

Paragon Of Sin Chapter 1 - 10

Chapter 1: Wei Wuyin

"No..."

Plop. Plop. Plop.

Droplets of crimson blood fell without end on the cold ceramic tiled floor of the hall. A ghastly silence overtook the night filled atmosphere.

A body, a male corpse, laid on the floor. He was sprawled on the floor, holding his own throat with both hands, and eyes as wide as full moons. The chaotic blood lines in his eyes were filled with malicious hatred and disbelief, as if unable to accept that he had died like this.

The droplets of blood originated from an object with a particularly pure silver sheen. A saber. Holding this saber was a young man.

His hair was as black as an unlit night with a unique pair of contrasting silver eyes that gleamed with an unexpected purity. He was without clothes, holding only a saber, and stood upright while looking at the corpse before him. On his face was a light smile, gentle and pure.

A bloody smell flowed into his nostrils, but it couldn't affect him in any manner. In fact, he looked down towards the only other warm body in the room. A young girl who was on her knees, also without clothes, just a few inches away from his body. Her mouth wide and dripping with obscene liquid.

Her eyes were wide and in shock with tears seemingly ready to burst into existence. She obviously couldn't believe the events that had transpired. It was like a nightmare where one could only wish to awake from.

"S-senior br-brother... Yu..." her words were filled with disbelief and sadness. Her mental faculties went haywire as her mind could barely make sense of what

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lay before her. A wave of despair surged into her mind as she recalled early memories and recent events.

Their first meeting. On that autumn morning during their sect selections. He was unassuming but contained a unique hidden quality that attracted her. He had relied on himself, progressing through cultivation with a fierce momentum until he captured her heart and mind.

It was as if all things were meant to be. When she was in his embrace, she was enlivened and happy. Then, the nightmare began.

The tragedy of the cultivation world. A rival sect, stronger than hers, used various reasons to justify war. Without suspense, the sect's resources were taken and her fellow junior and senior brothers and sisters were killed, captured, or escaped for their lives.

She and her senior brother Yu Jin, her love, escaped after the collapse of their sect. He had claimed several enemy lives, escaped the pursuit of many, and survived. Until...

Her eyes traced towards the young man. His black hair was spiky, full, and long. He had glistening silver eyes that beat back the worldly darkness. This young man was a core disciple of the enemy sect, and he had captured her after hunting them down with other members of his sect.

With her captured, her fate was no longer in her hands. A tragedy of an enemy, a tragedy of a weakling, and she knew she would suffer the tragedy of being a woman. However, she trusted with all her heart, all her soul, that Yu Jin would arrive and save her.

She believed him.

She believed in him.

And just like she had thought, her senior brother Yu Jin had arrived with heroic fanfare and deadly killing intent. Just moments ago, despite her current actions and position, she felt a blossoming strand of warmth and happiness.

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Then, hell descended with a swipe of a saber.

The young man slightly smiled, looking towards her as if he had not claimed her lover's life.

"You can continue."

His words caused her to shiver as the taste in her mouth she'd forgotten returned. The rancid memories rushed into her mind like a flood.

To survive, she had to buy as much time as possible. Even doing unsavory things in hopes to buy enough time. Her eyes revealed hatred, dense and uncontrollable. They burned with an ardent killing intent. A will to fight to the death for revenge, for vengeance, for her senior brother, was born.

However, when the sheen of the saber met her gaze, her courage deflated like a popped balloon. Reality set in immediately. With her cultivation base, her strength, the most she could do was lunge and be beheaded at this distance.

Like a light at the end of the tunnel, her eyes glistened as she looked at the young man's manhood. It was beyond the norm in dimensions, an organ of god-crafted quality, and sufficient for any man to be proud of.

She knew that her life would come to an end, either in terms of freedom or her actual life, so how could she allow this man to live peacefully?! With haste, she intended to use her jaws and rip off the only thing that would ensure the most amount of pain.

"Sigh..." a soft exhale sounded like a whisper of a death god. The young girl panicked, lunging forward, but a brilliant silver light slid swiftly across her neck. Before she could continue, her head slid off her shoulders and with a heavy thud, landed on the ceramic floor.

It rolled slowly due to the momentum and stopped only when the crazed eyes faced the corpse of Yu Jin.

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"At least in death, you two will be together." A swishing sound echoed as the young man with silver eyes, black hair, and a slim frame waved the saber in his hand about. The loose blood shot away and left only the silver blade clean.

"Wei Wuyin, are you decent?" A soft, melodious voice echoed and entered the hall. A masculine figure appeared, filled to the brim with muscles, a bronze skin, and dressed in scarlet animal fur.

The young man named Wei Wuyin turned his gaze impatiently towards this voice. Despite the softness and feminine characteristics of his voice, his body was brimming with a unique sense of masculinity.

Coldly snorting, "It seems your Yin Echo Method has reached a new peak." Wei Wuyin waved his right hand and a scarlet robe appeared from his storage ring. He wasn't quick or slow as he dressed himself up.

The set of clothing, including the scarlet robe, originated from his sect and held not only its colors but its insignia. On his back was a black dire wolf of legend atop a mountain, with its claws lunging forth in a frightening pounce. Its eyes were beyond fierce and filled with killing intent.

"Indeed it has, jealous?" The masculine bearing yet feminine sounding man jeered, a peal of hearty laughter echoing out.

"Jealous?" Wei Wuyin laughingly responded, as if he heard the funniest joke in the world. Then, as if he recalled something, he looked at the young man whose throat was sliced and held no sign of life. "Chu Yan, did you need to lure him here? It's not as if he could've killed me."

Chu Yan frowned. A faint light of disappointment surged in his eyes, but he quickly covered it up with a trace of indifference. "I have no idea what you mean. This young man bypassed our defenses using some unique methods and entered your impromptu palace, how was I to know? Only the surge of Qi allowed me to realize my mistake."

Those words were said without a hint of truthfulness. His very words and reactions alluded to his involvement, but he obviously didn't care.

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Wei Wuyin didn't even feel the need to look at Chu Yan's expression, as if it was irrelevant. "You'll receive the appropriate reprimand for negligence. Clean this up." After commanding such, he started to walk towards the entrance to which Chu Yan entered.

"Of course," Chu Yan said with false respect. The punishment for negligence was just a subtraction of resources, nothing too serious. He wanted to get this over with, so he walked over.

As Wei Wuyin walked past Chu Yan, his eyes turned sharp, flashing a murderously dreadful light.

Slink!

Chu Yan felt an abrupt sense of deadly crisis, not expecting Wei Wuyin to make a move at this moment. When he wanted to react, a blade had already entered his temple and pierced into his brain. He had many words, regrets, and memories that flowed through his brain as it was punctured and subsequently destroyed. Unfortunately, they would never see the light of day.

As Chu Yan's corpse fell, his head in a bloody, unrecognizable mess, Wei Wuyin strongly sniffed, gathering a wad of saliva, and coldly spat on his corpse. "You ruined my fun, so do you even need to live? Piece of trash."

With a carefree gait, Wei Wuyin walked outside and met the guards who were stationed outside of his quarters' doors. His eyes casually swept these men, remembering their faces. "Lieutenant Chu Yan died from a sneak attack of an intruder. I killed the intruder as a result. Clean up the mess, I will report it to the sect."

The guards were shocked hearing this, their mouth agape. While they did not expect Wei Wuyin to die to the intruder, they didn't expect Chu Yan to fall to his own scheme. Their hearts grew cold. They felt a shade of calamity loom over.

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It was in autumn. The tree leaves were transitioning into a beautiful color, flowing about wildly in the wind like dancing fays. Littered about were a tart smell and colors ranging from red, yellow, purple, black, blue, orange, magenta, and brown.

Sitting atop a tall, thick tree branch, Wei Wuyin looked quietly at the surroundings. A camp was set not too far away from him. This camp held various young, old, and strong men and women. They all adorned purple outfits with a patch on various parts of their clothing depicting a crescent moon.

No one in the camp had noticed his arrival or his gaze as it swept about wildly in thought.

"The last camp..." his words were soft and filled with disdain. His sect, the Scarlet Solaris Sect, which held the Legendary Dire Wolf as its symbol, had declared war on this Violet Moon Sect. It was without much pretense, and while there were many established reasons for the war, he knew the truth.

It was for a woman.

A particular, yet an extraordinary woman.

She was the Violet Moon Sect's Sect Leader's descendant, unsure if she was a sister or niece or granddaughter, but they were related. Born with great natural talent, a countenance reminiscent of a fallen immortal fairy, and a powerful faction, she was beyond blessed. However, in a world of cultivation where the strong take from the weak, beauty and talent of such level was guaranteed to attract envy and lust.

Her fate now?

He knew for a fact that she had already been captured, given to the young lord of their sect as a present. Her fate was now to be seen as a toy, a prisoner, restricted and used as one pleased.

Looking towards the clear skies that held a light blue hue, Wei Wuyin shook his head. He lamented with pity in his eyes, "She's wasted on that fool. If she was

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with me..." a cold, callous smile couldn't help but tug at his lips. The glint in his eyes was dark, cruel, and lascivious. Licking his lips, he held out his palm.

A faint surge of qi and a perfect red apple appeared in his hands.

Crunch!

Taking a harsh bite, he chewed loudly and without care. The people within the camp grew alert. A few guards vigilantly looked in his direction and their eyes shrunk to their limits. That scarlet garb that haunted their dreams and made them hellish nightmares was glaringly obvious.

He smiled, a strand of fruit juice flowing down his lips.

"Hello."

"Enemy! ENEMY! ENEMY!!!" The guard with the quickest of mind shouted at the top of his lungs. He was already running, attempting to take a predetermined escape route. It seemed that his only job was to alert and the lives of others weren't his responsibility. No wonder he reacted quickly.

"Smart," Wei Wuyin admired the man's actions. Decisiveness in the cultivation world was truly lacking. "Kill those who resist. Capture the rest." Unlike the loud exclamations of the guard, Wei Wuyin was much more moderate in the volume of his voice. Even his tone contained a hint of casual activity.

Swish! Swish! Swish!

Streaks of scarlet shot out from the surroundings and encircled the camp. The members of his sect pounced like ancient Dire Wolves towards their prey. They wielded sabers and swords, weapons of war and death, and struck out with deadly force.

Those who even looked remotely like a threat was slain, their blood staining the autumn leaves endlessly.

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Wei Wuyin's gaze reflected the gushes of blood, horrific screams of agony and pain, and the despair in the air. It looked somewhat...beautiful.

"Hm?"

An abnormality caught his eye. A cubical, five by five-meter cage was situated at the far end of the camp. It seemed that the cage was carried by these weak, pathetic cultivators to this location. As a core disciple and commander of this team, he didn't feel the need to pay too close attention to the slaughter.

Therefore, he threw the half-eaten apple in his hand aside and leapt forward. His movements were casual as he walked upon the chaotic battlefield of death and agony. His subordinates were skillful, bypassing their leader and hunting down the remnant forces diligently.

"Help me!" A young woman, in her early twenties, caught sight of Wei Wuyin's casual stride and knew her only chance was here. Without hesitation, she didn't run away, knowing her legs and cultivation would not get her far. Instead, she hoped to seek a way of survival.

She lunged to Wei Wuyin's feet, halting his steps. Before the girl could say another sentence, several trained blades had already attempted to pierce through her body with dense killing intent.

She squealed.

Frowning, Wei Wuyin waved his hand at the last second. Truly, as the furthest blade was already piercing the girl's backside by a millimeter. The wielder of this blade was a woman as well. Her eyes were cold and indifferent. The others stopped as well. They looked to Wei Wuyin's tall figure, handsome visage, and powerful aura.

Wei Wuyin looked at this young woman and smiled at her. He squatted down. Bringing forth his right hand, he turned his palm upside down, and a ripe red apple appeared in his palm.

"Hungry?" He asked.

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Startled, the young woman's mind lapsed briefly before a sudden scream and its abrupt ending snapped her back to reality. A head of a middle-aged man rolled just a few feet from her, prompting her gaze to shift. Her heart constricted as if a ruthless viper had seized it.

Was that going to be her fate?

She was unwilling!

Decisively, she nodded towards Wei Wuyin, despair and hope in her eyes stronger than ever before. She reached out and grabbed the apple, grasped her hope, only after receiving it did she take a bite.

"Mn. Keep her alive," Wei Wuyin ordered. The others nodded. The cold, indifferent woman struck the back of the young woman's head before she could thank the heavens for her survival, and rendered her unconscious. With a heft, she carried the young woman by the shoulder and left.

The others gave a small bow and started capturing or killing the others. Wei Wuyin ignored it all, continuing his walk towards that cubical cage.

The cage was rusted with a single sliding entrance and a window the size of a baseball. It was this window that provided the small amount of sunlight and oxygen. He touched the cage, feeling its coldness on his fingers. He was startled.

"Froststeel?" Wei Wuyin knew that froststeel was a very particular and tortuous piece of material. Regardless of whether it was summer or autumn, froststeel remained at a constant low temperature. Even if you threw it into a normal fire, it would remain the same. Only by using a fire several times stronger than the melting point of normal steel could one even think of forging something from it.

He frowned. It must be an icy hell within a cage made of it.

However, his curiosity was abounding. What could a group of stragglers running and hiding for their lives need a cage like this for and what was inside?

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Without pause, he gripped the handle of the cage and slide open the entrance. A darkness seemed to linger in the icy cage. As he breathed, a frosty white air emerged.

"Cold..." commenting, he waved his hand and a silver saber emerged in his hand. Walking inside, he looked around with curiosity. This cage was small, barely capable of fitting him, but it felt oddly spacious.

"Aaah!" A piercing scream shocked him, his body turning around as his blade slashed out. However, his blade sliced through nothing but cold air and scraped nothing but froststeel.

Before he could react, he felt a presence behind him. A piercing pain emerged from his neck and his eyes widened. With a roar, a burst of qi flowed from his qi bodily points and exploded from his body.

A black shadow smashed heavily into the cage. A sickening crushing of bones sound echoed, but no cry of agony. A searing feeling emerged at his neck as he winced slightly. It only served to give birth to violent urges.

Holding his neck, Wei Wuyin turned and pointed his saber. A rage flowed endlessly through his eyes, and killing intent surged.

However, what was left was maniacal laughter.

Getting a good look at the figure, Wei Wuyin realized it was a male. It was a young man, not much older than him, in his early twenties. However, his body was malnourished and scrawny to the limits. His dark eyes were sunken and his silver hair was long, unkempt, and dirty.

He wore no clothes, taking the cold temperature of the froststeel with only his fleshy body. His coarse skin looked shriveled and frostbitten. Wei Wuyin could tell that this young man was tortured as well, marks, cuts, and bruises left like a series of roads on his flesh.

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The laughter broke Wei Wuyin out of his murderous rage and curiosity abounded instead. Pressing heavily on the wound at his neck, his eyes narrowed.

"Why are you here?" He asked.

"Why are you here?" A rough, gruffly voice filled with endless insanity asked in response. It sounded crazy.

Wei Wuyin kicked out. His legs were like the wind as it whipped at the head of the young man. A sickening sound of flesh and bone meeting force resounded. The head of the young man violently recoiled and smashed heavily on the cage froststeel constructed walls.

Bang!

"Why are you here?" Wei Wuyin asked again.

The young man, rattled and barely conscious, couldn't even respond.

Bang!

Wei Wuyin kicked again.

"Why are you here?"

This time, after the young man regained his balance and the blood flowed heavily from his skull with a noticeable indent within it, he looked at Wei Wuyin with clear, sane eyes. It was the eyes of a scholar who'd traveled a thousand miles and read countless books.

"Oh?" His interest was piqued. Did this fellow regain some sense with that blow?

"Are you good or are you evil?" The young man spoke, his voice was soft yet powerful. It was completely different from before. Wei Wuyin frowned but replied without hesitation.

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"Good or evil? Are you a child?" Such a nonsensical question belonged to those philosophical scholars and children's stories, it had no place in the cultivation world. He was about to kick out once more in hopes another blow would help but the young man smiled and nodded randomly, prompting him to halt.

"Good. Evil. Morale. Immoral. In our world, the Good gain karmic luck. In our world, the Evil gain infernal sin. The moral is just. The immoral are condemned. This world is one where the strong preys on the weak, the weak are evil and immoral, the strong are good and morale."

"In my life, I have done no wrong, yet I was deemed wrong. In my life, was I good or evil?" A deep unwillingness surged from his words.

Wei Wuyin shook his head. This prisoner had clearly lost his mind, so why did he need to stay alive. With his saber, he pointed it towards the young man. He felt merciful today, so he decided to make it only slightly painful.

"No!" The young man shouted fiercely. "I was simply weak. That is the greatest source of sin, but also, the greatest source of luck!"

Wei Wuyin ignored him, jabbing his saber into the emaciated shoulder of the young man. A bloody mist and crimson liquid exploded, but the young man didn't react or scream in pain. His eyes were clear and strong, and his expression stable.

"Be reborn in sin, steal karmic luck. I will be karmic cause, you will be karmic effect!" The young man strongly claimed. What greeted him was a stab into his abdomen that pierced out of his back. Wei Wuyin had fiercely penetrated the man with his saber.

"Nonsense," Wei Wuyin coldly spat. "If you want to be reborn, I'll send you off to reincarnate a little sooner. Say hello to Old Lady Meng Po for me." He removed his blade and placed it on the young man's neck, his eyes indifferent to the man's insanity.

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"I. Have seen my sin. I. Have seen my karma. You...Be rebor-" A bloody line appeared at his throat to seal his voice. A soft thud occurred as the young man's head smashed into the floor of the cage.

"Useless," Wei Wuyin coldly spat in disdain. With that, he walked out and was greeted by the blazing sun of autumn. His eyes squinted. He held his neck as a trickle of blood seeped through his fingers. He watched the slaughter before him unfold.

He knew the situation was reaching its climax, and felt oddly relieved. For some reason, he felt abnormally tired and wanted to return to the sect in haste.

Closing his eyes, he took a deep breath and exhaled.

A faint crimson light, brighter than blood, flickered briefly from his neck wound.

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## Chapter 2: Scarlet Solaris Sect

In the cultivation world, there was a country and in this country, there was a mountain that radiated a faint scarlet glow. This glow emanated a profound aura that caused all mortals who dared to glance to suffer the palpitation of the heart.

In the mornings, it stood tall and wide, capable of touching the clouds and covering the sun. At night, it was like a scarlet sun giving direction and meaning to the life of its inhabitants.

This mountain was the headquarters of the illustrious Scarlet Solaris Sect.

Around its bends and etched into its body were various buildings giving a sight similar to a long-winding city. One could notice defining lines indicating levels of sorts, and the higher one went, the greater the scarlet glow. At times, birds of legend could be seen soaring about. These were white cranes that stood at several tens of meters in size. On these cranes were people who radiated grand auras going to and fro various areas.

On a particular bird, a young man approached the mountain. He was young, handsome beyond description with silver eyes, jet black hair, and scarlet robes. His physique wasn't particularly large, but one could see ample definition of muscle.

He stood calmly on the crane as the wind battered his figure. Next to him was a young woman. She clutched at the feathers of the crane, attempting to not fall to her death due to a slight mistake. Her knuckles were white and her face was pale in fright.

The inhabitants of the mountain caught sight of the young man, their eyes swirling with thoughts.

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"Senior Brother Wei Wuyin! He's returned?" An honorary disciple exclaimed. He was middle-aged, likely having been a part of the sect for a long time yet was incapable of promoting.

"Wei Wuyin? Who's that?" A younger, naive looking young boy asked with curiosity. They were working together, tending the herb farm with dozens of other nearby disciples.

"Haha, you don't know? Well, let me tell you!" The middle-aged man took up a teacher-like expression with a hint of pride and smugness, as if bringing enlightening to the ignorant brought him immense pleasure.

"You haven't been here long so you don't know. Senior Brother Wei Wuyin is one of the nine Core Disciples of our sect! His cultivation is said to have exceeded the Third Stage of Qi Condensation, Elemental Birth, and has given form to Qi!" His excitement was intoxicating as he spoke. The surrounding disciples who were eavesdropping turned towards the middle-aged man and paid rapt attention.

"Really?!"

The young man gasped in wonder, his eyes brilliantly bright. Even if Wei Wuyin wasn't important, the fact that he was capable of ascending to the Third Stage of Qi Condensation made him an incredible figure worthy of admiration.

"Haha! Damn right! Not only that, he's just like you and me. He came from a small clan, broke free from his limitations, and rose from an honorary disciple to a core disciple step by step!" His words were laced with pride. From his eyes, it was as if he lived vicariously through Wei Wuyin.

It wasn't just him. The other disciples who had lived in the sect for long had eyes filled with pride and excitement. They wished to jump through the dragon's gate like Wei Wuyin and become prestigious and extraordinary.

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"Didn't you say cultivation without resources was impossible? How did he become a core disciple as an honorary disciple where we receive none?" The young man's mind gave birth to curious questions. In the sect, rank was divided into four disciples: Honorary, Outer, Inner, and Core. Climbing up the ranks was rumored to be as difficult as ascending the Nine Heavens.

A middle-aged woman, who wore common cloth indicating her status as a married woman, interjected, "Cultivation without resources isn't impossible, just incredibly difficult."

In the cultivation world, everyone had a chance to enter the road of cultivation. The world provides the most abundant resource, the Essence of Heaven and Earth, and allows such. However, unless one entered Qi Condensation, it was impossible to be considered a true cultivator.

The middle-aged man glanced at the woman and snorted, "Cultivation without resources is impossible, and the Essence of Heaven and Earth is a resource." It was clear he had a feud with this woman as he directly contradicted and corrected her.

The middle-aged married woman pursed her lips and kept silent, obviously unwilling to get into an argument.

"Hmph! If you cultivate with just that, entering the Qi Condensation isn't impossible, but what it can provide is limited the further you go. The world of cultivation starts with a singular realm and three phases."

"The realm of Foundation Establishment, divided into the three phases of Physique Tempering, Meridian Awakening, and Dantian Establishment. Only then can one enter the Qi Condensation Realm, gathering external forces with internal power and generating Metaphysical Energy called Qi. One day, I will do the same!" The middle-aged man's excitement reached a peak as, near the end, his voice went up several octaves.

The middle-aged woman rolled her eyes, "Even establishing a foundation is too difficult, and sometimes a century isn't enough to establish one's dantian. Don't

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let this old fool trick you, cultivation is anything but easy, and he hasn't even finished Physique Tempering in three decades."

"Oh?!" The young man was shocked both internally and externally. Despite being a part of a sect for so many years, he hadn't even broken free of the first phase of cultivation? Recalling the earlier conversations he had with this man, his expression darkened. He had clearly realized he was lied to about various things.

"Hmph!" The middle-aged man flourished his sleeves in annoyance.

Noticing that they went off-topic, the crowd started to get further information on cultivation and Wei Wuyin, but besides some basic rumors and gossip about his earlier years, not much came from it.

It wasn't long before they all went away to perform their respective duties.

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Thud.

The crane landed in a courtyard. Its body was light, so it hadn't made much of a commotion, but the young woman jumped off in fright. It was a blessing to touch the ground again. She even had the urge to kiss the ground in thanks.

Wei Wuyin dismounted from the crane, landing softly unlike the woman. This place had a relatively denser level of Essence of Heaven and Earth than other areas within the sect. It was more suitable for cultivation. It was a benefit of core disciples.

The Scarlet Solaris Sect was worthy of its name. It even contained Scarlet Qi, birth from the Scarlet Spirit Vine that ran through the mountain. This qi defined the Scarlet Solaris Sect and was used in many of its cultivation methods to bolster one's cultivated qi.

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The soft pattering of footsteps sounded out from the distance. A set of labored breathing was heard as a middle-aged man with a goatee was revealed. He was chubby in physique with bronze skin and looked a little slovenly.

He smelled of sex, and the belt of his robes wasn't fastened properly. It was obviously done in a rushed manner.

Wei Wuyin didn't mind.

"M-master! You're back!" The middle-aged man exclaimed excitedly. His name was Du Ling. He was Wei Wuyin's butler. Someone who he had known before becoming a disciple of the sect.

"Oh? You've established your Dantian," Wei Wuyin mildly noted. The aura of Du Ling was no longer just a strong physical presence, but a trace of the Essence of Heaven and Earth lingered inside his body. This indicated that he had established his qi center. If he had reached the Meridian Awakening Phase only, the Essence of Heaven and Earth wouldn't linger, but flow naturally inside to outside his body in a complete cycle.

Du Ling was briefly taken aback before nodding his head like a pecking chicken, "Yes, yes! It was thanks to Master's support."

Wei Wuyin slightly nodded. He looked towards the young woman. This woman he had spared was originally a part of the Violet Moon Sect. Her name was Li Yin. She belonged to some unassuming clan a ways away and was just an outer disciple of the sect.

Her cultivation was nearly similar to Du Ling, who was Dantian Establishment Phase of the Foundation Establishment Realm. In that realm, the Essence of Heaven and Earth would strengthen the body and give one inhuman levels of strength. She, while in the Foundation Establishment Realm, was only at the Meridian Awakening Phase.

"Find her a room. Give her a suitable job in the meantime." He ordered. Du Ling nodded quickly and walked towards Li Yin with a gentle, yet somehow dirty smile.

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Li Yin was in a daze. The courtyard's atmosphere had given her a huge shock. She had been in the Violet Moon Sect since she was eight and had never been in any place remotely as comfortable as this one. The dense Essence of Heaven and Earth made her pores celebrate.

Wei Wuyin didn't linger. He left the courtyard and arrived at the entrance of his personal abode. The sound of hushed talks drew his attention. Two women were around the corner speaking of various things.

He frowned. They were Du Ling's women and honorary disciples of the sect. Clutching at his neck wound, he winced slightly and entered, decidedly ignoring the two women.

As he arrived, he was met with a well-maintained, nearly too clean, room with a single bed and a table with a lone chair. Despite its size being several times greater than any room in the building, his room highlighted his liking towards minimalist design. The only two features that stood out were the orderly bookshelves filled with books and scrolls, and a pill cauldron.

The cauldron was verdant green, small in size, and emanated a faint medicinal fragrance. Its state was indicative that it had been often used and treasured.

He laid down on the bed as he felt exhausted in mind and body. Since his meeting with that young man with silver hair and black eyes, his body felt like atlas, being constantly weighed down upon. At first, he thought infection or poison from the bite. However, there was no indication of either and the wound was healing nicely.

In fact, the wound was already faint and healed for the most part.

Having just led a successful mission to eradicate the remnants of the Violet Moon Sect, it was understandable that he was exhausted.

Holding his palm out in front of his face, he couldn't help but sigh. "That one who snuck in an attempt to kill me was in the Third Stage of Qi Condensation, the Elemental Birth. If it wasn't for my recent ascension into the Fourth Stage, I

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would've likely fallen to Chu Yan's schemes." As he recalled the woman he briefly fancied and later killed including her relentless lover, he clenched his palm into a fist.

The Scarlet Solaris Sect was one of the Five Great Sects of Wu Country, alongside the Aqua Echo Sect, Earthly Titan Sect, Sky Sword Sect, and Jade Lotus Sect. They held enormous power and strength in the Wu Country, enough to summon the wind and rain. Even the royal family would have to give each sect the appropriate amount of face.

The strife between sects was already complicated and filled with all sorts of schemes, but inside was worse. Chu Yan was just a pawn in a bigger scheme. Wei Wuyin's status and background drew many envious and discontented eyes towards him, while others believe he carried a cultivation secret. There were just too many who wished him dead or worse.

"I was given that mission because of Jiu Lang...I'll have to deal with her sooner or later." As he recalled a beauty so great that nations would war at a single word of hers, his eyes flashed with dense, malicious killing intent.

As his mind wandered and forgot the passage of time, a soft knock resounded from outside. "Master, it's Du Ling. I received a letter of invitation for you."

Wei Wuyin took a deep breath. He had just returned to the sect and was given a letter of invitation. It wasn't much of a surprise as to who it originated from. He lifted his tired body up and reached the door. When he touched the door, his eyes flashed.

Immediately, he retreated fiercely backwards. A piercing sword penetrated the door and stabbed towards him. The resulting impact caused the wooden door to explosively shatter into fragments.

Before he could get a good sense of his attacker, a shadow appeared behind him like the looming dread of death. He didn't bother turning around or pressing forward. He formed a handseal and pressed toward the ground.

Elemental Wind Art: Wind Wall!

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An explosive boom echoed as chaotic wind flow was born that shrouded his body protectively. The shadow held a sharp weapon of sorts, obviously capable of immense cutting power, as it attempted to slice through the chaotic wind flow, but shockingly found that it couldn't.

With its trajectory disrupted, Wei Wuyin mobilized his cultivation base further. He formed a double-handed seal, and his right leg stepped forward as he breathed towards his initial attacker.

Elemental Fire Art: Serpent's Breath!

A roaring tongue of flame large enough to engulf a human body was expelled directly from his mouth. The form of a serpent could vaguely be seen as rushing heat enshrouded the room. A surprised exclamation echoed as his initial attacker retreated with haste.

His eyes flashed a scarlet light of death as he fiercely pursued. Only after breaking through his own fire art safely did he see the appearance of his attacker. A woman, petite and firm, dressed in black.

"Du Ling's women?" His mind quickly concluded. A chill suffused from his eyes. Both of his attackers were at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation, External Flow, and were practiced in stealth methods and the art of assassination. If his qi had yet to give birth to the elements and taken form, he would have suffered severe injuries or even death from those collaborated strikes.

The Elemental Birth Phase of Qi Condensation allowed one's Qi to give birth to the four natural elements: Earth, Wind, Fire, and Water. However, this was in a formless state and uncontrolled. Outside of raw creation, not much else could be done.

Unless one wants to throw random tongues of flames, spurt water at someone, or send out a gust of random wind, it was essentially useless in combat. The most crucial aspect was strengthening one's qi and body using the four

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elements, allowing it to be more fluid, tougher, resilient to temperature, and easier to control.

However, the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation, Yin Form, enabled one to harness innate yin energies to give shape to Metaphysical Qi. With that, a wall of wind could be formed, a serpent of fire, and bodies of water. It was a qualitative increase in cultivation that allowed one to be nearly invincible to all those below it.

His enemy hadn't expected his cultivation to increase to that realm, which was notorious for being insidiously difficult for men, who possessed little natural yin energies, to reach, and possess such prowess to boot. This was clear by that exclamation of surprise from a trained assassin. He wouldn't let up, however.

He flicked his palm and a silver saber appeared. A gleam of silver qi, sharp and deadly, formed at its tip. He roared, brandishing it in an attack. A ray of sharp, silver qi expelled from the blade and violently met the shadow.

"Metal qi?!" A voice sounded from behind him in shock. It was understandable as metal qi was outside the four natural qi elements and giving birth to it was exceptionally difficult.

Thud!

A body, now a corpse, fell heavily on the ground. A spray of crimson blood was left on the nearby wall. A glaring evidence of death.

"Ah!" The shadow behind took notice of her partner's death and retreated decisively. Without hesitation, she jumped out of the nearby window causing shattering sounds to resound.

"Since you've come, stay!" Wei Wuyin coldly spat before urging his qi within his body. He kicked off explosively as he turned around and sped forward like a bullet. It wasn't long before a brief clash of metal on metal, blade on blade, sounded and then resounding silence.

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A moment later, Wei Wuyin carried a segregated head and headless body through the shattered window. It was of a delicate and beautiful woman with a sliced mask. Her eyes were without focus and direction, even cross-eyed if one looked closely. Her death was sudden and filled with resentment.

"I'm so tired," Wei Wuyin softly muttered as he looked at the shattered cauldron. He dropped the head and body on the ground and took out a transmission crystal. He sent a message to Du Leng. Before long, a chubby man walked through with a shocked and fearful expression. It was obvious that he had heard the commotion but stayed away for his own safety. If his Master couldn't handle it, he would only get in the way.

"Clean this mess up. I'm going to take a bath." Ordering such, he left. Du Leng shivered slightly when he realized the scorch marks, destroyed objects, and corpses. The two bodies were those he was familiar with and had even accompanied him through many late nights.

An expression of guilt and apology surfaced on his face as he realized he was an unwitting accomplice to an assassination attempt. He wanted to curse himself endlessly. Instead, he focused his energy elsewhere, growing calm as a result. Without further hesitation, he started to diligently clean.

### Chapter 3: Du Ling

Wei Wuyin sat at a table with brewed tea. It was a picture of peace.

The deaths of the two assassins were reported to the sect. However, even after several days, only a perfunctory investigation was held. Of course, nothing came about it. They were deemed to have acted on their own reconnaissance and had no ties with any figure in the sect.

Wei Wuyin didn't waste his time or breath on pleading for a further investigation. He knew who was behind the assassination attempt and why. It was this very person that could sway and influence an investigation by the sect into a murder attempt of a core disciple, something that should've caused cataclysmic waves.

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After all, if a core disciple was attacked in the sect, who would feel safe? This had to be handled and, normally, people would've been blamed and publicly executed with the utmost swiftness. Yet, it was swept under the rug and he received a bit of contribution points from the sect as a reward.

A reward for surviving.

This was a clear sign of mocking and abuse of influence and power. Someone wanted him to know that even his death was acceptable by the sect, that he was unimportant and worthless.

In the end, he didn't pursue it. Even Du Ling's carelessness didn't bother him. Thinking of Du Ling, he recalled a vivid memory.

-----

Ten years, three months ago.

The Wei Clan's Red Dove City in the Zhan Prefecture. A bustling crowd had gathered in the city's central square as a platform stood at its center. A guillotine was erected high and above, nearly thirty meters tall. On the stock, fresh blood lingered and a ghastly aura chilled the air.

The crowd seemed impassioned by events as idle discussions took place. There were all kinds of people ranging from elders to children who had come to watch the public execution of criminals and other unsavory individuals condemned by the City Authority - the Wei Clan.

"Didya hear? The Bucklion Gang has been found!" An excited young observer said.

"The Bucklion Gang? Is that why we're all here?" An inquisitive young maiden asked.

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The young observer, male, eyes lit up as he obtained the attention of the young maiden and laughed. "Yeah! Those guys were finally hunted down by the Wei Clan! Haha, I bet they regret their actions now!"

"If it's true, they deserve what they get!" A random disgruntled elderly man interjected.

The conversations grew wildly from speculation, to gossip, to factual belief. As the crowd grew with anticipation, a group of people, with shackles tied to their ankles, were dragged here by a lone man. This man wore heavy armor and a black demon mask. He was the executioner.

When this group of people arrived, the world went silent as all eyes turned towards them. There was the occasional hushed whisper, but mostly the shaking of the chains and shackles resounded amidst the quiet.

"It seems it's true, the Bucklion Gang has been captured." The elderly old man whispered quietly. His eyes were filled with complex emotions as he looked towards the condemned men and women. Many of those captured were famous individuals who were known by many as being a part of or affiliated with the gang.

"To think, a lofty Qi Condensation cultivator was captured. Look, it's their leader, Tu Si!" One of the crowd pointed towards a man ahead of the prisoners. His body was muscular and tall, leaving a distinctive impression of immense power in the minds of others. However, that impression was weakened heavily as his hands were stitched together by barbwire, and his bare feet were covered in dry blood.

Even his flesh seemed mangled in certain areas. What was once a Qi Condensation expert, an individual who formed their Heart of Qi, used their mind, matter, essence, and spirit to condense Metaphysical Qi and become an

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expert who could lord over tens of thousands, now cut a sorry figure where even the local beggars felt pity.

Tu Si's eyes were dim and lifeless. The aura of dejected spirit and acceptance of fate lingered that could make children cry in sadness. As he trudged his body beneath the gazes of the crowd, his head hung low.

In the crowd, a young boy who was but fourteen was watching. His silver eyes, black hair, handsome appearance, and slim physique was hidden behind a conical hat and black robe.

Wei Wuyin watched the proceedings silently. His eyes were lively and aspiring. "To think Big Brother did it." He smiled cheerfully at the accomplishment of his family. The execution of criminals was a regular pastime in Red Dove City as the Wei Clan acted with an iron fist. They held no quarter for anyone who went against them and they held the power to back it up.

The strongest member of the clan, one of their patriarchs, was a member of the Saber Wolf Sect, a subordinate to the Scarlet Solaris Sect, and a cultivator at the Third Stage of Qi Condensation, the Elemental Birth Phase.

A gust of wind could become a typhoon. A wisp of fire could whip up into becoming a maelstrom of flames. While it didn't hold a permanence of creation, where the things created could last until destroyed or interact deeply and naturally with other elements, it promoted the interaction and growth of qi in relation to similar origins.

Experts at this level could dominate vast stretches of land, such as an entire City and govern its immediate surroundings in the cultivation world.

As Wei Wuyin watched in excitement. A shouting and active noise echoed in the originally silent atmosphere of gloom and death.

"I'm innocent! I'm innocent!" A skinny, nearly unhealthy, underweight man cried as he was brought along with the others from the gang. He repeated those words and cried, sobbing without end as snot gathered in his nose.

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"I did nothing wrong! Nothing wrong!" He cried more. The crowd and prisoners turned a deaf ear to his pleas. In fact, they wanted him to cry and beg some more, enjoying the disgusting display of criminals who acted without restriction and now getting their comeuppance. To them, those normal citizens who were plagued by the gang for years, all members and those affiliated deserve death.

The leader and the rest were brought near the stage, where the executioner and two other men arrived next to Tu Si. They unshackled him and brought him onstage. There was no fighting spirit left in his body as he was calmly placed on the stock.

The executioner with a rough, powerful voice asked, "Do you have any last words?"

Tu Si's eyes were still dim, but he lifted up his head to see the crowd smiling and filled with anticipation at his death. He lowered his head and said, "I should've killed you all."

"What?!" A member of the crowd shouted violently.

"How arrogant! Kill this idiot and be done with his kind! I feel stupid and dirty just by looking at him!" Another added in rage. The crowd loosened insult after insult.

Wei Wuyin looked about and couldn't help but think how those in safety and who felt a little superior to others based on circumstances truly were brave. If Tu Si had his cultivation base and freedom, the women would stay silent and serve him, while the men would lower their pride and be slaves to his every word. After all, he could decide their life and death easily.

Now that he was weak and facing death, they lashed ruthlessly at him without any regard.

"So be it," the executioner didn't hesitate. After they gave his name, listed his crimes, and declared his sentence of guilt and death, a lever was pulled and the angled blade fell like a blade from hell.

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Thud.

Tu Si's head fell.

A lofty expert was executed just like that.

"Woohoo!" There was a resounding cheer as even children and the elderly grew excited seeing a monster, a mass murderer and rapist, killed with a single stroke. It liberated their souls and deepened their trust in their government's power. This was why public executions were held, to allow the people to regain the faith in the government and instill fear in criminals.

Wei Wuyin smiled. He watched with pride as his Big Brother had performed the capturing. To him, he believed his brother was powerful and could take on any obstacle.

It wasn't long before heads rolled at an even pace as the members of the gang were executed in a consistent fashion. Their deaths elicited relief and excitement from the crowd. As their last words were either silence or curses, this allowed the crowd to insult them heavily.

Then, a man was placed on the stock. This man had dried tears, fierce exhaustion, and impossible levels of fear in his eyes. As he looked at the hyped crowd chanting for his death, his heart grew cold and his mind flashed with memories.

He had entered the Bucklion Gang just a month ago, lured there by a woman. He had been a slave, a servant for the stronger members, until he used his wit and words to get freedom and become a part of the gang. He was planning on running away when the time was right, but before he could even do so, the very next day, the gang was attacked by powerful experts who seized them all.

Unlike the prisoners who wore shackles, he was just given his freedom a day before, and branded with the gang's insignia. Because of that, the attackers had taken him to be a member and when he tried to explain his circumstances, no one listened. In fact, the other gang members straight lied.

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If they were going to die, they may as well take him too, no?

"Do you have any last words?" Those words were like the reaper's scythe at his neck. It caused icy-cold shivers to run down his spine and for his pants to grow wet from urine. He was afraid.

"I..." he wanted to say what he had already said before, and pray for someone to listen to him. Maybe, just maybe, they'd believe him. However, a sudden thought emerged in his mind and he spoke words that he never thought he would say at a moment like this.

"I'm hungry."

"..."

"..."

The expected insults were stifled by the irregularity. The man said he was hungry, throwing everyone off. In a moment where your life was about to end, you say something so unimportant?

However, while they were silent, a young man in the crowd couldn't hold back his laughter.

"Hahaha! You're hungry? Hahahahaha!" He clutched at his sides and he couldn't cease his laughter. It was infectious, as a few others also awkwardly laughed. Before long, the entire crowd was laughing at the situation.

"Hungry?! Have fun eating dirt in hell!"

"Did he really just say that? Well, he's about to get a blade full of metal, so at least he'll be full! Haha!"

"No, no. Perhaps, haha, that won't fill him up so he'll regrow a head to get a second helping! Haha!"

The crowd railed into him. His last words were indeed strange and hilarious.

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"So be it," the executioner nodded and was about to pull the level, ending the skinny man's life. However...

"Wait!" A black figure soared through the skies and landed, a conical hat preventing his identity from being seen. The guards took arms, intending to fight if need be.

The people in the crowd were shocked.

"Haha! You're pretty funny and unlike any criminal I know." Wei Wuyin ignored their aggressive stances and went to the skinny man with a smile.

"Uh...thanks?" The skinny man awkwardly said.

Wei Wuyin flashed his badge towards the executioner which stated his identity before ignoring the surroundings. The executioner grew shocked as he immediately gave a halting order, shocking the crowd.

Wei Wuyin waved his hand and a ripe, red apple appeared in his hand. "You hungry?" He pushed it to the skinny man's face.

Unsure of the situation, the skinny man just nodded.

"Good. What's your name?"

"...D-Du Ling..." the skinny man replied.

"Then, Du Ling, let's get you something else to eat."

-----

A knock on the door awoke Wei Wuyin from his daydream. He waved towards the door as it was opened by a gust of wind.

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A chubby man with a goatee walked in. For a moment, Wei Wuyin felt like a skinny man with dried tears and urine drenched pants was before him. That image superimposed on the current chubby, well-dressed man before him.

"Master, the Sect's Outer Disciple Competition will start in an hour," Du Ling said solemnly.

Wei Wuyin smiled. "You hungry?"

Du Ling received an immense shock, his heart trembling fiercely with all sorts of emotions. He nodded almost instinctively.

"Let's eat then before we go." Saying such, he rose and left. Du Ling followed with unshed tears in his eyes. As he looked at the back figure of this young man, his heartfelt warm and conflicted.

He swore softly in his heart that he'll be more careful in the future. He had to be.

#### Chapter 4: Competition

The Scarlet Solaris Sect held disciple competitions to decide the distribution of resources in the sect. It was divided into Outer, Inner, and Core Competitions. However, unlike the Outer and Inner Competitions who had tens of thousands of members, the core disciples only had nine in their ranks.

It was also an opportunity to be promoted to the next class of disciples or obtain rewards. For example, the top ten outer disciples were promoted to the Inner Rank, the top three inner disciples were given a chance to be promoted to Core Rank, and the top core disciple had a chance to enter the Mystic Scarlet Pond for seven days.

The Mystic Scarlet Pond was an area of accumulated Scarlet Qi, which was birthed by the lands and could be used to temper one's innate, natural energies such as Yin, Yang, and the natural elements. It could also help one transform their Heart of Qi into a Heart of Scarlet Qi - an advanced material qi form.

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The faint Scarlet Qi of the mountain had less than a thousandth of an effectiveness than the pond. Therefore, a single day of cultivation within was the near-equivalent of three years. It was extraordinary and drew the fierce competition of the sect.

Wei Wuyin had participated in the Outer and Inner Competitions, reaching third place and second respectively. This was why he was capable of claiming his current status as a core disciple. However, the Inner Competition not only required him to reach the top, but defeat a pre-existing core disciple, taking his place.

Therefore, Wei Wuyin had to be wary of the competition of both Inner and Core, as a top ranker could ruthlessly snatch away his status and position.

If he was injured by that assassination attempt, he was certain that his spot would've been taken along with the natural protections that it granted. If someone wished to deal with him at that point, they could do so in a more direct manner if he was an inner disciple.

Swoosh!

Wei Wuyin stood atop his crane as it soared through the skies. The surroundings were filled with people on eagle-like birds, indicating their status as inner disciples. Some of these birds had multiple people riding them leisurely. However, a faint pressure could be felt from the atmosphere.

This was the time that the allocation of power shifted. Amongst the core disciples, each had factions of inner disciples and outer disciples. Much like the core disciples, inner disciples had a limited amount of spots. If a core disciple could take the majority of the inner disciples slots, their faction's strength would be number one and the benefits would be endless.

Fortunately, as each core disciple had their own faction, him included, the distribution of power wasn't monopolized. In fact, even him, the newest

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disciple, had about seven percent of the inner disciples in his faction. He also had many promising outer disciples.

Cultivation was profoundly difficult. In fact, it was so difficult that many people never break free from Foundation Establishment Realm, or even its first phase - Physique Tempering.

It was so difficult that it was heart-crushing. The amount of resources needed was beyond the level of many disciples' individual capabilities. To solve and alleviate this issue, the core disciples use a group mechanism to earn resources and promote growth.

Wei Wuyin looked at the inner disciples approaching the stadium. His eyes flashed as his spiritual sense analyzed the standard of cultivation. Li Yin, the woman from the Violet Moon Sect, was at the Meridian Awakening, yet Li Yin had been merely an outer disciple of her sect.

To become an inner disciple in the Scarlet Solaris Sect, one of the Nine Great Sects, the minimum requirement was to reach Dantian Establishment, and reaching the Qi Condensation Realm was nearly a guarantee to become one. However, to condense one's Heart of Qi by merging the mind, spirit, matter, and essence was exceptionally difficult.

Therefore, about eighty percent of inner disciples were at the Foundation Establishment Realm, Dantian Establishment Phase. Even with the resources from the sect and time, it only goes to show the struggles one must suffer.

If one wanted to reach the top three in the Inner Disciple Competition, reaching the Second Stage of Qi Condensation, External Flow, was the only way. Wei Wuyin placed second in the inner competition only because of that.

The Qi Condensation was divided into Nine Stages and demonstrated their difference by Nine Phases of Qi. The first phase of Qi was Qi Creation Phase, where mind, spirit, matter, and essence were merged to create Metaphysical Qi and a Heart of Qi.

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Those at the Dantian Establishment had inhuman levels of strength, but those at the Qi Creation Phase were monsters. They could rip apart boulders of stone with their bare hands, fight full-grown bears and crush their bodies with a single blow. It was terrifying.

The Second Stage of Qi Condensation was the External Flow Phase. By strengthening and condensing one's Qi to its fully developed form, it can flow outside the body in a very elementary way. Such as a shockwave or pulsing wave. This simultaneously gave birth to a unique sensory perception called Spiritual Sense, the sixth sense of a cultivator.

Each stage advancement and each phase's form brought about tremendous benefits to one's physical body and senses, including spiritual sense.

Wei Wuyin had met a fortuitous encounter while hunting the Violet Moon Sect's remnants, obtaining a Steel Essence Source. It was a liquid that had formed from elemental essence, primarily metal, and matured over a thousand years. It was a lucky chance that very few could ever hope for.

Using it, he strengthened his qi and gave birth to the elements - earth, fire, wind, and water - and condensed metal qi as a bonus. Therefore, his qi and physical body held a higher toughness, resilience to temperature, was easier to control, and was more fluid in its activity. With metal qi included, he contained an enhanced durability and sharpness.

The second lucky chance was finding a woman from the Violet Moon Sect who contained an undiscovered Three-Point Yin Body. After using her as a sexual cauldron and gaining her Primal Yin via dual cultivation, he quickly ascended to the Yin Form Phase, the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation.

It was thanks to that he was capable of overcoming the schemes aimed at his life. With his current cultivation, he was already stronger than all the Core Disciples. Not only did he condense metal qi, but also could give form to his qi.

Only when one reaches this cultivation level does the option to use the full potential of qi arts and spiritual spells become unlocked. It was those qi arts that

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enabled him to easily kill two assassins skilled in stealth and escape quickly and with relative ease.

Now, with this competition, he was bound to take the spotlight.

As his spiritual sense swept forth, his silver eyes shined as it was bolstered by a spiritual spell, Iron Core Eyes. It allowed one's spiritual sense to pierce deeper and gather more information, including defending against spiritual spells.

He had accumulated a lot of arts and spells before departing for his mission as a precautionary mechanism, which was far more beneficial than he'd originally thought. It was because of his preparations that he could use these arts and spells now. Otherwise, while his cultivation base may have been high, it would be like wielding a claymore without the appropriate skill.

Luckily, the sect did not regulate qi arts and spiritual spells for core disciples; therefore, he was capable of claiming any and all that weren't restricted to the upper echelon members.

"The standard of cultivation has dropped..." Wei Wuyin frowned as he noticed that a few Inner Disciples had just broken through to the Dantian Establishment Phase. It indicated that their ascension was due to the weaker standard of cultivation bases overall.

"Did something happen while I was away?" He mused in his thoughts as he recalled matters Du Ling had informed him of. Nothing in particular stated why the standard had dropped. In fact, it should've increased due to the Violet Moon Sect's destruction. The resources of the sect and combat should've shaved the weaklings and promoted the strong.

And yet...

"Lord Wuyin!" A cold, feminine voice sounded from a distance. It broke Wei Wuyin out of his thoughts and he turned to look.

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This was the cold, indifferent woman from the last battlefield. He had ordered her to take care of Li Yin earlier. She was also an Outer Disciple who was a member of his faction. Her name was Su Mei.

She was on an eagle-like bird, being carried along with four other outer disciples with an inner disciple at the lead. Wei Wuyin recognized all of them as subordinates of his. He swiftly analyzed their cultivation bases and was pleasantly surprised.

Su Mei had condensed her qi, reaching the First Stage of Qi Condensation, Qi Creation Phase. Her body not only stored metaphysical qi, but her Heart of Qi allowed her to passively restore her natural energies using the Essence of Heaven and Earth and control her qi.

The others had all reached the Dantian Establishment, even the inner disciple was at this level. No wonder Su Mei was the one that called out to him despite being lower-ranked than the inner disciple. With her cultivation level, she was essentially the leader of this group.

He regarded this young woman in her early-twenties further. She had short black hair and clear black eyes. Her jade-like countenance was extraordinary, but her features were only above average. While she was a beauty, she wasn't a top-tier or even a high-level one. She was just a good-looking woman in her own right.

As for breasts and ass, she was only average sized in both, perhaps even below average.

Su Mei and the rest arrived, hovering below Wei Wuyin's crane, as they paid their respects. Wei Wuyin nodded in acknowledgment.

Wei Wuyin's gaze caused Su Mei to shiver slightly. She had condensed her qi and thus had merged her mind, matter, spirit, and essence, allowing her perception to be enhanced thoroughly. She didn't know how, but she felt Wei Wuyin was looking at her entirety, as if she had no clothes on.

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Her cold and indifferent facial expression had a faint blush of red that gave way to a cute flavor to her.

Wei Wuyin noticed and slightly smiled. He was known for being exceptionally handsome with mind-drawing silver eyes and a good figure. However, he didn't have any interest in sleeping with his subordinates. At least, he hasn't done so yet.

"The Outer Disciple Competition will happen first, so I may as well join you guys. What do you think?" Wei Wuyin asked.

The Outer, Inner, and Core Competitions happen one after the other. The reason had to be because those who reach the top ten in the Outer Disciple Competition can participate in the Inner Disciple Competition. Those in the Inner Disciple Competition's top three would then be able to fight a core disciple, replace them, and then fight for resources.

Usually, the core disciples wouldn't show up until they were required. However, Wei Wuyin wasn't like the typical core disciple, choosing to watch the competition from the beginning. After all, this competition was how he rose in power. It had a special significance.

Su Mei and the rest were surprised, but swiftly regained their expressions. Wei Wuyin was their Faction Leader and contributed heavily to their success and influence, so they would never deny his requests.

He nodded and followed them along the way. As he did so, an inner disciple spoke, "Lord Wei, there's a rumor circulating that you've given form to qi, reaching the fourth stage of Qi Condensation." The young man, who seemed to be in his mid-twenties, informed.

Wei Wuyin's eyes narrowed. He had never revealed his full cultivation base to others, and only while fighting the remnant forces of the Violent Moon Sect did he execute an elementary application of elemental qi. He hadn't even revealed his metal qi yet.

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There was no way for that rumor to have started when he had just returned. Which meant it was old. He expected that someone released this information to draw envy to any possible cultivation treasure he may have to explain his rise from Honorary to Core Disciple. While he was away, they could rouse others to act against him.

Someone wished to enlist others to pressure or kill him. It was frustrating, because at that time, it wasn't true and could've cost him his life.

Chu Yan was a knife someone wished to use for this exact reason. He inwardly sighed but didn't reveal any expression except calm indifference. He knew that the young man was also fishing for a reason from him.

While he had subordinates, many, if not all, of them wished to get ahead in the cultivation world and wasn't below betrayal.

"I learned of this matter already." After stating that, he didn't elaborate. The young man didn't dare to press, so he calmly directed the variant eagle as if it was just him being diligent in informing his master of a potentially harmful rumor.

Before long, they soon arrived at a grand stadium.

Chapter 5: Su Mei

Grand.

The stadium of the Scarlet Solaris Sect could be summed up in that single word. It spanned the distance of several miles and its walls encapsulated in an oval fashion, much like a colosseum of ancient gladiators. It was constructed from ironborn limestone with an obsidian layer.

The material of the colosseum was miraculous, exuding a hint of battle qi. It riled individuals minds and hyped them up for aggression. To those with simple spirits, their attitudes would become flamboyant in the face of battle and

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bloodshed, but to those true warriors, their minds would reach an unprecedented peak of clarity.

Since ancient times, battle qi was a rare form of metaphysical energy that was birthed from intent. To cultivate or gather it normally was nearly impossible. It would only form from the natural environment or from consistent exposure of particular events, such as from battle, death, or cultivation.

As it was birthed from intent it was classified as an Ethereal Qi, qi born from a disbalance of mind, spirit, matter, and essence unlike its base form which embodied a perfect equilibrium. In the case of Ethereal Qi, spirit and mind were the most prominent factors. A common example that many cultivators strive for is Weapon Qi, such as sword qi, saber qi, and spear qi.

There was also the opposing qi that was birthed by the environment instead of from. Scarlet Qi created by the Scarlet Mountain was a form of Material Qi, born from the opposing disbalance of matter and essence. This made it a lot easier to cultivate than its opposing counterpart.

Wei Wuyin marveled at the craftsmanship and aura of the colosseum. Regardless of the amount of times he'd been here to fight with his future on the line or to settle a grudge, this place always left him in awe.

It was said that a cultivator used this very stadium to establish his Heart of Battle Qi where he faced ten thousand cultivators with only a set of armor and a sword and shield. It was also where that cultivator drew his last breath, allowing his will to permeate to the future generations where they could feel an ounce of what he felt during that time.

Wei Wuyin felt great respect for such a figure. His will and ability was something worthy of striving towards. Unfortunately, there were no photographic material or statues of that figure, but the battle qi alone was enough to prove that he existed.

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As Wei Wuyin arrived at the stadium, he was greeted by several members of his faction. With slight nods, he acknowledged them individually. As a core disciple with nearly seven percent of inner disciples as a part of his faction, there were many he was familiar and unfamiliar with. Despite that, he made a conscious effort to memorize the basic information and faces of all those under him.

"Lord Wei, shall I escort you to the V.I.P section?" A wrinkled old man, who worked as an attendant for this event, asked politely.

As a core disciple, there were many benefits offered to him that others couldn't enjoy, such as private lodging and a viewing box. This competition often lasted several days to even a week, so having a place to rest and relax during the downtime was appropriate.

However, he waved the attendant away. He decided to view the competition with Su Mei and the others. It wouldn't be too late to enter during the Core Disciple Competition.

The others didn't dare try to persuade Wei Wuyin otherwise, so they marched on until they found their designated seating.

Wei Wuyin looked at the stadium platforms. They were flat hexagonal blocks that seemed to be made from polished stone. Using his spiritual sense, he could garner that each stone contained a dense degree of earthen energies.

If someone wished to cultivate their earthen natural energies to birth the elements, those battle platforms that numbered in the hundreds would be suitable. That being said, those platforms definitely were dense, durable, and compatible with Earth Qi Arts. Even he wasn't certain he could shatter the stone platforms with a punch.

"Su Mei, good luck." Wei Wuyin offered blessed words before looking at the platforms. The others weren't as important as Su Mei, someone who was

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destined to become an inner disciple with her Qi Condensation Realm cultivation.

"Mn," she softly nodded in response.

Soon, the announcer appeared and brought forth a black board that towered a hundred meters high and fifty meters wide.

"The designation board," Wei Wuyin muttered. The designation board was an object used to take pre-determined numbers and randomizing them in matches. Of course, it avoided placing seeded experts in the same group, but it was completely random outside of that.

White names soon appeared on the board with numbers corresponding to the platform number. The Outer Disciple Competition was already underway. Su Mei's name was revealed and so did every other outer disciple who entered the competition.

Before long, the outer disciples were like a bunch of ants that leapt forward and made way towards their assigned platform. Unlike the Inner or Core Disciple Competition, the Outer Disciple Competition was held differently and with a much faster speed.

There were hundreds of platforms, and each platform had nearly a hundred people assigned. This was a massive multi-held battle royal! This was why it was a near certainty that those at the Qi Condensation would become Inner Disciples. With their Heart of Qi and Metaphysical Qi, their physical strength, stamina, and senses far exceeded their opponents.

Even facing a hundred, it was unlikely they would lose. To put it in perspective, it would be like sending a hundred babies to fight against a goliath. There was no suspense.

Su Mei arrived on stage with a stern expression, her eyes cold and indifferent. Like many of the competitors, she was vigilant.

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In this battle royal style combat, there were very few rules. Firstly, fists and blades have no eyes, so being maimed or even killed was a real possibility. It was this reason why many outer disciples would opt out or simply try to last longer.

Everyone was given a number and when they are killed, surrender via verbal declaration, or kicked off the platform, that number would vanish and be placed on the matching board's score section. The earliest your name is listed, the less points you receive for resources in the sect, and the later your name, the greater your chance to advance and the higher the rewards.

The competition held was considered the event where the most contribution points were distributed, and reaching top hundred would be like doing a decade of missions suitable for honorary disciples. This chance made many unwilling to give up without a fight.

Su Mei was one of those people. Despite her looks and gender, no one would show her quarter in a fight like this, maybe not even her friends. She knew this and readied herself.

As she withdrew her sword, a longsword about two fingers wide, the aura around her changed. Her cultivation base had recently entered Qi Condensation, so as long as she was careful and didn't meet anyone like her, advancing to the next stage should be easy.

"Begin!" The announcer shouted with gusto.

The world went from tense to chaotic as fighters started attacking. Many had deadly weapons as they struck forth without hesitation. It wasn't long before a few resentful and pitiful yelps resounded.

A few had already lost their lives.

Wei Wuyin watched this as he was hit with a wave of nostalgia. Cultivation was fierce and there was only a limited amount of resources in the world. Those in a sect, especially the Scarlet Solaris Sect, were taught ferocity and a lack of mercy.

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While they don't actively teach betrayal, they taught the fundamentals of desire and motivation. To step onto the higher peak, to watch from up high, you must first climb a mountain of bodies.

Wei Wuyin had long since created his mountain. Now, as he looked towards Su Mei, he wondered if she would be able to do the same.

With her cultivation base difference, every strike of hers was like a tiger in a horde of sheep. A single swipe reaped lives.

While many of the deaths and severe injuries seemed random and chaotic, in truth, there were fighters who teamed up with their faction if they were matched up, and fighters who went after those from opposing factions. Those who were more neutral or loosely allies, they would at most be knocked off the stage or knocked out and thrown away.

They were the lucky ones.

He could see Su Mei's frosty expression as she slayed a fellow female cultivator. Her body split into two halves. Her intestines flowed out and her eyes were wide, filled with disbelief and pain. Wei Wuyin could see realization dawn on the young woman's face as she used her hands to clutch at her spilled insides.

Her life was about to fade naturally when a warhammer smashed down and turned her skull into a shattered mess.

That woman fighter belonged to Tao Gui's faction. Tao Gui was actively against his and Mei Mei's faction. Su Mei delivered the fatal strike, but a hammer wielding behemoth of a man crushed her skull in the follow up. He was a part of Mei Mei's faction.

Events like this happened continuously and no elders would interfere.

Participation in the event was a choice and one was not protected. In fact, it was likely that during their own struggle, they went through the same situation and came out as top pillars of the sect, so how could they feel empathy?

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Su Mei targeted those a part of Tao Gui's and Jiu Lang's factions. She was merciless, her blade giving no quarter as she struck. For those she could not avoid, but had no enmity with, she would kick or palm them hard, sending them out of the stadium with some broken bones.

In the Outer Disciples, Wei Wuyin was very selective with who he chose. Su Mei was someone he had picked out from tens of thousands, and he had some minor hope for her. During the mission to hunt down and eliminate the remnant forces of the Violet Moon Sect, she was a lieutenant of his.

Her recent breakthrough likely had to be directly induced by the resources plundered.

"She's ruthless and has ambition. She listens to orders quite well." Wei Wuyin's eyes narrowed. Memories flooded his mind.

-----

"You bitch, ptooeey!" A middle-aged woman held a young girl with black hair, black eyes, a dirt stained face by her hair. A smidgen of spit accompanied the dirt. The middle-aged woman dangled the young girl about like a toy and aggressively pulled her hair back. A few strands were removed forcefully.

Surrounding them were a group of women ranging from their twenties to thirties. They wore uniforms of honorary disciples and snickered in laughter. If one looked closely, one would notice their eye color, hair color, and even skin tone was similar.

If someone were to make a random guess, they would assume they were all related. However, that wasn't the case.

The young woman tried to grab the arm of her attacker, but whenever she got a grip, the middle-aged woman would use her free hand to smack her arms away. Her strength was simply not sufficient.

"S-stop! Stop!" The young girl pled fiercely, tears welling in her eyes as she was humiliated.

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"Stop? You think you can use your looks and body to get more than us? You're trying to monopolize him? You think he's only your dragon?!" The middle-aged woman seemed to grow more and more enraged by the situation. She grabbed the young woman's robe and pulled, ripping it apart and showing some skin.

"You're nothing but a loose slut!" Her rage seemed to be ceaseless. The other women jeered and watched in amusement. Sometimes, a few would flash pity or guilt, but when the woman said those earlier words, much of that dissipated. Instead, it was filled with anger and discontent.

A young man was flying nearby on a variant eagle, indicating his status. He was high enough as he looked down in curiosity. Beside him was a chubby man with a goatee.

This was Wei Wuyin and Du Leng.

"What's this?" Wei Wuyin asked. He had just been flying to take on a mission and receive his sect given crane now that he'd accepted his position as a core disciple of the sect.

Du Leng looked at the women gathered and the crowd that was also gathering and thought of something.

"Master, as you know, there's a saying: To rise, one can ride on the lap of a dragon. This was caused by the jealousy born from that journey." He laughingly replied.

In the cultivation world, the saying 'To rise, one can ride on the lap of a dragon' had a few meanings, but the most common and used was that one would use someone else, through exchanging their body, to obtain fortune and benefits. This was often done by female cultivators, and while it did happen with male cultivators, the scene wasn't as easily spottable.

For example, these women all had similar features and skin tones indicating that they were selected because of those qualities. Essentially, a man of notable

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status had built himself a harem using honorary disciples. Now, this was a dispute within that harem.

"Seems the younger girl is the new favorite and the rest don't like it," Du Leng shook his head in pity. In the cultivation world, resources were scarce and cultivation was too difficult. To rise required the willingness to do anything and everything. Forming a harem was a resource, using the innate sexual energies to stimulate one's qi, create innate elemental energies, forming Yin, and growing Yang.

Throughout the entirety of the Foundation Establishment to the Ninth Stage of Qi Condensation could be bolstered by sexual energies via dual cultivation methods. Therefore, women in a harem would often bicker and fuss if one was getting all the attention and love. All the 'yang' energy.

After all, the 'dragon' was typically someone with a higher cultivation base and thus generated stronger energies for cultivation. Therefore, sex was a resource. Not to mention, because the 'dragon' was often male, they wouldn't allow the women to be with other men under threat of death for the humiliation. Unless...it was their kink.

Wei Wuyin immediately understood. He had seen things like this in his clan and even around the sect. He was just curious as to why they were doing it so publically. Wouldn't the 'Dragon' become enraged because they humiliated his favorite?

Wei Wuyin looked at the woman being maliciously bullied. Her clothes were ripped and revealed her skin and breasts. She must be feeling humiliation enough to take her own life. The crowd grew more and more to watch.

Wei Wuyin was by no means a saint. Even he used women for their primal yin to generate energy for cultivation, so he wasn't feeling ashamed or enraged by watching this. However, that woman...

As he looked at her more and more, he felt an odd sensation in his chest. It was miraculous and birthed an impulse.

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"Hm?" Du Leng caught something with his eye. He saw a man eating some bread in the crowd. He was an inner disciple at the Dantian Establishment Phase.

"I think that's their man, hahaha." He pointed in laughter. Wei Wuyin looked at the man. He was middle-aged and had a teasing smile on his face.

"How can you be certain?" Wei Wuyin asked.

"Because I remember him, aaaannndddd...her." He pointed towards one of the younger women who were standing and watching. "They were together."

"Together?" Wei Wuyin frowned. "I see."

Wei Wuyin steered the variant eagle towards the crowd.

"Master?" Du Ling was shocked.

Wei Wuyin didn't respond. Instead, he landed within the crowd causing everyone to be startled. With a quick leap, he used his Second Stage of Qi Condensation cultivation to soar. He arrived next to the female honorary disciples.

They were all startled. They backed off in fear.

Wei Wuyin directly ignored them. He walked up to the young girl and middle-aged woman and didn't speak. Without any hesitation, he struck. His blow was fierce as it smashed heavily into the middle-aged woman's chest. She was blown back as blood spewed from her body like a geyser.

Her body landed with a thud. It was unknown whether she was alive or dead. This caused everyone to be fearful. They panicked and ran away. Some backed off far away but stayed close enough to see what would happen.

The young woman was startled. She turned to Wei Wuyin and saw his silver eyes and handsome visage. Speechless, she froze.

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"Your disgrace of a man watched as you were beaten and humiliated," Wei Wuyin plainly stated. He pointed towards the inner disciple in the distance, getting everyone to look over to see a middle-aged man who looked ready to run. His facial expression was confused for a second but then shocked and even a little enraged.

Luckily for him, he was too much of a coward to attack someone at the Qi Condensation Realm.

The young woman looked towards her 'man'. Her eyes filled with all sorts of emotions, most prevalent was sadness and depression. It seemed that she knew, at least on some level. There was no shock in her expression.

Seeing that, Wei Wuyin nodded. "You hungry?"

Du Leng was shocked, but he didn't say anything. His eyes flashed with all sorts of emotions and the way he looked towards that pitiful young woman instantly changed.

"I...maybe?" The young woman softly replied in some hesitancy.

Wei Wuyin smiled, "then let me bring you somewhere you can figure it out." He laughed, removing his robe and placing it on her body to conceal her properly. "What's your name?"

"Uh...Su...Mei..."

## Chapter 6: Top Placement

The Outer Competition reached a crescendo as the number of participants started to rapidly dwindle. In turn, the amount of deaths started to decline. Those who simply wished for a higher placement would verbally declare surrender without hesitation.

After they did so, a cloak of earth qi would enshroud their bodies and pull them into the platforms safely. In a few moments, they would be tunneled through to outside the platforms.

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Wei Wuyin noticed an elder of the sect at a tall tower overlooking the matches. He had a skinny frame and was rather short with grey hair and a moustache. Despite looking old, he didn't have any wrinkles on his face. He could be seen as decently attractive.

Wei Wuyin had some dealings with this elder. He was named Ji Yun, a Core Elder of the Sect with a cultivation base at the Fifth Stage of Qi Condensation, Yang Growth. His qi was vigorous and exuded a vibrant vitality and potential for growth.

Elder Ji was tasked with overwatching and actively protecting those who surrendered. The platforms were filled with earthen energies, and with a special spiritual spell, he could gain an absolute awareness of all platforms. By executing a protective qi art, he would send them through the platforms and safely out.

As if his gaze was noticed, Elder Ji turned towards Wei Wuyin's direction despite being miles apart. Wei Wuyin smiled, his eyes flickering with a silver shimmer. Elder Ji calmly nodded towards Wei Wuyin, but his aged gaze held some shock.

"Metal Qi, hm. It seems...the rumors are true. He may also be close to Yin Infusion." He quietly said before refocusing his efforts on the stadium. His actions had subtly changed. Now, those in Wei Wuyin's faction were given priority towards safety. There would also be the occasional save from death despite no declaration being made.

Wei Wuyin noticed this immediately and laughed inwardly. Elder Ji had always been a crafty fox. To think he would adjust his position and display his stance so quickly.

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Wei Wuyin had revealed a portion of his cultivation on purpose, the shimmering of metal qi in his eyes. This indicated that he had cultivated to at least the Third Stage of Qi Condensation, Elemental Birth. Just with this, he'd already revealed his superiority over this generation's core disciple set.

There would only be equal but not better.

Elder Ji was already over a hundred years of age, but Wei Wuyin was under thirty, being in his mid-twenties. The difference in talent and ability was clearly defined by this and their status. As a core disciple, he was equal in sectoral status to an inner elder.

The inner disciple that had arrived with Su Mei and the others noticed the swift pre-emptive saves. He gasped in shock. He looked towards Wei Wuyin's faint smile and relaxed expression and his heart shook.

"Is the rumor true?" He thought to himself.

It wasn't just him who noticed Elder Ji's actions. There were those of higher cultivation who noticed, particularly other inner disciples and elders watching the event. A few had their eyes flicker with a curious and intrigued light, and others reacted wildly at this obvious show of favouritism.

The worst was that some of Tao Gui's and Jiu Lang's faction members would call for surrender, but would only receive it a few seconds later. A few had lost their lives as a result of this delay or was maimed as a result.

"Elder Ji has decided to break his neutrality?!" A female outer elder, with the cultivation at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation, External Flow, cried in disbelief. Elder Ji was a neutral Core Elder, someone who held little connection with those of the Core Disciples' Factions. This was one of the two main reasons he was sent to act as an overseer and protector of the event.

The other was his cultivation base. All Elders were over fifty years of age. In general, Outer Elders had First or Second Stage of Qi Condensation cultivation bases, with the First Phase, Qi Creation, being the low-end and the Second

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Phase, External Flow, as the high-end. This was about the same strength of Upper-tier inner disciples and lower-tier core disciples. Wei Wuyin had promoted to the core rank nearly three years ago at the Second Stage.

Inner Elders were a little different. They were all at the Third Stage of Qi Condensation Realm, Elemental Birth. If one reaches the first truly difficult watershed of cultivation, the Yin Form Phase, then they would be directly promoted to a Core Elder. Therefore, Elder Ji, a person at the Fifth Stage, Yang Growth, was at the top. In fact, he was in the top three core elders in the entire sect.

For him to suddenly and brazenly reveal his side was beyond their imaginations!

"Impossible! Elder Ji has maintained his neutrality throughout the last generation of core disciples, there's no way he changes that!" Someone vehemently rejected the notion. However, what was happening was like a slap to his face each time. He hoped it was just a mistake, but as time went on, it became apparent as the sun in the sky.

In the sect, the core elders would often side with a faction. For example, Jiu Lang also had two core elders within her faction, but they were lower-tier core elders. The others too had core elders, but none of them reached the upper-tier.

That was because nothing the core disciples offered or showed was capable of pulling them to their side. While they may be fine with greasing the wheel in certain situations or interfering in some matters for compensation, they haven't declared their loyalties.

This had to do with the difficulty of cultivation. In fact, Jiu Lang could've had an upper core elder's support, but it didn't fall through. Everyone, including Wei Wuyin, had their hearts clench when news spread of a possible backing of an upper-tier core elder. Luckily, the core elder wanted what Jiu Lang wasn't willing to give: her primal yin and body.

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If she had the backing of that elder, Wei Wuyin was sure he'd already be dead, so would all her enemies. There was no doubt in his mind. That was the influence and power of upper-tier core elders.

As for Elder Ji, his actions declared his intent.

Elder Ji turned towards Wei Wuyin and slightly smiled.

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but nod in approval, then his eyes flashed with various faint illusory images. No one knew he was in the crowd or noticed him watching, just Elder Ji, so he decided to thoroughly pull this elder into his fold.

Elder Ji's eyes widened in shock. This reaction caught the eyes of elders who were curious about his actions. A load of transmissions came into his crystal suddenly, but he didn't answer. He calmed himself down and shut down communication with everyone. His eyes turned calm and he went back to acting as protector.

Inwardly, his heart was beating fiercely. "He's reached Yin Form before thirty?! Incredible cultivation talent! To rise from an honorary disciple to a core disciple, birth metal qi and establish yin! His future...if I side with him early, perhaps the hardest hurdle of the Qi Condensation Realm, the sixth phase of False Reality, would be a possibility!" As his mind cycled through various scenarios, he realized no core disciple could hope to match Wei Wuyin's momentum in the last two hundred years, a span of time inclusive of four core disciple generations.

The subtle actions started to become blatant. Su Mei in the battle felt odd. She could feel essence energy funneling through the soles of her feet. It entered her body, pure and powerful, and strengthened her qi and physique.

The essence energy originated from the platform and miraculously increased her body's durability and toughness. As she circulated her qi, she also noticed that her recovery rate had increased. She was shocked at what was happening.

"Blatant cheating!" An inner elder a part of Tao Gui's faction, having supported him, shouted in fury. The rage in his eyes were clear, but had no outlet.

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"Cheating? Pfft. You're blind, Elder Ji would never cheat. He's only ensuring that he can better save our sect's disciples by connecting them with the platform's defensive energy. Acting as he should." The female outer elder from earlier brazenly and shamelessly stated. She was someone from Wei Wuyin's faction, so she would obviously shift the narrative.

The earthen energies of the platforms were entering the bodies of Wei Wuyin's members throughout. They were suddenly stronger and filled with boundless stamina. Anyone could see that Elder Ji was manipulating the platforms to influence certain members in a positive way.

Not only that...

"Absolutely fucking shameless!" An inner elder who was a part of Jiu Lang's faction cried with grievance. If it was just helping certain members, fine, but the earthen energies were attached to his faction's outer disciples. However, instead of receiving a boon, they were weighed down and were acting as if they had to carry a large boulder on their shoulders.

It was appalling as some of his disciples were killed then and there. Their lives reaped because of this disadvantage. Some even had bright futures. This wasn't even the start, as some members cried for surrender, but was met with weapons of death as their reply. Then, their dead bodies would be sent into the ground as if it was delayed by an accident.

Wei Wuyin couldn't help but grin at this point. To think Elder Ji was so decisive. He hadn't obtained the backing of a single core elder before, yet immediately obtained the support of an upper-tier core elder, and one of the top three. It was quite interesting how quick things shift.

The battle for the Outer Competition caused many dismayed words to sling, but no one took it up with Elder Ji. This was clear that none of them had the courage to question him.

Even the other core elders watching remained silent, only lamenting at their failure with gathering intelligence. If they had known that Elder Ji was a part of

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Wei Wuyin's faction, or any faction, they would've elected someone else to take responsibility. Someone neutral.

The first part of the competition soon ended. Su Mei stood proudly on her platform. She was alone and had a blade drenched in blood, her eyes icy-cold yet filled with pride.

The several hundred lone standers proceeded to the next competition. The rest of the participants were divided into ten groups. Ten platforms were used and people entered at random. The fight then was more intense, but with Elder Ji's support, Wei Wuyin's faction obtained four spots out of ten, with Su Mei occupying one of the platforms.

These ten would be promoted to the inner disciple status, and a few were even crying. One was on his knees, tears falling without end. Another yelled in triumph like a ferocious lion. Su Mei's eyes were in a daze as her labored breathing was met with applause. The crowd's excitement felt incredible to her, but all she could do was look towards a smiling figure.

Wei Wuyin gave her a smile and an approving nod that said, 'You lived up to and exceeded my expectations.'

#### Chapter 7: Jiu Lang

The Scarlet Solaris Mountain was divided into many levels, with the lower levels, including its base, were locations for its mortal and cultivation clans residences. The location of many members' families. To climb the mountain, only a disciple or elder status was sufficient.

The middle levels were residences of honorary, outer, and inner disciples. Those special honorary, outer, or inner disciples that worked for elders or core disciples were located with them at the upper levels.

Wei Wuyin's residence was located at the upper levels, which had a denser concentration of Essence of Heaven and Earth as well as Scarlet Qi emitted by the mountain itself. It was a prime area for cultivation and held the envy of the other disciples.

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In the upper levels was a particular residence in the form of an immortal palace. Unlike Wei Wuyin's residence which was minimalistic and resembled a mortal mansion, this area was beyond luxurious with fountains of fresh water sprinkling about, lush greenery and flowers that emit a heavenly fragrance, and a majestic silver palace that nearly touched the next level.

This was Jiu Lang, one of the nine core disciples of the Scarlet Solaris Sect.

In a particular area, a woman waltz through a beautiful botanical garden that resembled an immortal field. It contained a heavenly aura that made one feel relaxed and at ease. If someone cultivated here, their processing of energies would definitely be sped up.

She wore a green colored robe, with trims of scarlet. Her blonde hair was like a cascading waterfall as it brilliantly flowed towards her back, and her blue eyes held a natural power in them. Her lithe form, impeccable jade countenance, and bountiful breasts would leave many men staring absentmindedly and lose their inhibitions.

This woman caressed the flowers with her delicate and jade fingers. As she did, the elements swirled around her finger. A deep, verdant green qi would flow from her fingers and insert itself into the flowers. They would tremble as if excited by the blessing of an immortal.

Some even experienced a transformation and they bloomed or grew in size. It was miraculously beautiful.

"Lady Jiu! Lady Jiu!" A cute, short young girl cried softly as she raced towards the young woman in the field. Her expression was panicked and filled with urgency. Despite her rush, she ensured that no flowers in the field were damaged by her path.

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This girl was named Yu Xiaoxiao. She was the most doted on servant girl of Jiu Lang and had an impressive cultivation at the First Stage of Qi Condensation. Her aura was steady as well, showing her foundation was impeccable.

Jiu Lang turned towards Yu Xiaoxiao and sweetly smiled. "Xiaoxiao, what is so urgent you need to run here?" She could tell that Yu Xiaoxiao had faint sweat on her forehead. As she was sent to watch the Outer Competition, she knew that something amazing had happened.

With grace, she lightly waved her hand and deep, verdant green qi was carried by the air. It washed over Yu Xiaoxiao during her approach. Suddenly, she felt light and relaxed. Her panicked expression was gone and filled with bliss. It was only after a few seconds before she regained herself and was deeply shocked.

"Lady Jiu, you've reached the Elemental Birth Phase?! You've birthed wood qi?!" Her shock was legitimate and appropriate. Typically, out of ten thousand Third Phase experts, only one would birth an advanced elemental qi. Cultivation was simply that difficult.

Even if one cultivated the innate wood essence energy borne from the flowers, grass, trees, and stayed in the forest deeply cultivating for twenty years, the chances of giving birth to wood qi was about two percent.

Even Wei Wuyin needed a material that had existed for a thousand years with constant nourishment of heaven and earth, and only then was it possible for him to give birth to metal qi. The harsher fact was that it wasn't a guarantee to succeed and he had only done so due to his outstanding natural talent.

This was one of the main reasons Elder Ji had decisively expressed his position.

Jiu Lang smiled. "Tell me, why did you need to rush here?" With her cultivation base reaching this extent, she was certain that she was invincible amongst the core disciples, and her position would certainly change.

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"Oh, yes, yes." Yu Xiaoxiao finally regained her wit and quickly explained, "The Outer Competition has ended, but an upset happened! Elder Ji had revealed to be a part of that Wei Wuyin's faction and secretly and openly helped his members while attacking ours! Because of him, only one member of our outer member faction made it to top ten!"

"None of Gui Tao's faction members made it."

Her words caused Jiu Lang to start. She couldn't believe what she had just heard. Elder Ji was one of the top three core elders and held an immense amount of personal power, sectoral authority, and influence in the cultivation world. He had lived for over a hundred years and had long since removed himself from the race amongst core disciples, having stayed neutral the entire of last generation and most of this generation of core disciples.

If...how...

Her mind tried to rack up a reasoning, but before she could process that information, Yu Xiaoxiao hit her with more.

"Elder Ji has even stated his stance verbally after the contest! He blatantly cheated, yet he declared it openly." Because he was elected, they couldn't remove him. The fact that he stated his stance was very telling and foreboding.

She didn't believe that Wei Wuyin had won Elder Ji due to his merits or potential, but likely a treasure he obtained during his mission against the Violet Moon Sect. She gritted her pearly white teeth, and her calm demeanor broke down.

She had sent him on that mission to die, and had even inserted a spy, Chu Yan, into helping with the deed. Chu Yan was rather capable, being at the First Stage of Qi Condensation. He had been placed as a spy by her into Wei Wuyin's faction the moment he became a core disciple. The fact that he had died in the mission and Wei Wuyin had returned had already displeased her greatly.

The worst thing was her second attempt was thwarted as well. She had placed two of her trusted legion of assassin's members to gain entry into Wei Wuyin's

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residence using that buffoon of a butler and launch an attack. They were both at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation and were the top members of her faction.

They were honorary disciples that she nurtured for deadly purposes since they joined the sect. She even prevented them from rising in status to stealthily kill her targets.

At first, she thought Wei Wuyin had indeed made a breakthrough into the Elemental Birth Phase, and thus had even pushed her plans forward. Now, she realized it was worse.

He had gained the backing of Elder Ji, an upper-tier core elder.

She was fuming in her heart as she connected the deaths of her assassins with Elder Ji. With his influence and cultivation base, learning of those two was easy. If he decided to invest in Wei Wuyin, then it made sense that they were dispatched.

Her jade hands clenched. Yu Xiaoxiao's expression grew concerned and fearful. She knew the implication of this, and it was huge. If Jiu Lang couldn't deal with this, even though she was at the Elemental Birth Phase now, her life wouldn't be easy any longer. She may even be driven to 'his' arms.

Yu Xiaoxiao shivered thinking this.

"Xiaoxiao...tell Elder Mei to have our inner disciples withdraw from the competition." Jiu Lang ordered.

Yu Xiaoxiao started in disbelief. This was an extreme measure, but after a second, she realized it was the only option. If Elder Ji was helping Wei Wuyin's members in the inner competition, then their deaths or injury would be nearly certain. In fact, Tao Gui and Jiu Lang couldn't allow their members to participate.

Of course, not all of them would accept this and those wishing to target the core rank would still enter, but their relationship isn't something that could be eradicated in a moment. They would be targeted and at a disadvantage during

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the competition. If they faced life threatening circumstances, they wouldn't be saved. That was devastating.

But to each their own risk. To each their own goal.

Yu Xiaoxiao nodded and ran off. Her qi circulated as great as it could as she dashed away in a hurry.

Jiu Lang stayed silent for a while in thought. Her beautiful face carried an expression of indecision and hatred. After birthing wood qi, she should've been a rising star. While she may still obtain first place in the Core Disciple Competition, with Wei Wuyin's new backing, that would still cause many of her plans to falter. In fact, the rewards may even change.

Her dreams of transforming her Heart of Qi into a Heart of Scarlet Qi was fading.

Unless...

As she thought more on the subject, her eyes grew firm and determined. She walked away from her garden and made her way into her palace. After arriving at her own luxurious room, with a bed fit for a literal queen, and a mirror as clear and large as ten meters, she made her way to the mirror.

Her reflection was perfect. A blonde beauty with great assets and extraordinary talent. She whispered to herself as she stared at the mirror, "I will become great. I will reach the peak of Wu Country. I will become immortal!" Her words carried undoubtable determination and willpower.

She flourished her sleeves, placing her hand lightly on the mirror and sending a strand of qi into it. A change suddenly took place as the mirror started to become translucent, losing its reflecting capabilities as its intrinsic properties shifted.

Soon, it disappeared entirely. What was revealed was dark depths and grey stairs. Its unlit walls felt like a beast's throat as it descended into the unknown.

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Jiu Lang stepped into this newly created passage and entered. As she stepped completely inside, the mirror was recreated and only the bedroom was reflected.

Jiu Lang descended until she met a wooden door with black steel latches. A torch was lit at the top of the door allowing one to know its direction. With a press, the door opened and revealed a room.

This room had dark grey walls and dimly lit torches. It gave a hollow feeling and felt suffocating, but Jiu Lang had no discomfort. Instead, she walked with a completely calm expression.

Within the room was a vertical table, and on this table was a dark-skinned male. He was strapped by shackles to his four limbs and completely naked. Near his crotch was a metallic contraption like a liquid funnel. It was embedded below his belly button.

A faint golden light was dripping into a porcelain bottle from the funnel. It was filled with his extracted innate yang energies.

Jiu Lang walked over and saw this man, her eyes indifferent to his situation. Instead, she grabbed the porcelain bottle and shook it slightly. She revealed a slight look of disappointment before placing a top on it and replacing it with a new one.

"P-please...k-ki-kill me..." A sudden, hoarse voice shook the quiet atmosphere. The man had a face of agony as he begged, deciding his life wasn't worth living in this state. However, Jiu Lang coldly looked at him and left.

The man wanted to howl, but his voice had long since nearly vanished because of his screams. In fact, he couldn't speak anymore even if he wanted to. He had no energy to do so.

Jiu Lang appeared at another section of the room. This time, a woman was seated in a cross-legged position. Her hands and feet had short nails in them. While she could still move, the nails seemed to be permanently embedded into her skin.

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If one looked at her with spiritual sense, they would realize the nails were restricting her qi flow and dispersing her physical energies. She couldn't do much besides meditate in her position. Even crawling would be a struggle that was beyond her current capabilities.

Despite her inherent weakness, her eyes held an apathetic gaze as if all of this was not happening to her. Her eyes, hair, and internal blood was the color of emeralds, dazzling and brilliant. They even glowed in this dimly lit room.

As she looked at Jiu Lang, her eyes held no emotion.

Jiu Lang walked over and looked at this woman. She was beautiful with long, smooth hair and a fascinating countenance that even she found hard to compare to. Despite being in rags and in such a state, she still carried a faint air of nobility and otherworldly prestige.

Her eyes sharply narrowed.

"I must thank you. Because of your Yin Wood Essence Heart Blood, I've birthed wood qi." A cold smile hung at her lips.

The young woman didn't reply, only indifferently looked at Jiu Lang like she was looking at an insignificant bystander.

"Unfortunately, I'll need a little more. With it, I'll be closer to ascending to the next phase and solidify my foundation. May I have some?" Jiu Lang feigned politeness. She had already taken out a rather large syringe. It was about the size of a newborn baby's arm. The needle was long yet exceptionally fine.

With a ruthless thrust, it stabbed into the woman's chest, entering her heart. The woman didn't even blink or shout in pain, her expression the same.

Jiu Lang smiled as she extracted emerald-colored blood. If a drop were to dangle from a finger, the majority of the world would think it was an emerald fashioned in the form of a drop of liquid.

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After extracting enough to satisfy her, she smiled, "Thank you." Storing the syringe, she left. As she was about to reach the door, a melodious voice echoed.

"Soon."

Jiu Lang stilled. She didn't bother turning around. She softly snorted and left.

### Chapter 8: Core Disciples

The Outer Competition ended and soon the Inner Competition had begun. The format for the two competitions were different yet the same. They were both elimination rounds to decide the top three contestants.

The platforms were shifted and connected. What was originally hundreds were now turned into a dozen. The amount of inner disciples in comparison was about one to one hundred.

There were a little over a hundred thousand outer disciples in the sect, but only a thousand inner disciples. In fact, it was only a thousand. Because of how competitions are held and how promotions work, the inner disciples rotate and those who reach the age of fifty each year are immediately inducted as Elders. Then, the outer disciples who either win, earn enough contribution points, or are recommended by elders are promoted to fill the void.

Wei Wuyin had nearly eighty inner disciples under him. If one included the newly added four from the competition, he had a total of eighty-one.

In the crowd, Wei Wuyin watched the ongoing competition and couldn't help but be somewhat shocked. Those of Tao Gui's and Jiu Lang's faction had mostly withdrawn from the competition. This only left seven core disciple factions, and since the two had a total of about twenty percent of inner disciples, the turn-out was massively lower than expected.

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Not all inner disciples would participate in the competition, as the threat of death or maiming was a real possibility. Even Wei Wuyin's faction only had about twenty members entering. In fact, about three hundred members had registered in total.

Yet now, only a hundred showed up.

Most of the unaccounted were those who didn't wish to battle under any disadvantage. Their lives were on the line, so facing Wei Wuyin's members would be a nightmare. If they did attack them, who knew if Elder Ji would save them later? Who knew if he wouldn't place a suppressing qi art on them?

It was unfair, but in life, what was fair? If that was going to be the case, they did not wish to risk the one thing that they couldn't afford to lose.

The competition ended with very little suspense. Elder Ji influenced the competition and the top three members were set. Two of which were a part of Wei Wuyin's faction.

Wei Wuyin stood patiently in his own V.I.P room overlooking the greater area of the colosseum. From his height and view, he could see all things clearly. Beside him was a grey-haired old man with no wrinkles and eyes effusing vitality.

Elder Ji had a stern expression on his face. His mind circulating swiftly as he internally settled on some matters and plans. After the Outer Competition had been brought to a conclusion, he had verbally declared his alliance with Wei Wuyin's faction, solidifying his stance and buying goodwill.

The young man before him had reached the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation and birthed metal qi before the age of thirty, his potential was literally limitless. As a male, someone with the ability to generate innate yang energy, reaching the Fifth Stage of Qi Condensation, Yang Growth, was a hundred times easier than a woman.

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If the person before him was a woman, he wouldn't accept this line of thought, as the difficulty to reach the Fifth Stage was unimaginable unless they obtained a treasured object of heaven and earth or slept with an astonishing amount of men in dual cultivation. Not many women would be willing to become the toys of men in such a fashion for so long.

As for men, lone cultivation and dual cultivation was more than enough to reach that phase. He had also reached his cultivation level after thirty years of this type of cultivation. For someone as talented as Wei Wuyin, it'll probably take a lot shorter. As a young man with vibrant yang, what he could accomplish was a lot more than what he himself could as he had already neared a hundred years at the time.

The logic also flowed backwards. The fourth phase was a hundred times easier to reach for women. In fact, the majority of core elders were female, about seventy percent, and most disciples taken by Elders were female as well.

If Wei Wuyin had never found a woman with a Three-Point Yin Body, the chances of reaching the Fourth Phase without wild debauchery or finding a treasure even greater than the Steel Essence Source of a yin nature, it would likely take him twenty years before forming yin within qi.

Elder Ji smiled. "Yes, Jiu Lang was responsible for your selection to perform the Violet Moon Sect's remnant clearing mission," Elder Ji informed. Wei Wuyin had been certain of the matter, but a verbal confirmation was best. After all, Tao Gui, another core disciple, could be responsible just as well.

"She had also sent those two assassins to your home, had them nest in there for an entire month after learning of your success. We've been keeping a watch on those fake honorary disciples she formed for her so-called legion of assassins, and those two held the highest cultivation level outside of its leader, Elder Nie."

"Because of Elder Nie's actions, the incident was swept under the rug. After all, she's a mistress of a grand elder, her position may be lower than mine, but her sectoral power is astonishing. As she's the aunt of Jiu Lang, it's only expected." Elder Ji explained unapologetically.

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Wei Wuyin wasn't surprised by this news. It was this very background of Jiu Lang that she was so terrifying, capable of sending a core disciple on a mission.

In the Scarlet Solaris Sect, there were positions above the core elder, they were grand elder, prime elder, head elder, vice-sect leader, and sect leader. Besides the prime elder position, which is reserved for retired vice-sect and sect leaders, the others are gained by contribution and cultivation.

In fact, all of those positions had the minimum requirements of reaching the Sixth Stage of Qi Condensation, False Reality Phase. This phase was considered the hardest phase to enter amongst the Nine Phases, regardless of gender, and was such a huge stopgap that few ever reached it.

The False Reality Phase entailed the perfect synchronization of yin and yang energies, establishing a complete and perfect balance and cycle to produce yin-yang qi. Those who wielded this qi were often given a title to those who obtained it by the mortal people: "God."

While it may sound exaggerated, the concept of yin-yang was beyond profound. It embodied the conceptualization of imagination with qi as its source, giving form from nothing and vitality to form. With the four elemental energies infused within, one could create true water, fire, earth, and wind.

These elements could then interact with the world on the most fundamental level. While Wei Winyu may be able to 'create' fire, in truth, what he did was give appropriate form and direction to fire energy. While it would be crude to say he only created heat with the illusion of fire, it was as such.

If it wasn't, Wei Winyu would've burned down his mansion with his fire qi art. At that level, while the things created have yet to gain permanence, the ability of self-sustaining itself without qi fueling it meant it could burn down forests, drown cities, and create mountains, albeit temporarily.

A cultivator at this phase gives their metaphysical qi the ability to 'create'.

Out of the Nine Phases, this phase was undoubtedly the hardest to overcome.

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So for Jiu Lang's aunt, a core elder, to be a mistress to one such cultivator only displayed her current protection level. Even with Elder Ji now backing him, Elder Nie would easily interfere with any attempts to claim Jiu Lang's life. While she may not interfere if things were made difficult for Jiu Lang, like having to withdraw from the Inner Competition, if he made a move openly, it's unlikely he'll be able to stay in the sect.

Regardless of whether he succeeds or fails.

Elder Ji was a smart wily old man so he knew how to pick his battles and place his bets. Wei Wuyin knew that he wished to use his momentum to rise. After all, those who reach the Yang Growth Phase have a lifespan of two hundred years. With at least one hundred and seventy years ahead of him, and his astonishing talent, Wei Wuyin had a great chance of reaching the sixth phase and helping him do the same.

"That's fine. I don't intend to make hasty plans based on rash emotions," Wei Winyu reassured. Elder Ji nodded approvingly. To have your life threatened and still remain calm, it was rare in youths. However, for someone to reach Wei Wuyin's cultivation level, they needed a certain patience.

"What's the Core Disciple Competition going to be?" Wei Wuyin asked. Unlike the Outer and Inner Disciple Competition, which were battle royale elimination style, the Core Disciple Competition was different and focused on trials.

The only exception was The Challenge before the main event where the three inner disciples who placed top three can issue challenges against the nine core disciples to replace them. Only after will the true event occur.

Elder Ji furrowed his brows, "This competition was decided differently than before. For some reason, the sect seemed urgent to have the sect competitions end sooner."

"Usually, the Core Disciple Competition would be a hunt, challenge, or battlefield where points can be accrued and define placements, but this time...it seems the sect leader has changed it."

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Wei Wuyin was mildly shocked. Changed? What could the enigmatic sect leader of theirs have in mind? If it was based on a hunt, then his first placement wasn't clear, but if it was a challenge or battlefield, he was certain to obtain first place. After all, hunts used one's own faction strength.

Before, when he had just replaced a core disciple, the competition was a battlefield because he had replaced a core disciple two years ago. Last year, it was a hunt, and he had placed last. His faction was still developing and since no one took an inner disciple position, it was a given.

If it was on faction strength, it'll be difficult to reach first, but third place was likely as his individual strength could rival a core elder.

Elder Ji's expression grew strange, "What I know is that it revolves around a Qi Art or Method. It'll likely test comprehension ability, and regardless if a person replaces a core disciple, it'll remain the same. This is the little we've been told." Elder Ji had a little helplessness in his eyes. He wanted to help Wei Wuyin succeed, but he wouldn't be able to.

Wei Winyu nodded. If it was based on comprehension, then it'll test intelligence and understanding. Even though his cultivation base was profound, a few of the phases he'd overcome required some comprehension, but most were accumulation and condensation. Only those attempting to ascend the Sixth Stage of Qi Condensation will need to comprehend yin-yang.

As he pondered, an announcer voice echoed.

"All Core Disciple Participants, please come to the main platform for The Challenge."

Wei Wuyin looked outwards and saw an Elder standing with three youths behind him. Those were the three inner disciples who placed top three, two of which belonged to his faction.

A young woman with auburn hair and a tall, lithe frame stood proudly on stage. She radiated a natural grace and her eyes radiated pride. Her name was Li Fei.

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She was a member of Wei Wuyin's faction and had a cultivation at the First Stage of Qi Condensation, Qi Creation. Her aura was steady and strong.

In comparison, Su Mei's aura was unsteady and the flow of qi had yet to abate into a calmer state. This was a sign that her Heart of Qi had just been created and her body had yet to adapt. However, Li Fei was the complete opposite. With a little bit more, she could ascend to the second phase, allowing her qi to externalize.

The other was a young man with blonde hair and green eyes. His body exuded a regal aura and he seemed to be nobility. As he stood there, it was as if he commanded respect. This was Han Yu.

He was also a part of Wei Wuyin's faction and was one of Wei Wuyin's earlier subordinates during his first few months as a core disciple. He had been a vice captain during the mission against the Violet Moon Sect alongside Chu Yan. His cultivation was also at the First Phase, Qi Creation. His aura was just as steady, but there was a hint of a unique affinity to it that resembled the sea.

Supposedly, Han Yu had a bloodline that could give birth to a unique qi state. In fact, because of this bloodline, his Heart of Qi had already transformed into a Heart of Aquatic Qi.

While its true abilities wouldn't present itself until he reached the Elemental Birth Phase, he could still prematurely use aquatic-based qi arts. He could breathe in water or influence the liquid composition of his body. While it had little effect currently, it would make him a fearsome water elemental cultivator when he comes into his own.

Wei Wuyin had always paid him close attention because of this. At the Elemental Birth Phase, he was bound to be a top-tier inner elder, and if he could give form to his qi, his strength would also be top-tier.

The last person was another woman. Her eyes were dark brown and so was her hair. She had a calm, nearly eerie gaze as she just stared into empty space. She was an oddity as she belonged to no faction. However, Wei Wuyin recognized her.

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Her name was Qu Gui. She had a very dark history from what he recalled. Like him, she started as an honorary disciple, but she was allowed entry due to a marriage with an Outer Disciple and not clan connections like him. Supposedly, that disciple died from unknown circumstances but there were malicious rumors.

Because of that connection, not many attempted to recruit her, likely already knowing the full story. However, Wei Wuyin had just joined at the time and was building his faction from nothing. Therefore, he attempted to recruit her.

She had rejected him.

Wei Wuyin could even tell that her eyes looked at him with some prejudice, so he didn't press or take offense. Everyone had their own story, and he didn't intend to force a recruitment.

He sighed softly.

"Then, I'll talk to you later, Elder Ji." Wei Wuyin said this and left.

Elder Ji nodded.

When Wei Winyu arrived on the main platform at the center of the colosseum, he saw several figures standing in odd places facing the Elder in charge, Elder Bai. He was an old, white haired old man at the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation, Yin Form Phase. His eyes held the distinct lack of vitality, but seemed to birth things from imagination.

Wei Wuyin analyzed the core disciples who arrived. All eight had arrived and he was last. He smiled at this and couldn't help but laugh inwardly.

Tao Gui, who was a muscular giant, stood tall while holding a gigantic warhammer that exceeded his already two and a half meter height. The warhammer was drenched in gold and flickered with elemental energies of metal. If one stared at it for too long, their eyes would hurt.

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Jiu Lang had a calm expression but stole the spotlight from everyone. Her beautiful face and astonishing female assets drew the gazes of nearly all the men in the crowd.

Wei Wuyin looked at her for a moment before looking elsewhere, but his eyes flickered with an enlightened light. "She's reached the Elemental Birth Phase. Interesting."

As he glanced about, he saw the other six, four girls and two guys. There was He Long, a handsome young man with black hair and black eyes. He carried a large arming sword on his back. It, like Tao Gui's weapon, exceeded his natural height. It was diagonally placed for that reason.

Mei Mei, a woman who was actually nearing her fifties, being the longest established core disciple. Despite her make-up and beautification methods, one could still see age in her body.

Her height stood at five feet, five inches, had a petite figure, long brown hair cascading down her back, with a pert nose and light brown eyes. Despite her make-up, she had natural freckles on her face that were faint, but added a down-to-earth allure. The most notable traits of her entirety was her full lips that looked as if they contained the softest touch.

She looked at Wei Wuyin and smiled sweetly. Her cultivation base was still at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation despite her age. Wei Wuyin replied with a smile of his own.

If amongst the factions of core disciples, Wei Wuyin had enemies and allies, then Mei Mei was his ally. In fact, he was formerly a member of her faction when he was an outer and inner disciple. Originally, he saw her as a big sister-like character until one night where she came to his core disciple residence and stayed in his bed.

At that time, their relationship and connection strengthened and Wei Wuyin had a good impression of this woman.

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Shu Yang and Shu Yin were twins who stood together. They were similar in height and face, and both were exceptionally good-looking with brown-skin and light brown eyes.

They were twins born from the Shu Clan, a staunch ally of the Scarlet Solaris Sect. Normally, Wei Wuyin would have a good impression of them, but one day, while he engaged in conversation with Shu Yin, he was attacked by Shu Yang.

It was then that he realized that his actions of getting close to Shu Yin, his outstanding appearance, and talent had elicited jealousy and fear from Shu Yang. They had a weird and undefined incestuous relationship. While others in the sect, the majority actually, just assumed Shu Yang was overprotective.

Shu Yang's eyes looked towards him with a little bit of disdain and contempt. Wei Wuyin laughed inwardly at his attitude. In fact, he had nothing against their relationship or him personally. The mortal clans and even royalty often believed in tight bloodlines for purity sake, so familial weddings happened more often than one would expect.

This didn't even include the fact that with strength, power, and desire, came a need for the normally forbidden or hard to obtain. As they were both at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation, it gave them the ability to do whatever they wished.

The last two were the number one and number two in the core disciples ranking in terms of individual strength, with them both reaching the Elemental Birth Phase.

Yan Zhu, a woman who stood ramrod straight and exuded a natural magnificence. She had short black hair and wore light armor that tightly hugged her body. Despite the aura she emitted, she had excellent female assets as well. In her hand was a spear held vertical and proud. She felt like a gate guardian of heaven as she stood there. With her short hair and light armor, she cut a heroic figure.

Wei Wuyin looked at her and sighed helplessly. This woman was bothersome to deal with, so he didn't try to formulate a relationship.

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The other was Ling Ya, a beautiful vixen. A dark-skinned woman with dark brown, long hair with white highlights. She wore revealing and thin clothes that left little to the imagination. Her bountiful breasts larger than a baby's head and perfectly round and perky ass were eye-catching, and she was drop-dead gorgeous as she exuded a sexy charm.

Wei Wuyin decided to not even look. This woman cultivated a unique qi art and was just beyond troublesome, more so than Yan Zhu who was fierce and unbending. If you were to be lured to her side, you probably wouldn't even know how you died.

When he arrived, the Elder Bai nodded.

"With all disciples of Core Rank present, let's begin The Challenge!" His words caused the crowd to cheer in anticipation. This was the moment where factions change and power shifted!

### Chapter 9: The Challenge

With The Challenge beginning, all of the core disciples had calm expressions, and Yan Zhu had her eyes closed. As the number one core disciple in terms of cultivation and ability, she didn't have to worry about being challenged.

Ling Ya was the same as she sent a flirtatious wink towards Han Yu, who nearly broke out of his noble expression as his aura shifted slightly. However, he regained himself and frowned.

Wei Wuyin looked towards Ling Ya. As if noticing, Ling Ya looked towards Wei Wuyin with a sweet smile. She placed her index finger on her lips apologetically and it entered her mouth slightly, as if by accident, but the manner was very suggestive.

He sighed in his heart and ignored her. Ling Ya was a true vixen and her unique qi art was something to be worried about. If he didn't have enough willpower, he would've long since been her prey.

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Ling Ya revealed a sweet, lustful gaze outwardly, but her heart shook inwardly. She was the number two strongest, only eclipsed by that stubborn Yan Zhu, and her prowess could throw anyone who had yet to reach the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation into a turmoil. However, Wei Wuyin was unaffected.

"Did he already birth elemental qi? If so, does he truly have a cultivation treasure or just insanely talented?" As her mind drifted with all sorts of thoughts and conclusions, Han Yu stepped forward.

"Han Yu wishes to challenge!" His words caused everyone to be intrigued. Han Yu was at the First Stage of Qi Condensation, but all of the core disciples had long since entered the Second Stage of Qi Condensation. They expected Qu Gui to act, not Han Yu.

However, this only caused many to speculate. After all, if Han Yu was willing to challenge, then he must be prepared for death or maiming, so his confidence for success must be high.

When Han Yu stepped forward, Wei Wuyin frowned. He turned towards Jiu Lang and saw her expression was as normal as ever, and then his eyes narrowed. He looked towards Ling Ya once again. This time, a flicker of killing intent within.

Ling Ya grew even more shocked feeling his killing intent. "Does he know?! Or is he probing my intentions?" She couldn't help but inwardly think. Outwardly, she retained her normal lustful expression and her qi didn't fluctuate irregularly at Wei Wuyin's intent.

"Han Yu, step down," Wei Wuyin directly declared, causing the crowd to be shocked. However, what happened next threw everyone for a loop as Han Yu said, "I challenge Core Disciple Mei Mei."

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"Oh god! I thought Mei Mei's faction and Wei Wuyin's faction were allied, what is this?" A crowd member with an especially loud mouth exclaimed aloud. However, the thought was on everyone's mind.

How could this happen?

Not to mention, Wei Wuyin ordered him to rescind his challenge, but was ignored.

Wei Wuyin turned towards Mei Mei and he could see her shocked expression. "Be careful," he earnestly warned.

At first, Mei Mei thought this was a ploy by Wei Wuyin, but seeing his concerned and slightly angered gaze, she knew it wasn't him. As the oldest core disciple amongst the set, she had the most experience, but also the lowest displayed potential. Despite that, she maintained her spot for this long.

Mostly it had to do with her own machinations and plans, but this was unexpected. Despite that, she was confident in beating Han Yu even if his true cultivation was concealed and higher than the first phase.

She softly nodded. She stepped forward and accepted the challenge with her actions, withdrawing a blue sword from her spatial ring. She calmly faced Han Yu.

Elder Bai ordered, "All those not participating, withdraw." Wei Winyu and the rest kicked off brilliantly, landing outside the platform at its edge.

Han Yu didn't pull out a weapon. Instead, he got into a martial stance and steadied himself. One could see the qi circulating through his body as earthly dust kicked up beneath his feet.

When Wei Wuyin saw this, he frowned. However, The Challenge had very specific rules. He couldn't interfere in any manner unless he wished to lose his core disciple status as a result. So all he could do was watch and be a humble spectator.

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Mei Mei sprinted forward. Her speed was swift and fully exhibited the physical capabilities of a cultivator at the Second Stage of Qi Condensation. She created a thin ward of qi that hugged her body protectively. As one reached the point of externalizing their qi, they could use various elementary level qi arts, such as forming a bodily qi ward, an essential technique for any and all cultivators of any phase.

Han Yu could not perform that, but he could strengthen his body via rapid qi circulation.

Mei Mei reached a few feet away as she prepared to send a qi wave slicing towards her Han Yu in a probing strike, but then her eyes contracted suddenly.

Han Yu's body had abruptly become like an overly stuffed doll as it puffed up. It expanded in a split second to become like a puffer fish, his lips, muscles, and fat looked swollen to their limits. Beneath his skin was a rapid flow of cyan light, like turbulent rivers being born. It was as if he could explode at any moment.

"This...!" Mei Mei was caught completely off-guard as she tried to recall her qi flow, but it caused a slight rebound that delayed her retreat. A sudden urge to spurt blood emerged, but she suppressed it.

Wei Wuyin's eyes widened in shock, but not just his. Everyone, including Jiu Lang and Tao Gui eyes widened. Only two people were exempt, Ling Ya and another. She had an expectant gaze.

"For love!" Han Yu's voice became distorted as his qi started to surge wildly and before long...

**BOOM!!!**

The explosion sent massive waves of intense qi flowing out in a violent manner. Han Yu had self-destructed and turned himself into a literal bomb. All of his qi, and his Heart of Qi, had been explosively sent in all directions in an insane suicidal attack. It was unexpected as his status was just on the rise, but his last words were very telling.

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Mei Mei's face grew pale as the explosion engulfed her body. With wild force, she was rocketed outwards like a flung piece of trash. Her body left a trail of violent qi and blood as she made an arc so far that she landed on another platform.

The disheartening, horrific thud of broken bones was like a wake-up call to everyone.

"Oh shit! Han Yu actually detonated his Heart of Qi?!" Someone cried.

"Why? He killed himself for what?! He was an inner disciple who had a limitless future!" Others cried in disbelief.

"For love apparently," someone who had good hearing and heard Han Yu's final words shouted in extreme derision. After all, without life, how can you enjoy love?

Wei Wuyin's eyes were dark. His eyes flashed a silver shine as he executed the spiritual spell, Iron Core Eyes. With that, he could sense the quintessential life energy in her body. If she were dead, it would flow out without end. Fortunately, it was steadily flowing through her body.

However, she left a figure of blood. A horrifying sight. Elder Bai looked at the situation and tried to have his mind catch-up to what happened like the rest. He kicked off and arrived next to Mei Mei and his gaze flickered.

"She's alive. The winner of The Challenge: Mei Mei." As a judge, he immediately declared before returning to his original spot, leaving Mei Mei where she was. There was no medic team arriving or in-wait. That was the cruelty of The Challenge.

Wei Wuyin kicked off now that the match was officially over. He arrived next to her with a cold gaze. He could see her body squirming as she tried to move, but her muscles and flesh had been torn into places. If it wasn't for her powerful body and firm foundation, it's unlikely anyone at her cultivation level could survive that.

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If her current state was surviving.

A self-destruction from a Qi Creation Phase cultivator could kill someone at the Elemental Birth Phase if they were caught unawares. However, how long and hard must one cultivate to even touch upon the Qi Condensation Realm?! Who in their right mind would surrender their life without a serious grudge or with utter hopelessness.

He wanted to help her, but he hadn't reached the Yang Growth, so he couldn't nourish her body with vitality. He would feed her a pill, but if she died right after, others could use that to strip him of his status or even get him crippled.

He took a deep breath and left, returning to his spot. His gaze was icy-cold. No one attempted to touch Mei Mei's body, her life and death would be decided by her willpower and if she could last until all the proceedings were over.

Elder Bai continued without care, "All other challengers, step forward."

At the moment, Li Fei was conflicted. Her gaze towards Mei Mei was like a battle between angelic and devilish forces. At the moment, Mei Mei could only forfeit her position as a core disciple if anyone challenged her.

She would lose her status, power, and various cultivation benefits. Having made many enemies, it's likely her fate would be absolutely pathetic now that she wouldn't be protected by the sect in the same way as before. It would be lucky if the next time she left the sect, she wasn't crippled and turned into a slave, and just directly killed.

That was, if she wasn't crippled already.

Li Fei was a part of Wei Wuyin's faction and thus were allies with Mei Mei's faction. She had received her favor and support from her subordinates, so challenging her right now would be ungrateful. Worse, if Wei Wuyin decided to target her because of this. He now had Elder Ji's backing. But Core Rank status came with immensely tempting benefits!

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While her ongoing struggle happened, a cold voice sounded, "Qu Gui challenges Core Disciple Mei Mei." There was silence and everyone's gaze looked towards the woman who many were unsure was alive or dead. Her bloody body had faint drag marks as she was obviously slowly clawing her way somewhere.

A feeling of pity emerged in all their hearts.

Wei Wuyin looked at Qu Gui and his cold gaze turned indifferent.

After ten minutes, Qu Gui was automatically declared the winner and promoted to Core Rank. As a core disciple, she would inherit all the things Mei Mei had, and Mei Mei's subordinates and faction would be broken apart.

With that, The Challenge concluded in an unexpected fashion. Han Yu, a genius with a bloodline, self-destructed and caused Mei Mei, the oldest core disciple, to lose her status and position.

"Let the Core Competition commence!" Elder Bai declared.

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## Chapter 10: Haven Heart Qi Method

"So soon?!" The crowd immediately went into an uproar. Usually, the basic information about the Core Competition would be announced now and then explained several days after The Challenge to give participants time to plan and make last minute preparations. This was also because of the chance of a new core disciple being bestowed their rank.

During this period of time, the newly promoted core disciple had some reprieve to attempt a recruitment of some members for the competition. While they would likely place ninth, it was still beneficial and helped the core disciple establish a solid base to move forward.

Now, however, it was going to just start? In that case, the situation now had to be different than previous competitions. This excited the crowd and even the core disciples grew restless in their hearts. While some, like Wei Wuyin, had avenues of information and knew of the oddity that was this competition, none of them knew what it was truly going to be about.

Elder Bai's expression turned stern as he looked towards the core disciples. "The competition will be held at the Scarlet Dao Temple. However, before we relocate, you all will be given an explanation and choice."

His words once more caused an uproar amongst the crowd and even the core disciples were curious about this choice mentioned. As for the Scarlet Dao Temple, they knew of it and had all entered it. It was the main warehouse for the myriad of qi arts and spiritual spells of the sect.

They waited patiently as Elder Bai continued, "The Competition will be cultivation. In particular, the cultivation of an ancient qi method. Not only will you be exposed to this method, but you will be able to cultivate it even after the trial. However, the ancient qi method is fierce and accidents can happen, even qi deviation. Therefore, you all will have the choice to withdraw at this moment."

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"I will stress," Elder Bai's eyes flashed with a sense of profound heaviness, "there is a chance of qi deviation, so those with poor willpower should choose carefully." His words caused the clamor of the crowd to stop and grow silent. They were all observing the nine disciples.

Wei Wuyin pondered. Qi Arts and Qi Methods were two very different things. Qi Arts were ways to exercise your qi in a particular fashion and accomplish a particular action. Qi Methods were how to cultivate qi and its foundation. Everyone had a Qi Method, and the Scarlet Solaris Sect had the Scarlet Solaris Qi Method that allows one to absorb Scarlet Qi to transform the Heart of Qi into a Heart of Scarlet Qi, allowing one's metaphysical qi to inherently become metaphysical Scarlet Qi.

This ancient qi method must have extraordinary requirements for cultivation. If there's a chance of qi deviation, then it had to stress talent heavily. No wonder they would only give core disciples the opportunity.

According to Elder Ji, it required high comprehension and intelligence.

Tao Gui spoke out at this moment, breaking the solemn silence, "Has there ever been someone who successfully cultivated the method?" This question perked the hearts of all the disciples. Indeed, if it had never succeeded, then it was defective, and therefore choosing to withdraw was the right decision. Which cultivator didn't value their lives to a certain extent? They reached their current level with countless hours and days of loneliness and meditation, how could they throw that away needlessly?

Elder Bai responded quickly, as if he expected the question, "Yes. I'll say it has been cultivated to the fourth level, and has a total of seven levels. However, no one has cultivated to the fifth level." As he vaguely explained this, the others now had a faint understanding of the situation. This was an opportunity and a trial. Perhaps the first obstacle required was self-confidence.

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However, there would still be a few cautious fellows who would sit back and not participate. For example, cultivating a risky method for no reason other than some dregs of benefits was too little.

Wei Wuyin knew that Mei Mei would refuse. As he thought of that, he glanced at the bloody figure in the distance. He sighed inwardly.

"I will also mention the rewards for the trial's placements. Third Place will be able to receive three Elemental Stones of their choice, and a Scarlet Qi Stone. Second Place will receive that and the ability to enter the cultivation grounds of any area except the Scarlet Qi Pond for six months. First Place, will receive an entire three months in the Scarlet Qi Pond and a Refined Yin Stone, including the benefits of Third and Second Place."

"..."

A silence unlike ever before was born. It was eerie and only the sounds of rapid heartbeats could be heard.

Wei Wuyin's eyes were wider than a full moon and his body shivered.

Holy fuck!

This...holy fuck!!

Wei Wuyin knew that elemental stones were condensed materials of heaven and earth, requiring a century minimum of nourishment. They were great sources of cultivation as they contained dense elemental energies that can birth elements in one's Heart of Qi or even strengthen the body.

When he became a core disciple, he was told that every five years, he would receive one elemental stone of his choice. One! Just one!!

As for Scarlet Qi Stones, they were stones condensed by the Scarlet Qi Pond, and were similar to elemental stones, requiring an incredibly long time before they were produced.

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Third Place already exceeded last year's total prizes. Being in the Scarlet Qi Pond for a week did not amount to one Scarlet Qi Stone. In fact, it would be better to say it was equivalent to a month of cultivation in the Scarlet Qi Pond.

If third place placement was already so great, then second place which included all that and six months of cultivation in any cultivation grounds was miraculous. As a core disciple for the last two years, he had cultivated a total of three days in any given cultivation ground.

If he wanted to use them, he had to generate an absurd amount of contribution points and they were consumed by the hour. They were mostly reserved for Core Elders and above.

An entire six months was an insane amount of time. With the Elemental Stones of their choice and a Scarlet Qi Stone, weren't their futures truly limitless?!

The first one didn't need to be stated. Just being in the Scarlet Qi Pond for a week was like years of cultivation outside. With three months, condensing a Heart of Scarlet Qi was an absolute given to anyone with a modicum of talent. They'll likely even ascend their cultivation phase to the next level.

With the Refined Yin Stone, becoming a Fourth Phase expert was a guarantee to anyone who placed first.

Even after three full minutes, the entire colosseum of hundreds of thousands of members were silent. Elder Bai allowed them to process the information, especially the core disciples.

Wei Wuyin, and the rest, knew that with enticements like this, the risk must be immense. He took a deep breath and expelled a breath of turbid qi. Calming himself down, his eyes flashed with interest and determination. If he could get at least second place, he could...

As his mind whirled, Jiu Lang spoke, "I'll have to decline this challenge." Her voice was calm and while many wanted to say she didn't have the heart to pursue benefits in the face of risk, no one could argue with her choice. In fact, not many were stupid enough to think that such a reward would come easy.

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Not to mention the risk, you would still have to compete. If all nine participated, only three would receive anything outside of the ancient qi method. As for the rest, if they underwent qi deviation, would it be worth it? The obvious answer was no.

Elder Bai looked at Jiu Lang and smiled, "Hold a moment. There is also another condition." When those words were said, everyone's ears perked up.

"All those who decide not to participate will be stripped of their Core Rank and benefits, and be unable to enter the next Core Competition for ten years." His words were like fireworks.

"What?! Holy shit! That's crazy harsh!"

"Is this for real? Either risk it or lose one's status and faction?!"

"An impossible choice! Those that leave the Core Rank often have very short life expectancy. Do you remember Ni Tu?"

"Oh yeah, the one who lost to Wei Wuyin and his corpse showed up a few weeks later?"

"What will they choose?! Is this even a choice?!"

The crowd was going absolutely nuts because of this condition. Either you participate or you lose your rank and status. You lose your right to establish and maintain a faction and your enemies would go after you. Those in the Core Rank had protective barriers placed on them. In fact, if Jiu Lang's assassins had killed Wei Wuyin, she would've been executed.

This was not an exaggeration.

They were ordered to injure, not kill. However, only assassins would be able to sneak and find an opportunity to strike without the person being on guard.

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It was also why Chu Yan didn't dare to resort to something like poison or directly killing with his own hands, but wanted to use the hands of others to do so. If he did, the sect would slam down on him and investigate thoroughly. His entire family and clan would definitely be implicated. Let's not even mention the blowback would hit Jiu Lang, and she would also suffer severe consequences.

If that foreign individual had killed Wei Wuyin, the investigation would have determined that they were not responsible and it was due to a love affair. Nothing would come of it but the eventual hunting and slaughtering of that man, the woman, their entire family, and clan to set an example to the world.

Even Wei Wuyin didn't dare help Mei Mei because if she died after, even with her status stripped, he could still be killed or crippled under a misunderstanding. Inner Disciples had similar, but very loose protections. As long as he was careful, he could kill an inner disciple without any fuss and get away with it scott-free.

The expression of everyone grew ugly upon hearing this. This was nothing more than forcing them. However, Wei Wuyin's eyes flashed with killing intent as he looked at Jiu Lang. If she became an inner disciple, as a beautiful woman with many enemies, he could find an opportunity. Or maybe he wouldn't even need one, others may just obliterate her for him.

He laughed coldly in his heart. Having already decided to participate, he didn't have any internal struggles.

"All those wishing to withdraw, please say so now." Elder Bai had a mirthful smile. These young geniuses were now faced with a near-impossible choice. How could he not have some jealousy in his heart over their talent and relish in their misfortune?

The struggle was revealed in all of their eyes except Wei Wuyin. When Elder Bai saw Wei Wuyin with a calm expression and a faint smile, he was deeply shocked. This child truly might have utmost confidence in his talent.

"..."

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In the end, no one withdrew. Shu Yang and Shu Yin were close to withdrawing as they argued back and forth, but settled on agreeing.

"Good. Let's go." Elder Bai led the way to Scarlet Dao Temple as everyone followed.

After a long walk, the ten of them finally reached the Scarlet Dao Temple. Despite its name, it wasn't scarlet in color, but a dark-grey. It looked like a simple monastery of a religious group. The only exception was at its doors. The characters for 'Scarlet' were embedded in the left door and 'Dao' in its right.

They walked in. When they entered, a young woman stood at the center of the hall dressed in an azure robe. She stood next to a monolith that was completely golden with characters carved onto its surface. It stood eight meters high and three grown men had to wrap around it to go from end to end. Its thickness and height wasn't its only impressive features, but the gold material it was made of.

It emitted a dense aura of heaven and earth, and the area around it seemed to have a higher quality of Essence of Heaven and Earth. If one cultivated directly beside it, their cultivation speed would definitely increase several-fold.

Wei Wuyin looked at the woman beside the monolith. A single word came to mind: Gorgeous. She stood there straight with blue eyes like the ocean and long, brunette hair that flowed to her back and split at her shoulders. Those strands of hair seemed to be perfect, and they led one's gaze to a deep and bountiful cleavage.

Her height wasn't impressive, being average, but her slim, bottle-like frame, incredible curves, and flawless jade skin left one breathless. Wei Wuyin had seen beautiful, but not this beautiful.

Her long, thin eyelashes and phoenix-like eyes that seemed to carry the truth to immortality was far beyond anything he'd ever seen.

It wasn't just him who was shocked by the woman. Shu Yang, Tao Gui, and He Long were also speechless with intense eyes. He Long was the worst of the four,

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his pants grew tighter and revealed a modest tent. Despite being a sword-wielder, his bearing was torn down before true beauty.

Elder Bai had led them in, but his head was down and he immediately said, "I'll leave them to you, Godlord Lin." He hastily left without hesitation.

Wei Wuyin broke free from his stupor and his eyes flashed with vigilance and shock. "Godlord?!"

Those who could be called Godlord by title were insane experts, those who've far exceeded the Sixth Phase and entered the Eighth Phase, Infused Spirituality! It was the last great watershed of cultivation in the Qi Condensation Realm.

The others reacted just as intensely. They knew that those at Godlord level were characters that ruled the Five Great Sects and Wu Country. In fact, there was only a single Godlord in the entire sect and it was the Head Elder, otherwise known as Ancestral Elder by title. Even the Vice Sect Leader, Sect Leader, and Prime Elders weren't in this realm.

However, the head elder of the sect was a male, this much they knew, so who was she?!

Her beautiful phoenix eyes swept them. It was as if all they had was unconcealable from her gaze. She lingered on Jiu Lang for a second, causing her heart to jump and feel insecure. She instinctively folded her arms around her chest, revealing her own bountiful mounds.

Luckily for Jiu Lang, she moved her gaze away and looked at Wei Wuyin. There wasn't much lingering as she swiftly moved on.

He Long made a step and walked forward.

Bang.

Suddenly, he kneeled on one knee. "I, He Long, have never seen someone so beautiful, more beautiful than the moon in the sky. I have given my life to the sword, but I realize that the Grand Sword Dao pales in comparison to you. For

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what have I been cultivating for if not for this moment. I wish to ask for your hand in marriage." His words were sincere and provoked silence and odd looks from everyone.

"This..." Wei Wuyin was taken aback. Did he not hear Elder Bai's words? He had said those words purposefully so they knew not to offend a beauty out of lust. Her cultivation base was so profound, a breath could turn them into dust.

Inwardly, he couldn't help but have some praise in his heart. He Long had some courage to propose with a weak cultivation and young heart. His potential hasn't even been fully revealed but he took his shot.

Not many would.

A few expected the woman to send him to the afterlife, but what happened next shocked them even more.

"I will accept, if..." those four words were like thundering waves battering their minds. Her voice was also beautiful and soft, but held a unique power that could uplift the spirit.

"If you can reach the fifth level of this cultivation method." When her words finished, they all looked towards He Long. His gaze was focused on the monolith as a faint hope emerged in his chest. He got up and nodded with confidence, "Then, It's a pleasure to meet you my beloved wife." A confident smile was on his face.

"This guy...is he an idiot?" Wei Wuyin didn't bother anymore, but he wouldn't lie and say he wasn't tempted to take his shot too. In fact, he may as well do so since he was going to cultivate the method regardless.

Tao Gui and Shu Yang also stepped forwardly simultaneously and heavily kneeled on one knee. They also proclaimed their desire to marry this Godlord whose name they didn't even know outside of Lin. Shu Ying, Shu Yang's twin sister, had an odd expression on her face. A trace of jealousy and disdain flickered in her eyes.

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Jiu Lang, Lang Yi, Yan Zhu, and Qu Gui watched this and contempt emerged in their eyes. This was pathetic to them, and jealousy was also in their eyes. To see such beauty before them left them feeling inferior. They pushed all their negative thoughts towards those boys.

Wei Wuyin helplessly smiled as he withdrew his thought of doing the same, and looked at the monolith. He couldn't help but grow curious about its origins and the method within. A method that, if cultivated to a high enough level, allowed a Godlord character to be willing to marry someone they didn't know.

However, the next words of the woman was like a nightmare from hell, dousing their ambitions. "Any of you who doesn't cultivate to at least the second level, I'll cripple you for your words."

"..."

The three were shocked and their hearts shook with fear, but Wei Wuyin interjected, "Why worry about the future? Your goal is the fifth level, right?"

His words were like a lifeline in a cold lake, bringing them to shore. Indeed, since their goal was the fifth, why worry about anything lower? They would reach that easily!

The Godlord glanced at Wei Wuyin.

Wei Wuyin saw her glance and turned respectful, no longer daring to speak out of turn.

"I'll begin and explain the rules. No one is permitted to speak during," she said before turning towards the golden monolith. "This monolith records an ancient qi method, one whose origins exceed ten thousand years. It is called the Haven Heart Qi Method, and it's a cultivation guideline that has seven levels. The goal of the method is to develop an additional Heart of Qi."

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