

M. Slaying 28

Chapter 28: Crisis

When Chu Liang returned to the Li Residence, Lin Bei had yet to return. So, Chu Liang sat cross-legged to meditate, seizing the opportunity to collect his reward.

Upon entering the White Pagoda, he saw a faint golden phantom imprisoned inside a cell.

Previously, Chu Liang had wondered whether the White Pagoda was an evil enchanted tool that refined souls to exchange for valuable items. However, he later discovered that wasn't the case; the White Pagoda didn't interfere with the death and reincarnation of souls. The golden phantoms that the pagoda refined were more like an imprint. They were only used as markers to prove that he had indeed slain those evil entities.

The best evidence of that was the Painted Skin Ghost that was currently in front of him and the cat spirit from before. After turning into supernatural entities, they were just souls—essentially bodiless entities.

If the White Pagoda had indeed extracted the souls for refinement, then their appearance and state inside the White Pagoda should be no different from when they were outside the pagoda. Nonetheless, there were only golden phantoms without consciousness inside the White Pagoda.

The White Pagoda was merely meant to be a beacon of positivity to encourage him to keep slaying monsters and wiping out evil.

With that in mind, he casually pressed the word "Refine."

Boom—!

There was a burst of light. After that, he caught the reward item in his hand and found that it was a translucent, crystalline white jade talisman.

[Soul-Swap Spell: This item allows you to swap souls with another being with a physical body for a very short time—the duration of three breaths. It is recommended that you only use it on beings of your species, as entering the body of a different species will not be a pleasant experience. The duration of just three breaths is very short, but sometimes that is all that's needed.]

Chu Liang pursed his lips. He was quite disappointed by this reward.

Strictly speaking, this type of jade talisman couldn't be considered a talisman. It was more like a stored spell.

Cultivators used a complicated method to securely store one of their divine techniques inside the jade talisman. Jade talismans made with a higher level of craftsmanship would yield a better storage ability. Ones like the white jade talisman in Chu Liang's possession could retain at least eighty percent of the technique's power.

These jade talismans had some amazing uses. For instance, they could be used to instantly cast complex spellings or to store protection spells for children.

Despite that, using jade talismans had many limitations, and the intermediate costs were high, so they weren't commonly used.

Just like this jade talisman, which has the Soul-Swap Spell stored inside it...

Chu Liang didn't see much of a use for it. Even an empty white jade talisman would be better than this. It was a rare material that could be sold to the Hall of Weapons for a considerable amount of sword coins. However, this specific white jade talisman, which had a trash spell stored inside it, wouldn't be worth much.

Lin Bei returned just as Chu Liang finished collecting his reward.

"How did it go?" Lin Bei asked.

"Very smoothly. The Painted Skin Ghost has been eliminated," answered Chu Liang.

Lin Bei said with a smile, "That's good. Everything went really smoothly on my end too. Yan Xiaohu even treats me as his sworn elder brother now. And he swore that he would repent and turn over a new leaf starting today."

Chu Liang nodded.

He then told Lin Bei what had happened.

"Though... isn't there something strange about this?" Lin Bei expressed puzzledly after he got the full picture from Chu Liang. "All of her victims were people who had bullied her. So, why didn't Situ Yan resent Yan Xiaohu? He was so scared, but in the end, he wasn't even on her revenge list."

"It could be... because Yan Xiaohu hadn't discriminated against her because of her appearance," Chu Liang speculated. "He had extorted money from Situ Yan, but he had done the same to other people and even extorted the same amount from them. In this regard, he had treated her the same as everyone else. The ones who had truly hurt Situ Yan had been those who treated her differently."

"That makes sense..." Lin Bei said with a nod.

Then he let out a long sigh.

...

In the dead of night, a time that should be spent in silence...

Song Qingyi returned to the South Mountain Academy. There, she sat down to meditate and activate her qi circulation. After cultivating for a while, she lay down to sleep.

Cultivators in the Mortal Gate needed to sleep to recover their energy. Nevertheless, once they reached the peak of the Spiritual Awareness Realm and achieved satisfactory levels of vitality, qi, and spirit, they could replace sleep with cultivation. Nevertheless, doing that was not as comfortable as winding down and having a good night's sleep.

A short time later, she was suddenly awoken by a string of sobs as daybreak approached.

"Hmm?" Song Qingyi sat up and confirmed that there was indeed a faintly discernible sound of crying coming in through the window from outside.

She quickly put on her clothes and leaped outside.

Song Qingyi's accommodation had been specially arranged for her by the South Mountain Academy. It was quite far from where the other teachers stayed, and there were only a few other people living in the area.

Who's crying?

She looked for the source of the crying and found a small figure, whose hair was tied up in two little buns, curled up in a corner nearby. The child was crying with their back to her.

"Little one?" Song Qingyi called out as she hurried over. "What's wrong?"

At this point, the matter with the Painted Skin Ghost had already concluded, so she wasn't on high alert. When the child turned around, Song Qingyi's senses were assaulted by a heavy aura of death. She tensed up and swiftly retreated!

It was a bit too late though.

She still saw the child's face. It was jet-black and horrifying, with hideously twisted and knotted bulging veins—resembling a rotten watermelon that had become soft and cracked. A resonating clang rang in her mind, like a heavy hammer striking the deepest parts of her spirit.

Song Qingyi reacted very swiftly, but she failed to guard against this attack and was suddenly frozen in place.

Right then, there were sounds of something bursting by her feet. Around seven or eight bony ghost hands with bulbous joints and long black fingernails broke through from under the ground, grabbing her ankles simultaneously!

Song Qingyi bit the top of her tongue hard to snap out of her stunned state. She drew the Heart-Measuring Ruler to chop off those ghostly hands.

However, a wave of bone-chilling cold swept over her from behind! She felt extremely cold and stiff, unable to move at all.

Yet, if someone were to look at her from the side, they would see that a white-robed female ghost with long hair covering her face had, at some point, latched onto Song Qingyi's back with a tight grip on Song Qingyi's shoulders.

"Who are you?" Song Qingyi asked seriously.

Despite being restrained, Song Qingyi didn't panic. She knew it couldn't be a mere coincidence that so many ghosts appeared at once. There had to be someone manipulating them.

"Hehe, so it's the young lady from the Noblemen's Hall..." a hoarse, grating voice rang out from the side.

A tall hooded figure dressed in a black robe slowly emerged. His voice sounded like that of an elderly person, but his build and posture suggested otherwise. There was something very odd about this person.

"You really, really shouldn't have touched my painstakingly crafted Painted Skin Ghost," the black-robed person said in a tone filled with resentment and fury. "I promised her that she could kill three of her enemies here before focusing on collecting conscious souls [1] for me. Who would have thought... that right when everything was over and she was ready to leave with me... you just had to kill her..."

"I'm very angry..."

"You must pay the price..."

In this darkness just before dawn, the black-robed person spoke with a sinister tone that would send chills down the spine of those who heard it.

Song Qingyi didn't say anything else. Instead, she suddenly made a hand seal with just her left hand, and a golden light rose and hovered overhead. It was that Half-Page Golden Script.

The Half-Page Golden Script rose higher while casting a bright light over her. All the ghost hands that had wrapped around Song Qingyi immediately gave off black smoke, accompanied by an incessant hissing as the hands were burned by the light! Blood-curdling screams and anguished wails suddenly filled the air.

"Aaaaah!!"

The ghost hands and the white-robed female ghost retreated, and Song Qingyi immediately regained the ability to move. However, she didn't try attacking the black-robed person. He had already demonstrated in the earlier battle that his cultivation level far surpassed hers and was at least at the Golden Core Realm... Moreover, his strange methods indicated he was a cultivator of the diabolical path.

Nevertheless, right now, her priority was to escape. She turned around and ran.

Yet, the person in the black robe didn't chase after her. He just smiled eerily and pulled out a huge black iron slingshot. He firmly gripped the slingshot with his right hand and pulled it taut.

Then he commanded softly, "Go!"

Swish—

A streak of lightning cut through the night scene.

Song Qingyi was in midair when she suddenly shook. There was what seemed like the muffled sound of a sharp object piercing her, but she had no visible injuries. Yet, she suddenly froze and then fell to the ground with a heavy landing.

Thud!

Song Qingyi felt extremely cold and stiff all over. Even just moving her fingers was incredibly difficult.

A name suddenly appeared in her mind—Soul-Piercing Nail.

It was a diabolical enchanted tool belonging to the Dark King Sect. The nail was invisible and traceless, designed to pierce a human's soul. Once struck with the nail, both the soul and the body would be immobilized.

The sound of the footsteps approaching from behind grew closer as the black-robed person slowly made his way over. Then he flexed his fingers and seemed to pull on an invisible thread around Song Qingyi, as she was suddenly forced into an upright position.

"Come with me," the black-robed person said.

He let out a creepy laugh and headed toward his destination. Song Qingyi, who was extremely stiff and unable to escape, was forced to follow behind the black-robed person.

In an unnoticed corner, the Half-Page Golden Script that had protected Song Qingyi quietly disappeared...