

F Disciples 351

Chapter 351.: Lesser Realm (II)

Wu Qianyu recovered from her breakthrough and rejoined her fellow sisters. Many congratulations were given and accepted. Everyone was happy about it celebrated for two days straight. Of course, Chen Wentian felt like he didn't get the credit he deserved. He was such a hardworking master; he deserved a little reward too!

Aside from the breakthrough, the lesser realm of Spiritual Growth also presented an opportunity. It was a period of rapid advancement and growth if she could take advantage of it. The next year or two at most would be a critical period for her to continue her progress and reach the next lesser realm of Spiritual Formation.

It was important to grow her powers related to pain. The way she described it during her dreams, Wu Qianyu had unlocked a way to project the pain inside her into her sword and use it as an attack. This ability to create spiritual energy with the attribute of pain was a great sign and a potential path to continue growing.

The upcoming Convocation of Swords in six months would be a great learning opportunity. She already had an affinity for the way of the sword and she intended for the Dao of pain to have a sword component. The meeting of all the brightest sword cultivators in the subcontinent would be a great chance to hone her powers.

But before then, she had to use the inspirations from the dream array and her recent experience to develop a rudimentary sword art utilizing the spiritual energy of pain.

Wu Qianyu emerged from the teleportation array and a cold blast of air hit her face. It knocked away her fur hood and swept stray strands of hair about. She chided herself for being unprepared and summoned the razor-sharp spiritual energy of Dugu's 10th Sword. The cold went away and she was protected by a thin layer of spiritual energy.

Ever since her breakthrough, her spiritual energy capacity had increased and so had her endurance. One of the important parts of her new training was to expend as much spiritual energy as possible to expand her spiritual sea.

She hoped that one day, this energy would radiate with pain, a product of her own unique Dao. She hoped that time would come sooner rather than later, before she got too old and lost her mortal beauty.

“Halt!” Several guards wearing black armor approached her.

She lifted her hand and nestled in her palm was her sect badge, a water lily on white jade. It perfectly complemented her outfit, which consisted of her usual white battle robe along with white fur cloak.

“Stand down! Welcome to Black Rock City, Mistress Wu!”

The squad of ten guards all saluted and took up protective positions around her. They escorted her to a side building where a horse carriage was waiting.

Wu Qianyu looked around as she walked, taking in the nostalgic sights. This was her first time coming back to Cloudy Mountain Province and Black Rock City. She had spent the better part of a year here during the Monster Fighting Competition. Those had been wonderful times, with her master a constant presence by her side. Now, she was a cultivator on the immortal path and there were certain things she had to experience for herself in order to truly grow.

Black Rock City had not changed much. It was still a scene of black and white, knobby black buildings covered by tall snowdrifts that lined winding streets. The buildings were somewhat taller now and the streets were narrower. The city was bursting at the seams. It was already beyond overcrowded but cliffs and mountains nearby meant that it was difficult to expand.

Wu Qianyu rode the carriage a short while and arrived at the governor's castle. It was another familiar sight, where she had often stayed. Its tall spires that were built into the cliffs were now home to the new governor.

“Welcome to Black Rock City! Mistress Wu!” A tall, handsome young man said as she entered the main entrance, “My name is Zhou Guanyu, newly appointed governor of the city. Please!”

He waved his hands towards an arched doorway that led to the great hall.

“What happened to Zhou Lai?” She asked.

Zhou Lai was the venerable granduncle of Zhou Ziyun. He had managed affairs in Black Rock City from the beginning. He had been pleasant to work with and a reliable person.

“Ah, Elder Zhou Lai is my grandfather. Mistress Zhou recalled him back to the clan's headquarters to handle an important project so I was assigned here.”

“Fine, lead the way.”

Wu Qianyu followed after him, noticing his rich and elaborate attire. His headdress seemed to be made out of pure gold and adorned with jewels and pearls. His robe consisted of intricate embroidered patterns. His belt was a gaudy mess with too many golden buckles.

He seemed so out of place like Black Rock City, a gritty city where there was still plenty of problems with poverty and crime. She wondered what the Zhou Clan was doing these days to have some like him in charge of a whole city.

Zhou Guanyu gave a brief overview of the state of the city and then asked, “Mistress Wu! Are you tired? Perhaps hungry from your trip? Anything you desire, I can have my chefs make them in only a few moments.”

His tone was way too eager and the movement of his eyes was bordering on vulgar.

She didn't react and merely waved her hand. “I won't be needing those.”

He looked quite disappointed.

“But, I will need a place to stay. Give me the penthouse of the southern tower.” She commanded.

“Y... yes! Mistress Wu! But the room is currently occupied, I will need some time to get it ready.” Zhou Guanyu said with even more disappointment.

She didn't really care. It felt satisfying to throw her weight around. She was the disciple of the immortal. She was the mistress and he was the servant. He wasn't in any position to disobey.

“You have two hours. I will be taking care of some business.” She said and promptly turned to leave.

She smiled to herself, surprised by her own moxie. She felt something had changed within her. She was more confident, more assertive, more willing to use her power.

This was perhaps related to the changes her master had mentioned. The path to immortality was one paved with hardships as well as dead bodies. She would have to tread on countless people, defeat countless foes, and surpass her mortal limits. Immortality was a complete transformation of the body, mind, and spirit and she was already taking the first steps.

Wu Qianyu stepped out of the castle and summoned Tortoise Can Fly. She flew a short distance and landed in front of a familiar building, the crime and punishment headquarters. It was three times the size as before, a sign of the times. Black Rock City was struggling under its own weight and riddled with crime. The original residents competed with newcomers. There were loose cultivators, bounty hunters, fortune seekers, and even entire clans and sects that had moved here, all seeking opportunity under the umbrella of safety and opportunity offered by Ten Thousand Flower Valley.

“Mistress Wu! Mistress Wu!” A man wearing the red robes of the crime and punishment division rushed and knelt before her.

“San Huming, it's been a while.” She said.

“Indeed! Welcome back, I was so happy to hear that you needed to use our facilities again. Ever since that time, I always knew you would return!”

His excitement was genuine and she didn't mind it. San Huming was an honest and righteous man. He and the entire department admired her for helping them greatly with interrogating criminals the last time. She was here to do so again, this time to also train her Dao of pain, so she needed their cooperation.

Wu Qianyu let out a soft laugh, “Uncle San, my matters should be kept confidential.”

“Of course, absolutely, my apologies.”

“Don't worry. Please rise.”

San Huming got up, wiped his brow, and gestured her towards the entrance, “Are you tired from your journey. May I get you anything? I had the department prepare a feast just in case.”

She smiled, “Actually, that sounds good. You can catch me up on some of your most difficult cases in the meantime.”

“Yes, understood!”

Together, they walked up the steps and entered the building.

Chapter 352.: My Authority

A modest banquet was prepared and Wu Qianyu enjoyed it. As she ate and drank politely, San Huming explained the situation of the city in more detail. The story she had gotten from Zhou Guanyu was almost night and day. One man led the city from the daylight while the other had to clean up the mess in the dark.

“Mistress Wu, aside from these countless ordinary crimes, two special cases have caused us a tremendous amount of difficulty.” San Huming said with a heavy sigh.

“Uncle San, please tell me.” She said.

“Alrighty, the first deals with the tragic fall of the Black Sword Lodge...”

Black Sword Lodge was one of the strongest mortal sects that called Black Rock City home before the monster invasion. They were an upright sect and sent forth their disciples and masters to fight the monster hordes that encroached upon the city. As a result, they suffered great losses over the past year. They went from the top two in terms of power and influence all the way to the bottom.

While that was a tragedy, the real crime happened afterward. Xiao Yan, the young master of the Black Sword Lodge, was recently found murdered, his body nailed to the front door of his ancestral home. The male lineage of the Black Sword Lodge effectively ended with his death. This caused the sect master Xiao Zheng, Xiao Yan's father, to offer the Crime and Punishment Division all of the sect's remaining wealth and assets to bring the culprit to justice.

“So, you already have determined the primary culprit? Otherwise, you wouldn't have told me about this case.” Wu Qianyu asked.

“That's right.” San Huming said, “The culprit is without a doubt Ye Wuzhi, young patriarch of the Shattered Peak Sect. They are a sect with questionable morals. They used to be below the Black Sword Lodge but they conserved their resources and did not fight the monster invasion at all.”

She felt her temper flare. The monster invasion caused so much pain and suffering across the province. How dare a sect act so cowardly!

He nodded, “Indeed, but because of their cowardice, they emerged from the crisis intact and now occupy the position that the Black Sword Lodge vacated. As if that was not enough, Ye Wuzhi was always jealous of Xiao Yan and coveted Xiao Yan's fiancé, a beautiful maiden from the richest merchant family in the city named Nalan Wan'er.”

She could almost guess what happened and San Huming confirmed it.

The Nalan Family was no longer satisfied with the engagement to the Xiao Family of the Black Sword Lodge. They wanted to marry their daughter to the Ye Family of the Shattered Peak Sect. Both Xiao Yan and Xiao Zheng refused to cancel the engagement agreement but now that the groom was dead, the agreement was naturally voided. On top of it all, the Shattered Peak Sect recently announced to the city that their young patriarch and Nalan Wan'er were now engaged. They were even holding their engagement party this very day.

“Uncle San,” Wu Qianyu stopped him, “So you think this Ye Wuzhi murdered Xiao Yan?”

“Yes, we are sure. Our detectives have already finished a thorough investigation. All point to Ye Wuzhi!”

“He isn't locked up yet?”

“This... he isn't.” San Huming admitted, “It's not because we don't want to. We simply don't have the strength to. Even if we could take down the entire Shattered Peak Sect by force, Governor Zhou Guanyu won't let us. Causing such a huge commotion in the city and bringing down a major sect and the most important business family is unacceptable for him.”

Wu Qianyu put down her chopsticks and got up. She clutched the Purple Jade Sword in her hand and felt a fearsome fighting spirit rise within her. She wanted justice. She wanted to avenge the pain that the Xiao Family suffered. She wanted to punish all the wrongdoers in this city.

“Lead me to the Shattered Peak Sect.” She commanded, “Now!”

A few moments later, a sea of red robes thundered out of the Crime and Punishment Division. A hundred heavily armed enforcers led the way on powerful steeds. This was followed by several carriages including armored ones designed to keep prisoners.

They charged through the streets and arrived at a stone tower that was over twenty stories tall. It was the headquarters for the Shattered Peak Sect. Its area at the base was that large but given its height, it was quite spacious inside. The front entrance was decorated in red, with red lanterns everywhere as

well as posters of the character for double happiness. The engagement party was already underway and the door was tightly shut.

“Halt!” A row of disciples from the Shattered Peak Sect blocked the way.

They looked aggressive and obviously uncooperative.

San Huming walked up and showed his red badge. “I am Chief Enforcer San Huming of the Crime and Punishment Division! I am here to arrest Ye Wuzhi for the murder of Xiao Yan. Make way!”

The disciples looked at each other and then laughed mockingly.

“What chief enforcer?”

“Get lost!”

Their strengths were puny, merely at the Mind Focusing Realm, and yet they dared to speak like this to San Huming and his enforcers. There was something seriously wrong with this city.

San Huming called his men and were about to force their way through when a surge of spiritual energy stopped them. A powerful cultivator came through the gate, carrying a war hammer. He was at the 10th Level of the Spirit Initiate Realm, much stronger than San Huming or the others.

The heavy-set man stroked his white beard and laughed, “Old San, have you gone senile? Do you think you can barge through these doors and arrest my grandnephew? Dream on! This is Ye Wuzhi's engagement party, his day of joy. Nobody is going to ruin it!”

He then waved the war hammer around with emphasis. The strength behind each swing was enough to shatter small mountains.

But San Huming wasn't deterred, not with Wu Qianyu's support, "Ye Mo. Don't try to stop me or else I will lock you up as well. This is the Crime and Punishment Department, our authority to investigate crimes and carry out judgment is supreme! Don't bring your sect down just for one Ye Wuzhi!"

Ye Mo laughed like he had heard a great joke, "Ridiculous. Utterly ridiculous! Ye Wuzhi is the future of the Shattered Peak Sect. If you want to move against Ye Wuzhi, you are creating an enemy out of the Shattered Peak Sect! Do you think you can bear that responsibility? Do you think Governor Zhou Guanyu will let that happen? No! He is true authority of this city, nobody except him can make me open these doors!"

"Silence!" Wu Qianyu's voice cut through the air like a razor blade.

She finally couldn't take it anymore. Listening to that noisy man boast about nonsense was one thing but hearing Zhou Guanyu's name was the last straw. This city was sick. She had to clean up the filth before it could heal.

The door to her carriage flung open and she leaped out. She landed gracefully on the steps, in front of San Huming.

"Mistress Wu!" The chief enforcer said uncertainly.

She waved her hand at him, commanding him to step back.

"Oh? And who is this lass?" Ye Mo asked, peering at her with dirty eyes, "You seem quite fierce."

Wu Qianyu withdrew her sect badge. A pulse of white spiritual energy filled the surrounding. Those knowledgeable enough knew what immortal energy was and they were cowed by it.

Ye Mo was forced to take a step back. "Who... who are you?"

“Wu Qianyu of Ten Thousand Flower Valley, disciple of Immortal Blue Dragon Chen Wentian!” She said with a slight smirk, “Kneel down!”

Ye Mo showed visible struggle in his expression but he did not kneel down in the end. He hefted the war hammer with both hands stubbornly. “I still cannot let you through. This sect is allied with Governor Zhou and the Zhou Clan. I know about you and I also know that Mistress Zhou Ziyun's authority supersedes yours since she is the second disciple while you are the third!”

Wu Qianyu felt white-hot fury take over her thoughts. The Purple Jade Sword emerged from its scabbard and flashed in the air. A purple ray of spiritual energy slammed into Ye Mo, knocking the weapon out of his hand and sending him tumbling.

“Listen closely!” She said, her voice clear for everyone to hear, “By the will of the Immortal Blue Dragon, this city is now under my authority. Does everyone understand?”

“Yes, Governor Wu!” San Huming shouted excitedly.

“Governor Wu!” The other enforcers echoed.

“Good!” She said and slashed her sword twice at the door.

It couldn't stand up to her sword energy and was destroyed, leaving the way clear.

Wu Qianyu pointed her sword forward, “We are going to take down Ye Wuzhi. Anybody that tries to stop us, take them as well!”

“Yes, Governor Wu!”

Chapter 353: Crashing the Engagement Ceremony

“You can't pass!” Ye Mo shouted.

The heavy-set man managed to recover and blocked the doorway again. He seemed to have gone crazy. Nothing else could explain why he came back for another beating.

Wu Qianyu shook her head and slashed her sword. A ray of purple energy pierced Ye Mo's shoulder. The Purple Jade Sword displayed its immortal might and it was unstoppable in the mortal realms. Her master had told her to use it less as it would stunt the development of her Dao. She fully intended to follow his instructions... right after she took down this disobedient sect.

"Uncle San, arrest him properly, please."

"Yes! Mistress Wu!" The chief enforcer said sheepishly.

Wu Qianyu finally stepped through the main doorway of the Shatter Peak Sect and into a wide, stone-paved entrance hall that was lined with well-manicured pine trees. Red festive lanterns were adorned everywhere possible and a crowd of disciples stood in her way in a loose semi-circle.

She took a few steps forward and they took a few steps back. She continued forward and parted the frightened disciples effortlessly without a fight.

She crossed the hall, towards the sounds of partying and laughter seeping through from a nearby room.

The two guards at the door thought for a moment about stopping her but then decided against such foolishness. They had heard and seen what happened to Elder Ye Mo. Instead, they bowed respectfully and opened the door.

The scene inside was of a lively banquet, with rows and rows of individuals sitting at tables laden with food and wine. A dozen scantily clad dancers were performing in the center.

Wu Qianyu stepped in followed by San Huming and his red-robed enforcers. Their red was the color of festivity but of blood and punishment.

The party-goers paused.

The dangers stopped.

Even the music ceased.

Everyone stared at Wu Qianyu as she walked to the center of the room. She raised her sect badge and addressed the raised stage in front of her that held the dignitaries and core members of the sect.

"I am Wu Qianyu of Ten Thousand Flower Valley, disciple of Immortal Blue Dragon Chen Wentian." She said and nobody dared to miss a single syllable, "This city is now under my authority. We are here to arrest Ye Wuzhi. Anybody that tries to stop me will be arrested as well."

Silence met her words.

Nobody dared to move or say anything.

It was too shocking. It was supposed to be Ye Wuzhi's great day, how could he be arrested?

Wu Qianyu studied the most notable people and found Ye Wuzhi sitting in the most prominent spot. His face was twisted in a mix of rage and fear. He was clad from head to toe in crimson and gold. He was certainly a handsome specimen of a human male. Too bad his black heart led him down the wrong path.

She searched for Nalan Wan'er but didn't find her. It was strange for the future bride to not be present for the engagement ceremony. The representatives from the Nalan family were certainly present and seated in distinguished spots. Perhaps there was something else going on here.

"Heroine Wu Qianyu, the paragon of righteousness... your great name precedes you!" A man past his prime rose to speak, "I am Ye Zongxie, sect master of the Shattered Peak Sect and Ye Wuzhi's father. May I ask, why is he being arrested?"

Wu Qianyu scoffed, "Ye Wuzhi is under arrest for the murder of Xiao Yan of the Black Sword Lodge."

"Lies!" Ye Wuzhi shouted, unable to control himself.

He had leaped up and shattered his table in fury.

“Silence!” Ye Zongxie pushed his son back down and bowed to Wu Qianyu, “Heroine Wu, today is my son’s great day of fortune. If you would give me face in front all these gathered heroes and heroines of the continent, I promise I will deliver Ye Wuzhi to the Crime and Punishment Division headquarters myself!”

“No. Uncle San, take down Ye Wuzhi!” Wu Qianyu replied flatly.

Nobody was going to negotiate with Ten Thousand Flower Valley, especially not the Shattered Peak Sect. What kind of ridiculous concept was this?

“Wait!”

“Hold on!”

Several voices interrupted Sun Huming from taking action. Several people rose from their seats with aggressive expressions.

An old man wearing black and red and carrying a long horse-tail whip spoke, “I am Hong Tian, the principal of the Black River Canyon School. Young lady, you should show restraint and reason in your actions. Do not let the arrogance of your good fortune drive you to offend the common people’s will.”

The Black River Canyon School was the number one mortal sect within Black Rock City. They were the most influential faction in the province before Chen Wentian arrived. Through many methods, they managed to get in the Zhou Clan’s good graces and maintained their position.

Wu Qianyu frowned slightly but didn’t reply as another person stood up, a middle-aged woman with an oversized and unbalanced headpiece and a ferocious face.

“I am Ao Yuanli, leader of the Bloodbird Group. I echo brother Tian’s words. The world is wide and filled with people. You may be a disciple of an immortal sect but there are millions of mortals struggling to make a living and survive in this world. You cannot oppress all of us without justification. We cannot follow your unprincipled demands.”

The ugly, mouthy woman’s Bloodbird Group was the strongest mercenary group in the region and arguably the whole province. Their ferocity in fighting against monsters and humans alike was well known to all the locals and they were equally as respected as the best sects.

“Well said!”

“This is wrong!”

“This is an engagement party!”

Other brave souls stepped forward to make their voices heard. In their eyes, they were right. All the representatives of the martial world of the Cloudy Mountain Province were gathered here for an engagement party, a celebration of unity and good fortune. This was not a place for Wu Qianyu to barge in and make demands left and right. They believed that even immortal sects had to follow certain rules of respect and etiquette. Since she showed them no face, she was looking down on all the gathered heroes and heroines of the province. Since she was being unruly and unreasonable, they had to unite and uphold righteousness.

This... was probably what they all thought, what they thought would save Ye Wuzhi.

They were all wrong.

They all misunderstood a fundamental fact, the difference between immortals and mortals. Immortals were simply divine beings walking amongst ants. If Chen Wentian was here, none of them would dare utter any bit of nonsense. They were all humans but an immortal was a higher state of being and existence.

Wu Qianyu, having taken her first tiny step toward an immortal Dao, was starting to understand a little of this mindset. She had to believe in herself to continue down this path. If was several months ago, perhaps she would have backed down out in front of so many people, in the face of such harsh criticism. But now, she was starting to think differently.

She was striving for a completely different world. She was striving for the immortal realms. A few petty mortals could not stand in the way of her will!

She put away her sect badge and drew the Purple Jade Sword. Deadly sharp sword energy emerged and wrapped her in a protective cocoon. It was as if ten thousand tiny sword blades were dancing around her.

“Everyone, listen carefully!” She said in a commanding voice, “I am going to arrest Ye Wuzhi. Anybody that gets in my way with be arrested as well. This is your final warning!”

“Nonsense!”

“Too arrogant!”

“This is ridiculous!”

She faced the united condemnation of the crowd with an expressionless face.

She then took a step forward and the banquet hall erupted into chaos.

Chapter 354: Test Subject

The power of Dugu’s 10th Sword swirled around Wu Qianyu’s body. It was a clear message. Anybody who approached her was going to pay. However, the attendants of the marriage ceremony were too invested. Their honor was on the line. Their peers were around them. Nobody felt like they could back down when nobody else did. A pack of sheep would have fled in the face of a single wolf but humans were different. They could think, they were arrogant. But they should have followed their instincts instead.

A random middle-aged man stepped in her way, dumbly trying to be brave. His body glowed red as flames appeared in his palms. He spouted something dumb but Wu Qianyu wasn't even listening.

The Purple Jade Sword flashed and the nondescript man flew away, spraying blood all over. A grievous slash wound was left diagonally on his chest but she had spared her life.

"Little girl! You dare?" Ao Yuanli shouted and raised a bullwhip.

It snapped out at Wu Qianyu's feet. The mercenary leader tried to stop her movements but her sword easily sliced through the whip like it was a piece of string.

"What... ahhhh!" Ao Yuanli's disbelief turned into horror as she was blown away by a strand of sword energy.

"Take them!" Wu Qianyu said as she advanced towards her target.

"Yes, Governor Wu!" Her enforcers responded and swarmed over the two that had fallen.

The people who still remained in front of her looked at each other apprehensively. Her strength was far beyond their expectations. The weapon she carried was too powerful, her sword energy was too strong. They all then turned to Hong Tian, the principal of the Black River Canyon School. It was the strongest sect and he was the strongest cultivator among them all.

"Young lady, you are simply too unruly! Let me instruct you properly!" Hong Tian declared and drew his sword.

It flashed out and danced in the air in an intricate pattern.

"Black River Sword!"

"Wow!"

The audience shouted their praises. It was the strongest sword style in the province. It was filled with designed poses and movements like a choreographed dance. It was many times more impressive than Dugu's 10th Sword which focused on nothing else besides simple power and principle of the sword, which was for killing!

"Black River Snake Fang!" Hong Tiang shouted and made his move.

His steps were fancy. His movements were pretty. His sword made a lot of noise as it whirled in the air. But in the end, it was still a trashy mortal art created by a mortal cultivator to satisfy his own vanity. It was nothing compared to a true immortal sword art!

First Movement, Slash the World!

Nobody saw what happened. One moment, Hong Tian was about to teach Wu Qianyu a lesson. The next, his sword was shattered and he was almost split into two, falling back with a vertical wound that extended from the top of his head down to his groin. He could let out a weak, bloody gurgle as he fainted.

The resistance broke. Their will to fight disappeared. It was as if everyone suddenly realized that Wu Qianyu was an immortal disciple once again. She was simply an untouchable existence. Who knew what other secrets she held?

The first one to kneel, ironically, was Ye Zongxie. The sect master of the Shattered Peak Sect, known for their cowardice during the monster invasion, was a coward. It wasn't surprising anyone except for one.

"Father?" Ye Wuzhi said incredulously, the pain of betrayal evident in his voice.

"I'm sorry, son." Ye Zongxie muttered, his head pressed firmly on the ground in capitulation.

The rest of the people in the engagement ceremony gave up soon after. Ye Wuzhi was tied up and dragged out of the build into the waiting carriages outside. The same happened to Ao Yuanli and Hong Tian.

“Where is Nalan Wan’er?” Wu Qianyu asked.

“She is in the back room. She is currently sedated with medicine.”

“Why?”

Ye Zongxie muttered something intelligible and refused to say anything else. Wu Qianyu guessed that the bride was unwilling and was being forced.

“Uncle San, take this man away too.”

“Why! But...”

“Yes, at once!”

Wu Qianyu left with the enforcers and returned to the Crime and Punishment Department. The lesser characters were given to San Huming to lock up for a while. She didn’t really care about people standing up for themselves. The most Ao Yuanli and Hong Tian would suffer was being locked up for a few days. She even sent them some medicine to recover.

The main culprits, Ye Wuzhi and Ye Zongxie, were hers. She was going to interrogate them personally. She was going to find out the truth and at the same time, she was going to test out her Dao of pain.

Wu Qianyu walked into an enclosed stone chamber. There was only one entrance, the doorway which she came from. Several lamps hung from the walls, providing weak flickering light which illuminated a man limply hanging from chains that were attached to the ceiling. It was Ye Wuzhi.

The man was still wearing his wedding regalia but his hair was now a mess and his face sported a few bruises from rough treatment by the enforcers. Unlike his father, Ye Wuzhi was only at the beginning levels of the Spirit Initiate Realm, the third to be exact. He was the perfect test subject.

“You...” He said weakly. He raised his head and glared at her, “You can’t do this to me!”

Wu Qianyu didn’t reply. Him being stubborn made her feel better. If he started spewing his guts at the first sign of trouble, she would lose someone to experiment on.

She closed her eyes and meditated for a while. She recalled the experiences of pain she had gone through in her past as well as the countless times within the dream array. She recalled the feeling she had as she broke through, the way she was able to connect with pain.

Pain was a strange thing. It was mental but it was also physical. It was capable of affecting the body, mind, and spirit at the same time. Its power was profound and held infinite potential.

Wu Qianyu wasn’t armed. She couldn’t use the Purple Jade Sword as the soul within it cultivate Dugu’s 10th Sword. It would interfere with her Dao too much.

She held out two fingers in one hand and aimed at Ye Wuzhi’s right arm. She closed her eyes and summoned spiritual energy from deep within her. At first, it was simply formless and without any attributes. She persisted, injecting her memories and experiences into the ball of spiritual energy that began to form on the tip of her fingers.

Poof!

The spiritual energy gathered suddenly dissipated. She had tried too hard, forced too much.

She tried again, forming a smaller ball. It was stable this time and she could sense the familiar aura within, one of pain.

She then pressed the ball of energy against Ye Wuzhi's arm. His spiritual aura surged, trying to resist. But soon, his face contorted. Veins popped out in his arms. His fingers twisted in odd directions as he strained against his shackles.

"Ahhhh! Shittttt!!!" He howled over and over again until the agony passed.

He went limp, panting heavily, "What... what did you do to me?"

Wu Qianyu simply summoned another ball of pain on the tip of her fingers.

"No!" He shouted, "No! Don't... AhhhHHH!!!"

Chapter 355: Sect Rules

Ye Wuzhi lasted an hour under Wu Qianyu's care. Most of that time, he actually managed to resist quite stubbornly. However, she managed to grasp a small breakthrough in her pain-filled spiritual energy and how to transfer it efficiently into the intended target.

Once that happened, her prisoner's screams were three times as loud and filled with wretchedness. He only lasted a few touches afterward before spilling his guts. He blurted everything he knew and it was a tale as old as time.

Nalan Wan'er was the most coveted maiden in Black Rock City, not only for her beauty but for the businesses and wealth that her family commanded. She was pursued by many capable and talented young men.

Xiao Yan of the Black Sword Lodge had been the victor in the pursuit of Nalan Wan'er's heart. Ye Wuzhi of the Shattered Peak Sect had been the loser. Everything was already set in stone when the monster invasion upended the province. It didn't take long for the Black Sword Lodge to fall and for vultures to circle the corpse.

The Shattered Peak Sect was the most opportunistic and shameless. Ye Wuzhi was responsible for hiring expert mercenaries to kill Xiao Yan but he wasn't acting alone. His father knew of everything and was

the one who actually approached the Nalan Family to break their previous engagement and form a marriage alliance with the Shattered Peak Sect instead. Therefore, he was equally guilty and needed to be interrogated until he confessed.

Wu Qianyu entered another dingy dungeon where the venerable sect master of the Shattered Peak Sect was shackled upright against the wall. Ye Zongxie's long gray hair was a wild mess. His formal attire was torn and dirty. He was nevertheless an expert at the peak of the Spirit Initiate Realm so there wasn't much the enforcers of the crime and punishment division could do to him. His spiritual energy was still strong and filled with defiance.

"Let me go!" He shouted at her, "You can keep me here!"

"Do you confess to conspiring with the Nalan Family and plotting to kill Xiao Yan?" She asked evenly.

"Black Rock City has rules! You can't do this! I am an ally of the Zhou Clan! I am an ally of Ten Thousand Flower Valley! Ask anyone! Ask Governor Zhou Guanyu!"

Wu Qianyu raised a finger. A pulse of familiar spiritual energy emerged. It was filled with pain.

"What... what are you doing?" Ye Zongxie shrank back upon sensing that ball of energy.

She touched his arm.

"Ugggh!" He grunted and gnashed his teeth while straining against his bindings.

She frowned. His resistances were much better than his son's. She collected much more energy at her fingertip and tried again.

"AhhhhH!" He wailed in agony.

He really felt it this time, that much was clear. His spiritual aura wavered and became disordered. His eyes rolled around without control and it was like he was drunk.

“What... what...” He panted after the pain subsided.

“I call it the Touch of Pain. It is a secret art I am working on. I apologize for the discomfort...”

“You apologize... what... ahhhhHHH!”

Wu Qianyu left the room a couple of hours later. She managed to complete the rudimentary form of the Touch of Pain. She decided that it would become the first ability in her brand-new secret art. It had the ability to transfer pain into an opponent to disrupt their physical body and even interfere with their ability to control spiritual energy. The touch could also numb a person’s spiritual veins as well as their spiritual sense.

Therefore, if she could inflict an opponent with the Touch of Pain during a fight, it would give her a momentary but very deadly advantage. The only drawback was that she had to physically touch them. The ability to send out waves of pain-filled spiritual energy with long-range attacks like in her dreams was still too far away.

But it wasn’t impossible. She just needed to continue to train...

She kept the prisoners locked up and returned to her quarters at the governor’s castle. Ye Zongxie and Ye Wuzhi had already confessed so their fates were sealed. They now belonged to her.

Working with the Crime and Punishment Division was convenient. She didn’t want to subject random innocent people to pain for her cultivation. She could only do it with criminals and detestable people since they deserved it anyway.

She meditated in her room and pondered her recent advancements for many hours. She contemplated pain and more methods on how to use it on others. She didn’t find any pleasure in torturing people. There was nothing pleasurable about pain. But she found it fascinating, the same way a person might find strange and disturbing things fascinating.

"Mistress Wu?"

Wu Qianyu opened her eyes when there was a knock at the door.

“What is it?” She called out.

“Mistress Wu, dinner is ready. Mistress Zhou has also arrived.” The servant said.

“I will be down in a moment!”

“Yes, mistress!”

Wu Qianyu let out a small sigh. Her actions no doubt caused some chaos for Zhou Ziyun. She would have to find a way to apologize to her.

“Sister Wu!”

Wu Qianyu entered the private upstairs dining room. Zhou Ziyun got up from the small table that was already laden with food and bottles of wine. The two sisters greeted each other amicably there was an unspoken tension in the air.

Wu Qianyu decided she had to break the ice first, “Sister Zhou... I apologize for causing trouble for you. I got caught up in the moment and was a little too eager to carry out justice.”

Zhou Ziyun tilted her head and studied Wu Qianyu for a moment before smiling, “Sister Wu, you’ve gotten stronger!”

She hugged Wu Qianyu who was surprised but also happy. The friction between melted away and they sat down together at the table. After some small talk and exchange of wine, Zhou Ziyun started on the matter at hand.

“Regarding the matter with the Shattered Peak Sect, they fully deserved what they got. The others who talked back to you also deserve whatever you have in store for them.” She said and then smirked, “Zhou Guanyu has been harshly reprimanded by me. His behavior in your presence was beyond unacceptable. He’s lucky it was me punishing him instead of master.”

They shared a knowing look and giggled. They both knew Chen Wentian’s dislike of other people ogling his disciples.

“But I have to ask,” Zhou Ziyun continued, “I will fully support you if you want to take over Black Rocky City and Cloudy Mountain Province for yourself. Master has me managing basically everything that is under his control. It is difficult for me to keep an eye everywhere. It's not like I want to own everything even though it might seem that way.”

Wu Qianyu blushed slightly, “Actually, I am not very good at managing a city, let alone a province. I also won’t be staying in any one place for long. It won’t be good for my training.”

Zhou Ziyun nodded, “I had a talk with master before I came and he guessed you would say that. He also told me to pass you a message, that he is awarding you the new rank of Punishment Elder of Ten Thousand Flower Valley. You will have the authority to carry out punishments for anyone and everyone who break the rules of the sect as well as rules of provinces under the sect's control.”

Wu Qianyu choked on a bit of wine, “Cough... Sister Zhou, what sect rules is he talking about? They don’t even exist!”

This was indeed the case. Ten Thousand Flower Valley was only recently established. Even though its influence and territory were vast, it was still a tiny sect. Chen Wentian had, up until this point, done whatever he wanted. He had encouraged each disciple to do what they felt was right. This was okay for principled disciples but it would be disastrous if there was an immoral disciple.

“Master decided that the sect needs formal sect rules.” Zhou Ziyun said, “But he wants all of our input on it. There will be a meeting at the sect in one month. Every disciple has one month to submit their suggestions.”

“Sounds good!”

Chapter 356: Teaching Moment (I)

Chen Wentian arrived in Black Rock City a few days later. He had been preoccupied with his other disciples and finally found some time to visit Wu Qianyu. He was glad that Zhou Ziyun and Wu Qianyu were able to settle their minor dispute but he still wanted to make sure everyone was alright.

He viewed his first three disciples differently from the others. They were his founding disciples; they were his foundation. Lin Qingcheng was the physical manifestation, a woman who cherished physical pleasure as much as himself. Zhou Ziyun was the brain, the mental manifestation. He and she often had similar thoughts about all kinds of matters. And lastly, Wu Qianyu was the manifestation of spirit. She was everything intangible; emotion, sentiment, and spirituality.

Although Lin Qingcheng was his first, he viewed the three of them almost equally. The last thing he wanted was a conflict between them. With Lin Qingcheng and Zhou Ziyun as close to each other as twins, the odd one out was Wu Qianyu. He had to make sure she was alright.

“Qianyu...” Chen Wentian said and knocked on the door.

A surge of spiritual energy undid the locks and the door swung open.

“Your spiritual control has gotten really good lately!” He praised as he stepped through.

The sight of a half-naked Wu Qianyu greeted his insatiable eyes. She was sitting cross-legged in a cultivation array, wearing nothing but a white gown that was almost see-through. The thin fabric hung off of her body and especially her twin peaks.

“Master...” She let the pain-filled spiritual aura around her dissipate and bowed respectfully.

“Good girl.” He pulled her up and gave her a kiss.

After sharing a sweet moment, they broke apart and sat down for a more serious conversation. He asked about the hiccup with the Zhou Clan whether she was alright. He wanted to make sure that she

was completely satisfied with the resolution, that she wouldn't harbor any resentment beneath her stoic demeanor.

"Master, I am fine. I should be asking the same about Sister Ziyun. I wasn't really sure why I acted so harshly. I hope she was able to handle the fallout properly."

"No worries. She can handle it. Speaking of which, I have something for you."

He took out a circular golden object that was no bigger than a person's palm. There was an indentation in the middle that seemed perfect for a lily flower.

"Take out your sect badge. It fits perfectly in there." He said.

Wu Qianyu did so and found it to be the case. The white lily flower contrasted nicely with the golden background and gave off a splendid glow. Its aura was both calm and yet firm, giving the holder an air of authority.

"This..." He said, "Is your official badge for the one and only Punishment Elder of Ten Thousand Flower Valley. If anyone misbehaves, you have the authority to do punish them in my name."

She blushed and held the badge to her chest, "Thank you... but are you sure?"

She didn't know if she could bear such a responsibility. She didn't think she deserve it. She had an elder position in the past in the Green Leaf Sect but that was because she was the daughter of the sect master and also the strongest disciple by far. Ten Thousand Flower Valley was different. There were so many talented and independent women, some that were much stronger than her.

Chen Wentian sensed her thoughts and rubbed her hand, "It doesn't matter. I trust you. Just do what you feel is right."

"..."

“For example, if there is an argument between disciples, do what you believe is right and what is fair to mediate. The sect will grow inevitably. There will be disciples of disciples and grand-disciples of disciples. They will all need a firm guiding hand. You are the best choice for the task. I believe in you.”

“Thank you...”

He laughed and pulled her to the bed, “Let’s do something fun.”

She nodded obediently and began to undress him. When he was left in his underwear, he stopped her and lied down.

“Show me what you’ve been up to, your new Touch of Pain.”

His immortal aura receded and there was no longer any spiritual energy protecting his skin.

Wu Qianyu sat beside him and concentrated for a moment until a ball of white energy gathered at the tip of her index finger.

“Very interesting. I never expected the attribute of pain to have such a color. Here, touch my arm. Use your full power.”

“Alright...”

Pain blossomed in his arm. It felt like he was being pierced by a million needles at once. His entire forearm went numb for a split second before her spiritual energy dissipated against his immortal body.

He was surprised by the intensity of her ability. The way it was already able to affect him like this meant that her Dao had great potential for tremendous power. She was well on her way to becoming an immortal and it wasn’t going to be just some average Spirit Lord. She had the talent for much more!

“Your ability takes a large amount of influence from the sword aura of Dugu’s 10th Sword?” He asked.

“Yeah, it was the thing I knew best so I did it without really meaning to. Should I not have?”

“Yes and no. Using another immortal Dao as inspiration can get you a head start which is good. But you should make a conscious effort to remove its influence as soon as possible. Plain sword aura is fine but the sword aura of Dugu’s 10th Sword isn’t. There are countless sword Daos in the world and while the sword is a flexible weapon, you should still seek to create something new instead of copying old and tired ideas.”

“I understand.”

“Good, now practice your ability on me a little more. I can bear it.”

She nodded and her hand began to roam across his chest.

Chapter 357: Teaching Moment (II)

Chen Wentian winced again and again as he let himself be subject to Wu Qianyu’s touch and her random whims. He gave detailed feedback on how he felt, how deeply the pain penetrated, and how much of it was blocked by spiritual energy. It was a painful teaching moment but he wouldn’t choose anyone else to do it in his place.

The bonus of the situation was that he was able to get her to touch him all over his half-naked body. She was usually a very passive lover. Even though she was loving and sincere, she was reserved in her conduct in public and even more shy in bed. It felt great to have her be the one to take the lead for once.

“Ouch...” He mumbled as her hands grazed his stomach.

“Are you alright?” She asked, rubbing the spot above his navel gently as if to make the pain go away faster.

She was concentrating on her task and she looked so delectable. His little dragon was already starting to awake and just need a little push.

“Try here...” He said and moved her hand lower.

She focused on her task with a serious expression, not noticing how close her hand was to the growing tent in his underwear. She summoned her powers once again and dragged her index finger across his skin.

He pretended to feel pain but his spiritual energy had returned. He grabbed her hand to stop her. He winked at her and moved her hand lower.

“This place needs a little attention.”

“This...” She blushed furiously as she finally realized.

She gripped his shaft and gave a firm handshake to his little dragon, which jerked up and roared with approval.

Both of them were thinking of the same thing, their training session was already forgotten. It was a natural act between lovers. Being in such close proximity for a few hours, it was a minor miracle they lasted this long.

“Master...” Wu Qianyu said uncertainly.

“That’s good, love.” Chen Wentian encouraged her with a smile.

She nodded and rubbed his erection with a little more certainty. Her hands were soft and yet firm at the same time.

He wondered briefly what would happen if she started using her pain energy on his stuff. He quickly swept the thought away and shuddered slightly. It sounded too crazy, even for him...

“Are you okay?” She asked, noticing it.

“Mmmm, good!” He rubbed her hips and removed her thin gown with his spiritual energy, revealing her full glory to his insatiable eyes.

He drank in the sight of her naked body, her hand clutching his cock, her thin black bush barely peeking out between her milky white thighs, her round globes that dropped down due to their weight and the reddish-pink nipples that were starting to harden.

He traced an invisible trail up her slender neck to her stunning smile and her bright brown eyes. She was so beautiful. She was his woman and she was going to love him all night long.

He slapped her thigh with a grin, “Come, you’re the one in charge tonight.”

“Me?” She asked, blushing again.

“You can do it.” He gripped his shaft and shook it teasingly, “Come here, ride me.”

“Okay...”

Her face became an adorable mask of concentration as she thought about how to properly go about the task. She finally decided on the strategy as she scooted up on her knees and then straddled his waist.

“Oh!” She gasped as his erection rubbed against her inner thigh.

“Do it, baby.” He whispered.

She listened to his words and lowered her hips. She gently tugged on him to get into position, to line up his cock head against the gate of her womanhood.

She sank down a centimeter and groaned softly. He felt the hint of warmth and jerked his hips upward to seek more.

She moaned some more as she found the right angle and finally let her weight fall down, sinking him into her depths.

“Ohhhhhh!” Wu Qianyu let out a relieved sigh as if she had accomplished a great task.

She was hot, she was wet, and she was very tight inside. His cock was enveloped in her velvety folds. Her weight pressed him deep inside.

Her thighs wrapped around his waist. Her hands were on his chest as she panted, trying to get her bearings. This caused her breasts to swing freely before his eyes and they were irresistible.

Chen Wentian reached up with both hands and found her nipples. He caught the two pink nubs with his fingers and tweaked them.

“Wentian!” She cried out in complaint.

He chuckled, “Ride me, fuck me.”

Those words sent a shudder of excitement through her body. Her skin flushed with desire and she finally started to move her hips.

Up and down, she gyrated her hips, dragging his cock in and out of her sopping wet pussy. Her tight folds clung to his shaft, unwilling to let him go, as she pulled up. When she came back down, his hardness parted her insides like a fiery spear, piercing her flesh and touching her core.

He encouraged her by pinching her nipples in sync with her thrusts. As he pinched harder, she rode him with even more desperation. He was thoroughly enjoying the moment, this rare moment where she was on top.

At some point or another, Wu Qianyu finally fell down on him. Her breasts pressed into his chest. Their lips connected as passion flowed through them. He missed her tender, shy kisses and he showed her as much love as he could with his tongue.

Simultaneously, he took over most of the work where they were still connected at the hips. He started thrusting upward, driving his cock at a new angle, fucking her hard and fast until he drove her senseless.

“Ahhhhh, Wentian... I’m coming... AhhhH!”

She clutched the pillows, the sheets, his shoulder, anything she could get a hold of as her orgasm arrived unexpectedly. Her pussy twitched uncontrollably around his dick while her whole body shook from the ordeal.

When she finally came to again, Chen Wentian had flipped them onto her back. He was on top again, nestled firmly between her legs and ramming his cock into her pussy energetically.

“Ohhh!” She moaned, still sensitive from the orgasm.

“You like that?” He asked, “You have to fuck me hard... like you want it!”

Her incoherent moans only urged him to go faster. She was beyond wet, she was overflowing. He slammed his hips against hers as a steady slapping noise filled the room.

He felt his own orgasm building and didn’t try to stop it.

“Qianyu... I’m going to come.”

She moaned in approval, wrapping her legs around his waist.

“You want me to come inside you?”

She clutched his neck and kissed him hard. He knew she wanted it and he wanted it too. He clutched her soft ass and plunged even deeper inside her.

His balls twitched and the muscles in his groin shook. His orgasm came like a tidal wave, sweeping over his body. His cock jerked inside her pussy, spraying copious amounts of white-hot essence until she was filled to the brim.

She felt all of it, including the searing heat that was spreading inside her, the evidence of his love. It was unbearably sexy and she quickly came again with her own orgasm to match his...

The pair hugged each other in the afterglow, their hips still connected. She didn't want to lose his simmering heat. He was looking forward to another round and didn't want to leave.

“I'm sorry for not being able to finish on top like you wanted.” She said softly, her head burrowed into the crook of his neck.

Her efforts at taking charge were adorable but she still lacked experience as well as stamina in that area. Compared to his more passionate lovers, she wasn't quite there yet.

“You did great.” He praised her. “Don't worry about it!”

He meant it. She was unique in her own way so it didn't matter. He loved her all the same and her simply listening to his words and trying was enough.

Chapter 358: Solitary Training (I)

The next morning, Chen Wentian left Black Rock City with Wu Qianyu. They flew east until they came to the border between Cloudy Mountain Province and the wilderness. He would leave her alone here to continue her practice. Since she had made a minor breakthrough with the Touch of Pain, it was

important to keep the momentum going. Comprehension and advancement were often tied to momentary inspiration. If that opportunity passed, it would be a huge waste.

They stopped in the middle of a deserted forest. It was silent all around. Any monsters in the vicinity had already hidden or fled at the presence of an immortal.

Chen Wentian held Wu Qianyu's hand and returned her spatial bag to her, "I've refilled it with all the supplies you'll need; food, spiritual stones, medicine. Don't hesitate to use them. Don't be stingy."

She nodded and transformed the camouflaging spatial bag into a necklace. "Master, thank you."

"This is your first time stepping into a true wilderness. I want to be with you but I can't. It is something you must tackle yourself. I won't step in to help unless your life is in danger. Understand?"

"I understand."

"That said, you can still take some risks. Tortoise Can Fly and the Purple Jade Sword will help you greatly. You know how to use them to their full potential."

"I know."

"Practice and learn all those sword arts in your spare time. Use it as inspiration to develop your own sword style for pain energy. The Black River Sword is too flash and ostentatious but it is good at collecting spiritual energy and preparing the user for launching powerful attacks. The Sword of Painted Mountain focuses on accuracy and endurance, it is also good. Grand Mountain Temple's style is breadth of knowledge, that's also good..."

Wu Qianyu put a finger to his lips and smiled, "Master, I am prepared."

Chen Wentian knew she was but he was still worried. The wilderness was no joke. He had been in the same position as her just a few years ago and he almost died many times. He wanted to say something else about all the sword arts he had gathered for her but he couldn't think of anything.

Deep down in his heart, he knew she would be fine. That she would be fine without him. He wanted her to need him, to rely on him, but he knew it was detrimental to her immortal Dao. Aside from dual cultivation arts, most immortal paths were a solitary affair. It was a single being's struggle against their mortality, against the cycle of samsara, against the laws of the world. There was nobody else that could walk the path for them, only themselves.

He hugged her one last time, gave her a kiss, and slapped her butt for good measure. "I'm leaving. See you in a month."

Wu Qianyu nodded and waved serenely as he flew away.

Zhou Guanyu emerged from the teleportation array and arrived in the central square of Thousand Flower City. The city square was crowded bustling but everyone seemed to pause as the instantly recognizable attire and appearance of a Zhou Clan member attracted everyone's attention.

"Young Master Zhou!"

"Young Master Zhou!"

He was promptly greeted by familiar guards and whisked away in a gilded carriage. This only served to cause even more commotion as the common bystanders clamored to get a better look of the handsome and elite member of the Zhou Clan. To satisfy his own vanity, Zhou Guanyu even leaned out of the window to bask in the adoration of the crowd.

A short ride later, he arrived at the Zhou Clan complex, four city squares located beside the river that belonged to the clan. Their roots were still in River East City but the whole clan was rapidly moving their operations to this brand-new city, the site of their future prospects and efforts. This complex was their new home and would be their home for many generations to come.

He entered the third building which was the residences for the younger generation. He walked through the corridors that were decorated with gold, statues, paintings, and pots of rare flowers and herbs. Rows of guards and gaggles of female servants greeted him at every step.

He arrived at his quarters which was no less impressive, an expansive room with lavish furnishings as well as suits of armor in glass cases and fancy weapons from far-off lands hanging from the walls. Everything cost a small fortune. The contents in this room put together were equal to his branch family's entire wealth just a year ago. Now, just his branch family alone controlled businesses and assets worth over a million gold taels and even that amount was rising fast every day.

All of this was due to one person. The transformation of their clan was due to one person.

Zhou Guanyu walked up to a large, life-sized painting that hung prominently from one wall. It depicted their lord, their supreme benefactor, Immortal Blue Dragon Chen Wentian.

Zhou Guanyu believe that his status, wealth, power and influence were all due to the venerable immortal, instead of Zhou Ziyun. It was a view held by many within the clan, especially among those in the branch family. By now, everyone knew the rumors of how she had spread her legs for Lord Chen at an opportune moment and won his favor. Nobody blamed her for her actions but many didn't respect her for it.

It was especially the case for young men like Zhou Guanyu. He was of the same generation as Zhou Ziyun. How could he sing praises about a woman, even if she was their clan's mistress? Instead, he revered the sect master of Ten Thousand Flower Valley. As a man, he couldn't help but be jealous of Chen Wentian's beautiful disciples. But there was also deep respect and a great sense of motivation. If Chen Wentian could do it, then he, Zhou Guanyu, could also do it.

He stared at the painting for a while until there was a knock at the door and a familiar presence.

"Father."

The elder Zhou Wanli entered the room and shook his head when he saw what Zhou Guanyu had been looking at.

"I thought you were going to bring home a daughter-in-law as beautiful as the immortal's disciples. What happened? What went wrong in Black Rock City?"

“Nalan Wan’er, she has fallen out of my grasp.” Zhou Guanyu said.

She had been his target all along. Aside from angels such as Long Yifei and Jasmine, Nalan Wan’er was the most beautiful maiden he had ever set eyes on.

Killing her fiancé had been his intention all along. He had manipulated the Shattered Peak Sect into doing his bidding without them even knowing it. He had planned on swooping in at the last moment to rescue her and win her heart in a heroic fashion.

Zhou Wanli sighed and patted his son’s shoulder, “Who could have known Wu Qianyu would have come to Black Rock City at that moment. Who could have predicted that she would cause such a mess right when your plan was about to succeed. It is unfortunate...”

“I was so close!” Zhou Guanyu said, slamming his fist on the table. “That Wu Qianyu...”

“What can we do? She is the lord immortal’s disciple. Just take the loss and move on.”

“Doesn’t matter if we can or can’t. What if we should do something?”

“What do you mean?” The father asked.

The son leaned in and his voice became a whisper, “Wu Qianyu will only cause the Zhou Clan more problems in the future, now that she has become the Punishment Elder of Ten Thousand Flower Valley. She is our mistress’ direct competitor. It would be greatly beneficial to us if something bad were to happen to her that would let her fall out of favor with Lord Chen.”

Zhou Wanli grabbed the front of Zhou Guanyu’s robe, “You... do you know how dangerous your words are?”

Zhou Guanyu didn’t flinch, “I know. But I also know that Wu Qianyu left Black Rock City a few days ago and headed for the eastern wilderness. Lord Chen has returned without her, meaning she is there all by herself. There is no one to blame if a little accident befell her.”

“You...” Zhou Wanli glared at his son for a long time but he couldn’t find the proper reprimand. “You’re on your own on this one. Don’t do anything that will ruin the Zhou Clan.”

“I know!”

Chapter 359: Solitary Training (II)

The wilderness that bordered the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent to the east was even bigger than the subcontinent. It was filled with jagged peaks, deep canyons, raging rivers, and thick ancient forests. It was filled with all kinds of beasts as well as entire demon domains. There were rumors of small pockets of wild humans, disconnected from the civilized world. There was even the possibility of running into the ruins of a long-extinct kingdom.

The eastern wilderness was a place of wonder and danger. Only Spirit Lords would dare to traverse the entire territory and that was only by land. Cultivators from the provinces only dared to spend a limited time within the wilderness and did not stray far from known paths and landmarks. People used it as a challenge to hone their skills and search for treasures and luck opportunities.

Wu Qianyu’s first destination was a mercenary fortress a few days of travel from the border. It had been overrun during the initial stages of the monster invasion but it was retaken right after the invasion ended. The Bloodbird Group was one of the mercenaries that helped reestablish the fortress but it wasn’t the only one. Wu Qianyu was slightly worried about meeting members of that mercenary group after locking up and torturing their leader but she didn’t have a choice. This was the most established route into the wilderness from Cloudy Mountain Province.

She rode a brown mare steadily through a dim forest path. Sunlight barely peeked in through the thick canopy and there was a lingering fog between the tree trunks. The sound of insects and birds filled her ears while the smells of strange flowers and fungi stung her nose.

She kept one hand on the reins and one hand on the Purple Jade Sword, ready for anything. She was the only human around for many kilometers. She was getting close to the fortress but it was strangely quiet.

Sha! Sha!

Wu Qianyu ducked as a jagged arrow zipped past her head.

Her steed let out a pained whinny as a pair of arrows embedded themselves into its neck and check.

She leaped into the air as the horse collapsed. The Purple Jade Sword was already out and so was the sharp sword aura of Dugu's 10th Sword. She spun and deflected another volley of arrows and landed in a crouch, her sword raised high above her head in a protective stance.

"Hahaha!"

"Fresh meat!"

"Oy, it's a human female!"

Harsh voices came from the trees on both sides as a squad of goblins appeared. These demons had scaly gray skin, a hunched posture that only brought them to shoulder height, and what could only be described as knobby and rocky bodies. They were granite goblins, a species that lived underground and liked to dig through solid rock to create surprise attacks.

She counted ten in front of her and six blocking the path to her rear. There definitely shouldn't have been so many so close to the fortress, especially in one group.

Wu Qianyu stood back up and stowed her sword in her hand behind her arm. She gathered the power of pain in her right hand and directed it all into her index finger. Now was the perfect time to test out her Touch of Pain, in the middle of combat. She had no qualms using her Dao on demons.

"She's mine!"

"Don't kill her!"

A burly goblin with a rotund stomach rushed at her with a heavy club. It made it only halfway before she rushed up to meet it. Her spiritual energy knocked away the club and she was able to tap its arm with her finger.

“Yaaaaa! Graaaahhh.” The goblin fell to the ground and writhed helplessly.

It was only at the peak of the Mind Focusing Realm. It had no protection against a spiritual attack that caused unbearable pain. It quickly threw up the contents of its stomach, rolled a few times, and fainted away.

“She killed Big Belly! Get her!”

The goblins leaped at her from all sides. At the same time, she charged at the nearest foe.

A brief and vicious brawl broke out. Wu Qianyu’s sword energy kept her safe from wayward attacks while every touch she landed incapacitated a goblin completely. There was plenty of vomit in addition to the expelling of other orifices as the goblins lost control of their bodies. If it was humans, it would have been a sad and disgusting sight. But for goblins, it was exactly what they deserved.

Five goblins fell.

Ten goblins fell.

Soon, only the goblin leader was left, a tall lanky specimen at the middle levels of the Spiritual Control Realm. It wielded a heavy metal club and specialized in especially tough skin.

Wu Qianyu found to her surprise that her Touch of Pain was ineffective against it. The reason was due to the heavy accumulation of rock into a hard armor-like shell on its skin which was four or five times as thick as the other goblins. This goblin felt no pain because it simply felt nothing. It was like poking her finger at a boulder, it was pointless.

Such weakness was to be expected but it was still a little discouraging. For her Dao to be truly useful in an offensive role and not just interrogating prisoners, it needed to be able to penetrate through spiritual armor and the thick hide of beasts and demons.

“Hahaha! Good! Now I get you all to myself.” The ugly face cackled and waved its club, “I want to hear you scream!”

Wu Qianyu huffed in frustration and finally pulled out the Purple Jade Sword. With simple slashes that contained the purest and sharpest sword energy, she severed the demon’s hands and feet and left it sobbing and begging on the forest floor.

She stepped back looked around the battlefield at her handiwork. Several goblins were still writhing in pain while most others were unconscious. She gathered them up in a small clearing next to the forest path and prepared to experiment with her Dao of pain.

She felt only a sterile curiosity like she was tackling a difficult problem, not torturing a living, intelligent being. In the past, she would have definitely refused to do something like this. It was a change that all cultivators went through while on their path towards immortality. It was a question of how far one was willing to go and what they were willing to do to achieve their goals. Some would lose themselves and emerge from the journey a completely different person. Others were able to hold onto their values and come out relatively unscathed.

Wu Qianyu’s paused and thought about what her master had told her, about values, about how it was important to stay true to a certain philosophy and keep a set of principles in order to not lose her way along the journey.

Her enemy was demons and evildoers of the world, beings that caused her pain and would seek to cause her and her master pain. Her enemy was not ordinary humans living their lives or innocent beasts that were only defending themselves. This was her creed, her limit, her belief.

As long as the subjects of her pain were deserving, she would have a clean consciousness. These granite goblins before her certainly deserved it.

She made the decision and, with a steady heart, reached for the first goblin with the Touch of Pain.

Chapter 360.: Enhanced Touch of Pain

It didn't work out quite the way Wu Qianyu hoped. The goblin leader was simply too tough and obstinate for her immature Dao of pain. The detestable goblin even started to laugh and taunt her.

She was frustrated but undeterred. She moved to the goblin underlings that were still alive. She went through them one by one, ruthlessly subjecting them to unbearable pain. They screamed and uttered all kinds of unmentionable insults about her and the human race in general. It was clear how deeply demons hated humans and it only urged her to use even more power.

She tortured all of the smaller goblins and discovered a problem. She couldn't break their wills and it seemed that her pain energy was less effective on them than her human test subjects. The father and son pair of Ye Zongxie and Ye Wuzhi had capitulated rather quickly and it had filled her with confidence. Now, that confidence was being seriously tested by a few insignificant demons.

Wu Qianyu sighed and stood back up. She looked around the forest and wondered what she should do. Something probably happened to the mercenary fortress but she wasn't concerned with it for now. It was a place filled with hardened mercenaries. If they couldn't take care of themselves, it wasn't her fault.

The fortress was also only a convenient stop for her, not a necessary one, what with all the supplies stuffed into her spatial bag. She didn't need to be anywhere specifically, only somewhere that was beneficial to her cultivation. Thus, she decided to continue training with the goblins.

To be safer and attract less attention, she buried the dead goblins and moved the others several kilometers away off the beaten path and into the ancient forest.

She made camp above the ground in a massive tree. Its thick horizontal branches were wide and flat, a perfect place to stay out of the way of roaming beasts. She tied up the goblins on smaller branches, ate a small meal, and went into meditation.

Wu Qianyu drifted into her memories and dreams. She relived her life in the Green Leaf Sect, the death of her family and friends, as well as all the other times she experienced pain herself or from others.

Her understanding of pain and the emotions it wrought came from her experiences and it was important for her not to lose that connection. She patiently relived the days long past, refreshing those agonizing moments over and over until they were fresh in her mind.

Wu Qianyu stayed like that until the next morning when she was disturbed by the raucous goblins. They were struggling against their binding energetically and the strongest one was about to escape by the time she got to it.

“Slut! Human woman!” The goblin spat. “Untie me and I’ll show you my true power! You’ll be screaming underneath me. Hahaha!”

She resisted the urge to chop off its head and instead stuffed its mouth tree bark so it couldn't make noise anymore. She pulled an underling over and pointed her finger at it, with the leader watching her every move furiously.

The power of pain gathered from within her spiritual sea but this time it was tinged with something extra, a mental attack. This was due to a small breakthrough that she had during the night. She realized that her Dao of pain contained a mental component as well as the obvious physical component. She was already unconsciously using it against human targets because, as a human herself, she understood human thoughts and emotions. It was easy to naturally manipulate a person's mental defenses the same time they were afflicted by pain.

This time against the goblins, she was consciously adding that same mental component to her attack. Demons were different from humans but, in many ways, they were also the same. They had fears, dislikes, and things that caused them pain. Goblins, from her studies, were most afraid of starvation, competition from other goblins, and death. They weren't unfeeling, mindless creatures.

“Ahhhhh! Save me, big brother!” The small goblin howled as pain surged through its body.

Its screams were three times as loud as yesterday. The mental attack was rapidly breaking down its stubbornness and attacking where it hurt the most. It writhed in its bindings but it was helpless. It couldn't escape the pain that was driving it crazy.

Helpless, it gave one last shout of defiance, “Go to hell, human!”

It then proceeded to bite through its tongue. It bled out a few moments later and died.

Wu Qianyu expression barely changed. She wasn't too surprised by the goblin taking its own life. In the past, she had wanted to do the same when she had been captured. But it did prove one thing, that her improved Touch of Pain was doing a better job.

She went around and tested her improved secret art on the other goblin underlings. The result was the same, with all of them committing suicide. They all saw what had happened to her first victim and decided to end their own suffering quickly rather than suffer at the hands of a sadistic human.

The only one that remained stubborn was the goblin leader. It stared at her with fury and hatred, as if by simply staring, it could strike it down the human before it.

Wu Qianyu stared back at the large goblin impassively. Its defiance suited her just fine as she had one more breakthrough to test out.

The power of pain gathered in her right hand. But instead of her one finger, she held out her index and middle finger. It was universal hand sign for cultivator of the sword. It was a form honed to perfection by countless generations of sword practitioners. It was the embodiment of sword Dao. All kinds of sword Daos contained some usage of this hand sign in their martial arts and meditative practices.

With two fingers extended, she gathered two forms of power. The first was the power of pain, enhanced with a mental attack. It was joined by the sharpness of sword energy. This was inspired by Dugu's 10th Sword but it did not originate from it. It was her own making, designed to perfectly meld with pain into a brand-new move, an enhanced Touch of Pain.

Piercing Pain!

The combination of spiritual energies shot out from her fingertips in an invisible beam.

It impacted against the granite goblin's rocky hide and immediately made a deep cut. The goblin's eyes widened in horror as the sword energy component of the attack steadily dug its way into its defense.

Soon, there was a spurt of blood as the attack pierced into its body. It shuddered and opened it's mouth in disbelief as pain energy tore through.

“Gahhhhh! AhhhhhHHHH!”