

PROTEGE 101

Chapter 101: FINDING NEW GENUISES

After dinner, the injured soaked their body in the tub with the tonic solution Ling Li had provided for two hours. The warm, herb-infused water soothed their tired muscles, preparing their bodies for the rigorous cultivation ahead. Once they finished, they gathered in the training hall, ready to start their cultivation under their coach's guidance.

Shi Min spotted Lily hovering near the entrance, looking uncertain. "Lily, join us and learn how to cultivate your body," he called, his tone encouraging. Lily's face lit up with relief and excitement as she quickly joined the group. She had been itching to participate, feeling left out as she watched the others.

Ren and Shun were already in deep meditation when Lily arrived. She settled beside them, recalling the instructions Shi Min had given earlier. As a martial arts enthusiast, she had some understanding of cultivation, but Shi Min's guidance brought clarity to the process.

Within minutes of settling into her position, a faint white light began to emanate from Lily. Though invisible to the untrained eye, Shi Min, with his advanced cultivation, could see it clearly. 'Damn, my little sister has special abilities,' he thought, excitement bubbling within him. The white light indicated her potential to summon wind and control light.

Not long after, Shun also started to emit a glow. His was a vibrant red, signaling his innate power to control fire. 'Wooooow, Otako must have known Shun had this special ability,' Shi Min mused. 'He's like Mushu, damn.'

Pharsa observed Chatty with newfound respect. His usual carefree demeanor had given way to intense focus. Seeing him so dedicated to his cultivation filled her with pride. She positioned herself nearby, ready to lend her energy to aid in his cultivation.

Shi Min's attention shifted back to Lily as he felt a breeze picking up in the room. 'She can summon winds at this early stage; she must have been cultivating in secret,' he thought with a smirk. Anticipating potential danger, Shi Min cast a protective dome around Shun and Ren to shield them from Lily's burgeoning power.

Concerned for his sister's safety, Shi Min decided to find their mother. He found her meditating in front of Four Eyes, both surrounded by glowing auras, his mother's golden light indicating mystic power and

Four Eyes' ominous black aura hinting at dark magic. 'What the hell!' Shi Min uttered, stunned by the revelation. Black Magic could be terrifying if Four Eyes couldn't refine and use it correctly.

Quickly returning to his apprentices, Shi Min quickened his step when he felt something amiss in his group. Lily was already making havoc; the wind in the room had grown stronger, nearly chaotic. Lily's cultivation was progressing faster than expected, but stopping her now could cause irreversible damage. Shi Min strengthened the protective shield, hoping to contain the situation.

Mushu, alarmed by the unusual commotion, entered the room. He had been coaching Fatty and noticed the intense wind as soon as he approached. Seeing Lily at the center of the storm and Shi Min maintaining the shield, his jaw dropped in astonishment. "Lily will be very powerful when she fully refines her cultivation," Mushu said, smiling.

"I know, right? Mushu, look at Shun," Shi Min pointed out. Mushu's eyes widened as he saw Shun's red glow. "Fuck! Isn't it too early for him to be showing that?!"

"It seems we've discovered new geniuses," Shi Min replied.

"Are you going to reveal it to him? What about Lily? What do you plan for them?" Mushu asked.

"We usually don't tell them at a very early stage. It could do them more harm than good if they are not ready. Their power might be more vital than their body, and they won't be able to control it." Shi Min explained, "As for Lily, we might need to inform her because she could actually summon the winds. She can hurt herself or others without her knowing."

Mushu silently nodded in agreement. "I'll go back to Fatty; he had difficulty grasping the entire process."

Shi Min watched Mushu leave, then turned back to his group. After four intense hours of cultivation, everyone felt energized and accomplished. The coaches praised their apprentices for their dedication and progress.

On the following days, everyone goes to the camp for their training. They only have almost a week left before leaving for Amazon and still have much to learn while Ren trains Lily in her office.

Ling Li, Shi Min, and Mushu are now concurrently training with them. Their training includes orientation, climbing, drifting down from a cliff, familiarizing themselves with the three harnesses, learning the nine critical knots, and learning two harness systems.

Initially, thirty-four were in the group, but they lost six class C comrades during the training, leaving them twenty-eight. They divided the group into four, with seven members each; before they ended the day, they would spend at least three hours training in self-defense, assault, and attack in different forms.

During lectures, Mushu and Shi Min shared their insights, the dos and don'ts in the forest, and other precautions they might experience. Also, teaching them how to craft and improvise weapons in the forest, such as spears, axes, clubs, sling-shots, bows, and arrows, and making a poison arrow using poisonous berries and mushrooms and fire arrows. Different booby traps were introduced to the group. Even making improvised bombs was taught to them.

"Remember, water in the forest from creeks and streams contains parasites that will make you extremely ill. You have learned how to collect rainwater; utilizing it is up to you. The safest thing to do is to boil the water to drink.

If you see a cute yellow tree frog, don't even think of going near it or touching it. That is a golden poison dart frog, and it is very deadly. Snakes are plentiful, from anacondas to coral snakes and cobras. Fire ants are widespread, together with scorpions and spiders. Cougars and jaguars are there.

Be careful with the rivers for piranha. Though these don't usually attack when not harmed, if you have wounds that may be bleeding, they will be attracted and would not think twice. Crocodiles and alligators could be just around the corner.

Chapter 102: CULTIVATING MARTIAL ARTS

And keep in mind mosquitoes are present at all times. Lastly, there are a lot of edible plants, but there are still many that are deadly to eat. For your basic knowledge, I have this book I'm giving you; try to familiarize yourself as much as possible." Mushu stated.

Everyone in the room is very attentive. They listen to the lecture and want to get all the information while looking at the pictures flashed on the screen.

"Primarily rules, avoid plants with white and yellow berries. Don't eat mushrooms; some are edible, but many are highly toxic or deadly. So why take the risk unless you are very confident of the mushroom you have.

Avoid plants with thorns. If you eat something that tastes bitter or slimy, spit it out. Steer away from shiny leaves, plants with leaves in a group of three, and plants with umbrella-shaped flowers. Also, avoid beans, plants with seeds inside a pod, and anything with an almond smell. Any milky or discolored sap is a warning sign.

We have shown you how to make booby traps. Now how do you spot booby traps? When there is a sign of disturbed earth, rocks, etc.

Rope, lines, or wires—fishing lines can be tough to spot, but some types are shiny, anything that might be luring; flashes of metal, garbage, or debris that seem out of place or rearranged, dead or withered foliage of plants. Stems that are out of place or appear stretched, anything suspended, and missing steps.

We will discuss more tomorrow. Let us adjourn for today." Mushu declared, ending the day's lesson.

After dinner, Shi Min asked his Mom to meet with him in the study. The air was tense as Ling Li entered, sensing the gravity of the situation.

"Son, what is it?" Ling Li asked anxiously. Shi Min only summoned her for a private meeting if the situation was critical and beyond his control.

"Mom, it's nothing serious; it's actually good," Shi Min reassured her.

Ling Li's shoulders relaxed slightly, but her curiosity was piqued. "Well, don't keep me in suspense. Spill it out."

Shi Min chuckled, finding his mother's demeanor endearing in her concern. "Mom, you won't believe what I'm about to tell you. Last night, while deep in her cultivation, Lily summoned the wind. Her entire body glowed with a white radiance. It was astonishing. She could also control light in the future."

Ling Li's eyes widened with shock. "Shi Min, is what you're saying true?"

"Yes, and Mom, it's not just Lily. Shun appears to have the power of fire." Shi Min confirmed.

Ling Li was momentarily speechless, her mind racing to comprehend the magnitude of her son's revelation. "What the hell!" she finally exclaimed. The shock and disbelief were evident in her voice.

"Ha ha ha ha," Shi Min couldn't help but chuckle at his mother's reaction. "I knew you would be surprised. I was equally stunned when I saw them last night. Mushu witnessed it, too, because Lily was causing havoc with her winds in the room. Mushu came to check what was happening."

Ling Li quickly gathered her composure. "You need to guide Lily on how to manage her powers. She might unintentionally hurt herself or someone else. How is Shun progressing with his power?"

Shi Min's expression turned serious. "I believe Shun should cultivate further before we inform him about his abilities. His body might not be ready to handle the strain of practicing his power this early."

Ling Li nodded in agreement. "You're right. I'll drop by tonight and observe them. We need to ensure they understand and control their powers properly."

"Mom, last night I actually went to your room to show them to you, but you were already cultivating with Paps. Have you noticed any changes in him?" Shi Min asked, his tone turning inquisitive.

Ling Li sighed, a look of concern crossing her face. "Yes, I've seen something in him. I will personally train him. Black magic is too dangerous and can harm the possessor if not handled correctly."

Shi Min nodded, relieved. "That's true. I want to know your plan for him. But for now, let's go freshen up before we join our apprentices."

"Thanks, son. I'll come to see you later," Ling Li said, giving her son a reassuring smile as they both headed to their respective rooms to freshen up.

"Where is Lily?" Shi Min asked later when it was time for their cultivation. The sun was beginning to set, casting an orange glow through the courtyard, marking the perfect time for their evening practices. The faint hum of cicadas filled the air, adding to the tranquil yet charged atmosphere.

"Lily is in her online class. It will end in half an hour," Ren replied, glancing at the clock hanging above the ornate wooden door, its hands slowly inching forward.

"I see." Shi Min nodded thoughtfully before turning his gaze to Shun, who was adjusting his stance, preparing for the session. "Shun, last night, how did you feel while cultivating?"

Shun's brow furrowed as he recalled his experience, the memory vivid in his mind. "I felt very hot, as if I were in the middle of a fire, but at the same time comfortable. It was strange," Shun admitted, hoping Shi Min could shed some light on his experience, his voice tinged with curiosity and a hint of concern.

"Did you see actual fires around you?" Shi Min further questioned, his eyes sharp and attentive, searching for any clue that could explain Shun's peculiar sensation.

"No." Shun shook his head, still perplexed by the sensation, his face reflecting the mystery that surrounded his cultivation experience.

"Alright. Keep cultivating and strengthening your body's energy daily," Shi Min advised, his tone a mixture of sternness and encouragement, the authority in his voice unmistakable.

Ren, who had been listening intently, couldn't help but voice his concern. "Shi Min, what is with the heat in Shun's body?" Her voice was laced with worry, her eyes darting between Shi Min and Shun.

"Don't worry about it for now. Just focus on strengthening your body first. We will talk about it in the future." Shi Min's answer was firm, signaling the end of the discussion.

Chapter 103: CULTIVATING MARTIAL ARTS 2

"You may start while I wait for Lily." Shi Min announced.

An hour later, Lily arrived, her face flushed with excitement, her steps light and brisk. "Brother, I'm here," she called out, her voice echoing through the courtyard, breaking the silence that had settled over them.

"Brat, you've been cultivating your body before. Tell me how and what you did," Shi Min said, his tone a blend of curiosity and amusement, his gaze piercing as he looked at Lily.

Lily was caught off guard by the question, her eyes widening in surprise. She quickly recovered and laughed. "Brother, you really are my idol. You are too great. I can't even keep my secret from you," Lily replied sheepishly, attempting to act cute, her cheeks tinged with a faint blush.

"You, Brat! Now tell me." Shi Min's tone was sharp.

"OK! OK! I always wanted to be strong like you and Mom, but Mom won't let me train. She always said she would let my husband protect me in the future and that I wouldn't need to suffer a lot in training.

However, Brother, you know I'm not that weak. I read the book that Mom gave them yesterday. I found it at Mom's library at home. I have also read many other books and followed the steps, but I couldn't seem to get them right. Last night, I understood its idea better when I listened to your explanation," Lily clarified, her pout turning into a determined expression, her eyes shining with resolve.

"I understand. And you didn't do anything wrong. You made your body more substantial while cultivating simultaneously, with your rigid gymnastic and dance training giving a lot of help to your body refinement," Shi Min expressed his positive view of Lily's actions.

"Really, brother?" Lily's eyes sparkled with hope, her voice a mixture of excitement and relief.

"Yeah. I believe you have gone through the first four body refinements. But the next two are not easy to do. You must push yourself to the limit before you can forge your bones and condense your pulse. But don't worry too much. Last night, tell me how you felt while cultivating," Shi Min explained.

"Brother, I felt winds circling around me, and I just let them circulate until I felt it was so strong that I was floating in the air," Lily recalled happily, her face lighting up as she remembered the sensation.

Shi Min chuckled, 'This brat didn't know she was indeed floating in the air,' he thought, shaking his head. "OK, tonight, if you encounter this wind coming to you, try to gather them instead of letting them circulate around you," Shi Min advised.

"Brother, how do I gather them?" Lily asked curiously, her brow furrowing as she tried to understand the new task.

"Focus, let your internal energy flow around your body. You have enough Qi in your body. This will be the focus of your training from now on," Shi Min instructed. "Let me know how much you can do," he added, his voice calm but firm.

Lily nodded, determination evident in her eyes, and positioned herself. Shi Min once again cast a protective dome around Shun and Ren in case Lily caused havoc again.

While doing so, Shi Min noticed that Shun's red light around his body radiated more visibly, indicating that the fire energy was getting stronger. 'Damn! This man is surely a genius,' Shi Min thought, smirking. He worried that Shun's power might harm his internal energy if he couldn't contain it. "I might have to teach him how to control it this early," Shi Min sighed, his mind already planning the next steps.

After noticing Shun, Lily caught Shi Min's attention. She was grasping the idea he taught her, the wind around her coming in and out, amusing Shi Min. 'She is too willful. She could already gather the wind. She just needs more time to practice. At least she won't be causing havoc around her.' But just as he praised Lily, she must have lost control of the wind, and a strong gust came out from her.

'What the hell!' Shi Min was dumbfounded and quickly cast a shield around her. He chuckled and shook his head. 'I complimented her too early,' he said with a sigh, yet a hint of pride still lingered in his eyes.

It was at this time that Ling Li came to check on them. "Shi Min, your sister!" Ling Li said happily, her eyes widening in amazement as she saw Lily floating in the air, her hair swirling around her like a halo.

"I told you so." Shi Min couldn't hide his smirk, a mixture of pride and amusement.

"She has refined her body, or she wouldn't be able to do this. Though her cultivation is still at its lowest, her internal energy is powerful, equal to that of True Origin cultivators," Ling Li exclaimed, her voice filled with astonishment and pride.

"Mom, this little brat said she's been cultivating for a while now. But it was only last night that she fully grasped the whole technique," Shi Min relayed, his tone a blend of admiration and mild exasperation.

"This is understandable. We cannot underestimate the energy Lily exerts during her gymnastics and dance training. Otherwise, she wouldn't have come this far," Ling Li replied, proud of her daughter, her eyes glistening with maternal pride.

"I know. I admire Lily's perseverance," Shi Min agreed, his tone reflecting genuine respect for his sister's determination. "Mom, check on Shun." His voice held an urgency and excitement that made Ling Li turn her attention swiftly.

Only then did Ling Li truly notice Shun, standing apart with a concentrated intensity about him. His energy was palpable, and the air around him seemed to ripple with unseen power.

"Shi Min, he is stronger than Lily. You cannot let this go on. He will ruin his internal body. The firepower in his body is tremendous. You must inform and guide him by tomorrow," Ling Li said, her frown deepening, lines of concern etched on her face.

"I know, Mom. I intend to do it. What about Paps? How is he?" Shi Min asked, his voice tinged with worry. The thought of their stepfather always brought a mix of pride and anxiety to his heart.

Chapter 104: TRAINING FOR THE AMAZON

"Dang! I also cast a dome upon him. Your stepfather was lifting all the furniture around us," Ling Li responded, her eyes widening as she recalled the scene. The room had been in chaos, with furniture levitating and objects flying in unpredictable patterns.

"I will ask your Pap's parents tomorrow if anyone else in the family has black magic. They might know something. Black magic is rare and could be passed to the next generation," Ling Li further explained, her mind working through the implications of such power.

"His black magic is that strong!" Shi Min's surprise was evident, his eyes widening. He and Ling Li both had mystic mastery. They were well-versed in the complexities of black magic, yet the revelation still astonished him.

"Mom, it looks like we have found three new geniuses in the family. If you had not decided to cultivate them further in martial arts, we wouldn't even know," Shi Min laughed, the sound a mixture of pride and disbelief.

"Especially this brat!" Ling Li said, pointing to Lily, who was practicing her techniques with fierce determination. "Yeah, I'm sure Ren would also be special in her own way in the future. She is not a body refiner, after all," Ling Li added thoughtfully, his gaze shifting to Ren.

"Ah! This big brat only thinks about Shun and nothing else. She gave up her sports, focused on her business, and wished to tie Shun on her waist," Shi Min stated, referring to his eldest sister, Ren. His tone was teasing, but there was an underlying truth to his words.

"Ha ha ha ha," Ling Li laughed after hearing Shi Min's playful jab. "How could you say something like that about your elder sister? Ha ha ha," she chuckled, her eyes twinkling with amusement.

Shi Min did not say a word but joined in the laughter with his Mom. The shared moment of joy lightened the atmosphere, filling the air with warmth and camaraderie.

"Don't worry, son; Ren will shine on her own," Ling Li declared, her voice filled with conviction. Watching her children cultivating together made her heart swell with pride and happiness.

"I know, Mom. I wonder if the twins will be as powerful as you and Paps," Shi Min mused aloud, his thoughts drifting to his mother's and stepfather's incredible skills. The potential within their family seemed boundless.

"Your words make me shiver; don't even think about them yet!" Ling Li replied, a shiver running down her spine at the thought. The possibility that Shi Min suggested was both thrilling and terrifying.

"Mom, I'm just stating the truth. You and Paps are both geniuses. Just how good can your children be?" Shi Min pressed on, eager to explore the potential of their lineage, at the same time teasing his mother.

"Heh, I'm going back to my apprentice," Ling Li said, leaving the room like a scared cat, which made Shi Min laugh heartily. The sound of his laughter echoed through the room, filling it with warmth and a sense of hopeful anticipation.

The next day after their foreign language class, Shi Min gathered the group—Four Eyes, Shun, Chatty, and Fatty—for another round of training at the camp. Mushu, ever the silent observer, tagged along. With only three days left before their journey to the Amazon, time was of the essence.

"You all carry on with the training. Shun, come with me." Shi Min's tone left no room for hesitation.

Shun, intrigued and slightly anxious, followed Shi Min to a nearby pickup truck. They drove deep into the forest, the air thick with anticipation. The dense canopy above created an almost eerie twilight, even though it was still daylight. When they finally arrived, the sounds of nature seemed to amplify Shun's pounding heart.

"Shun, don't worry. Let me explain. While you were cultivating, we noticed something unique about you. Your power is incredibly potent. I'm here to help you control it because, without proper guidance, it could destroy your body." Shi Min's voice was calm but firm.

"What power?" Shun's voice trembled with disbelief, the forest's shadows making the revelation even more surreal.

"You can summon fire. Remember you mentioned feeling hot and being in the middle of a flame?" Shi Min's eyes twinkled with amusement.

The realization hit Shun like a thunderbolt. The memory of the burning sensation now made sense. Shi Min chuckled at Shun's wide-eyed expression.

"I saw it the first night of your cultivation. But last night, the fire within you almost doubled. I didn't expect your power to be so enormous. But you need to be able to control it; otherwise, as I have said, it will ruin your body." Shi Min clarified.

"I don't know anything about it. And I still can't understand." Shun honestly said, scratching his head.

Shi Min stepped closer and said. "Let me show you what firepower is."

With a flick of his wrist, a red light formed in Shi Min's palm, growing until it was the size of a basketball. The glow bathed the forest in an eerie red light before Shi Min hurled it forward.

BANG!!!

The gigantic fireball exploded with a thunderous roar, toppling several trees and sending birds screeching into the sky. The display of power left Shun reeling. He was so stupefied he even jumped back after Shi Min threw the fire.

Shi Min waved his hand, and the fire vanished as if it had never been. Shun stood in awe, still trying to grasp the enormity of what he had just witnessed.

Back at the camp, the group who were training heard the loud thunderous sound from the forest and wondered what it was.

"What was that?!"

"What the fuck is that?"

"Focus on what you are doing, and don't get distracted; being too curious will kill you!" Mushu barked. Of course, Mushu knew what it was. He has that kind of power. 'Shi Min must be showing Shun his real power.' He thought.

"Do... Do you mean I have that kind of skill?" Shun's voice quivered with a mix of fear and excitement.

"Yes." Shi Min replied, his tone serious. He doesn't want to waste time and go around the bush. They have a very limited time.

Chapter 105: XU FAMILY'S BLACK MAGIC

"Now, stand here beside me, and don't be scared. Your body seems to be tougher than I thought." Shi Mi said.

Shun came forward and stood beside Shi Min, his face reflecting Shi Min's intense focus.

"Now, open your palm like this. You might prefer to close your eyes since you're still learning," Shi Min instructed.

Shun followed Shi Min's stance.

"Focus the way you focus while you are cultivating. Find the 'Qi' in your body and channel it to your palm until you feel the fire." Shi Min instructed.

The forest seemed to hold its breath as Shun concentrated. It took nearly six hours of intense focus before Shun finally summoned the fire into his palm. He opened his eyes, marveling at the heat he felt.

Shi Min was ecstatic. 'Damn, he is good, and it only took him hours to summon his power.'

"A little bit more," Shi Min encouraged when he saw Shun producing the fire in his palm.

"Now, throw it with your internal energy," Shi Min instructed.

Shun obeyed, and a fiery blast echoed through the forest.

BANG!!!

It could be said that it was not even one-tenth compared to Shi Min's fire. But both of them were already more than satisfied.

Shi Min waved his hand to extinguish the fire.

"That's great. Now that you can summon the fire, what is lacking is the energy that comes with it. And this will eventually grow as you cultivate your body." Shi Min said, pride evident in his voice. "Do it again."

Shun's thrill with his newfound skill was unmistakable. The fire danced in his palm, a testament to the potential within. And with Shi Min's guidance, he was ready to unleash it.

Meanwhile, Ling Li stayed home to finish some papers. The house was quiet except for the rhythmic sound of her pen on paper, a stark contrast to the impending turmoil in her mind. After tying up loose ends, Ling Li decided to pay a visit to her in-laws' house, seeking both comfort and answers.

"Ling, what a pleasant surprise! Come in," Mrs. Xu greeted her with a warm smile and an even warmer hug.

"Thank you, mother-in-law," Ling Li responded, embracing the familiar warmth.

"Honey, Ling is here. Come out," Mrs. Xu called out to her husband, her voice filled with joy.

"Ling, we just ended swimming, and your father-in-law just finished showering. And thank you for all the care you are giving us," Mrs. Xu added, her gratitude genuine and heartfelt.

Mr. Xu emerged from the room, his face lighting up at the sight of his diligent daughter-in-law. "My wife is right, Ling. You are very good to us, and we are grateful for your generosity," he said, his eyes twinkling with appreciation.

"Don't thank me too much. We are family. This is what Chu Yan and I should do," Ling Li replied, her voice steady yet humble.

Mrs. Xu, sensing something more profound behind Ling's visit, leaned in closer. "Ling, you must have something in your mind to visit us. Did Chu Yan bully you? Tell me, and I will discipline him," she exclaimed, her protective nature coming to the fore.

Ling Li giggled at her mother-in-law's fervor. "No, no, no. Chu Yan didn't bully me. I am here to ask you something," she answered, her tone shifting to one of gravity.

"Oh, what is it?" Mrs. Xu's curiosity was piqued.

"Please don't be scared by my question or feel offended," Ling Li said calmly, taking a deep breath. She glanced at her in-laws, knowing that this conversation was inevitable. Ling's hesitation did not go unnoticed.

"Ling, just ask anything, and we will give you our best answer," Mr. Xu reassured her, his voice kind and patient.

Ling nodded, steeling herself for the delicate conversation that lay ahead.

"Does any of your family members have black magic?" Ling Li asked nervously, her voice barely above a whisper. Though she was usually composed, facing her in-laws with such a question made her anxious; the last thing she wanted was to offend them.

Upon hearing Ling Li's question, Mr. and Mrs. Xu exchanged a puzzled glance. The room felt suddenly tense.

"Can you tell us why you are asking?" Mr. Xu inquired gently.

Ling Li pursed her lips. She wasn't sure if she should mention Four Eyes' black magic, unsure of how they would react.

Seeing her hesitation, Mr. Xu cleared his throat, trying to ease her nerves. "Ling, does Chu Yan have black magic?" he asked.

Mr. Xu's direct question took aback Ling Li. She nodded, feeling a weight lift off her shoulders but replaced quickly by uncertainty.

Mr. Xu's expression turned solemn, and he lowered his gaze to the floor and finally said, "Ling, my grandfather practiced black magic. I have two brothers. We were triplets, but they both passed away at a very young age because they couldn't control their powers. They wanted to practice like our grandfather."

Mr. Xu paused, the pain of those memories evident in his eyes. "Our grandfather kept reminding them that it wasn't easy and that they should have pure intentions; otherwise, the evil behind black magic would consume them. And it probably did."

Ling Li listened intently, astonished by the revelation.

Mrs. Xu joined the conversation, her voice soft and nostalgic. "Ling, my mother was a shaman. They said she had this kind of magic, too. But I was very young when she died, so I didn't learn much from her."

Ling Li was even more stunned. 'No wonder Four Eyes' black magic is so potent,' she thought. Ling Li doesn't know if she wants to laugh or cry at the irony.

"Don't worry too much. I will help Chu Yan control his black magic," Ling Li assured the elderly couple with a determined smile, who she noticed had become emotional.

Mr. Xu's eyes welled up with tears. "I trust you will," he said, his voice choked with emotion.

"Father-in-law, why are you crying?" Ling Li asked softly.

Shaking his head, he replied, "I didn't expect my son to have black magic. I hope his fate is better than my brothers'."

Ling Li placed a reassuring hand on his arm. "Father-in-law, Chu Yan will definitely be far from them. I assure you."