

## PARAGON OF SIN

### Chapter 3 - 3: Du Ling

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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.

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.

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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.

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 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.

"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.

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.

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.

"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."

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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.

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.