

PARAGON OF SIN

Chapter 18 - 18: SearChapter

They traveled through Muu Lake's forest swiftly. On foot, the five carried dead spirit crystals and spread out with a fifty meter distance between them.

Wei Wuyin was calmly looking at his surroundings, finding the fascinating flora and fauna of the Muu Lake's forest as he did. The flowers were lively and shone with faint traces of water and wood energies. The mystical lake was somehow transforming the inherent properties of the water that enters the soil, and thereby affecting the inhabitants who live from it.

The animals were incredibly peaceful, as if the calming qualities of water had been instilled into their primal instincts. He found that many of them were herbivores, living off the lush greenery within the area. The forest was like a wealth of food for them.

Off to the side, Zhou Gao fumed from time to time. Her eyes shifting out of focus and muttering all sorts of indistinct comments. As she did, a faint blush would surface on her face before swiftly fading.

Wei Wuyin had taken her first kiss, and he had done it so 'forcefully' that she felt aggrieved. However, while she had her grievances, whenever she recalled his eyes filled with power, that visage of handsomeness, and tall figure looming over her. She'd feel all sorts of emotions and heat within her heart.

Her gaze would then shift over to Wei Wuyin, causing her heart to beat faster than before. Two words and she had fallen into his claws like a helpless butterfly. At first, she assumed Wei Wuyin had used some sort of spiritual spell to influence her mind, but there's no way he could do something like that; only Godlords had mind-affecting abilities, as their qi held its own spirituality. Not to mention, even if he did, there would be some traces of manipulation.

She knew it was done in the spur of the moment, and while her emotions and senses may have been overwhelmed at that particular instant, instinctually and deep within her heart, she wanted to do it. The only issue was that she didn't know why.

Yan Zhu and Ming Yu were silent most of the way. Shui Wuhen was the only one talking actively as she gave directions on where and how to sweep their assigned area. This search lasted for an entire sixteen hours.

They had combed through the entire section of their forest and came up empty.

"We've finished our assignment. For now, let's return to the lake and set up camp by the lakeside," Shui Wuhen said. They unanimously agreed as it took them roughly fifteen minutes to arrive back at the lake. Now that they weren't moving with caution, the time to return was considerably less.

When they arrived, Wei Wuyin noticed a campsite had already been established. A fire was lit and a spiritual formation was set up as an early alarm system. It was similar in structure as the one Elder Ji had established. However, it was a little lacking in flexibility.

With the appropriate spiritual spell, Wei Wuyin felt that he could bypass it.

"Hm?" As they walked deeper, his eyes shone with a silver light. Another formation was layered beneath the alarm formation. It was intricately done, and even he had nearly missed it. It could be an assault formation, but he wasn't sure.

"Nothing?" An Aqua Echo Sect's Elder approached. Shui Wuhen shook her head helplessly. Wei Wuyin noticed this short exchange and realized the importance of finding the culprit responsible for the mysterious disappearances to their sect.

In fact, they were plagued by the disappearances and had to ask others for help.

Elder Bing arrived to meet Yan Zhu and Wei Wuyin. Her hair that gave off traces of frost seemed to have dimmed in luster. Wei Wuyin could notice some exhaustion in her eyes, but also a hint of frustration. It was somewhat concealed, but her mood was clearly not good.

"We're set up over here," she gestured towards a location where Shu Yin and Xing Fu were located. He couldn't visibly see them as a rather large tent had been set up.

While Wei Wuyin had followed, a pair of eyes was watching him. It was Shui Wuhen. She hadn't said anything about Wei Wuyin's actions towards Zhou Gao, but only because of her wariness and unwillingness to broach the subject which could compromise their mission.

However, now that she had returned to her elders, she had given a full report, including Wei Wuyin's actions.

The Aqua Echo Sect Elders had solemn expressions as they sat in their own unique tent. Zhou Gao and the other two Aqua Echo Sect members also had various expressions, mostly filled with anger.

"He has birthed Metal Qi and Lightning Qi, and seems to be hiding his cultivation base. I can't say for sure, but he could be at the Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation," Shu Wuhen voiced her assumption. The expressions of everyone changed the moment those words were said.

The Fourth Stage of Qi Condensation was the Yin Form Phase, and the difficulty of reaching this phase for men was immensely difficult. It was equally difficult for women to reach the Yang Growth Phase. For Wei Wuyin, a young man in his mid-twenties to reach this level would say much about his potential.

There was a possibility he could ascend into godhood or even become a Godlord in the future.

The other issue was birthing two advanced elemental qi's. Many people spent decades trying and failing. Even if you absorbed an enormous amount of elemental energy, it was by no means a guarantee that you could birth that element.

However, if you do, the benefits were astonishing. Those who birth the four elements have tempered their bodies and qi to be tougher, more fluid, easier to control, and resilient to high temperatures.

Metal Qi would increase durability, allowing the qi and body to reach an exceptionally high level of hardness and its ability to withstand pressure.

Lightning Qi affected one's reflexes, speed of movement, and explosive power.

With six elements, Wei Wuyin's body and qi would receive this level of tempering that would jump his combat strength to another level.

The Aqua Echo Sect members couldn't use any methods to deal with him because, frankly speaking, they weren't strong enough if Shui Wuhen's words were true. They could only swallow the humiliation for now.

Zhou Gao was of similar mind, her heart enraged by Wei Wuyin's actions. The fact that she had kissed him could even ruin her status and chances of becoming the Sect Leader in the future. How could she not be furious?

Within the Aqua Echo Sect, those upheld to the highest standards in the sect had to withdraw from men and women relations. As a core disciple of the sect, she was one of the few who had to uphold that standard. Now, her entire status could be jeopardized because of him.

As for going to war? That was a pipe dream. Neither Wei Wuyin nor her was important enough to go to war over a mutual exchange of contact. That would be ridiculous to the cultivation world if it actually happened. Perhaps if it was a forced sexual event which would result in a humiliation to the sect and the destruction of their core disciple's future potential.

Only then would it result in war.

Wei Wuyin was capable of relaxing in his tent because he knew this, and thus felt comfortable placing his mind elsewhere. The current elsewhere was Elder Bing.

"We've searched through the entire forestry area with dead spirit crystals, the four of us even tried to use various spiritual scrying methods, but we couldn't find a single clue. In fact, we can be certain that no human has died within this forest in the last six months since the disappearances began." Elder Bing said with exhaustion.

The search they had deployed clearly heavily taxed her spiritual sense and mental energy.

New novel chapters are published on .

"The entire forest?" Wei Wuyin softly muttered. It seems that the four elders didn't want to rely on the disciples not making a mistake and scryed areas they had already searched with their spiritual spells.

"Not a single clue?" Wei Wuyin asked.

"Not one," Elder Bing said.

"Odd. Then, is it possible the people are still alive? But if that's the case, where are they being kept and how can someone hide tens of thousands of people without a single trace?" Wei Wuyin asked, confused. This wasn't possible.

Xing Fu interjected, "Maybe with Spatial Rings? They have their own space to store things."

"..." Everyone was silent as they simultaneously turned their gazes towards Xing Fu.

"What?" Xing Fu was confused by everyone's silence.

Elder Bing broke the silence, "Spatial Rings don't store things into their own space. Cultivators don't have the ability to actually create an independent dimension, keep it stabilized, and allow passage into and out without any inconsistency or constant maintenance."

"They don't?" Xing Fu truly thought those at the False Reality Phase could create independent spaces and store them into spatial rings. She looked at the spatial ring on her finger given to her by the sect when she became a core disciple. They had told her its function, but never the mechanics behind it.

Yan Zhu answered, "Spatial Rings are temporary gateways from one physical point to another. It's a tunnel that allows travel both ways, not a container. The gate leads to a storage container stored by the sect, private and safe that only Seventh Phase experts could enter forcefully. You place and pull objects from this container. It is called a spatial ring because it contains a small amount of spatial energy that enables this tunnel to open and close."

"Oh?!" Xing Fu was shocked. She had no idea that was the case. Then doesn't that mean that as long as one goes to her container, they could take everything from her ring? Thinking this, she turned slightly pale.

"As Yan Zhu said, because its only a gate to a tunnel, it can't store past its limit and transporting life takes far too much energy. As you know, the larger or stronger the object in terms of qi or energy, the more qi it takes to extract or enter the object. Even if the Sect Leader herself wanted to store a newborn child, she'd exhaust herself to death before she could get it through. The child

would probably remain unharmed as well, so it's not an effective weapon." Elder Bing informed.

Wei Wuyin had long since known these specifics, otherwise there would be no reason for a vault in sects or cultivation clans. They could just store things in spatial rings, these small objects, and hide them away. There would be no fear of being robbed.

However, life wasn't so simple.

"What's our next move?" Yan Zhu asked.

"We'll recover our strength and try other ways. We'll likely employ your cultivation bases to help." Elder Bing took a deep breath and closed her eyes. The icy frost on her hair seemed to recede somewhat. She looked like she was conserving energy and attempting to speed up her recovery.

"We'll do so in two days. For now, rest, cultivate, mingle with the other disciples." Elder Bing left these words before going to a corner and sitting in the lotus position. The surrounding Essence of Heaven and Earth was absorbed rapidly by her.

Wei Wuyin decided to see the Muu Lake up close. He left and walked the lakeshore while his spiritual sense swept the lake's surface. It contained a high concentration of water energy, which was far higher than natural lakes. If he was cultivating here at the second phase, he could've birthed his water qi far easier.

In the Elemental Birth Phase, one could only be said to have reached completion when they've birthed all four natural elements, but birthing one was sufficient to reach the phase. Only with elemental energy can one enable the intermixing of yin, and with yin comes yang, hence the order at which cultivation was set.

As he walked and pondered cultivation, he grimaced. His knees nearly buckled as he fiercely gripped his neck. A crushing sound could be heard as he pressed heavily. His teeth clenched as he stifled a shout of pain.

"What is this?!" He had just felt an absolutely inconceivable amount of pain in his neck and shoulder area out of nowhere. His body became wrapped around by a ward of elemental qi, within this qi was yin and yang energies. The ward nearly looked like a perfect silhouette of himself.

His actions definitely elicited many inspections from the elders and disciples nearby, but Wei Wuyin couldn't care about this. Even if his cultivation base was revealed, this pain was too intense! He circulated his qi to the area in hopes of easing the pain.

"This pain?" His face paled as he recalled the injury from before. While on his mission to eliminate the Violet Moon Sect's remnant forces, he met a crazed, nonsensical prisoner who bit him. The injury had long since healed, with not even a scar left behind.

This prisoner had clearly gone insane, and because of his mission to eliminate the force, he had killed him regardless of his identity or status.

"Gawh!" A bit of spit escaped his lips as he shouted with clenched teeth.

"Wei Wuyin?" Elder Bing had noticed, arriving with a trace of frost qi to her steps. When she looked at Wei Wuyin's ward infused with elemental energy, yin, and yang as well as its nearly perfect encasing, and her eyes widened in shock.

"Fifth Phase?" She found this inconceivable. This junior of hers was nearly seventy years behind her in age, but exceeded her in cultivation base.

The middle-aged Elder from the Sky Sword Sect arrived as well. His gaze was sharp as he inspected Wei Wuyin. Even his expression changed as he saw the traces of elemental energy, "Violet Lightning and Steel Metal energy?!" He became stunned.

Elements had various origins and weren't always the same. For example, fire could be gold, blue, or even green. It denoted various chemical differences and thus affects the qi itself. However, condensing them was incomparably difficult.

Violet Lightning was one of the most volatile lightning known, not to mention the hottest, yet to birth it was incredibly difficult. However, if one used violet lightning crystals, it would be easier to birth standard lightning. To actually birth violet lightning...

As for the Steel Metal, it was one of the most difficult forms of metal to establish. Its inherent properties take metal characteristics and drive it to a generalized extreme. It was, simply put, the Jack of All Trades of Metal Qi.

This meant any and all metal qi arts could be used by it, and it was stronger than normal metal qi.

These two were exceptionally difficult to birth, high-level elemental energy that many could only hope to have!

"Such talent!" One of the Aqua Echo Sect elders arrived, she was immediately shocked by Wei Wuyin's display.

While the numbers of people grew, Wei Wuyin felt paralyzed by the pain. His nails had already dug into his skin, causing blood to flow. His qi ward was infused with more energy, as it repelled his own fingers, preventing further self-harm. However, his hand still gripped his ward harshly.

"What is happening to me?!" His mind spiraled, unable to remain clear because of the pain.

A voice suddenly entered his mind.

"Sin, come. Sin, run."