bite off his own tongue for real.

That wasn't the worst part of it. The drowsiness kept growing stronger—or maybe his body had adapted to the pain—but he discovered that the method's effectiveness was diminishing over time anyway.

At some point, Yi Pin said while he was smacking his own head, "There has to be a better way to stay awake, brother."

Ye Qing replied, "Is that so? Tell me."

"We can use a Strange Artifact or an item that specifically clears the mind," Yi Pin suggested meaningfully.

"Oh, that's what you mean. But I'm a simple and honest man, you see. I'd rather stick to the lousier way," Ye Qing replied indifferently.

The second Yi Pin opened his mouth, Ye Qing knew that he was coveting his limited supply of Qi of Ultimate Purity. The item gave its user absolute clarity of the mind, and it was definitely the perfect answer to their situation. Since Yi Pin was the one who gave him the Qi of Ultimate Purity in the first place, of course he was aware of its effects.

Simple and honest?! Have some shame, you shameless liar! Yi Pin cursed mentally.

In the old Taoist's script, Ye Qing would ask him what item or Strange Artifact could possibly shield their mind from the Turtle of Sleep's power, and he would reveal the answer. When that happened, Ye Qing would have no choice but to produce the Qi of Ultimate Purity. After all, the young man had promised to keep him alive for as long as they were stuck in this hellhole, and refusing to give him the Qi of Ultimate Purity would go against that promise.

Unfortunately, Ye Qing saw through his ploy and ended the conversation before it even began. He really was as cunning as a fox.

Luckily for himself, he was a worldly man. He still had plenty more tricks up his sleeves.

Yi Pin let out a cough and sighed deeply. "Oh, how I regret this life. If only I knew that I would be whisked away into the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin and encounter the Turtle of Sleep, then I would have carried all my Qi of Ultimate Purity with me. I think I still have a couple dozen in my secret place?"

"A shame, man, a shame. If I die here, all that Qi of Ultimate Purity would go to waste. I was going to give them to you if I managed to survive this place, brother, but now, I guess they'll just have to rot in my secret place for eternity."

Ye Qing's eyes lit up at that. *Now we're talking!*

Chapter 492: Dueling With Sleepiness

Ye Qing smacked his own head as if he just recalled something and fished out a bottle from his Nine Heavens. "The Qi of Ultimate Purity? I toooooootally would've forgotten about it if you didn't bring it up. It just so happens that I have a couple with me—they're the ones you gave me back at the Demon's Tomb, remember?"

Yi Pin had given him six wisps of Qi of Ultimate Purity in total, but now there were only four since he had to use two back on the Boat of Longing.

Yi Pin also exclaimed with feigned realization, "Oh, you're right! I can't believe I forgot about it myself! Are you sure you want to give it to me though? They're quite valuable, you know?"

"What are you talking about? It could be the most valuable treasure in the world, and it still wouldn't be worth your life!" Ye Qing feigned a look of shock and horror.

"Besides, I know you're a generous soul! You'll make it worth my trouble, won't you?"

Yi Pin laughed drily. "Hahaha... Thank you, brother. Assuming I manage to get out of this place alive, I'll be sure to reward you handsomely."

"Hahaha! You're too kind. We're brothers, aren't we?" Ye Qing grinned widely. "But of course, I shan't turn down a gift from you. I'll be fine with just eight or ten wisps of Qi of Ultimate Purity. Anymore than that, and I'll take it as an insult, okay?"

"Hahaha, what a good brother you are!" Yi Pin deadpanned. *If I didn't mention that I still have a lot of Qi of Ultimate Purity with me, there is no way this brat would've agreed to help me so easily. Truly, he is the best of brothers!*

Despite his scorn, Yi Pin was confident that Ye Qing would use the Qi of Ultimate Purity to save him if he was moments of dying—and not a moment earlier. That was why he promised the young man a reward. He was way, way, way too old to choose self-mutilation, fear, and all that nonsense when the option to be freed from his suffering this instant existed.

“Of course I am.” Ye Qing held the bottle in front of Yi Pin’s face and urged him, “No time to waste. Inhale now.”

Yi Pin bent down and inhaled a wisp of Qi of Ultimate Purity. As soon as the qi entered his abdomen, a surge of pure energy rushed into his head, and the drowsiness sinking its talons into his mind was expelled in an instant. For the first time in a long while, he felt completely conscious and in control of himself. No longer could the Turtle of Sleep’s evil influence touch him.

Yi Pin thought that Ye Qing was going to inhale a wisp of Qi of Ultimate Purity as well, but he didn’t. Instead, he put the bottle away.

The old Taoist furrowed his brows in confusion. “Why aren’t you using it, brother?”

Ye Qing answered honestly, “It’s too wasteful.”

Yi Pin: “...” *Well, at least he’s honest this time.*

The reason Ye Qing didn’t use the Qi of Ultimate Purity was because of several reasons. One, the “Paranirmitava?avartin Heavenly Demon Sutra” was a profound martial art that could resist the Turtle of Sleep’s influence to a certain extent. He was nowhere close to hitting his limit, so he saw no reason to use the Qi of Ultimate Purity so soon. In fact, he saw this as an opportunity to temper his demonic thought and create his Yin God.

Two, he really wasn’t willing to waste the Qi of Ultimate Purity like this. It was a priceless treasure with many incredible uses. In some cases, it could even make the difference between life and death. Rather than using it now even though he didn’t really need it, he would rather save it for the future.

Now that he was protected by the Qi of Ultimate Purity, Yi Pin was no longer afraid. He even began humming a little tune.

As for Ye Qing, he began tempering his demonic thought and Yin God while resisting the Turtle of Sleep’s hypnotic influence.

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Inside a room, Sun Xuanzhen was sitting crosslegged on the floor with his fingers pressed together. Whenever he felt like he was about to succumb to the unnatural sleepiness, he would tap himself in the forehead, the solar plexus and the bellybutton. His whole body would shake like he was convulsing, large beads of sweat would appear on his forehead, and the blood would drain away from his face.

His eyes gleamed as sharp as a sword and as bright as stars, however. Sun Xuanzhen was using a Sword King City secret art known as the Three Swords of Punishment. The first strike severed one’s blood flow, the second strike sealed one’s meridians, and the third strike threw one’s qi flow into disarray. It was a terrifying secret art that was often employed in punishments and interrogations.

The first and second strike combined could seal away one’s vigor, rob them of their strength, and prevent them from using their astral qi. If all three strikes were applied, they could reverse one’s

vigor and qi flow and throw their force into disarray. The pain that resulted from it was worse than death itself.

That was what he was doing to himself. He was inflicting the full might of the Three Swords of Punishment upon himself and keeping the sleepiness at bay with terrible pain.

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“Yawn. I really don’t want to eat this. What should I do?”

A scantily-dressed Huo Linglong was currently lying down on a bed with a frown on her face. She was staring at a flower pot on the floor.

The flower pot was perfectly ordinary, but its contents were a different story. Instead of soil, it was filled with rotten flesh and a vibrant green vine.

The vine looked extremely lush and healthy, but the fruits growing out of its thick body were rotten, moldy, dry, and covered in white hair. It was horrifying to say the least.

“Yawn...”

A moment later, Huo Linglong yawned and felt herself hitting the limits of her endurance. Left with no choice, she reached out and plucked a molding fruit from the vine.

As soon as the fruit was removed, the vine withered at a visible rate. Yellow spots began appearing on its body.

Huo Linglong hesitated for a second before consuming the fruit. Her dainty face immediately scrunched up in a grimace.

“Heavens, it’s so disgusting!”

The fruit she just consumed was called the Rotten Fruit, and as its name implied, it was a fruit grown from the rotten flesh of a Stranger.

The Rotten Fruit was rotten and absolutely disgusting to eat, but it possessed the strange power to clear one’s mind and maintain one’s consciousness. It was quite the rare and valuable spirit fruit despite its horrible taste.

The Rotten Fruit Huo Linglong was eating was nurtured from the rotten flesh of a Phenomenon-class Stranger, so it was even more potent than your average Rotten Fruit. It could definitely keep her awake until the Turtle of Sleep had passed.

She just had to stop herself from throwing up...

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Compared to Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong, Yue Juejiang was far more composed. He was sitting crosslegged on the floor and staying so still it was almost like he was dead.

A stone mirror was floating above his head, and inside the mirror was another Yue Juejiang. The mirror Yue Juejiang was also sitting crosslegged on the floor, but unlike the physical Yue Juejiang, this one had his eyes open and were looking about curiously. It was almost as if the Yue Juejiang outside the mirror was a fake, and the one inside the mirror was the real thing.

The mirror was called the Soul Displaying Mirror, a Soulstealer-class Strange Artifact. Forged from the Soul Illuminating Stone and the bones of a Soulstealer-class Stranger called the Soul Beckoner, the Soul Displaying Mirror could suck the Three Heavenly Souls and Seven Earthly Souls of any living being it was pointed at unto itself. Hence the name.

The Strange Artifact was meant to be used against one's enemies, but this time Yue Juejiang used it on himself. Since his Three Heavenly Souls and Seven Earthly Souls currently existed in a different reality, the hypnotic influence permeating the outside world couldn't affect him one bit. He simply needed to wait until the Turtle of Sleep was gone before returning to his body.

But of course, this method had a huge flaw. The connection between his body and his soul was currently severed, so if someone happened to barge it at this very moment, they could easily destroy his body or the Soul Displaying Mirror to kill him.

Luckily for him, no one knew that he possessed a Soul Displaying Mirror, and no one dared to enter his room.

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Right now, everyone in the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin was using all sorts of methods to fend off the unnatural sleepiness threatening to put them into an eternal slumber.

Some of them were succeeding, and some of them fell unconscious before they knew it. It wasn't guaranteed that their slumber was permanent—after all, the Turtle of Sleep only consumed one flower at a time, and only the person in the deepest sleep would be affected by this—but their chances were grim as a matter of course.

About six hours later, the unnatural sleepiness permeating the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin finally faded slowly.

"Is that all?" Ye Qing opened his eyes with a reluctant look on his face. Considering the circumstances, Yi Pin couldn't help but roll his eyes at him.

What's with that slight tinge of disappointment in your voice, man? Are you crazy?

He had to admit he was impressed, however. He knew firsthand just how powerful the Turtle of sleep's hypnotic powers were. Even a Grandmaster could succumb to its influence if they were careless. At first, he thought that Ye Qing would be able to stay awake for one or two incense sticks at most before he was forced to use the Qi of Ultimate Purity. However, six hours came and went, and Ye Qing was still awake.

What was truly impressive about this feat was that Ye Qing had not used a Strange Artifact or item to keep himself awake. He had done it through sheer willpower.

At the beginning, Ye Qing bit his tongue from time to time to keep himself awake. When his body had adapted to the pain, he began breaking his fingers one by one, reconnecting them after he ran out of fingers, then breaking them all over again. When even the pain of broken fingers wasn't enough to keep the sleepiness at bay, he began crushing his finger bones.

The second-hand pain alone was enough to turn Yi Pin's face white, but Ye Qing looked completely unperturbed. In the end, he seemed to have adapted to the Turtle of Sleep's power and no longer

needed to mutilate himself to keep himself awake. He was able to resist it through willpower and only willpower.

Chapter 493: I Want To Live

“You didn’t have to do this, brother,” said Yi Pin with a sigh while Ye Qing used a drop of Nature’s Water to restore his crushed fingers back to normal. Was this really necessary?

“I have to if I want to live,” Ye Qing replied enigmatically while smiling casually. It was a smile that was equal parts helpless and defiant.

“What on earth happened to you, brother?”

Yi Pin didn’t know what happened to Ye Qing, but it had to be something big for the young man to say something like this.

“You really want to know?” Ye Qing’s smile turned playful.

“Eh? Did I say something just now? I can’t remember a thing for some reason. How strange!” Yi Pin immediately feigned ignorance and scratched his head. He knew that Zhou Hengshan, a Grandmaster, was involved, and there could be bigger fishes in the pond. Considering that he was just a puny little Vessel Augmentor, the knowledge could only be harmful to him. That was why he immediately changed his mind.

“Don’t worry, I’ll tell you everything once we get out of this place alive,” Ye Qing declared with a devious smirk on his face.

“No, it’s fine. I don’t want to hear it,” Yi Pin replied seriously while shaking his head.

“Yes you do.” Ye Qing insisted with the same smirk. *You will learn even if you don’t want to.*

Knowing then that he couldn’t change Ye Qing’s mind, Yi Pin felt like giving himself a couple slaps to the face. *Why are you so curious, mouth? Now, we’re both in trouble!*

“But that’s a topic for another day. You’re a worldly man, right brother? How many people do you recognize in this place?” Ye Qing pretended he didn’t notice Yi Pin’s look of deep regret and changed the subject.

A jolt immediately came over Yi Pin. *He’s not scheming something again, is he?!* He watched Ye Qing warily as he asked, “Why do you want to know?”

“It’s nothing. I just want to know about their background, that’s all.” Ye Qing smiled mysteriously.

“I don’t recognize any of them.” Yi Pin shook his head and showered Ye Qing with a look of deeper suspicion. *Like hell I’ll believe that! You’re one of the baddest kids I’ve ever met!*

“No, you do,” refuted Ye Qing with a smile.

“Can’t we just lay low and survive our predicament *peacefully*

, brother?” Yi Pin sighed. He couldn’t understand why Ye Qing insisted on courting death when life was an option.

“I am lying low. I just want to know who they are, that’s all.” Ye Qing blinked innocently.

“You... ah, screw it.” Yi Pin suddenly let out a deep sigh. “Do whatever you want. Just make sure you don’t involve me in your schemes. I’m not planning on dying anytime soon, understand?”

“Don’t worry. You will live so long as I live, brother,” Ye Qing declared confidently.

“That doesn’t instill any confidence in me whatsoever, *brother*,” Yi Pin complained before turning serious. “Besides Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong, I think I recognize another eight warriors in total.”

“Just eight?” Ye Qing frowned in dissatisfaction.

“Do you think I’m an omniscient god or something? If anything, you should be impressed that I was able to identify this many people just from their clothes and their martial arts!” Yi Pin turned angry. “If you think this isn’t good enough, then you can identify them yourself!”

“Sorry, sorry, it’s all my fault. Please continue, brother.” Ye Qing hurriedly placated the guy while adopting a respectful posture. Yi Pin was a little scary when he got angry.

Huffing, Yi Pin began slowly, “Anyway, let’s begin. Do you remember the short, muscular guy with a scar on his face? He’s from Mount Dikui, one of the thirty six unorthodox sects. Legend says that Mount Dikui was a sub-branch of the Heavenly Kuixing Sect, and they specialize in the arts of Dikui, a form of body-tempering martial art...”

“If I’m not mistaken, that honest-looking, farmer-like middle-aged man is really the one they call the Heart Eater, one of the Eight Ghouls of the Mountain Mover Brigand. You’re aware that the Mountain Mover Brigand is one of the Thirteen Brigands, right? Good. He might look timid and ordinary on the outside, but he’s easily the most vicious bastard of the Eight Ghouls. As his name implies, he enjoys eating human hearts and especially a baby’s heart...”

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It wasn’t long before Yi Pin had told him all he knew about the eight warriors. As if on cue, two wisps of Profound Yellow Qi appeared inside the room.

Ye Qing glanced at the Profound Yellow Qi but didn’t use them as he did before. Instead, he went over to the door and pushed it open slightly. The gap was so small that it was impossible to notice

unless someone was standing close to it. It definitely wasn't big enough for Ye Qing to look outside and scan the area either. That was fine though, as he was perceiving his surroundings with his demonic thought, not his eyes.

"What are you doing, brother?" Yi Pin asked curiously.

"I'm peeping," Ye Qing said with a devious smirk. Yi Pin rolled his eyes at the answer and sarcastically thought that Ye Qing had a bright future ahead of him.

A dozen or so breaths later, Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong left their rooms one after another. He could see Huo Linglong greeting the two men with a bright smile on her face. The two men nodded back at her.

It was at this moment Sun Xuanzhen remembered something and looked at Yue Juejiang, "This is the first time you're collecting the Profound Yellow Qi yourself, isn't it? What a rare sight."

"Your point?" Yue Juejiang's expression turned ugly when he heard this.

"I don't mean anything. I'm just making an observation, that's all," Sun Xuanzhen replied with a raised eyebrow before laughing all of a sudden. "Hahahahaha!"

"What are you laughing about?" Yue Juejiang asked coldly.

"I'm just in a good mood today. What, am I not allowed to laugh in this place?" Sun Xuanzhen asked with a wide grin.

Yesterday, Yue Juejiang had forced him to show him the contents of his Nature's Shell. It had been a frustrating and humiliating day to say the least. However, Yue Juejiang ultimately failed to find his treasure and was now forced to collect his Profound Yellow Qi personally just like him and Huo Linglong. The mere thought made Sun Xuanzhen feel as delighted as downing a glass of iced water during a particularly sunny day.

In the past, Yue Juejiang left it to his subordinate to collect the Profound Yellow Qi for him. Besides the first time, he never even showed his face during their regular meetings. The Profound Yellow Qi Calabash allowed him to collect dozens of wisps of Profound Yellow Qi with ease, and while he had never tried to cheat them, the inequality still grated at Sun Xuanzhen like nails on a chalkboard. They were all humans, so why did Yue Juejiang alone get to act like he was better than the rest of them?

But now, Yue Juejiang had lost the Profound Yellow Qi Calabash. Without the ability to store the Profound Yellow Qi, he had no choice but to visit each warrior personally and store their Profound Yellow Qi in his abdomen before refining them slowly in his room.

In other words, the show-off had finally gotten his karma.

"Well, I'm gonna go collect my Profound Yellow Qi now, so see y'all later.

Hahahahahahaha!" Sun Xuanzhen laughed even harder when he saw that Yue Juejiang's complexion had turned as black as coal. He turned his back on the Earthly Sovereign Hall's descendant and slowly walked away.

Crack!

Yue Juejiang glared daggers at Sun Xuanzhen's back and clenched his fists so hard that veins were popping on the back of his hand. He wanted nothing more than to kill Sun Xuanzhen right here and now.

“Haha... don't be mad, dearie. You haven't forgotten why we're here, have you?”

It was at this moment Huo Linglong stepped forward and squeezed Yue Juejiang's arms between her breasts. She propped her chin on top of his shoulder and breathed, “If you really can't let it go, then I'll help you get revenge once we're out of this place. What do you say?”

The warm breath that tickled his ear, the seductive voice that bewitched the mind, the faint scent that seemed sweeter than even the freshest air, and the hourglass body that invoked endless imagination slithered into Yue Juejiang's heart like tiny flames. When they combined, they abruptly transformed into a blazing inferno.

The young man's eyes slowly turned bloodshot, and his breathing grew heavier and heavier. He slowly turned to stare at Huo Linglong like he might devour her alive. However, Huo Linglong didn't seem afraid in the slightest, her smile only growing more seductive as time passed. She looked like a fire in the darkest night, and anyone who set their eyes on her wanted to throw themselves into her flames even at the cost of their lives.

Suddenly, a humanoid, doll-like creature made of some sort of skin flew out of Yue Juejiang's clothes. Floating in the air, it assumed a horse stance, spun its right arm in a circle twice, and bent sideways about a hundred and eighty degrees before finally landing a powerful slap on Yue Juejiang's face.

Slap!

It was such a loud and crisp slap that noise resounded throughout the entire Earthly Sovereign's Coffin. Not only that, Yue Juejiang was sent flying through the air before he hit the wall behind him, hard.

“Holy mother of...”

Ye Qing had been peeping on the trio this whole time, and his eyes widened in astonishment and approval when he saw this. *This skin doll's slap is almost as good as mine!*

On a more serious note, the skin doll was probably some sort of special Strange Artifact, and it just saved Yue Juejiang's life.

As expected of a practitioner of the Dark Ways, Huo Linglong's martial art was as devilish as it was unpredictable. She could stir her target's lust and bend them to her will with even the most harmless of gestures.

Yue Juejiang had let down his guard for one second, and he nearly lost himself to lust and succumbed to whatever wicked designs Huo Linglong had prepared for him. Luckily for him, the skin doll appeared at a critical moment and awoke him with a slap to the face.

After Yue Juejiang climbed back to his feet, he glared at Huo Linglong hatefully and asked, “What did you do to me?”

“I'm just a frail woman. What can I possibly do to you?” Huo Linglong giggled innocently. The sight of her trembling curves sparked a new flame in his heart, but

when the skin doll rubbed its hands together as if anticipating another slap, Yue Juejiang snapped out of it and hurriedly put it away. He shot Huo Linglong one final look before walking away.

“Hahaha... this is fun.” Huo Linglong giggled one last time before walking toward a room herself.

Chapter 494: Nope, I Definitely Got The Right Person

Inside his room, Ye Qing thought to himself, *Hmph! What a hussy. I'll get you eventually.*

He already knew this, but Huo Linglong definitely wasn't someone he could afford to underestimate. A few breaths later, Sun Xuanzhen, Yue Juejiang and Huo Linglong stepped out of their respective rooms with the aura of the Profound Yellow Qi. They would repeat this a couple more times before finally returning to their rooms.

I thought this might be the case. Yesterday, they claimed three wisps of Profound Yellow Qi from their “livestock” before returning to their rooms as well. This confirms that three is their absolute limit.

Ye Qing narrowed his eyes thoughtfully. *And judging from yesterday's observation, it will take them between four to six hours to refine it all. Good. It's my turn now.*

Ye Qing looked behind his back and informed Yi Pin, “I'm heading out, brother. Be back in a jiffy.”

“Sure, whatever,” Yi Pin replied with a depressed look. It didn't take a genius to figure out that Ye Qing was plotting something, but there was nothing he could do about it. He could only turn a blind eye and pretend that everything would be fine.

The moment Ye Qing left the room, a thick fog washed out of his body and concealed his appearance. He looked left and right once before walking toward a room, smiling. “Let's start with you.”

He pushed open the door and stepped inside the room before its resident could react. Then, he closed the door behind him.

“Who are you?” The resident of the room was an honest-looking, farmer-like middle-aged man. As soon as Ye Qing stepped in, he pressed himself against a corner of the wall with fear and panic.

On the surface, the farmer looked completely harmless. In reality, he was clenching every muscle in his body so he could react to any sudden movement at first notice.

Ye Qing didn't seem to notice this. He simply asked with a genial smile on his face, “Are you the Heart Eater, one of the Eight Ghouls of the Mountain Mover Brigand?”

“Excuse me? I've never heard of those names before. Did you get the wrong person?” The farmer replied meekly and obsequiously.

The corners of Ye Qing's lips turned up slightly. “No, I definitely got the right person.”

To be fair, Heart Eater's acting was near perfect. If he hadn't practiced the "Paranirmitava?avartin Heavenly Demon Sutra", then he might've had second thoughts about this. However, he picked up a huge surge of malice and killing intent from the man when he exposed his identity, so he knew for certain that he was right.

As expected, the farmer abruptly pounced toward Ye Qing with his fingers curled like talons. In fact, cold, deadly metal had protruded from his fingers as he reached out for Ye Qing's chest.

Ye Qing had no doubt that the attack would disembowel an ordinary person as easily as cutting air. But too bad for Heart Eater, he was neither ordinary nor suicidal. He tapped the air in front of him, and the warrior abruptly stopped in his tracks with a glazed look in his eyes.

The next moment, Ye Qing wiped a hand across Heart Eater's face and kicked him behind the knee and caused him to fall to the ground. Due to his posture, it looked like the man was asleep.

"That's one down."

Ye Qing smirked and produced the Profound Yellow Qi Calabash. After he stored Heart Eater's Profound Yellow Qi, he reopened the door and left the scene.

Next, Ye Qing arrived at another room and stepped inside unannounced just like before.

"Who are you?"

A man and a woman resided in the room. The man was incredibly handsome with red, inviting lips and perfect white teeth. In fact, he was even prettier than the woman that made his company.

The woman's appearance was the complete opposite of the man's. Her face was ugly, and her figure resembled an oval-shaped ball. However, her voice was sweeter than even the chirp of a black-naped oriole. Ye Qing knew this because she was the one who spoke just now.

"Are you the 'Jade-faced Playboy' Jun Dingchong, and the 'Vile Witch' Huang Yingying?" Ye Qing asked.

Jun Dingchong and Huang Yingying were husband and wife. It was obvious from their monikers alone that they were vile human beings.

Jun Dingchong was an infamous playboy who exploited his good looks to seduce innocent virgins and beautiful housewives alike into debauchery. He was also a disgusting rapist who had snuck into countless homes, raped many women and ruined their lives.

The 'Vile Witch' Huang Yingying was no better than her husband. While many people would argue that one shouldn't judge a book by its cover, Huang Yingying was one of those people whose heart was exactly as ugly as her appearance. Vicious and overflowing with jealousy, her inability to keep her husband's dick in his pants drove her to vent her frustration on other women. Anyone she thought was prettier than her and coveted Jun Dingchong would suffer the vilest torment. Ruining her victim's face, spoiling her figure, and tainting her purity were just the beginning. There was nothing she couldn't do in the name of vengeance, and each act was only viler than the last.

It shouldn't need to be said, but the two warriors enjoyed a loathsome reputation in the *jianghu*. Unfortunately, it was far too easy to disguise oneself and sneak under the radar in this world, so they were still at large to this day.

“Yes, you are them,” Ye Qing continued without waiting for the duo to reply. Once again, he tapped the space in front of him.

Jun Dingchong and Huang Yingying were early-stage Spirit Purifiers, but they had spent most of their effort honing their art of disguise and escape. As a result, they blacked out before they could muster even a whimper of resistance.

Just like before, Ye Qing closed their eyes and adjusted their posture so that they looked like they were deep in slumber. He left after retrieving the two wisps of Profound Yellow Qi floating in the air.

Ye Qing would repeat the same thing for another two rooms before he finally went back to Yi Pin.

“You’re back,” Yi Pin greeted him after Ye Qing stepped through the door. He tried to restrain himself, but in the end his curiosity got the better of him. “What did you do, brother?”

Ye Qing answered nonchalantly, “Nothing much. Just did some good for the world and got a little wealthier in the process, that’s all.”

“What?” Yi Pin didn’t understand the young man’s cryptic words at first, but it wasn’t long before he puzzled out his meaning. “You killed them?!”

Ye Qing rolled his eyes. “Why did you have to put it that way? All I did was righting some wrongs and exterminating some vermin that should have been exterminated a long time ago.”

Yi Pin gulped and asked carefully, “You... you didn’t kill all of them, did you?”

He wasn’t referring Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Yue Juejiang, of course.

“Of course not. Do I look like the type who would kill innocents for my own self-interest?” Ye Qing side-eyed Yi Pin and grinned. “Like I said, I only killed those who deserved it.”

“Is... Is that why you asked me about their background earlier?” Yi Pin asked.

“What else?” Ye Qing shrugged.

Yi Pin let out a sigh of relief. “That’s good then.”

By now, Yi Pin had mostly figured out Ye Qing’s plan. To put it simply, he was exploiting the rule that only the living would be rewarded with a wisp of Profound Yellow Qi to his own advantage. While Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Yue Juejiang were busy refining their own Profound Yellow Qi, he snuck out, killed those who deserved to die, and stole their Profound Yellow Qi. When the trio checked on these people, they wouldn’t suspect a thing as it would appear as if they had died because they had failed to overcome the Earthly Sovereign Coffin’s trial.

In fact, Ye Qing wasn’t the first person to try this. However, those people were unable to conceal the aura of the Profound Yellow Qi perfectly, nor did they have a way to deal with Yue Juejiang’s Profound Yellow Qi Calabash[1]. A couple of murders later, no one dared to cheat the trio again.

However, the Profound Yellow Calabash was currently in Ye Qing's hands, and he possessed the ability to conceal the aura of the Profound Yellow Qi perfectly. Therefore, he was able to pull what those people could not.

Meanwhile, Yi Pin was thankful that Ye Qing hadn't killed everyone he pointed out to obtain the Profound Yellow Qi. There were several reasons. One, Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong were sure to become suspicious if too many people died in a trial. Second, it meant there was a real chance Ye Qing, having forsaken his conscience, might kill him to further his own self-interest.

Thankfully, that wasn't the case. Ye Qing only killed those who deserved to die for their sins.

Suddenly, Yi Pin recalled something and reminded Ye Qing, "Oh right, are you sure you disguised their deaths properly? The Turtle of Sleep's ability makes its victims fall into an eternal slumber."

Ye Qing nodded. "Don't worry. I know."

As his cultivation grew stronger, his demonic thought became more powerful than ever before. Besides that, he had Nanke to drastically improve his understanding and mastery of the "Heavenly Demon Captures The Soul". He could now wipe out a person's soul from existence, capture their Three Heavenly Souls and Seven Earthly Souls, search their memories with a fine tooth comb, or simply pin them in place all with a single thought.

Just now, he had captured his victims' Bright Spirit and Quiet Spirit—the two Heavenly Souls responsible for one's dominant consciousness—and left behind only the Light of Fetus.

The three Heavenly Souls of a human were called the Light of Fetus, the Bright Spirit and the Quiet Spirit. To put it in very simple terms, the Light of Fetus represented a person's life, the Bright Spirit represented their consciousness, and the Quiet Spirit represented their sentience.

By stealing his victims' Bright Spirit and Quiet Spirit, he had basically eliminated their consciousness and their sentience. The body that was left behind was still alive thanks to the Light of Fetus, but they were no different from vegetables in their current state.

Only those who were experts of the mind and soul and in possession of a powerful spirit would notice what Ye Qing had done to these people.

The reason he did this was to make it look like they had fallen into an eternal slumber due to the Turtle of Sleep. Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Yue Juejiang wouldn't suspect a thing.

As for how he knew where these people were residing, it was very simple. He had memorized everyone's rooms after Yue Juejiang called them out a second time to give them his impotent warning.

Chapter 495: The Man Is About To Cook

Ye Qing dared not say that his plan was perfect, but he did believe that it was pretty secure.

The only shame about it was that Yi Pin only knew eight people.

Out of the eight people the old Taoist recognized, four of them were bad people. However, he only managed to obtain three wisps of Profound Yellow Qi because the last person he visited had actually fallen into an eternal slumber. He felt that his cunning ploy was wasted on such a paltry reward.

Moreover, he could only employ this method once. After all, there were only so many bad people in this place.

He had no qualms killing criminals who deserved to die a hundred times over for their sins, but he could never bring himself to kill an innocent.

Humans were humans because they had principles and lines they would never cross. If he defied his own principles and crossed his lines, then what was the difference between him and a Stranger; an animal?

“So, what are you going to do with our portion of the Profound Yellow Qi?” Yi Pin asked.

Ye Qing waved his hand and moved one of the Profound Yellow Qi into the Profound Yellow Qi Calabash. Then, he swallowed the other wisp before answering, “I’m keeping it for myself, of course.”

“And how are you going to explain its disappearance when Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen or Huo Linglong show up?” Yi Pin asked worriedly.

“It’s easy,” Ye Qing replied casually, “If Yue Juejiang came, then we’ll tell them that Sun Xuanzhen took it. If Sun Xuanzhen came, we’ll tell him that Yue Juejiang took it. If Huo Linglong came, then we’ll tell her that Yue Juejiang or Sun Xuanzhen took it.”

“Hah! It’s not a bad plan, but what if all three of them show up at the same time?” Yi Pin rolled his eyes at him.

Ye Qing answered, “I observed them yesterday, and I can confirm that the speed at which they refine the Profound Yellow Qi is different from each other. They will never show up in the same room at the same time, so don’t worry about it!”

“Heh... as long as you’re confident.” Yi Pin shook his head, but it wasn’t because he was worried that Ye Qing might screw up. No, he was simply pitying Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong for not realizing that their Profound Yellow Qi was already gone.

Ye Qing couldn’t read Yi Pin’s thoughts, nor did he care to. He was busy refining the wisp of Profound Yellow Qi he just absorbed.

Yesterday, he had refined four wisps of Profound Yellow Qi in total. Two of them were the reward he and Yi Pin received for surviving the Earthly Sovereign Coffin’s trial, and another two came from the Profound Yellow Qi Calabash. That was all it took to treat a small portion of his injuries. His damaged internal organs, meridians, and bodily points were almost fully restored, though the Black Sky Divine Palm force and Zhou Hengshan’s saber intent entrenched inside his body were as difficult to remove as ever.

That said, he had a sense that he only needed to refine another six or seven wisps of Profound Yellow Qi to grind away and eliminate the foreign energies completely. When that happened, he would return to full strength and become even stronger than before.

That was why there was no longer any need to take any risks. He should just focus on converting his current hoard of Profound Yellow Qi into his own power.

What happened next went exactly as Ye Qing predicted. Neither Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen nor Huo Linglong suspected that foul play was involved with the three warriors' death. Not only that, because the trio's refinement speed was different from each other, he also succeeded in fudging the truth regarding his Profound Yellow Qi when they came visiting. Once he confirmed that all three warriors had returned to their rooms, he immediately produced a wisp of Profound Yellow Qi and began the process anew.

On a related note, Yue Juejiang, Sun Xuanzhen and Huo Linglong always refined three wisps of Profound Yellow Qi at a time because it was more efficient, but Ye Qing only refined one because he needed to make sure he would always finish ahead of them. Otherwise, there was a chance they might catch him while he was still refining the Profound Yellow Qi.

Time passed slowly as Ye Qing played hide-and-seek with his enemies.

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"Do you feel it, brother?"

At a certain point in time, Yi Pin suddenly asked.

"Yeah. It's gotten hotter," replied Ye Qing while opening his eyes.

Having learned from yesterday's lesson, Ye Qing didn't dare to let down his guard for even a second. Even when he was training, he made sure to keep a wisp of demonic thought out so he could detect any abnormalities at first notice.

"Indeed. The room temperature has been rising non-stop since a while ago." Yi Pin placed a palm on the floor and said seriously, "The floor was cold, but now it's warm."

"In any case, get ready for anything."

Ye Qing and Yi Pin rose to their feet and examined their surroundings cautiously as the room temperature continued to rise. Ye Qing was doing fine since he possessed a powerful body. Besides, he had been subjected to far worse temperatures when he was still practicing the "Nirvana Sutra of Burning Wind". Heat resistance was his strong suit.

The same couldn't be said for Yi Pin though. He was sweating like a dog, and white steam could be seen rising from his head.

In just a dozen breaths or so, the floor and the stone walls began turning red like heated steel. It was as if the entire room had turned into a furnace.

Despite the protection of the Mountain Mover Bell, it wasn't long before Yi Pin's clothes and shoes began smoking with fire. A scorched smell permeated the air as his hair curled like a clump of wilting grass, and his skin began cracking and reddening in response.

"Brother, I'm reaching my limit here! At this rate, I'm literally going to cook alive!"

In an attempt to wet his mouth, Yi Pin smacked his lips only for them to become plastered together. After wrestling through the pain and ripping his lips away from each other, he said, “That’s it! I’m getting out of this heavens forsaken place!”

Yi Pin turned toward the exit, but Ye Qing grabbed his arm and pulled him back to his side. “Calm down. The heat might be worse outside the room.”

Ye Qing raised his left hand and summoned the Netherflame. The temperature inside the room immediately nosedived. The Netherflame was a type of yin fire, so it was frigidly cold even though it could burn anything.

The temperature was still sky high, but at least it was no longer unbearable.

Unfortunately, this state of events didn’t last. Just a moment later, the Netherflame that could theoretically burn forever so long as there was something to burn gradually disappeared into nothing. Instead, it was replaced by some sort of purple flame that Ye Qing had never seen before.

Ye Qing gritted his teeth and reluctantly handed Yi Pin a bottle of Nature’s Water. “This is a bottle of Nature’s Water. If the heat gets unbearable, a single drop will restore you back to full health.”

“Thank you, brother!” Yi Pin didn’t hesitate to accept the gift. He immediately drank a drop of Nature’s Water and saw his burn wounds disappearing like they never were.

They weren’t the only ones who were struggling to withstand the ridiculous heat. Inside a different room, a woman finally lost it and pushed the door open, screaming, “Ahh! I can’t stand this any longer! I need to—”

However, the second she stepped out of her room, she abruptly froze in her tracks and stared at the space above her with widened eyes. A moth the size of a hawk was flying in the sky, and it was covered from head to toe in a strange, purple flame. The flame was dark on the inside but bright on the outside, and it was emitting a brilliant purple light. The moth’s wings were covered in blinding, mysterious runes, and what looked like the silhouette of a sun was floating above its head. Even more light was shining down from the false sun.

The burning moth flew under the burning sun like a graceful dancer. Like a king of flames, the creature looked beyond noble, elegant, and mysterious.

The woman’s shocked expression only lasted an instant. The next moment, her body and even her soul abruptly burst into flames and disintegrated into a pile of ashes.

“Chirp! Chirp! Chirp!”

Still flying freely in the air, the moth let out this long, whistling sound that sounded like the melodious chirp of a bird, but not really. More accurately, it sounded like the combined chirpings of hundreds of songbirds, and the end result could only be described as a heavenly, otherworldly tune.

Inside their rooms, Sun Xuanzhen heard the chirping, Huo Linglong heard the chirping, Yue Juejiang heard the chirping, Ye Qing and Yi Pin heard the chirping as well. Nearly everyone heard the chirping loud and clear, and they all looked enchanted by it.

They didn’t notice that their body and soul were burning up like a bunch of dry sticks, however. Some of them never did until they burned into a pile of ash.

Ye Qing's headspace was currently engulfed by a sea of purple flames. While the flames were spreading, a silhouette within the demonic lotus abruptly opened his eyes and swept the area with a powerful wave of demonic thought. The purple flames immediately extinguished into nothing, and Ye Qing jolted back to reality.

As soon as his vision refocused, he noticed that Yi Pin had already burst into flames.

Chapter 496: Purple Sun Trueflame

Purple flames covered Yi Pin from head to toe. The one silver lining about this situation was that he hadn't burned into a pile of ash yet.

Ye Qing rushed forward and extinguished the flames eating away at the old Taoist's body with the wave of his hand. At the same time, he tapped Yi Pin's forehead in an attempt to extinguish the flames burning inside his headspace with his demonic thought.

Suddenly, Yi Pin opened his eyes and said, "Don't—!"

Unfortunately, he was too late. Ye Qing's demonic thought had already invaded Yi Pin's headspace as smoothly and easily as the spring rain. What the young man saw next wasn't what he expected at all.

Generally speaking, a warrior who hadn't begun to temper their spirit and refine their mind possessed a headspace that looked mostly like a bunch of nonsense. It was similar to Primal Chaos where heaven and earth weren't yet defined, and everything was blended together.

However, Yi Pin's headspace looked like a vast, infinite universe. He saw countless stars and invisible threads floating inside it. The only problem was that the stars were dim and broken, and the invisible threads were either severed or bundled together in a chaotic fashion.

His headspace was also perfectly quiet and devoid of any semblance of life.

The purple flame he thought was ravaging Yi Pin's headspace was also nowhere to be found.

Rumble!

Ye Qing was still trying to figure out what the hell was going on when a bolt of lightning pierced emerged from the darkness of Yi Pin's headspace and shot straight toward his demonic thought. It was overflowing with such enormous, destructive power that stars crumbled into nothing, and the heavens shuddered like breaking steel.

Ye Qing's demonic thought was annihilated before he could even react. He could vaguely hear the sound of thunder inside his own headspace as well. Blood immediately gushed out of his eyes, ears, nose and mouth, and his head hurt like it had been split open.

"What the..."

Ye Qing was unable to contain his shock even as he was rubbing his forehead and doing his best to calm his damaged mind. Never in a million years did he imagine that Yi Pin's headspace would look like that, and what in the world was that lightning?

He knew a long time ago that Yi Pin wasn't what he seemed, but it was only now he realized that he still grossly underestimated the old Taoist.

“Sorry, brother. I tried to warn you,” Yi Pin coughed and said with an innocent expression.

“Brother, your headspace...” Ye Qing asked tentatively.

“Sorry, but I’ll have to stop you right there.” Yi Pin shook his head with a forlorn, helpless expression. “All you need to know is this, brother. Once upon a time, I thought I stood at the peak of the world. But when I looked up, I realized that I was just a frog in a well.”

He put a hand on Ye Qing’s shoulder and said seriously, “Remember this, brother. Never think that you’re strong enough, for there will always be a sky above your head.”

Ye Qing didn’t say anything. He knew very well that he was nowhere strong enough to be arrogant or satisfied. As he was now, he was a slightly bigger ant at most. And as long as he stayed an ant, he could never topple the tree or overcome the heavens.

“Er, brother? I don’t want to interrupt your melancholy, but I can use another bottle of Nature’s Water. I’m about to be cooked alive here!”

Ye Qing was still thinking when Yi Pin interrupted his train of thoughts. When he looked up, he saw that Yi Pin was steaming all over and looking as red as a lobster. Not only that, the guy was giving off a smell that reminded him of roasted chicken[1]. The old man definitely wasn’t exaggerating his condition.

“You already used up the Nature’s Water I gave you?” Ye Qing exclaimed in disbelief.

“Of course I did! I’m not so thick-skinned that I can withstand the Purple Sun Trueflame of the Fire God Moth!” Yi Pin replied matter-of-factly.

It felt like Yi Pin was subtly insulting him, but Ye Qing ultimately handed the guy a bottle of Nature’s Water.

“Come on, brother. You’ve gotten a glimpse of my true identity, and you now know that I was a legendary warrior in the past. Shouldn’t you give me a dozen bottles of Nature’s Water to show your piety or something?” Yi Pin complained but didn’t hesitate to grab the bottle and poured a single drop of Nature’s Water into his mouth.

Ye Qing rolled his eyes. The old Taoist’s shamelessness was definitely legendary alright. Pretending that Yi Pin hadn’t said anything, he asked, “You mentioned something about a Fire God Moth just now. Care to explain?”

“Right. Remember that chirping noise that set us both on fire? That’s the chirp of a Fire God Moth.”

SexyMatureTaoist is online. “The Fire God Moth is a Disaster-class Stranger. Legend says that it possesses the Purple Sun Trueflame because it somehow acquired the bloodline of the ancient Sun Bird, and its chirps sound like the chirps of a hundred songbirds, beautiful and passionate.”

“The Fire God Moth usually resides at the tallest peaks, and its favorite hobby is chasing the sun. Every time it appears in our world, it would cause a massive inferno and a terrible famine that claims countless lives.”

“The Fire God Moth, the Purple Sun Trueflame...” Ye Qing licked his dry lips with a stunned expression. He had never heard of the Fire God Moth, but he had heard of the Purple Sun Trueflame before.

The purple qi rising from the east at the break of dawn was the Purple Sun Trueflame, the golden flame the sun gave off during the middle of noon was called the Supreme Sun Trueflame, and the gorgeous crimson that dyed the ground red when the sun sets at the horizon was known as the Crimson Sun Trueflame.

The Purple Sun Trueflame, Supreme Sun Trueflame and Crimson Sun Trueflame were some of the hottest, fiercest, and most potent flames of yang in the entire world. The Supreme Sun Trueflame in particular was nicknamed the Original Flame. It was said that a warrior who perfected their cultivation of the Supreme Sun Trueflame could even set heaven and earth ablaze with a snap of the finger.

Although the Purple Sun Trueflame was inferior to the Supreme Sun Trueflame, its power couldn't be understated. After all, it was mentioned in the same sentence as the ultimate yang flame.

Thanks to the Profound Yellow Qi he absorbed, Ye Qing recovered just enough to be able to resist the Purple Sun Trueflame's power, albeit just barely. Otherwise, he would be cooking in the furnace just like Yi Pin.

“Hmm. Brother, I have a suggestion for you.” A light bulb suddenly appeared on Yi Pin's head. “The Purple Sun Trueflame is some of the fiercest yang flames in the world. Few evils could withstand its might. Since the Black Sky Divine Palm force and the saber intent of the Slaughterer of Ten Thousand are yin type energies, why not try and use the Purple Sun Trueflame to root them from your body?”

“You possess a tenacious body and powerful recovery treasures such as the Nature's Water and the Profound Yellow Qi, so you should be able to survive the process without much trouble. The Purple Sun Trueflame is going to seep into your body one way or another, so you might as well use it to treat your ailments, right? I guarantee that it will work better than the Profound Yellow Qi.”

“Hmm? You knew?” Ye Qing narrowed his eyes a little. He didn't know that Yi Pin had already figured out the source of his woes.

“I *am* a senior after all. I may have lost my powers, but not my insight,” Yi Pin declared arrogantly. He tried to stroke his beard to enhance the impression, but when his hand touched only thin air, he realized that his beard had burned into a crisp a long time ago.

Ye Qing didn't mind that Yi Pin knew about the source of his injuries. "Are you sure it would work?"

Yi Pin replied in a tone of absolute certainty, "Am I sure? Are *you* sure you want to question my judgment? If you miss this opportunity, you won't get another one!"

Ye Qing still wasn't sure about this, or rather, Yi Pin being excessively confident actually made him wonder if the old Taoist was pulling the wool on him. That said, he had to admit that Yi Pin's logic made a certain degree of sense, so a few seconds of hesitation later, he nodded. "Alright. I'll give it a try."

Worst case scenario, there was still the Nature's Water and the Profound Yellow Qi. He should survive no matter what.

Having made his decision, Ye Qing sat down on the floor^[2] despite its scorching heat and slowly opened his mouth. Then, he inhaled a single wisp of Purple Sun Trueflame into his mouth.

Ye Qing was well aware that the Purple Sun Trueflame was deadly. That was why he only inhaled a single wisp of it. Even so, he felt like he was an ordinary person attempting to swallow a block of red hot coal. His throat burned like it was being ripped apart, and he could smell his burned flesh from inside his mouth. He knew at that moment that his throat had turned into a black crisp.

While doing his best to endure the pain, Ye Qing continued to swallow until the Purple Sun Trueflame finally settled in his abdomen. As soon as this happened, every drop of water in his flesh and blood evaporated into nothing, his internal organs instantly charred into a crisp, and tiny flames could be seen seeping out of his pores. His hair caught on fire, his flesh began to wither, and his skin sagged at a visible rate.

In just a second, Ye Qing looked barely better than a charred corpse. It was like he had swallowed the sun itself—which wasn't entirely inaccurate considering the origin of the Purple Sun Trueflame.

"Heavens above! He... he's not dead, is he?" Yi Pin was stunned by Ye Qing's transformation to say the least. "It's not my fault if you die, okay brother? I was just trying to help you!"

Theoretically, his plan was viable. But of course, he had never tried to consume the Purple Sun Trueflame before, so he couldn't possibly anticipate the degree of damage it might cause. Despite this, Yi Pin still urged Ye Qing to try because one, the faster Ye Qing regained his strength, the sooner he would be able to live these fearful days behind. Even if Ye Qing fucked up and got them exposed, they wouldn't be completely exposed.

And two, Ye Qing absorbing the Purple Sun Trueflame into his body—even if it was just a sliver—would reduce the room temperature by a significant amount. He was an old man. If possible, of course he was going to pick the choice that resulted in less pain and suffering.

Sure, he couldn't deny that his plan was born from selfish intent, but as long as the outcome was good, then it was fine, right?

On the off chance things ended poorly, at least his intentions were good, right? Surely Ye Qing's ghost wouldn't haunt him to the ends of the earth, right? Right?

Chapter 497: The Fuck You're Looking At, Old Man?

While Yi Pin was muttering under his black, the charred half-corpse that was Ye Qing suddenly opened his mouth and exhaled a puff of blue smoke. A tiny pulse of vitality also washed out from his body.

“Oh, thank the heavens he’s still alive! That really gave me a scare.”

Yi Pin let out a sigh of relief before downing a drop of Nature’s Water to celebrate.

It wasn’t all good news though. Although this confirmed that Ye Qing was still alive, his vitality had felt as weak as a dying candle. It wouldn’t be surprising if it was snuffed out by a particularly strong gust of wind. Besides that, Yi Pin had no way of checking Ye Qing’s current condition without disturbing his concentration.

Thankfully, things took a turn for the better. Slowly, Yi Pin realized that the Purple Sun Trueflame inside the room was gathering toward Ye Qing. His surroundings slowly turned hotter and brighter until he was shining like a purple sun.

Even better, only the spot where Ye Qing was sitting was particularly hot. The rest of the room were much, much cooler than before.

Yi Pin’s eyes lit up as he let out a huge sigh of relief, “Phew! Looks like everything is going to be just fine.” It would be terribly sinful and disadvantageous for his survival if he accidentally killed Ye Qing.

Time passed slowly. Some two hours later, a supernatural chirp resounded throughout the Earthly Sovereign’s Coffin one last time before the outside temperature abruptly nosedived. The temperature inside everyone’s room slowly began to drop as well. For a time, everyone was basking in refreshing coolness and the joy of having survived another trial.

Everyone, except one old Taoist. The reason was simple. Instead of cooling, his room was growing hotter and hotter.

He could no longer see Ye Qing with his eyes. No, his eyes were perfectly fine, but Ye Qing’s whole body was submerged by what looked like a gigantic purple fireball. Looking more like a purple sun than ever, he was giving off so much heat and light that Yi Pin could feel himself cooking alive again.

This was just a pale imitation of the real thing. The real purple sun could’ve killed millions with its sun rays.

“I know I dug myself into this hole, but come on! How could I have known that this was going to happen?!” Yi Pin moaned in pain and self-loathing. One moment ago, he was still praising his own intelligence. The next moment, reality was slapping him hard in the face. His poor face! But what could he do? The only one who could bear the consequences of his actions was himself!

“This is too much. I need to get out of this place right now.”

A moment later, Yi Pin finally couldn’t stand the heat any longer and raced for the exit. Although it was dangerous to hang outside one’s room for too long, he was going to cook alive *now* if he stayed.

After Yi Pin left the room, he made sure to shut the door tight so that no one would notice that a purple sun was burning inside. Even through the door, he could still feel the insane heat inside the room.

The space outside the room was still hot since the Purple Sun Trueflame just disappeared a while ago, but it was far cooler in comparison.

“Phew... this is much better!”

Yi Pin let out a huge sigh of relief and produced a bottle of fine wine from his Nature’s Shell. Then, he began drinking greedily.

Bang!

Unfortunately, he had just taken two sips when a man suddenly barged out of the opposite room. He was completely naked, and not a single hair could be spotted on his person. Every part of his body was charred and steaming, and Yi Pin could vaguely smell the scent of roasted flesh. It was clear that today was a bad day for the warrior.

The warrior’s name was Zhang Jun, and he was a late-stage Spirit Purifier. He was a member of Endless Sand, the most powerful gang of the northern lands. It was said that Endless Sand was where the heroes of the entire realm were gathered, and their numbers were so numerous they could give the sand of a desert a run for its money. The metaphor might have been an exaggeration, but their numbers were certainly most impressive.

Zhang Jun was a genius among his sea of peers in the Endless Sand. That was why he never imagined that he would be in such a weakened, embarrassing state until now. If it wasn’t for his Soulstealer-class Strange Artifact, the fire would have burned him into a pile of ash already. Even so, he was horribly injured and looking more dead than alive right now.

After somehow surviving the Fire God Moth’s ungodly flames, he decided to leave the room because it was too hot and suffocating inside. He didn’t grab himself a new set of clothes before heading out because one, his room was literally hotter than hell at the moment, and two, he was sure that everyone else would be recuperating inside their rooms at the moment, so no one would catch him in his embarrassing state.

He was wrong. As soon as he rushed out of the door, he was met with the sight of a well-dressed, celestial-like Taoist enjoying a delicious bottle of wine. To say that the old man looked like he was enjoying the time of his life would be an understatement.

Jealousy sank its talons into Zhang Jun instantly. *We both went through the same trial, so why do I look like this, and why do you look like that?!*

At first, Zhang Jun thought that the old Taoist was a senior he couldn’t afford to provoke or something. When he probed him with his senses though, he discovered that the old Taoist was just a Vessel Augmentor.

This old Taoist was a small fry he could crush with a finger, but right now he was smiling at him and drinking his wine like he was a clown. To say that he felt humiliated and angry would be an understatement.

How dare he revel in my misery! How dare he look fine while I’m not! Is there anyone in my position who could swallow this indignity without retaliation? Nay, nay I say!

And so Zhang Jun allowed his evil side to get the better of him. “The fuck you’re looking at, old man?”

Yi Pin was completely confused. He just gave the man a look, that’s all. Why was he so angry?

Still, he was a worldly, magnanimous senior, so Yi Pin decided not to take offense and looked away. *If he doesn’t want me to look at him, then sure. Like I would want to look at a naked man who’s as burned as coal*, he thought while enjoying another delicious sip of wine.

I knew it! Unbeknownst to Yi Pin, Zhang Jun took his submissive gesture as a sign of weakness. He was angry, but he wasn’t that angry that he would start a fight without doing some probing. It might look like Yi Pin was a Vessel Augmentor, but who could say that he wasn’t a powerful warrior who was just pretending to be weak? That was why he had issued a verbal challenge.

His words weren’t particularly insulting, but it could definitely be taken as an insult. Assuming that Yi Pin was hiding his strength, then he would definitely retort against him.

Zhang Jun was very confident in his strength. He believed that he was the strongest warrior in this place besides Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Yue Juejiang, so even if Yi Pin was hiding his strength, he couldn’t possibly be stronger than him. At most, he was his equal. If that turned out to be the case, then Zhang Jun was going to let bygones be bygones, apologize, and put this matter behind them.

However, if Yi Pin really was just a Vessel Augmentor, then he wouldn’t dare to mouth a retort. That would be his cue to vent his frustrations.

On a related note, he was surprised that a Vessel Augmentor was able to survive such high temperatures with nary a scratch on his person. After the trial was over, he even had the leisure to enjoy some wine. This could only mean that he possessed a valuable treasure or two. If he could obtain whatever treasure the old Taoist was holding, then the pain and suffering he endured since being kidnapped into this place would be worth it.

Zhang Jun’s heart became inflamed with greed when he thought of this.

His decision made, Zhang Jun grinned savagely at Yi Pin and asked, “Why are you looking away, old man? Are you lookin’ down on me?”

Yi Pin: “...” *You hate it when I’m looking at you, but when I look away, you say that I’m looking down on you. What do you want then, boy? You obviously have something against me.*

Fine. I can’t beat you, but I can definitely hide from you, can’t I?

So, Yi Pin rose to his feet without a word and got ready to return to his room.

“You think you can run?” Zhang Jun felt even more confident when he saw Yi Pin’s reaction. “You’re dead, old man. No one looks down on me and gets away with it!”

Zhang Jun immediately gave chase, but he purposely slowed down a little because he didn’t want to kill Yi Pin out in the open. Someone could be spying on them after all.

As soon as Yi Pin opened the door and stepped inside, Zhang Jun crossed over the threshold like a lightning bolt while yelling arrogantly, “Nowhere left to run, old—”

The next moment, he felt an unbelievable wave of heat washing over him. It almost felt like he had jumped into a pool of lava.

When his mind caught up to his eyes, he realized that he was looking at a fireball. A massive, purple fireball that might as well be a mini sun.

A fireball? Why is there a massive fireball inside the room? And why is it purple-colored as well? Zhang Jun's mind raced. *Wait, why did I use the words "as well"?*

He didn't have the time to think. The next moment, the old Taoist shouted at the fireball, "Brother, save me!"

"Did you just call a fireball your brother? Are you crazy, or am I crazy?" Zhang Jun couldn't help but blurt out. This was all so ridiculous he could laugh, but for some reason, he could sense a tinge of fear and panic in his voice. *Why? Why am I worried?*

"Quit pretending and just die already, old man!"

Zhang Jun's anxiety was getting to him. His instincts told him to get away from this room as soon as possible, but the realization also made him embarrassed and angry. So, he reached out to grab Yi Pin.

His arm was about halfway there when suddenly, something pitch black and charcoal-like reached out of the fireball and grabbed his arm. It was such an unexpected and ludicrous thing that Zhang Jun was unable to process what he was seeing for a time.

The object was blackened like a burnt tree branch and covered in purple flames. There were five shoots at the end of the branch, and despite the scratchy, scorching sensation pricking against his skin, they felt like a... hand.

A hand?

A burnt hand?

A burnt hand caught my arm?

The triple confusion protocol self-executed inside Zhang Jun's brain.

A burnt hand just grabbed my arm. What should I do? Can someone give me the answer like, right now?

Chapter 498: You Will Never Have Me

Zhang Jun was still hesitating when he suddenly felt a heart-wrenching pain from his hand. It was because his wrist had turned into charcoal, and the purple flames covering the burning man were crawling up his arm.

Wherever the purple flame went, water evaporated into nothing, and flesh turned ashen black. At the same time, he felt himself steaming and turning red like he was a piece of metal inside a furnace.

"Argh!" Zhang Jun let out a terrified scream. Only he knew if it was because of the pain, the fear, or both.

To be fair, his decision-making and reaction speed while under pressure were top-notch. He brought down his palm like a knife and cut off the afflicted arm in one smooth motion. Ignoring the pain, he immediately raced toward the exit. If he could escape this place, then he might yet have a chance to survive.

Unfortunately, his left hand had just touched the door when the unknown person within the purple fireball gently clenched his fist. As if lightning had struck the room, a deafening, space-shaking boom broke out and knocked Zhang Jun on one knee. His ears hurt, and stars were floating inside his head.

Zhang Jun wasn't sure if it was because he was dizzy or hallucinating, but he saw flakes of charcoal flying off the ashen fist and revealing smooth, glass-like skin. Before he could make sense of it, his vision darkened, and his entire body popped and cracked ominously like he was being squeezed by a gigantic, invisible hand. However, purple flame gushed out of his orifices instead of blood.

“ARGH!”

This time, Zhang Jun definitely screamed because of the pain. He felt like someone was grinding his body with a millstone, and the pain was so terrible that he wished he was dead.

“Mercy... I'm...”

But Zhang Jun didn't want to die, so he tried to beg the known person for mercy. There was none. Purple flames shot out of the purple fireball and burned him into a pile of ash just like that.

After Zhang Jun had perished, the purple fireball gradually shrank in size not because it was disappearing, but because something was absorbing it. Eventually, the purple flames vanished completely, leaving only an ashen black figure behind.

Yi Pin looked shell-shocked as the black substance covering the humanoid figure began peeling off bit by bit like egg shells, revealing a perfectly sculpted body within.

Sparkling, pure and almost translucent, the body looked as perfect as glazed glass. Every curve of its bones, every fiber of its muscles, and every blood vessel underneath the skin could be seen clearly. Besides that, the body was exactly the right size and shape for the person. If someone slapped a pound of flesh onto the body, then it would've appeared just a tad bloated. If someone removed a pound of flesh from the body, then it would've appeared too thin. Hence, perfection. Words could not describe how beautiful and strong it looked.

At first, the body looked completely pale and transparent. It almost looked like it was made of marble, not flesh and blood. Then, the body began humming with vigor and vitality, and its complexion slowly turned back to normal. In the end, Ye Qing opened his eyes.

The first thing Ye Qing saw after opening his eyes was Yi Pin staring at his bare ass with one-tenth admiration, one-tenth intoxication, one-tenth envy, and seven-tenth jealousy. It was a complicated look to say the least.

He's not gay, is he?

A shiver ran up Ye Qing's spine, and Ye Qing immediately produced a set of clothes from Nine Heavens and put it on at lightning speed. Sure, Yi Pin had already seen everything there was to see,

but that didn't mean he was going to endure the old man's passionate gaze for even a second longer. Then, he watched Yi Pin warily and suspiciously.

"Your body is quite beautiful," Yi Pin reluctantly withdrew his gaze and sighed after Ye Qing put his clothes back on.

I'm aware, but you will never have me, so don't even think about it, alright? Ye Qing ranted mentally even as he subconsciously backed away from Yi Pin. His eyes were only growing more suspicious over time.

Finally, Yi Pin noticed Ye Qing's strange gaze and asked in puzzlement, "Why are you looking at me like that?"

Something clicked inside his head, and Yi Pin's eyebrows knitted together in annoyance and exasperation. "Are you stupid? I was just admiring how strong your body's become and thinking that you have a bright future ahead of you, especially considering your age. I don't mean anything by it."

"Also, I like women, alright? I like beautiful women. I like beautiful, sexy women."

Important matters should be repeated three times.

"Ahem... I don't understand what you're saying. I wasn't thinking about anything. You're the one who seems to be thinking too much," Ye Qing feigned innocence.

Yi Pin: "... *Oh, so it's my fault for pointing out your reaction?*"

"Ahem... so like, who is that guy just now? Why did he try to kill you?" Ye Qing hurriedly changed the subject when he noticed that a storm was gathering on Yi Pin's face.

Yi Pin shook his head disgruntledly. "That's *my* question as well. I took one look at him—seriously, just one look!—and suddenly, the guy went bonkers and tried to kill me!"

Ye Qing recalled the times he almost died because he happened to look at the wrong things. "Well, I can't say I don't sympathize with your plight. This world is seriously bonkers."

"By the way, your body looked as flawless as glazed glass just now. Dare I say that you've completely recovered?" Yi Pin asked.

Ye Qing smiled at that. "You are correct. Thanks to you, I am fully recovered."

It was no wonder the Purple Sun Trueflame was recognized as one of the fiercest and most yang fires in the world. Just a single wisp of the flame was enough to wipe out most of the Black Sky Divine Palm force inside his body.

That said, without the Black Sky Divine Palm force and Zhou Hengshan's saber intent—especially Zhou Hengshan's saber intent—he would've perished trying to take the Purple Sun Trueflame into his body.

Zhou Hengshan was a Grandmaster, and the Slaughterer of Ten Thousand was a Phenomenon-class Strange Artifact. The saber intent they created were beyond deadly and yin enough to freeze a river to say the least. Together with the Profound Yellow Qi and the Nature's Water, he just barely

avoided being burned into a crisp the second he swallowed the Purple Sun Trueflame into his abdomen.

Even so, the heat of the flame had evaporated every drop of water inside his body and burned his flesh into a crisp in an instant. He only survived because he was protecting his major organs, meridians and other vital areas with the Profound Yellow Qi. Once he was certain that he was in no danger of dying, he slowly began directing the Purple Sun Trueflame against the palm force and the saber intent. After his body began adapting to the Purple Sun Trueflame, he absorbed even more flame to hasten the process.

There was no denying the potency of Zhou Hengshan's saber intent, but metaphorically speaking, it was a pond trying to weather the unrelenting, unending heat of the sun. In the end, it was broken down and eliminated entirely from Ye Qing's body.

Not only that, the process had further increased Ye Qing's power. His body had already been nurtured by several wisps of Profound Yellow Qi, but the Purple Sun Trueflame had brought him to near death as well. Like a phoenix who was reborn from ash, Ye Qing came back stronger than ever before. Now, he was eight dragon elephants strong.

Ye Qing felt better than he ever had in his life. He was confident he could kill ten Yi Pins in one punch.

"I didn't think it would work," Yi Pin murmured, and Ye Qing's smile immediately turned into a frown. *I thought you said it's definitely going to work?!*

"Ahem... moving on," Yi Pin noticed his slip-of-the-tongue as well and hurriedly changed the subject, "You were manipulating the Purple Sun Trueflame just now, weren't you? How did you do it?"

Ye Qing relaxed. Right now, his euphoria was too strong for his annoyance to overcome. "It's simple, really. I just refined the Purple Sun Trueflame I absorbed."

After he was done eliminating the foreign forces inside his body, Ye Qing thought it would be a waste to expel the Purple Sun Trueflame just like that. So, he tried to absorb and refine it into his own power.

For most other people, the attempt would only result in spontaneous combustion and immediate death. After all, the Purple Sun Trueflame was one of the three strongest yang flames in the world. One misstep was all it took for someone to burn into a pile of ash.

This wasn't too big of a problem for Ye Qing though. For one, his body had already grown used to the Purple Sun Trueflame to a certain extent. Even without the Black Sky Divine Palm force and Zhou Hengshan's saber intent to keep it suppressed, the flame couldn't consume him completely.

Chapter 499: Jealousy Needs No Reason

Of course, it was beyond painful to be burned alive, but Ye Qing was a man on a mission. While keeping the pain at bay and maintaining clarity of mind, he began his refinement process by targeting the weakest portions of the Purple Sun Trueflame—those that had been weakened by their clash against the Black Sky Divine Palm force and Zhou Hengshan's saber intent. It was only after he mastered them completely that he began to refine the rest of the Purple Sun Trueflame.

The process sounded easy on paper, but only he knew just how dangerous it had been. One single mistake, and he would've died just like that.

In the past, he might have chosen a different, safer course of action. But today, he no longer had that option.

Only by becoming stronger could he survive—no, *live* in this world.

The good news was, he succeeded.

There was now a mysterious, noble, and unfathomable purple flame floating inside his dantian. Surrounded by an entourage of Burning Wind, it illuminated every inch of Ye Qing's dantian and sea of qi like a king.

“What? You refined the Purple Sun Trueflame?” Yi Pin exclaimed in shock. “You're not kidding me, are you?”

“What do you think?” Ye Qing smirked and flipped his palm upward. A wisp of purple flame immediately appeared at the center.

The moment the Purple Sun Trueflame appeared, the room temperature skyrocketed, the air distorted, and Yi Pin felt like he was cooking alive just like when the trial was still ongoing.

“P-put it away!” Yi Pin said in a hurry. It was only after Ye Qing had put away the Purple Sun Trueflame that the old Taoist sighed with trepidation and relief. “Do you want to kill me, brother?”

“You're the one who didn't believe me, so I decided to give you a lesson in seeing is believing.” Ye Qing smirked.

Yi Pin sighed again and stared at Ye Qing. His voice was brimming with jealousy as he remarked, “You're truly a lucky guy, brother.”

His jealousy was well-founded. The Purple Sun Trueflame was one of the fiercest and most yang fire in the world. Strangers feared it, and evils stayed well out of its way. Not only that, it was powerful and could be used for countless purposes.

Although Ye Qing had only refined a small amount of Purple Sun Trueflame and so could not literally boil a sea or transform a corner of the world into a scorched wasteland like the Fire God Moth, it was still nothing to scoff at.

Ye Qing could go up against a Spirit Master right now, and he could probably deal them a crippling blow on the first strike assuming that he managed to catch them off guard with the Purple Sun Trueflame.

Unfortunately, this was the extent of Ye Qing's cultivation of the Purple Sun Trueflame unless he stumbled upon another grand opportunity. Although the Purple Sun Trueflame was the flames of dawn, which theoretically meant that the sun itself was an infinite source in which he could harvest the purple qi of dawn from—a raw substance that he could condense into the Purple Sun Trueflame—reality wasn't so simple.

The sun was suspended higher than the nine heavens themselves, so by the time its rays reached the human world, they would have become infinitely weak and contaminated. Assuming that he was trying to refine a single wisp of Purple Sun Trueflame from the purple qi of dawn emitted by the sun alone, it would have taken him between thirty to fifty years to accomplish the feat.

Alternatively, he could fly above the nine heavens, breach the astral winds, and get as close to the sun as possible to absorb its pure rays, but it would take at least a Grandmaster to perform such a feat.

Besides that, he would need a cultivation art that could extract the purple qi of dawn and convert it into Purple Sun Trueflame. However, it was an exclusive secret kept by certain noble clans and powerful sects, and it was very difficult for a common man to obtain it.

He could seek out Strangers or places that contained the Purple Sun Trueflame, but obviously, such a venture came with considerable risks. Even if there was no danger, the process of refining the Purple Sun Trueflame was, as Ye Qing could attest with his own experience, incredibly dangerous. One misstep, and all that would be left of him was ash.

Absolutely everything must swing in his favor if he wished to refine the Purple Sun Trueflame.

For reasons that should be obvious, Yi Pin had *not* intended for Ye Qing to refine the Purple Sun Trueflame. He just thought it was a good idea to use an object of supreme yang to counteract another object of supreme yin. The fact that Ye Qing possessed the Profound Yellow Qi and the Nature's Water made his chances of success far higher than most.

He underestimated the young man's audacity, however. Not only did he refine the Purple Sun Trueflame right after he eliminated the Black Sky Divine Palm force and saber intent, he actually succeeded. He seriously was one lucky bastard. *Oh, how envious I am!*

Of course, Yi Pin was equally aware that luck was hardly the only factor Ye Qing had succeeded in his risky endeavor. If he didn't possess an unbelievably tough body, if his willpower wavered for even a second while he was on fire, if the foreign forces ravaging his body didn't happen to be objects of absolute yin, and if he didn't possess a sufficient number of Profound Yellow Qi and Nature's Water, then he would've failed to refine the Purple Sun Trueflame. The process had been as painful as it was risky.

One might say that nine out of ten of the warriors in Ye Qing's position would have died today, and probably none would be able to walk away unscathed.

Sometimes, luck just favored a person. And sometimes, someone made their own luck. Ye Qing succeeded because he was a combination of both.

I'm still jealous though! What, do I need a reason to be jealous? Not in the slightest! At least not me!

Despite his jealousy, Yi Pin soon arrived at an important decision. From now on, he was going to befriend Ye Qing seriously and cease screwing him over for his self-interest completely. Judging from the sheer potential and dogshit luck Ye Qing displayed today—hells, he would believe it if Ye Qing told him that he was really the heavens' favorite son—befriending the young man could only bring fortuitous tidings.

What? He wasn't trying to curry favor with the guy! He was just trying to befriend him, okay?

Oh, shut up. He was a goddamn senior; a lofty champion in the past. Even if he was trying to curry favor with the guy, which he totally wasn't, you gotta word it in a more sophisticated, friendlier fashion, get it?

Ye Qing teased him. "I have you to thank for my success, you know. If it wasn't for your 'idea', I would never have had such a boon."

Ye Qing purposely put some weight behind the word "idea".

It was a mistake. Instead of feeling shame, Yi Pin declared with a perfectly straight face, "What are you talking about, brother? We're brothers! It's only natural that a brother would help out his brother, right brother?"

"Har har... whatever you say, *brother*." Ye Qing rubbed his nose with a bit of irritation. What could you do when the person you were trying to embarrass had embodied the teaching, "If I'm shameless, then no one can shame me" to its core? Ye Qing's own face was pretty thick, but he had to give it to the old man. No one was more shameless than him!

Two wisps of Profound Yellow Qi had appeared inside the room while the two of them were conversing. Yi Pin took one look at the qi before asking, "So, now that you've recovered, what are you going to do now?"

The corners of Ye Qing's lips curled into a devilish smirk. "I'm going to keep playing the game, of course."

And by that, he meant he was going to keep stealing Profound Yellow Qi.

"But how? You already took out all the bad guys yesterday." Yi Pin advised, "Now that you're strong enough to butt heads with Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Ye Juejiang, my advice for you is to show your strength and intimidate into giving you a share."

"I don't know. There are more wolves than meat in this place." Ye Qing shook his head. "There are now less than twenty people left in the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin, and people are dying almost everyday. For now, there is just enough Profound Yellow Qi for three people to share, but a fourth? Do you really think they would accept this outcome?"

Yi Pin frowned a little. He had to admit that Ye Qing's words made a lot of sense. Not only that, if Ye Qing showed himself now, there was a high chance the three warriors would join hands to eliminate the new competitor from the equation. Ye Qing might not fear any one of them at his current strength, but it was a different story if they attacked him together.

"Besides, Yue Juejiang would figure out that I'm the one who stole his Profound Yellow Qi Calabash as soon as I revealed my true strength. Things would get even more troublesome then." Ye Qing chuckled. "I'll admit that that's not my main

concern though. I just don't like sharing the current stock of Profound Yellow Qi with four people."

Yi Pin rolled his eyes. In the end, it all came back to greed.

"So? How do you want to play this? Snatch them by force?" Yi Pin asked.

Could he do it? The rewards were great as a matter of course, but could he really weather the dangers?

Ye Qing smiled confidently. "Snatching is such a barbaric, primitive method. Do I look like a primitive or a barbarian to you?"

That was what he said, but the main reason he didn't resort to brute force was because he wasn't ready yet. It was almost guaranteed that there was going to be a huge battle between Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong, Yue Juejiang and himself in the end, but he didn't want to bring forward the final battle so soon. At the very least, he would consider it only after he had converted all of the Profound Yellow Qi currently in his possession into power.

He really, really, *really* didn't fancy the idea of getting injured again.

Yi Pin: "... *Is he trying to imply that I'm stupid?*"

"Great minds think alike, it seems. I was thinking the exact same thing." Yi Pin echoed in agreement so he wouldn't seem like an idiot. Unfortunately, he was unable to hold his silence for more than a couple more seconds before he betrayed his intellectual deficiency. "So, did you have a plan, brother?"

"I do now." An enigmatic smirk crossed his expression. "You'll see."

Chapter 500: I'll Pray For You

Just like before, Ye Qing opened the door slightly before peeking outside with his demonic thought. A few breaths later, Sun Xuanzhen, Huo Linglong and Yue Juejiang left their rooms to collect their Profound Yellow Qi as normal.

Something was different, however. Compared to last time, the trio looked quite fatigued and tired. Clearly, even they had trouble weathering the Fire God Moth and the Purple Sun Trueflame.

Huo Linglong looked the worst out of all of them. Her sect was called Earthfire Palace of Demons, and her martial arts were all tied to fire to a certain extent. Normally, fire was the last thing she was afraid of. However, as a practitioner of the Dark Ways, her martial arts were as yin and evil as they could get, whereas the Purple Sun Trueflame was the complete opposite. In fact, one could say that it was the bane of her existence.

That was why her "Flames of Desire" was breached practically the minute the room started turning hot. If she didn't happen to have an emergency item that could protect her under these circumstances, she would be one with the air already.

Sun Xuanzhen and Yue Juejiang looked much better than her, though they had used up a lot of energy as well. It was why the trio didn't speak to each other this time. They went straight to the rooms to collect their due.

A lot of people died this time, so the trio visited quite a lot of rooms before they finally managed to gather three wisps of Profound Yellow Qi each. Only then did they return to their rooms to cultivate.

This time, Ye Qing and Yi Pin weren't able to protect their Profound Yellow Qi. Too many people had died this time, and after searching a few rooms to no avail, Huo Linglong eventually made it to their room. And since the three of them were acting at the same time, the excuse Ye Qing prepared earlier was useless. Since he didn't want to reveal his identity, he had no choice but to allow Huo Linglong to inhale the two Profound Yellow Qi into her stomach.

When Huo Linglong was leaving the room, she shot Yi Pin and Ye Qing a meaningful look and giggled, "Interesting." It was only then she sashayed out of the room.

"What did she mean by that?" Yi Pin asked after Huo Linglong was gone. "Do you think she suspects something?"

"Have a little more confidence and remove 'do you think' from your sentence. She definitely suspects that something is afoot," Ye Qing declared confidently.

"Why would she? We acted no different from how we acted before."

"Because we're too weak, of course." Ye Qing said indifferently, "You're a Vessel Augmentor, and I appear to be an early-stage Spirit Purifier. Many people who are stronger than us had died, and yet we weaklings are still alive. You especially look perfectly healthy and do not have a single scratch on your person. I would've suspected you if I were her."

"Oh, so it's my fault?" Yi Pin rubbed his nose. While Ye Qing's words made sense, he absolutely refused to bear the blame alone. After all, the young man himself looked perfectly unharmed. "You don't look worried though."

Ye Qing replied, "That's because Huo Linglong only suspects that we are hiding our strength, or we have some sort of treasure that shielded us from harm. No matter what it is, she is confident that we won't be able to harm her. That is why she won't raise the alarm or do anything to us—for now."

In the future, Huo Linglong was definitely going to take some measures against them. That was fine though. When tomorrow came, there was a good chance that their roles would be reversed.

After the trio returned to their rooms, Ye Qing waited for about an hour before slipping out of his room and arriving at Sun Xuanzhen's doorsteps. Then, he produced a single incense stick from Nine Heavens, ignited it, and waved it a few times. Finally, he planted the incense stick in a gap between the floor tiles.

"My respect for your power, brother Incense. Please," Ye Qing muttered under his breath as he stared at the incense stick intently.

The incense stick burned and emitted a thick cloud of blue smoke. It circled around the air for a bit before slipping into Sun Xuanzhen's room.

"Thanks, brother Incense!" Ye Qing relaxed when he saw this.

The incense stick he just lit was the Incense of Misfortune, of course. He would repeat the process and place another two Incense of Misfortune in front of Yue Juejiang and Huo Linglong's door. After that, he went back to his room.

"You said you have a plan, and your plan is to take a stroll in front of their doors, brother?" Yi Pin asked in puzzlement after Ye Qing returned.

Ye Qing was shrouded by a layer of fog when he was outside, so Yi Pin couldn't see what he was doing.

The corners of his lips curled into a devilish smirk. "Take a stroll? I suppose I had, but that's not all I did. I also gave them a heartfelt gift."

.....

Inside his room, Sun Xuanzhen was refining the Profound Yellow Qi. He was at a critical moment of his refinement when suddenly, his nose suddenly became horribly itchy. It was so terrible that he couldn't stop himself from sneezing.

Unfortunately, the sneeze also caused his energies to fall into disarray, and his vigor to surge chaotically. Before he knew it, he had spat out a mouthful of fresh blood, and everything he did to refine the Profound Yellow Qi was reset. He had no choice but to start over.

Sun Xuanzhen shook his head in annoyance and frustration, but what was done was done. He began soothing his energies and quelling his vigor.

He was about halfway done when suddenly, his stomach started hurting a little. It felt like he was having a stomach ache, but how was that possible when he hadn't eaten anything?

A Spirit Master hadn't yet transcended mortality, so he still needed to eat every once in a while. Even so, he could go half a month without a single drop of water.

He hadn't eaten a single grain since he entered the Earthly Sovereign's Coffin. He did enjoy a sip of wine here and there, but that was it. It should be impossible for him to have a stomach ache.

Groooooooooooooowl!

He was still trying to puzzle things out when suddenly, his stomach started growling and rumbling like a series of mini thunderclaps. Sun Xuanzhen's face immediately turned ugly. It was because he felt like taking a shit.

He was a Spirit Master and a swordsman. His willpower was tougher than most warriors, and the fact that he withstood the pain of the Three Swords of Punishment proved that. The stomach ache could have plagued him for days, no, weeks, and he might not even notice it until it made a noise.

Holding a shit was *not* the same, however. It was unbearable in a completely different way.

Sun Xuanzhen couldn't understand why this was happening to him. Logically speaking, a Spirit Master could passively and actively control their qi, essence and spirit and prevent even illnesses from ailing them, much less the urge to shit. So what the hell was going on here?

His non-comprehension didn't stop his stomach getting worse over time. It was to the point where large beads of sweat were rolling off his forehead.

Sun Xuanzhen hurriedly grabbed a couple of healing pills from his Nature's Shell and swallowed them. This was *not* the way they were intended to be used, but who knows, it might help with his symptoms?

He was wrong. Almost as soon as the pills entered his stomach, the growling doubled in both volume and intensity. His face grew increasingly purple and contorted.

"I can't hold it any longer!"

In the end, Sun Xuanzhen finally caved and grabbed a Strange Artifact that looked like a porcelain bottle from his Nature's Shell. As soon as the Strange Artifact expanded in size, Sun Xunzhen pounced on it like it was his final lifeline.

And so the Strange Artifact suffered a kind of indignity it should never have suffered.

A teatime passed, and Sun Xuanzhen rubbed his tummy with an obvious sigh of relief. Sure, an indescribable smell was currently permeating the room, but it was an acceptable state of affairs compared to having to hold his shit in.

Unfortunately, right after Sun Xuanzhen cleaned up everything and got ready to resume his cultivation, his stomach began rumbling once more.

"What's going on?"

Sun Xuanzhen's face turned ugly again.

.....

Inside her room, Huo Linglong was refining the Profound Yellow Qi and using it to nurse her injuries. She had just started for a moment when suddenly, she felt a little thirsty. In a daze, she opened her Nature's Shell, grabbed a jar, and drank directly from the mouth.

She had just downed a few gulps when suddenly, she realized that the water didn't taste right. When she looked down, she realized that it wasn't water, but an extremely valuable poison.

The poison was named Peach Blossom Smile. It was a poetic name, but its substance was vicious beyond imagination. Colorless and odorless, the poison was capable of killing even a Spirit Master.

First, the victim's body would be covered in small, fluid-filled blisters. If the victim failed to consume the antidote in time, then the blisters would pop, and the poison would seep into the victim's body. They would die in two hours max. The bright red pus it left on the victim's skin after the blisters popped left red markings that looked like blooming peach blossoms, which was why it was named Peach Blossom Smile.

In just the blink of an eye, Huo Linglong's entire body was covered in reddish blisters. It looked horrifying to say the least.

"Ah!"

Stunned, Huo Linglong hurriedly grabbed the antidote and consumed it. She didn't relax though. She immediately grabbed a mirror and started squeezing the blisters on her face.

Besides being poisonous enough to kill a Spirit Master, the Peach Blossom Smile possessed another difficult trait. Eating the antidote would cure the victim of the poison inside their body, but not the blisters on their face. If the victim didn't squeeze out the poison and treat the blisters in time, they

would transform into pus and leave pot-holes on the victim's face at best, or disfigure them permanently at the worst.

A man might not care if they were disfigured or not, but Huo Linglong was a woman; a beautiful woman no less. There was no way she would allow even the slightest scratch on her face.

Someone might argue that she should focus on refining the Profound Yellow Qi right now as it was the opportunity of a lifetime. In her opinion, those people could go fuck themselves. The world could burn this instant, and her first priority would still be treating her face.

Power was ephemeral, but beauty was forever.