

F Disciples 401

Chapter 401.: Six Meridians Demon Blight (II)

Sect Master Liu Jia trembled as he stared up the strange immortal before him. He had never heard of Immortal Sword Bandit before and knew nothing about what kind of bad reputation Lin Huzhong could have had. None of that quite mattered at the moment since his life and his disciples' lives had all been saved by this great man before him.

"Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong..." Liu Jia said softly, reverently, "This one will forever remember your name. My Pine Mountain Sect will forever remember your great name even after I am gone."

"Don't be so hasty about dying. Here!" "Here!" Chen Wentian said and pressed a small booklet into the old man's chest with his fat hand, "This will help your sect against the current demon uprising."

"Six Meridians... Demon Blight?" Liu Jia muttered as he thumbed through the pages.

"Hahaha! That's right. Six Meridians Demon Blight. This is a sword style I have developed myself to fight demons. Don't be dissuaded by its simplicity. It contains complex attributes that will allow you to destroy demons with a simple swing. How about a demonstration?"

Chen Wentian used his spiritual energy and pulled the most powerful jueyuan to his feet. The demon was at the peak of the Spirit Initiate Realm, more than a match for the old sect master who was only at the ninth level.

"How many attacks of your most powerful secret art would it take to kill this demon?" He asked.

Liu Jia shuddered slightly, "This one is useless... Lord Lin, I would need at least ten attacks to break through its tough defenses if it was not bound by your power."

"Take a few moments to practice the first sword in my sword art."

"As you command." Liu Jia bowed.

The Pine Mountain Sect sect master diligently studied Zhou Ziyun's creation. He flipped the first few pages back and forth, muttering to himself. He practiced the movements described within many times, first without a weapon and then with his sword. After a short while, he closed the book and looked back up.

"Lord Lin, I think I've grasped the basics of the first sword."

Chen Wentian nodded sagely, "Your comprehension isn't bad. Then again, I created this sword art to be accessible to all mortal cultivators. It is ingenious in its simplicity and yet it contains profound concepts at the same time. Hahaha, what did you think about it?"

"Er... yes, indeed it is very amazing and enlightening." Liu Jia answered lamely. "I have never studied a sword art as incredible as this one."

"Hahaha, good, good! Alright, no more idle chit-chat. Why don't you try it out against this little demon."

Chen Wentian waved his hand, freeing the lone jueyuan from imprisonment and surrounding them in a ring of spiritual energy.

The monkey-like creature beat its chest in fury and fondled its engorged genitals as it howled at Chen Wentian and Liu Jia. It then charged at the old sect master without warning, its thick and muscular arms intending to rip the man to shreds.

Liu Jia wasn't a novice. He first retreated several steps and deftly dodged to the side. The demon rolled past and collided with the spiritual energy barrier. It screamed in frustration and shook its head several times. By the time it got back up and ready to fight, Liu Jia had already launched his attack.

"First Blight! Taiyin Sword!"

His sword shot out.

The demon's sharp claws extended, intending to parry to incoming blow.

Then... against the expectations of both Liu Jia and the jueyuan, the sword sliced through three sets of demon claws as easily as a breeze and embedded itself in the demon's palm so deeply that it came to rest against bone.

“Raaaahhh” The demon howled in pain, ripping his hand away with a fountain of blood.

“Wha...” Liu Jia looked at his sword and then at his writhing foe in astonishment.

Even if he had used the most powerful attack of his sect's secret art, he could not have broken the jueyuan's defense so easily. Yet, he was able to do it with one strike utilizing the simplest and weakest move of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style. Any doubt he had left in his heart about the strange Immortal Sword Bandit disappeared in an instant.

“Die demon!” He shouted and launched another attack.

Chen Wentian watched the fight silently. He was very satisfied with Zhou Ziyun's creation. The sword style contained just enough demon slayer energy to give it a distinct advantage against all types of demons. It wasn't so much that it was overpowered but it would certainly cause a stir amongst mortal cultivators. This was exactly the effect he wanted.

Liu Jia dispatched the powerful demon after a few more attacks. He suffered a few hits in return due to the difference in cultivation levels but it was still a groundbreaking result.

“Lord Lin!” Liu Jia once again bowed before Chen Wentian, “Your sword art is indeed everything you described it to be. I am beyond satisfied and thankful. If there is anything you wish me to do, even if it is to follow you through a sea of flames, I am willing!”

Chen Wentian waved him off, “Nonsense, I don't need much. But I do have one request.”

“Please instruct me!”

Chen Wentian produced ten more booklets and dumped them into the old man's arms, “Spread the Six Meridians Demon Blight across the land, far and wide. Give these books to your neighbors. Teach this sword style to all of your disciples without delay. Do not be stingy. Do not attempt to make money off of this. This is my generosity, do not sully it.”

This time, everyone fell to their knees and bowed.

“Thank you, Lord Immortal!”

“Thank you, Lord Lin!”

“Good. I am leaving to spread my sword style to more people. We will not meet again but remember my words.”

“Yes, immortal!”

“Yes!”

Hiding a smirk, Chen Wentian blasted off into the sky, leaving the Pine Mountain Sect behind. He would make many more stops today and in the following days, spreading the amazing Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style to as many cultivation sects and human factions as possible.

This was Zhou Ziyun's plan. Since their unseen enemy had cast such a wide net, they were going to oblige and take the bite. The mass distribution of a pseudo demon slayer art would be irresistible and exactly what that pesky demon should be looking for.

Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong was the fat carp that was going to draw the fisherman out of hiding.

Chapter 402.: Man of Honor

Chen Wentian, as Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong, continued his tour of benevolence across the northeast provinces of the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent. He hit several more sects after the Pine Mountain Sect and even more the day after. At each sect, he gifted multiple copies of the Six Meridians Demon Blight with instructions that they were to distribute to others. And thus, little by little, his little demon slayer art was spreading across the land.

This also improved his reputation and name recognition. Many people were wary of him due to multiple smear campaigns by the Beast God Sanctum after his attacks against them. Giving away for free a sword style to fight demons helped fight back against those perpetuated lies.

After all, where was the Beast God Sanctum when mortal lands were swamped by a demon uprising? Nowhere in sight! No other immortals stepped in to help either. They all stayed in their home provinces like hens sitting on a nest of eggs. None of them ventured out to help the struggling mortal provinces.

There was only Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong. He was the infamous bandit, a loose cultivator of the highest ability, and, it seemed many, a friend of the people...

This was also Chen Wentian's declaration of war against his unseen enemy. Whatever kind of demon that was hiding and stirring up trouble, it was sure to be attracted by the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style. Its mission here was to investigate the possible existence of a demon slayer or demon slayer art. It would have no choice but to investigate Lin Huzhong.

The irony was that the demon could spend as long as it wanted investigating his background and it would still come up empty-handed. Lin Huzhong was a fake persona. He did not exist. He had no background, no family, no history, nothing at all.

He was simply the demon slayer. He had the demon slayer. He was declaring the truth that the demon wanted to find out loud and clear, provocatively and without fear. The demon would realize soon enough that there was nothing else for it to do except a direct confrontation, one Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong was eagerly looking forward to.

On the third day, Chen Wentian's tour took him to a familiar province famous for its ice and snow. Unlike the other provinces he had visited before, he did not plan to stop at lowly mortal sects. He only had one place of interest he wanted to visit.

He let out a hearty laugh which made his fake belly jiggle, "Heh, let's have some fun!"

He flew across the province and headed for the most powerful sect in the province. It was an icy fortress situated atop a frozen mountain, Glacier Palace.

As he entered the eternally snowy mountain range, scores of message talismans shot into the sky, going in many directions. They were the sect's forward scouts, placed around a wide perimeter to watch for unfamiliar immortals and potential dangers. All immortal sects had something similar, his own included.

He continued without slowing. He flew through the glacier valleys and quickly approached the icy peak which housed the vestal halls of Glacier Palace.

More panicked message talismans announced his impending arrival. He ignored them all and arrived at the main entrance. As he landed, the massive twin doors of ice promptly slammed shut in his face as a white-blue spiritual aura spread around the entire sect. Within a split second, this energy covered the icy complex entirely and hummed with a profound and icy power.

This was the Glacier Palace's protective array formation named the Barrier of Eternal Ice. He was familiar with it, being the sect's administrator. It was capable of stopping his progress and all other immortal intruders at the Spirit Lord Realm. A foe could still try to break through forcefully but it would take them several days, more than long enough for help to arrive.

Chen Wentian had no intentions. He simply straightened his windswept robes, sucked in his large stomach, and cleared his throat.

"Ahem! I am Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong. I mean your sect no harm, may I speak to your sect master?"

There was a lengthy pause. Then, a small window opened above the doors and a small voice drifted out, "Glacier Palace currently is under the guidance of Immortal Blue Dragon Chen Wentian, an administrator

appointed by the Immortal Association and Immortal Gentle Lotus Gong Liyun... Apart from these two immortals, nobody else is allowed entry to the sect... Venerable Immortal Sword Bandit, please turn back. We cannot disobey our orders and we cannot open these doors.”

Chen Wentian hid a smile. That voice belonged to his disciple Su Yue. He knew both twins were at Glacier Palace and he had expected one of them to speak up but he did not expect it to be Su Yue. She was the more mellow one that usually followed Su Xue's lead. Still, he was glad that she was standing up to the impromptu challenge.

“Ah, I see. However, I have flown myself over millions of kilometers and braved the dangers of the world to visit your sect. Surely, it would be improper to simply shoo me away?” He said loudly, “Also, the name of Glacier Palace is famous throughout the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent as a cultivation holy land. How can I leave just like this?”

This time, another familiar voice piped up, “Lord Bandit, Glacier Palace is indeed a sacred place for women and has been for a thousand years. That said, you are a man and thus we cannot allow you entry.”

Chen Wentian laughed heartily, “I am indeed a man, that is true. But Chen Wentian is also a man, is he not? What about all the other males that are allowed to enter the sect, those from Divine Blazing Mountain? Why can't I be like them? What if I said I am also looking for a Dao partner? Look here!”

He leaped into the air and launched a series of kicks and punches that emitted flames of a deep scarlet color like blood. He whirled around several times before landing while striking what he thought was a heroic pose.

“Ha! What do you think about that? Do my flames of passion not burn bright? How does it compare to your Immortal Blue Dragon's flames?” He asked.

“No!” Su Xue's voice was tinged with a bit of anger, “Please leave! My master is on his way! Someone like you cannot be spoken in the same sentence as my master. He is ten times... no, twenty times the man you are!”

Chen Wentian snorted and patted his stomach, "Little woman, never in my life has anybody spoken to me like that! I should lay you across my lap and slap your disobedient butt until it's blushing red! Somebody has to discipline you if your master is incapable!"

He waved his palm threateningly and huffed in mock anger, "What Blue Dragon, what nonsense! Whatever... I, Lin Huzhong, am a man born of honor and righteousness. I am a man amongst men. I am an immortal whose name will resound across this subcontinent as the patron of all mortals and a hero of the common people."

He then produced around a hundred booklets of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style and dumped it on the ground.

"I know this province, like others around here are suffering from a demon uprising. This is a demon slayer art I have developed that is highly effective against all types of demons. I have gifted this sword art to countless mortal sects and immortal sects alike. Do what you want with it. I came here with honest intentions. My conscience is clear. But since you all are a bunch of rude and stingy women; your daddy won't argue with you anymore! Goodbye!"

With that, Chen Wentian promptly left Glacier Palace, leaving his baffled disciples and several thousand flabbergasted women behind.

Chapter 403.: Kindred Spirits

Chen Wentian left Glacier Palace behind. It was fun to tease Su Xue and Su Yue but he never intended to stay long. He was disguised as a strange immortal after all, one they didn't recognize. They would find out the truth about Lin Huzhong soon enough and he looked forward to seeing their expressions at that time.

He never intended to keep such a thing secret from his disciples but it worked out in his favor. For now, the twins' ignorance was his benefit. Chen Mo, disguised as himself, was already on his way to Glacier Palace to answer the call of so many emergency talismans. If that water demon had any method of spying on this province, it would see one immortal leave the province and another one arrive. It would prove that the source of the demon slayer art was unrelated to Ten Thousand Flower Valley. That demon's attention would remain on Lin Huzhong alone and his sect would be safe.

The endless white mountains flashed past below as Chen Wentian zoomed off towards the next province. The whirlwind tour of the provinces continued unabated. Mortal sects, lesser kingdoms, vast empires, he visited them all and dropped off the fruits of Zhou Ziyun's hard work and intellect.

He even visited Divine Blazing Mountain although he did not repeat his performance in front of Glacier Palace. Since Divine Blazing Mountain was full of men, there was no point pretending like he wanted to gain entry. The other three members of the ice sisters were currently within the mountain but he did not call on them. He dropped off a hundred copies of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style and left promptly.

Immortal sects were an important part of the plan to lure out the unseen demon enemy. They were the premier powers of the land and had thousands, tens of thousands, of powerful disciples. Even without their immortal masters, Glacier Palace and Divine Blazing were still unparalleled compared to mortal sects and factions. They would be able to utilize his demon slayer art and cause havoc on a level far beyond the capability of ordinary sects.

If his unseen demon enemy had any backbone, it would not be able to stand by and do nothing, not for long.

Since Chen Wentian visited Glacier Palace and Divine Blazing Mountain, he visited other immortal sects as well. The most prominent among them was the Tower of Swords, once a rival of the two elemental sects who now stood at the pinnacle in this region of the subcontinent.

The province where the Tower of Swords was located was called Sword King Province. It used to have a much less arrogant name but that had long been forgotten. There was no sword king here but the name reflected the ambition of the lord of the land. It wanted to become the home of a Spirit King Realm sword cultivator.

Sword King Province was a rich, fertile land. Nestled in the heartland of the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent, close to the Eastern Sanmu Metropolis, it was brimming with cultivation resources. From mountains and valleys to rivers and lakes, it was a land filled with spiritual energy. It was no wonder an immortal sect could take root here and thrive. It was difficult for an outsider like Chen Wentian to not feel envious of the sights around him.

Chen Wentian soon arrived at the Tower of Swords. He descended below the clouds and approached the verdant mountaintop that contained numerous towers of grey stone. These towers were smaller around the edges and grew in size and stature towards the center where there was a massive, solitary tower that loomed over the rest. From a distance, there was no doubt that this place belonged to an immortal sect. The sheer majesty and spiritual aura that surrounded the mountain was something to behold. It was a product of countless generations of sword cultivators seeking the way of the sword here.

No emergency talismans fired off as he drifted closer. This meant that the sect master was home. Sure enough, a grey-robed figure emerged from the upper levels of the main tower and zoomed towards him.

It was Immortal Desolate Sword Peng Yuefeng. A thin and spry middle-aged man, he carried an enormous black sword on his back that was as big as himself. It was the Desolate Sword, the Spirit Lord Realm spiritual weapon that was his namesake.

When the two got close enough, an array of sword energy erupted around Peng Yuefeng and formed a wall in the sky, preventing any further progress. His sword energy was tinged with a grey-metallic color, cold and domineering. It was the Lonely Sword Wanderer, a solitary sword designed to slay all enemies alone.

Chen Wentian didn't flinch and responded with his own sword energy. It was a royal blue hue and did not come from Dugu's Tenth Sword. Since his disciples practiced Dugu's Tenth Sword, it was something closely tied to Ten Thousand Flower Valley and the identity of Chen Wentian. He couldn't utilize it as Lin Huzhong unless in a dire situation. Instead, his sword energy came from the only other immortal sword art that he knew of, the Descent of Ascalon. It was something that he had never shown to anyone, including his disciples.

The two sword energies collided with flashes of light and ear-splitting noise. One side was filled with grey swords, each radiating a lonely death. The other side was filled with blue swords of divine destruction of the dragon race.

They were evenly matched though neither was trying very hard. Peng Yuefeng's aura contained no killing intent, merely curiosity, while Chen Wentian was doing just enough to maintain his cover.

After a brief standoff, the sect master of the Tower of Swords let out a bellowing laugh. His sword aura retracted and his sullen face turned into a smile.

"I have heard of you, Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong. Your feats in the past year have shaken this subcontinent to its roots. Nobody knows where you can find me but there is no one that does not know your infamous name. Welcome to the Tower of Swords. I've been expecting you."

His tone was cordial, filled with a strange amusement. It was the polar opposite of how this wily sword master treated Chen Wentian's actual self, which was with blatant animosity.

Peng Yuefeng and Chen Wentian would never see eye to eye. They were direct competitors. One was a sect master upholding the legacy of his immortal sect. The other was an upstart immortal with limitless potential seeking to carve his own domain off the backs of the established sects.

Lin Huzhong, on the other hand, was a rogue who had no home. Since he had no intentions of starting his own sect, he was far removed from the politics and power struggles between immortal sects. There were countless individuals throughout history who were able to break the shackles of mortality. Yet they all faded away into obscurity because they had no one to leave their inheritance. Only those that established a sect could have their legacy live on after death.

Thus, in Peng Yuefeng's eyes, Lin Huzhong was not a competitor.

Chen Wentian returned the greeting respectfully. "Immortal Desolate Sword Peng Yuefeng, I have also heard of your great name. It brings me joy for us to finally meet. I am honored and pleased that you have paid attention to my recent actions. Since I am here, I will get to the point. The subcontinent is suffering from a plague of demons and my Six Meridians Demon Bane sword style is the perfect cure. I wonder if Senior Peng would be interested in this little sword style that I have developed?"

Peng Yuefeng laughed merrily, as if the stranger in front of him was a long-lost friend. Indeed, they were kindred spirits, both sword masters walking the immortal path of the sword.

With just a quick exchange, the experienced sword master of the Tower of Swords could tell that the fat and ugly man in front of him was no pushover. That horrible blue sword energy had given him the sensation that the entire sky was falling down. He had never experienced a sword style like that and desperately wanted to learn more about it.

"Of course, no question about it! I am a fanatic of the way of the sword." Peng Yuefeng said, "It doesn't matter if it is a light sword, a heavy sword, or a demon banishing sword, I am interested in all of them. Come, Lin Huzhong. Today, you are an honored guest of my Tower of Swords! Please, this way."

"Please, lead the way."

Chapter 404.: Sharp Contrast

Chen Wentian followed Peng Yuefeng and descended to just above the treetops. Together, they floated towards the main tower at a leisurely pace, attracting attention from across the entire sect. The Tower of Swords disciples pointed at them excitedly and gossiped about the appearance of an immortal visitor.

The two Spirit Lord Realm swordmasters were a striking pair. They were both of a similar age by coincidence but that's where the similarities ended. One had a thin, frail build and carried a heavy sword way too big for him. The other was severely overweight but had the thinnest of blades hanging from his waist belt. They were a sharp contrast to each other, a spectacular example of the wide and varying possibilities within the Dao of the sword.

Chen Wentian had no particular preference for the style of his sword. He was not a true sword cultivator and he merely picked one at random from his armory. The one hanging from his waist was one of a handful of swords at the peak of the Spirit Initiate Realm. It was not as impressive as a Spirit Lord Realm sword such as the Desolate Sword or even his own Purple Jade Sword. But he still had to carry one while pretending to be a swordmaster.

"Quite a lively morning," He commented as they passed by multiple courtyards filled with gawking disciples, "Your sect seems to have even more members than Glacier Palace or Divine Blazing Mountain. I count at least fifty thousand around this mountaintop."

Peng Yuefeng chuckled, "Sharp spiritual sense! You are correct. Tower of Swords is one of the largest sects in the subcontinent if we consider just Spirit Lord sects. The path of the sword has always been popular. There would be something wrong with me if the sect wasn't as thriving."

"Impressive. If all of them can wield the sword of demon blight, they will be an unstoppable force against these upstart demons. We will be able to rid this land of demon plagues for many generations." Chen Wentian said.

"Perhaps..." Peng Yuefeng said, "Tell me, why do you dislike demons so much that you are willing to go to such lengths to fight against them?"

Chen Wentian dived into a lengthy explanation into his made-up background. He described growing up in a frontier province, how he suffered through constant demon uprisings and beast hordes. He explained how his family was wiped out by demons and how the local cultivations sects sat around and did nothing to help. It was a wonderfully inspiring tale that was totally devoid of any details that could be used to track down its validity.

And while he recounted his sob story, Peng Yuefeng nodded along thoughtfully and stroked his goatee.

They eventually landed in the middle of a stone arena beneath the massive main sword tower. The raised fighting platform was paved with gray slabs and surrounded on all sides by stands tall enough to hide the rest of the sect from view and could seat at least a few thousand spectators.

"Lin Huzhong," Peng Yuefeng turned to Chen Wentian, "I will be honest with you. The Six Meridians Demons Blight sword style intrigues me but it isn't something I can give to my disciples just like that. As a fellow sword master, you know that the path of the sword is littered with dangers and obstacles. One's sword heart must be steady and brave. They cannot be distracted and swayed down the wrong path. I have faith that your intentions are noble but before I accept your gift, I must verify its quality."

"I wholeheartedly agree," Chen Wentian replied.

"Good, I am glad you are as generous as much as you are broadminded!"

Peng Yuefeng raised his hand and sent out a ray of spiritual energy towards the main tower. His message was answered a short moment later as five disciples marched into view and up to the fighting platform. Each one wore the same drab gray robes as their master and carried a variety of swords.

Among them was Peng Xiling who had made a name for himself in the Monster Fighting Competition. The other four were unknown but their cultivations were formidable. They were all walking the immortal path, well on their way towards breaking off the restraints of mortal life.

Chen Wentian studied each of these disciples with a keen eye, gauging their talent and comparing them to his own disciples. This was his ulterior motive for visiting the Tower of Swords. With Glacier Palace and Divine Blazing Mountain under his control, this sect was the only competitor that remained in close proximity to his Ten Thousand Flower Valley. There were a handful of other immortal sects but they were weak and insignificant.

The Tower of Swords remained a direct competitor so he had to know who he was dealing with. He wasn't interested in taking over this place or anything, just like he hadn't been interested in taking over the other two sects either. He simply liked being in control of the situation and gaining insight into potential opponents or enemies.

Peng Yuefeng's friendliness towards Lin Huzhong was a fortunate development and would save Chen Wentian a lot of effort. Having a good relationship with the sect master of the Tower of Swords was good insurance for any future conflict.

"Master!"

"Master!"

The five disciples stopped in front of Peng Yuefeng and bowed deeply. They kept their head down and waist bent for several awkward seconds until Peng Yuefeng let them rise. The amount of respect shown was tremendous and the level of indifference from their master was also startling.

This was far different from how Chen Wentian treated his disciples who barely had time to bow before he smothered them with hugs. To Peng Yuefeng, his disciples were merely that, insignificant mortals who perhaps had a chance of carrying on his legacy. To Chen Wentian, his disciples were also lovers and he cherished each one of them deeply.

"Lin Huzhong, these are five of my most talented junior core disciples, ones with the deepest understanding of the way of the sword and the greatest potential for following in my footsteps. I will let them test out your sword style to see if it is effective and easy to learn as you claim." Peng Yuefeng said.

"Sure."

Chen Wentian produced five booklets from his spatial bag and handed them over.

Peng Yuefeng then turned to his disciples and conversed in a low voice. He explained the reason for Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong's visit and their task of learning the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style. He also took the opportunity to have a competition between his disciples with the one to learn this new sword style the quickest receiving some coveted rewards.

While this was going on, Chen Wentian noticed that one of the sword disciples, Peng Xiling, was shooting weird looks in his direction whenever possible. It was as if this person was trying to pierce through his disguise bit by bit to unearth the truth beneath. It gave Chen Wentian the unnerving feeling that they knew something he didn't... which was impossible.

What he didn't know was that his intuition was correct. Peng Xiling, or more accurately Peng Lingxi masquerading as a man, already knew something about him that nobody else had been able to discover, not even her master. This was because she knew something about Chen Wentian that nobody else did.

Peng Lingxi continued to stare at Immortal Desolate Sword Lin Huzhong even though she knew it was rude and dangerous. She simply couldn't help herself. It was not because she was attracted to his face which was round like a dinner plate. It was because this strange immortal, when facing off against her master, had displayed a fantastical sword style, one that she had instantly recognized.

Its aura was the same as that day in Dugu's Cavern, bearing the same majesty as a divine being descending from the sky. Its power was even greater now, like the weight of the world was behind his sword energy. It filled her with nostalgia and the unbearable desire to meet the man behind the sword.

She never forgot that day. She never forgot that moment when a handsome young swordsman showed her what a sword was truly capable of. Chen Wentian had pierced her soul and stolen her sword heart and she had been chasing after his shadow all of these years.

When she sensed that same sword energy once again, she immediately thought that Chen Wentian had come to the Tower of Swords. She was sorely disappointed when the guest wasn't Immortal Blue Dragon at all but a fat and weird-looking uncle. She had no idea where this Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong came from and how he could wield the same sword art as Chen Wentian.

As she continued to study him, his beady little eyes, multiple chins, and a neck as thick as his head, she felt a sense of familiarity. She wondered if Chen Wentian and Lin Huzhong had the same master. It seemed impossible but she wondered if they were related.

Chapter 405.: Peculiar Preference

Peng Yuefeng's discussion with his disciples ended and they all began to study the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style on their own.

His challenge to them was to learn as much of this new sword style in thirty minutes. They would then display their understanding of Six Meridians Demon Blight. The one who managed to learn the most would be the winner and be rewarded with a sizable amount of sect contribution points or some personal training time with their master.

"Sect contribution points? Are they valuable?" Chen Wentian asked.

He knew about such points from Glacier Palace and Divine Blazing Mountain but was curious about how the Tower of Swords operated.

"They are more valuable than even spiritual crystals, at least in the Tower of Swords!" Peng Yuefeng explained, "All disciples can obtain a small number of contribution points through various methods. They can get them for cultivation breakthroughs, completing difficult missions, or performing various meritorious deeds. These points can be exchanged for special rewards that are not available in the outside world, not even with spiritual crystals. Certain elixirs and pills are only available to the Tower of Swords. Time inside a cultivation tower to speed up their progress. Fine swords made by genius swordsmiths raised within the sect that aren't sold anywhere else. And even personal instruction from me!"

"Personal instruction time, even your core disciples need points for that?" Chen Wentian asked.

"Yes, but they are for normal disciples as well. It gives every disciple in the sect a chance to learn from me if they amass enough contribution points. Core disciples also don't get a free pass to my time. It is impossible for an immortal master to spend all day with his disciples." Peng Yuefeng answered.

The way the two of them managed their sects was the complete opposite. He always knew that he spoiled his disciples, a little too much. He had never thought about just how lucky they had it compared to other immortal sects.

Peng Yuefeng's core disciples rarely got a chance to receive his teachings. Meanwhile, Chen Wentian often spent all day and all night with one or more of his disciples. The day would be spent in practice and cultivation and, at night, that practice and cultivation would continue in bed...

"Sounds like a hassle. I certainly can't be bothered with a disciple." Chen Wentian said.

"It really doesn't take much time. Most days, I don't even see anyone and just cultivate myself. You will be their master. They are not babies and you don't have to be their parent. Lin Huzhong, I can tell that you are a person that values freedom and the ability to do whatever you want whenever you want. But remember this, having a disciple is about leaving behind your legacy. Otherwise, when your lifespan reaches the end, there will be nothing left and your accomplishments will accompany you to the grave."

"Hmph, then I will simply breakthrough to the Spirit King Realm. Then I won't need any disciples." Chen Wentian boasted.

The elder swordmaster snorted with laughter, "Spoken like a true cultivator!"

"Master, we are ready!" One of the disciples said, interrupting the conversation.

"Good!" Peng Yuefeng said, "Each of you will perform what you have learned from the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword art for us. As the honored guest and impartial judge, Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong will determine who has mastered his creation the best. Since you are my best disciples, don't disappoint me!"

"Yes, master!"

"Peng Shuya, you are the most senior, you are first!"

The tallest disciple stepped forward. His facial features were chiseled and sharp though his actual age was in the early forties. He was at the third lesser realm of Spiritual Awakening and could be considered talented among the disciples of any immortal sect.

Peng Shuya stopped briefly and turned back to his fellow disciples, "Watch closely and learn. I, Peng Shuya, will prove why I am the senior brother today. Hahaha!"

This earned him several snide remarks from the others.

Unperturbed, Peng Shuya continued, "Junior Brother Xiling, don't forget our bet. If you cannot beat me, you have to treat me to dinner!"

Peng Lingxi rolled her eyes while the other core disciples sported looks of great displeasure.

Chen Wentian watched the exchange between them in confusion. He wasn't sure what to make of this strange dynamic between male cultivators. Perhaps this Peng Xiling was good company or a funny jokester.

Peng Shuya started his demonstration in front of the two immortals. He wielded a two-handed longsword almost as long as he was tall with a width of three fingers. It was an excellent weapon with both speed and agility as well as reach and power.

"First Blight! Taiyin Sword!"

"Second Blight! Shaoyin Sword!"

"Third Blight! Jueyin Sword!"

His comprehension was adequate. Out of the six sword movements of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style, he was able to perform the first three. His form was acceptable though not precise. Still, he performed far better than the members of mortal sects. He was even able to display a tiny bit of the unique aura that made the demon slayer art special.

“Good. You may return.” Peng Yuefeng dismissed his disciple, “Lin Huzhong, what did you think?”

“Excellent swordsman!” Chen Wentian praised, “Understanding is good. His form could be more precise but it is still excellent for such a short period of time.”

Peng Yuefeng snorted, “Him, he did okay though I expected better since he is the eldest. But I have to say, your sword art is indeed a rarity. Although its raw power is a bit lacking, I can sense that it contains a very special quality. Is this what makes an effective fighting style against demons?”

Chen Wentian put on a fake smile, “Yes, it is something I discovered by chance. It had no potential as an immortal art but it is quite useful for mortals against mortal demons.”

Peng Yuefeng stroked his beard and nodded, “I get the same feeling. Oh well, it is still excellent for its purpose. Next, Peng Yuchang, your turn.”

A stocky disciple with a beard walked up. He carried a heavy sword that was similar to his master's Desolate Sword, a solid slab of metal that weighed more than a cow. Strangely, he also challenged Peng Xiling to a bet that also involved a meal together.

Chen Wentian idly wondered if this Peng Xiling was exceptionally good at cooking. Why else would so many of his senior disciples want to have meals with him?

The second core disciple was nothing special. He also performed the first three sword movements but his technique was shoddy. He was missing several steps in each movement and he lacked attention to detail. It was clear that he emphasized strength in order to swing his big chunk of metal around but this limited his performance on many sword arts.

“Go back, next!”

“Next!”

Two more disciples came and went, displaying their capabilities. They were all around the same in terms of comprehension. Only one showed a bit more talent and managed to showcase the fourth movement.

What was most surprising was that all of them showed a high level of interest in their junior disciple. They all pestered Peng Xiling with bets that involved spending time together in some form or another. It varied from lunch and dinner to sword practice and even meditation sessions together. It was bizarre.

Chen Wentian had met Peng Xiling once before in Dugu's Cavern many years ago. He always felt that this swordsman was a weird fellow. He didn't expect the other core disciples to be equally as weird.

It was impossible for this to be a coincidence. For so many men who liked other men to be in the same place, there had to be a reason.

He cast a sharp glance at Peng Yuefeng and shuddered inwardly. It had to be this sword master and his peculiar preference in disciples...

Chapter 406.: Supreme Display of Talent

The fourth disciple finished his demonstration and stepped back. Chen Wentian gave some casual pointers and covered his mouth to suppress a yawn. These male disciples were all talented but they were nothing special. All of them failed to impress compared to his own disciples. He had a natural dislike for males cultivators and they were graded on a heavy curve.

"Xiling, hurry up. It's your turn." Peng Yuefeng said gruffly, disgruntled at Chen Wentian's lack of interest, "It's up to you to show Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong the potential of the core disciples of our Tower of Swords. Don't disappoint me."

"Yes, master." Peng Lingxi bowed to her master and the visiting immortal, "Lord Lin, please rest assured. Disciple Peng Xiling will not let you two swordmasters down."

She then unsheathed her sword and went into the first stance of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style.

Her sword flashed as she twirled it around, slashing the air, and stabbing at an imaginary demon foe. Her blade was of a classic design, as wide as two fingers and around one meter in length. The guard was made of gold while the handle was of black ivory. It was beautiful weapon that fit its beautiful owner perfectly.

Chen Wentian didn't want to watch but he found himself entranced. He didn't know if some kind of spell had been cast on him. He stared with dumbfounded expression as Peng Xiling danced across the stage.

Yes, danced. That was the only way to describe it.

He didn't think the Six Meridians Demon Blight was anything special apart from its demon slayer attribute. Yet the way this man, Peng Xiling, went through each movement and attack pattern, the way this person stepped, the way they bent their slender body, the way they moved their sword as if it was a natural part of their body... it was all delight to behold, much to his dismay.

Chen Wentian was helplessly impressed but, in truth, Peng Lingxi was also trying her hardest to impress him. To her, Lin Huzhong was undoubtedly related to her beloved Chen Wentian and her closet connection to him. If she could impress Lin Huzhong, then her name would no doubt reach Chen Wentian's ears eventually.

She had originally wanted to reach the immortal realms first before seeking him out but since such an opportunity arrived today, she would regret it forever if she didn't try. She put everything into her sword dance, her emotions and her soul. She took every detail of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style into her and melded it into her very being.

She flashed across an invisible stage, whirling about like a steel-gray flower in a maelstrom. She lost herself in the moment. She was no longer practicing a sword art for her master or a strange immortal; she was performing for the only person her heart.

The four other core disciples looked on in astonishment. Their mouths were wide open and they were drooling like idiots.

Their immortal master was equally affected. His eyes wide open and unblinking like an owl and his hands, clenched into fists, were trembling with excitement.

First Blight, Taiyin Sword.

Second Blight, Shaoyin Sword.

Third Blight, Jueyin Sword.

Fourth Blight, Shaoyang Sword.

Fifth Blight, Taiyang Sword.

Sixth Blight, Yangming Sword.

There was no doubt that she wouldn't be able to showcase all six movements of the sword art. This was genius. This was awe-inspiring. This was once-in-lifetime, one-in-million.

A supreme display of talent!

The air around Peng Lingxi hummed with profound energy as she performed the final step of the Sixth Blight. She didn't know what it was but it came from within her; her body, mind, and spirit. It was warm and comforting. It was deep and powerful.

As she thrust her sword forward to complete the final attack, a tremendous wave of spiritual energy washed over her entire being and burst out in a brilliant eruption.

Breakthrough! The lesser realm of Spiritual Growth!

"Xiling broke through!"

"He really did it!"

“Finally!”

The four core disciples broke into excited shouts.

Chen Wentian glanced at Peng Yufeng to find that the old man was equally shaken as him.

“Your disciple broke through just like that?” Chen Wentian asked, “The Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style is a mortal sword art with no potential!”

“I know! I checked myself...” Peng Yufeng retorted, “Unless, this has less to do with your sword art and more to do with my disciple's breakthrough in the way of the sword. Xiling, come here.”

“Master, Lord Lin!” Peng Lingxi bowed, sporting a smile that was simply radiant.

That beautiful visage nearly squashed Chen Wentian's composure. It made him question his own sexuality, it was that devastating!

“Xiling, how do you feel? Any pain or discomfort anywhere?” Peng Yufeng asked.

Peng Lingxi shook her head, “No, master. I feel great, like I could keep practicing this sword art for the whole day!”

“Ah... perhaps you don't have to do that. Lin Huzhong, what do you think about Xiling's performance?”

Chen Wentian coughed awkwardly before speaking, “Well, you are obviously the winner of this little competition. Though, I did not expect you to breakthrough a lesser realm while practicing my sword art. Thank you for the great show. It was an enlightening experience!”

Peng Lingxi's heart filled with warmth at his words and she bowed once more, “Thank you, Lord Lin. I had been at a difficult bottleneck for several weeks. Your sword art was exactly what I needed and helped me take the all-important first step towards the immortal Dao of the sword. Thank you!”

Chen Wentian scratched his head, "Well... it's just a simple sword art. It's nothing special."

Peng Lingxi shook her head, "Lord Lin, the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style is great. It is a complete sword style with few flaws and tremendous depth. I am amazed by it!"

She clutched her sword to her chest and gushed about every movement and every fine detail. The words flowed out, a rarity that surprised her seniors and her master. She didn't know why but she just wanted to tell this strange, overweight immortal everything on her mind.

Chen Wentian nodded along with an amused smile, his opinion about Peng Xiling having changed after that performance. The fact that Peng Xiling was a man was no longer as irritating as before. True talent was undeniable, even for someone like Chen Wentian with strange prejudices. Peng Xiling's genius with the sword was as plain as day and it was inevitable that he would reach the immortal realms sooner or later. For people blessed by the heavens, it was simply inevitable.

Chen Wentian lamented that Peng Xiling wasn't a woman. Otherwise, he would have loved to have her as his disciple!

While Chen Wentian was enjoying being the sole focus of Peng Xiling's attention, the other men were standing around with rising frustration and a sense of crisis. Indeed, Peng Yuefeng and the four core disciples all knew of Peng Xiling's true identity as Peng Lingxi. It was an open secret within the sect and they only maintained pretenses for outsiders to maintain the sect master's reputation.

What worried them all was not Peng Lingxi's breakthrough but her attitude afterward. None of them expected her to be so interested in Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong and speak to him like that... like an adoring maiden.

Peng Lingxi was normally reserved. It was difficult to pry even a few words out of her mouth. She was admired by all the male core disciples and even her master. She was the object of their hidden affections. How could any of them accept the Tower of Sword's most precious pearl cozying up to an outsider? A fat, ugly one at that?

"Ahem... AHM!!" Peng Yuefeng finally cut in, "It's getting late. You all still need to continue your daily chores. Go, scram!"

The four male core disciples scampered away but Peng Lingxi stubbornly remained.

"Xiiling, you can settle with the secretary office for your contribution points." Peng Yuefeng said.

Peng Lingxi blushed and bowed, "Umm... Master, Lord Lin, if it is not too bothersome, I would like to study the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style some more in my free time."

The two immortals looked at each other.

"I... don't see why not." Chen Wentian said uncertainly.

Peng Yuefeng grunted in assent.

"In that case, could I maybe... could I ask if Lord Lin could visit the Tower of Swords again in the future? Or perhaps I could have a way of contacting you in the future in case I have questions about your sword art?" She blurted.

"Well..." Chen Wentian began.

"That's enough!" Peng Yuefeng snapped, his body trembling with anger and indignation, "How can you ask a visiting Spirit Lord something like that? Impertinent! Go back to your courtyard and you are not to leave for three days! Reflect on your actions!"

"Sorry, master! I'm sorry!" Peng Lingxi said in a small voice and fled from sight.

He let out a deep sigh to bring his emotions back under control and then addressed Chen Wentian with an even expression, "Please excuse my unruly disciple. A breakthrough is a strange experience and affects each person differently. Xiling was speaking nonsense out of momentary excitement, please

ignore him. Anyways, Lin Huzhong, thank you for the gift of the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style. I am sure that the demons of this subcontinent will feel your wrath soon enough. Now, I have to return to sect matters.”

Chen Wentian nodded. It was time for him to leave. It seemed that he wouldn't be a welcome guest here after all, not with the way these weirdos operated their sect.

It was their loss. At least he wouldn't have to look at that male disciple whose sheer beauty surpassed almost all women. At least he wouldn't have to question his own sanity constantly in that person's presence.

“Very well, I hope we meet again!” He said and bid farewell to the Tower of Swords.

Chapter 407.: A Barren Location

Zhou Ziyun stood still in the deserted great hall, in the middle of the expansive map of the northern quadrant of the Eastern Sanmu Subcontinent that stretched from wall to wall.

It was deep in the night. She had dismissed all of her servants and guards. She couldn't sleep so she was studying the map once again for the hundredth time. The map depicted every detail of her plan that was rapidly coming to fruition. It was the prelude to a deadly clash between her master and the unknown demon enemy.

But when and where exactly that battle would take place was still a mystery. The enemy was still hidden and there was no sign of them. They were everywhere and nowhere at the same time.

The map now had an eye-catching trail of gray flags that meandered across the provinces. It was each place Chen Wentian, as Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong, had visited so far. Counting the Tower of Swords, he had now covered over three-fourths of the entire quadrant. This included most of the major powers in this area and those that remained were sparsely populated provinces to the north that bordered the Northern Wasteland.

Zhou Ziyun closed her eyes in thought. Her brows furrowed as she pondered the situation. A cool breeze brushed past her from the open windows. The chirps of crickets from the gardens stirred the otherwise silent night.

Nothing came to her for a while and she let out a sigh in frustration. Although she made it look easy sometimes, like her mind was capable of performing miraculous feats of comprehension, it wasn't always reliable. Her master and her fellow sisters didn't see the hours she spent in futility.

With a dull flash, the Insightful Swallow Saber flew out its sheath. The blade danced in her hand as she went through the well-practiced movements of the Flying Dragon Saber Art.

Slash, parry, thrust, repeat.

She found that a workout often healed her overtaxed mind and straightened her thoughts. It didn't really matter if it was the Flying Dragon Saber Art, the Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms, or some other secret art. Even sex was effective sometimes.

As for the specifics of martial arts, she had no particular preference. She simply liked the simple yet elegant beauty of Insightful Swallow Saber so she stuck with the saber art that came with it. She could have just as easily practiced Dugu's Tenth Sword if there was another immortal sword in her master's arsenal.

The particular secret art didn't matter but she enjoyed the process of learning them. She enjoyed practice somewhat but she enjoyed studying the intricate details and origins of the art the most. She loved diving into the core of each art and unearthing its essence and soul.

The Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style came to fruition as a result of her study habits. It ended up being the perfect tool to lure out the hidden demon immortal but this was not its original purpose. It was something she had worked on over many months as an exercise to improve her comprehension. The sword style was an amalgamation of her understanding of the Twelve Meridians Body Tempering, Nineteen Demon Subduing Palms, and universal concepts of the sword distilled from various mortal sword arts.

It was her first creation and definitely not her last. The exercise of breaking down existing arts and creating a new one had been an absolute joy. She already had many other ideas floating in her mind. She couldn't wait to bring them to life.

“Wait...” Zhou Ziyun skidded to a halt and her eyes flashed with enlightenment.

A sudden thought hit her, causing her to forget about the next movements of the Flying Dragon Saber Art and everything else.

Her eyes landed on a particular spot on the map, a barren location.

Her master would be heading there tomorrow. It was a lonely city within a mountainous region in a northern border province. While the eastern frontiers that bordered the Eastern Wilderness was a place of opportunity, the north was barren, a place that few aspiring cultivators wanted to go to.

Named Su River City, it was a single dot of human existence isolated from the rest of the subcontinent by vast stretches of empty wasteland. There were no immortal sects here. There wasn't even a teleportation array within several thousand kilometers.

It was a useless place and the most ideal location for an ambush.

“Psss! Hey!”

“Mmm...”

“Wake up!”

“Mmm...”

A furry black snout burrowed under the fluffy white blankets, followed by a black-haired body, four paws, and a bushy tail.

Chen Wentian, in Chen Mo's fox form, pushed the slumbering forms of Fengsha and Huoling aside as he dug deeper into the bed. He found Jasmine at the bottom of a pile of pillows, clutching her pet Snowy, refusing to acknowledge his presence.

“Fine by me,” He muttered.

He crawled behind Jasmine and spooned against her. He stuck to her like a limpet with his four paws and began licking her ear.

That did the trick.

Jasmine let out a long groan and elbowed him in the stomach. She then turned around and pinched his furry cheek.

“Ow, ow, ow.” Chen Wentian yelped under her punishment.

“Asshole! I was just getting to eat the biggest pork chop in the world! It was as big as this subcontinent!” She grumbled. “What do you want? It's the middle of the night!”

“Didn't you say wanted a fight? A fight alongside your hubby? Well, I got one for you!”

Her ears perked up and her tails wagged excitedly, “Oh yeah? Where, when?”

“Badlands Province. We have to go now.”

“Where's that? Why do we have to leave now? It's still dark!”

Chen Wentian explained the situation to her, about the potential for an ambush at one of the most remote human cities in the subcontinent, a place where it would be difficult to find help. They wouldn't be able to use teleportation arrays and it will take her a full day of flying to get there. Since his real body was going to that city tomorrow, they had to leave Ten Thousand Flower Valley immediately.

Her expression hardened steadily as she listened until she couldn't bear it anymore. She leaped from her bed, sending pillows, sheets, and stray foxes flying everywhere.

“A dirty water demon wants to hurt my hubby? I'll kill them! Let's go!”

Chapter 408.: Gloomy Prelude (I)

Chen Wentian, still disguised as Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong, stood alone in a large, richly decorated hotel suite. His eyes were closed but his senses were keen and alert. A banquet table was nearby, laden to the brim with food and drink, almost all of which was untouched. Additional tankards of wine sat on the floor, still sealed and untouched.

On the other side of the room was a curtained bed that hid half a dozen beauties. They were all in deep slumber and impelled to remain so by his spiritual energy. They were supposed to be his entertainment for tonight but he wasn't interested in casual relations with strange women. He accepted them into the room simply to maintain his cover as a rogue immortal.

He was in Su River City with the Badlands Province, spending the night after a long day of teaching the locals the Six Meridians Demon Blight sword style.

The province was a barren region with striking landscapes; rocky buttes, jagged pinnacles, and eroded rainbow hills. Scrubby shrubs and hardy grasses grew here and not much else. The few beasts that called this place home consisted of small insects, underground rodents, and migrating birds.

The human population in the province was concentrated around Su River City. It was the only major human settlement in the province. All the notable cultivation sects were here. Situated next to a wide, slow-moving river, it was a veritable oasis in the middle of an empty land.

All the sects being in one place ended up being both a convenience and a nuisance. He didn't have to fly all over the province but he also had to contend with multiple sects competing with each other for his attention. After lengthy and heated arguments, they settled on an impromptu city-wide martial festival that lasted through the day and into the night. This involved numerous martial demonstrations, a spirited tournament between the sects, and lots of partying afterward.

The six women in his room were an unexpected part of those festivities, the product of six of the strongest factions within the city conspiring together to gain his favor. They sent in their most talented and beautiful core disciples, princesses, and daughters in hopes that they could establish a lasting relationship with him. One of them was even already engaged!

Chen Wentian shook his head at the ridiculous situation. A worse immortal than him would have surely taken advantage of the situation without remorse. While he already had many disciples, his habits were still mild in comparison to the wild stories that circulated the immortal rumor mill, especially about loose cultivators who truly had no care about their reputation.

This didn't mean he wasn't tempted. With the complete legacy of the divine blue dragon within him, it was impossible for him to turn into a celibate monk. He was not that willful nor did he have a noble heart.

He had wanted to succumb to animal instinct, if only briefly. He had wanted to let go and satisfy his desires. But tonight was not the night for that. In fact, it was the worst night imaginable.

The air around the room changed. It had been dry and cool, a reflection of this region's climate, but now it was uncomfortably humid. Chen Wentian tensed and spread his spiritual sense out of the room and throughout the hotel. There was nothing out of place except for the strange air.

A thick fog then appeared in the streets. It spread quickly and obscured the city entirely. By the time he opened the balcony door and stepped outside, a light rain had started.

Rain was a rare but welcome gift here. The river could irrigate the crops but it was dirty. Drinking water came from wells or the occasional seasonal rain. Despite it being the middle of the night, people across the city woke up to the sound of rain with a flurry of activity. They put out buckets, pots, and the like to collect the clean, refreshing water from the sky. Some held out their hands to get a drink immediately.

Chen Wentian held out a palm under the eaves, letting a few raindrops land on his skin. He felt nothing out of the ordinary for a while. But eventually, he sensed foreign spiritual energy trying continuously to burrow into the flesh of his hand. It was a tiny amount of energy but it contained a deep malevolence within as well as profound might that was only possible if the source was an immortal.

Since he was an immortal also, this amount of spiritual energy had no effect on him. What it would do to the residents of the city was still unknown but it was certainly nothing good. Despite knowing this, there wasn't anything he could do to stop them or save them from their fates.

The rain continued to fall, steadily increasing in intensity. It splattered off the roof tiles and gurgled down the gutters. It was a symphony of life-giving nectar to the masses and for him, a gloomy prelude to the inevitable battle.

He was already trapped within the enemy's domain. Right now, they held all the advantages of initiative, environment, and information. They knew where he was while he still didn't have clue.

An immortal's domain attack was one of their most powerful attacks. It was an incarnation of their immortal Dao, a manifestation of their profound strength. Some immortal secret arts did not have a domain attack but for those that did, none of them were to be taken lightly. The worst thing he could do was to charge out into the rain, blindly attacking an unseen foe, falling further into the grasp of their domain.

So, therefore, he didn't.

He stepped back into the room and closed the door, leaving the people of Su River City to their uncertain fates.

He sat down at the head of the banquet table and let out a breath. "Fuuu..."

He opened a fresh jug of peach wine, poured himself a cup, and took a long sip. He savored the taste and quality, a little subpar for immortal standards but still acceptable. He pulled a plate of food beside him and began to take in small morsels.

He was in no rush.

He wanted to see just what kind of demon had dragged itself out of the underworld to cause trouble for him. He was tired of being herded around by its tricks. He was tired of it constantly hiding, scheming.

He wanted it to come to him.

Chapter 409.: Gloomy Prelude (II)

The evening rain continued to pour. Screams soon rang throughout Su River City. At first, there was one, then two, then ten. These screams were filled with surprise, fear, pain, and something more. They came from all directions within the city walls.

"Ahhh!" A scream came from somewhere in the hotel.

"Interesting..." Chen Wentian muttered.

He looked up at the gilded ceiling, his spiritual sense telling him everything that was happening on the roof.

Three servants had gone up there when the rain started to check on the rainwater cisterns. They had no way to protect against the rain nor were they trying to.

The spiritual energy within each drop of water allowed it to burrow through their skin and deep into their flesh. Once inside, the corrupted water rapidly multiplied using human blood. Their mortal bodies could not resist the power of an immortal. The only counter would have been to chop off one's limb at the source of contact. Similar to vicious poison, if one's reaction wasn't swift enough, it was all over. There was nothing the servants could do. The invading water spread too quickly, spreading to all corners of their body in a few short breaths.

The final target of the water was not the death of the person but something even more insidious. Instead of killing, it targeted the brain, obliterating the consciousness within. What was left were mindless meat puppets that obeyed the will of the demon behind this repulsive Dao.

The three servants, now devoid of human reason, returned inside the hotel and started attacking anyone they encountered. One charged into the servants' quarters and started biting and clawing. The other two went their separate ways through the hallways, breaking down doors one by one to get at the customers within.

More screams rang out within the hotel.

As people awoke to the noise and senseless attacks, some fled while some tried to fight back.

“Who dares?”

“What is Little Hei doing?”

“Grab him!”

The three mindless servants were quickly subdued. They were merely servants and couldn't even compare to the average guest in cultivation. But this wasn't the end of the horror.

Like a virulent disease, the corrupted water was easily spread by bodily fluids. The meat puppets had bitten many people and it only took a few breaths for them to lose their minds.

“What are you... Ahhh!”

“Help me!”

More screams filled the hallways.

Several strong guests at the Spirit Initiate Realm fell under the demon's Dao. In a flash, what had been a situation under control turned into total chaos. The three original meat puppets even managed to break free and join the fray.

Nobody knew what was going on. Nobody knew who was attacking who or who the culprit was. It was as if everyone had gone mad.

“Help! Please open the door!” A fist banged on the door to Chen Wentian's room. “Please, please... Ahhhh!”

Crash!

The door was smashed into pieces and two bodies fell through. The one on the bottom belonged to the woman who had pounded on the door originally. The one on top was of a servant, his body covered in bleeding wounds and bite marks. His eyes were bloodshot and his expression was empty.

“Noo... help...” The woman cried to no avail.

The man lunged and chomped down on her face, leaving a bloody gash. She pushed him off but this resulted in several missing fingers. Terrified, she lost the power to fight back, flailing around helplessly.

The man savaged the woman beneath him for a while before suddenly losing interest. Leaving the whimpering figure on the ground, he got up and looked around for a new target. It was not an act of mercy for her fate was already sealed.

The man saw the five women still unconscious on the bed and started towards them. But before he had made a full step, an invisible blade of sword energy swept out and separated his head from his shoulder. His body crashed to the floor and didn't move again.

An eerie silence filled the room only to be broken by a long, pained groan. The woman who had been gnawed half to death finally stirred. She picked herself up from the ground, stumbling a few steps before casting her empty, soul-less gaze on Chen Wentian.

“Eeeeeee.” A low-pitched screech came from the woman's mouth as she rapidly shuffled towards him.

Another blade of sword energy shot out.

Another body fell to the floor.

Chen Wentian shook his head and took another sip of wine. There was nothing he could do for the people in the hotel. There was nothing he could do for the city which was no doubt suffering from the same horrors.

This attack by the enemy was a low-power but wide-scale attack. If he were to go out and personally kill every demonized puppet, it would waste way more spiritual energy than the enemy expended in the attack.

No.

His resolve remained the same. He still wasn't going to move until the demon came to him.

As the night wore on, Su River City was plunged into a bloodbath. Various cultivation sects tried to organize a defense but they were gradually overwhelmed. Even the strongest mortal cultivators could not resist the corrupted rain forever. All it took was one drop for the corruption to start.

It was a battle with no enemy and it was a battle where everyone was the enemy. Friends attacked friends. Children attacked parents. Masters attacked disciples. Nowhere was safe and fighting back was futile. There were simply too many demonized puppets. Their number multiplied with each passing breath until the inevitable conclusion.

The sounds of battle fell away. There were no longer any screams, only soft groans of a hundred thousand mindless slaves. Combined, it was as if the whole city was moaning in pain.

The hotel was completely taken over. There wasn't a single same human left in the building except those in Chen Wentian's room. The doorway had long been jammed by headless corpses, all the way into the hallway.

The puppets had no way of entering his room anymore so they went elsewhere. They occupied every floor and every room. They spilled into the streets, joining their mindless brethren.

Su River City was no more. An entire human city was gone, just like that, casualties in a contest of wills between two immortals. Their lives were insignificant and they were snuffed out with what was only the prelude.

A powerful presence landed on his balcony.

His enemy was here. With the city already dead, there was nothing else for it to do. It finally couldn't hold back.

Chen Wentian put down his cup of wine and wiped his mouth with a napkin. With a wave of spiritual energy, he opened the flimsy door that stood between them.

Woosh!

A wave of cold, blue spiritual energy slammed into his sword aura. He didn't blink and sliced the greeting apart.

"Aiya, so rude!" An attractive, feminine voice spoke from the doorway, "Here I thought you were enjoying the show I created for you. Instead, you were still stuffing your face like a fatty!"

Chapter 410.: Lord of the Calm Lake

The figure that entered the room had the form of a human woman. She was strikingly tall, taller than most men. Sleek black hair flowed like a waterfall and pooled around her feet. She was slender but not skinny, retaining curves in all the right places. Her pale skin was bare. Almost nothing was hidden from the imagination.

She walked on tiptoes like a dancer. Her legs went on forever. Her hips swayed like the tides, with a hairless gap between the thighs that was barely covered by an assortment of blue shells and coral that seemed plastered to her skin.

Her waist was flat and impossibly narrow. It contrasted perfectly with her breasts which were astonishingly large. Each one was far more than a handful and seemed to defy gravity with their size and ability to retain a perfectly round shape. Although the nipples were coyly hidden by another set of shells and coral, it was clear that they were perking upwards as if seeking the morning sun.

All of these features were each impressive but they were all eclipsed by her breathtaking beauty. She had the slenderest neck, the smoothest jawline. With a heart-shaped face, plump lips, soft cheeks, sleek nose, and upturned eyes; her face was stunning yet confusing at the same time. It was as if she had picked and chosen the best features of many different facial types. It was inconceivable.

“See anything you like?” She asked coyly.

Chen Wentian looked up and their eyes connected. His brown orbs peered into hers which were a breathtaking shade of baby blue.

“Hmph, I've seen better.” He answered flatly.

Although she was indeed impressive in every way physically, there was something missing. Her appearance didn't shake his heart like Jasmine and bewitch his mind like Long Yifei. There was no impact behind this beautiful visage, as if it was merely an illusion.

The demoness glanced at the bed and back at him. She looked like she wanted to argue but then changed her mind.

“I had great expectations for you... the noble and generous Immortal Sword Bandit Lin Huzhong! Your name has been sung across the land as the champion, the savior. I thought you'd be... more impressive. I thought you would have manners.” She said.

He continued to study her, "I was raised in the wild. I live by the sword and I kill by the sword. I care little about manners but I know how to treat friends... just like I know how to treat enemies!"

Sha!

A horizontal blade of spiritual energy shot forward, slicing clean through her neck. There was momentarily a gap where the powerful sword attack went through her but it quickly disappeared. Her skin melted back together and there wasn't even a mark leftover.

She covered her mouth and let out a soft laugh, "No manners!"

She sauntered over to the table and sat down in the seat opposite him. She crossed her legs and leaned back into the chair. She stared at him and he stared at her, two foes sizing up each other before the real fight started.

"Did you like my gift?" She asked, breaking the silence. She waved the pile of corpses spilling in from the hallway. "My specialty."

"What are you?" Chen Wentian asked.

He already had some idea but he wanted to hear it from her.

"I am the Lord of the Calm Lake Qin Shui'er. You, humans, know of my type as shuimu, a water demon." She answered.

She was a shuimu after all. It was the worst possibility but it was within his ability to manage.

Shuimu were known through folklore. Stories were told across the ages of fatally attractive beings appearing in lakes and rivers, pulling young men to their deaths. They could cause floods. They could cause storms and even droughts. They were masters of their element.

Often called the old mother of water, they were the most powerful among demon races attuned to the element of water. They were born of water and their bodies consisted of water.

This demoness sat before him in human form but her true nature was that of water. She didn't have to defend against his sword attack because of her constitution which allowed physical attacks to pass through harmlessly. She was a being manifested from pure water-attribute spiritual energy.

Qin Shui'er giggled, "I can guess the thoughts stirring inside your fat head. I am indeed your worst opponent, your nightmare. You can't beat me and there's nowhere for you to run. Now, let's get started with a few questions I had in mind..."

Bang!

The table exploded into pieces, sending plates of food and cups of wine everywhere.

In that same instant, a thin sword appeared in Chen Wentian's hand. The awesome sword energy of Dugu's Tenth Sword gathered at the tip and then blasted towards the demoness.

Second Movement, Pierce the Heavens!

A beam of blinding energy blasted into her chest. It left a gaping hole and continued through the back of the chair, the walls of the hotel behind, and into the dark night.

"Ow..." Qin Shui'er muttered.

She felt the emptiness with her hand. It was big enough to fit her head through. She looked down at the blood-less wound and then doubled over. Her body shook as she tried to hold back but she finally couldn't.

"Hhhh... hehehe... HaHaHa!"

She clutched her stomach and laughed uncontrollably, kicking her legs about in mirth. The hole in her chest melted away and not a blemish remained. She was totally unharmed.

"Come on!" She exclaimed, "Stab me again! Come on! That felt good!"

Chen Wentian snorted and sat back down. "I give up. You wanted to ask me some questions? Go for it. But for each question I answer, you have to answer one of mine."

Her laughter disappeared and she glared at him. He didn't flinch, as if he didn't care at all that his sword arts had no effect on her.

She finally shook her head, "You really are a person with no manners."

"I am a simple man who lives simply." He answered.

She turned her nose towards the bed in the corner, still miraculously intact, "A simple man who lives simply?"

He shrugged, "Simple pleasures. Why? Are you jealous?"

"Simple words from someone who's about to die. If you answer my questions obediently, I might let you live to see the dawn."

"Really, I could say the same for you."

The pair fell into silence once again, glaring at each other. Their spiritual auras clashed together in place of words.

Chen Wentian couldn't hurt this demoness with sword arts but it didn't mean other attacks wouldn't be effective. He wasn't worried about her powers but what other tricks she had in store. Since she finally showed up tonight, it meant that she came prepared. A devious witch like her was sure to have several backup plans.