

Chapter 5401

Counting the moments he lost consciousness, Charlie had no idea how long he had been adrift in the void.

Suddenly, a faint light pierced through his vision, accompanied by excruciating pain and a profound sense of powerlessness.

He lacked the strength to even open his eyes.

But then, a comforting warmth enveloped his entire body, easing the intense pain to some extent.

Gradually, he realized that the warmth was propelling him upward, urging him to float.

And then, he heard a familiar voice exclaiming in his ear, "Charlie!" With that call, Charlie's vision slowly returned.

When the feeble man opened his eyes and beheld the figure before him, he was utterly stunned!

For there, immersed in the hot spring, revealing only a hint of her bare shoulders, stood the enigmatic Maria Clark herself!

Charlie was immediately shaken to his core. It felt as if he were trapped in an unimaginable and irrational dream, unable to discern whether he was alive or dead.

As Charlie gazed at her in disbelief, Maria Clark bestowed upon him a sweet smile and spoke softly, "Charlie, I'm afraid. What are you afraid of?"

Her pure and slender smile left Charlie utterly spellbound, erasing the severe pain that had ravaged his body in an instant.

Moreover, deep within his heart, a peculiar sensation of tranquility took hold, defying all logic.

In a daze, Charlie couldn't help but mutter, "Damn, I'm probably dead... But even if I am, why do I see Maria Clark? She shouldn't be dead too, right? It doesn't make sense... I explicitly told her to stay in school and grow old gracefully... Are these mere hallucinations after death?"

As he uttered these words, Charlie's eyelids grew heavy, compelling him to close his eyes once more.

In the midst of his haze, he felt a pair of delicate hands firmly gripping him beneath his armpits.

Simultaneously, the figure pressed against him, her body intimately melding with his own.

He could even discern the soft curves pressing against his chest.

Yet, despite this, the figure continued to exert herself, lifting him effortlessly from the warm waters.

Just as he was on the verge of being lifted out of the water, Charlie opened his eyes again.

And there, beside him, stood none other than Maria Clark herself. Charlie, bewildered, couldn't help but mutter, "What in the world is happening... Are you also... dead?"

Maria Clark hastened to respond, "Charlie, you are not dead. You've arrived at Maria's abode!"

Her words struck him like a lightning bolt, and he surveyed his surroundings with wide-eyed astonishment.

He vividly recalled the moment when Gideon had transformed into a human nuclear bomb, leaving him severely injured and instantly unconscious.

He believed he was surely on the brink of death. However, when he opened his eyes, he found himself in the hot spring of Maria Clark's courtyard, cradled and lifted naked from the water by none other than Maria Clark herself!

Observing Charlie's eyes flicker open, Maria's cheeks immediately flushed a deep shade of red, extending all the way to her ears. Hastily, she spoke, "Charlie, don't be alarmed. You are completely safe here. If you have any questions, stay in the room, and I will explain everything to you!"

Charlie's mind was completely exhausted, struggling to comprehend the perplexing sequence of events.

He suddenly recalled that Maria had arrived in Aurous Hill under the guise of Cathy Clark. However, upon seeing him, she had insisted on being called Maria Clark.

Though the two names differed by a single word, the significance to Charlie was extraordinary!

An icy shiver raced down his spine, and he weakly but shockingly asked, "No... do you... do you remember me?" Maria Clark softly replied, "Charlie, I will never forget. In Northern Europe, you saved my life!"

Charlie's heart was awash with turmoil.

He mumbled, "Why... why do you still remember... Could it be... Could it be that you too possess supernatural abilities?"

Maria Clark blushed coyly. "Charlie, I am not gifted with supernatural powers. I possess a unique constitution that prevents memory loss."

She then became aware of the physical closeness between them and spoke shyly, "Charlie, please refrain from questioning me further. Once I have settled you, I will reveal the entire story myself, leaving nothing hidden!"

Charlie nodded faintly.

He understood the immense effort Maria was exerting to support him, and he wanted to contribute whatever strength his body could muster to alleviate her burden.

However, aside from being able to open his eyes and speak, his body remained almost completely paralyzed, rendering him utterly helpless.

Yet, amidst his despair, Charlie found solace in one thing—he could still feel pain!

Feeling pain meant he wasn't paralyzed.

With immense effort, the slender Maria painstakingly carried Charlie, inch by inch, back to the room. She struggled to ascend the second floor and gingerly placed him on her bedroom's soft, inviting bed.

Throughout the process, the two remained unclothed, their bodies perpetually intertwined.

Initially, Maria Clark was overcome with embarrassment, but soon enough, she cast her inhibitions aside, wholeheartedly cradling Charlie's scarred form.

In that instant when Charlie reclined, his eyes inadvertently caught sight of Maria's flushed cheeks, the glistening beads of sweat on her forehead, and her unadorned perfection. Understanding he mustn't harbor wicked thoughts, he quickly shut his eyes.

Observing his response, Maria blushed even deeper, yet she pretended not to notice. She tenderly covered Charlie with a thin quilt and positioned two pillows behind him, allowing him to rest against the headboard.

Throughout this entire process, Charlie never opened his eyes again, filling Maria's heart with warmth.

After settling Charlie, she wrapped her graceful form in a cotton and linen robe from the nearby hanger.

Returning to the bed with haste, she sat on the floor beside him, gazing at Charlie as she inquired, "Charlie, how are you feeling now?"

Her voice rang in his ears, and he slowly fluttered his eyes open.

Though aware that Maria was far from ordinary, he also believed she couldn't be his enemy. He parted his chapped lips and asked, "Miss Clark... why am I here?"

Maria smiled and replied, "Before I answer your question, let me take your pulse first."

She gently withdrew Charlie's right hand from beneath the covers, placing her fingers on his pulse. After a thorough examination, she spoke, "Although your internal injuries are severe, fortunately, they won't prove fatal."

Charlie exclaimed in surprise, "You possess medical skills?"

Maria nodded modestly, "I possess knowledge in various fields, but only to a limited extent."

Charlie couldn't help but sigh, "Before embarking on my journey, I carried numerous medicinal pills with me. Sadly, I am now bereft of them..."

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As he spoke, a thought struck him, and he quickly turned to Maria and asked, "By the way, what day is it? What time is it?"

Charlie had no knowledge of how much time had elapsed since he inexplicably arrived here.

If it hadn't been too long, he might still have a chance to return home and destroy the letter he had left for Claire. But if it had been a significant amount of time, Claire might have already discovered his secret. Seeing the worry in Charlie's eyes, Maria hastened to reassure him, saying, "Charlie, don't worry. I heard the explosion in the southern suburbs, and you appeared in the hot spring within seconds. It has only been a little over half an hour since you arrived here."

Finally, Charlie could breathe a sigh of relief.

Then, Maria recalled something from his previous mumbling and suddenly smiled, exclaiming, "Oh, the pill!"

Without delay, she got up, retrieved the four leaves Charlie had left for her from the wooden box beside the bed, and showed him three-fourth of the pill.

Returning to Charlie's side swiftly, she handed the elixir to his lips, her smile shining brightly. "Charlie, look, the elixir you left for me comes in handy now!"

Charlie felt embarrassed and replied, "The things I gave you are useless to you. I wouldn't dare to consume them..."

Maria chuckled and said, "Charlie, you need not be so polite. After all, you saved my life, not to mention you gave me these pills."

Without awaiting Charlie's response, she gently pushed the pill into his mouth.

As the elixir dissolved on his tongue, the potent medicinal effects instantly brought relief and comfort to Charlie's entire body. Even his once-immobile form regained some mobility.

However, his injuries were still grave. With such a small amount of medicine, it was challenging to completely heal him. The damage to his bones, meridians, and dantian remained severe. He had lost all his fighting capabilities and wouldn't stand a chance against even a three-year-old child.

Furthermore, his reiki had completely dissipated, and this medicine couldn't replenish it in the slightest.

At the moment, he couldn't concern himself with the pill. He still had numerous questions that he hoped Maria could answer for him.

So, he inquired once more, "Miss Clark, how exactly did I end up here?"

Maria smiled gently, pointing to the ring on his middle finger, and whispered, "The reason you appeared here is because you wore the ring I gave you."

Charlie glanced at the ring, furrowing his brow as he asked, "But what does that have to do with anything?"

Maria smiled knowingly and replied, "It has everything to do with it. This ring is the one that brought you to me."

Hearing her words, Charlie was astonished!

He mumbled under his breath, "Just a ring, and it transported a living person to this place?! How is that even possible?!"

Maria chuckled softly and spoke with sincerity, "Charlie, this ring possesses a remarkable power. It can transport you to the person you most want to see in your most perilous moments.

Regardless of the distance between you, as long as you think of her, the ring will instantly bring you before her, seemingly out of thin air!"

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Upon hearing Maria's words, Charlie furrowed his brows and subconsciously questioned, "How is this possible... you must be lying to me."

Charlie shook his head and responded with seriousness and candor, "If I believed what you said, and this ring can indeed transport people to others. However, when Gideon suddenly exploded earlier, my thoughts were not of you... I thought of my deceased parents."

As he spoke, Charlie couldn't help but mutter again, "It seems that in the end, my wife's image flashed through my mind. If what you said is true, then perhaps I was sent to see my wife by the ring..."

Maria pursed her lips and, with a touch of sadness, said, "Charlie, I didn't lie to you. I know that at the moment of life and death, you wouldn't have been thinking of me. However, this ring was passed down to me by my father. Before he passed away, he desired to see me the most, so the ring was bestowed upon me."

Charlie was dumbfounded upon hearing this. He hadn't anticipated that the ring possessed such magical properties!

After a brief pause, Maria continued, "My father left this ring to me, and later, in Northern Europe, I gave this ring to you..." She changed the subject and added, "However, even though I gave it to you, the ring still recognizes my father as its primary owner. So when you were in danger today, it sensed that you were in peril, and it sent you to me, just as it had done with my father before."

Charlie remained speechless, his mind grappling to comprehend the situation.

After a while, he asked in puzzlement, "If what you say is true, then this ring is truly a lifesaving artifact. Why did you give such a precious item to me?"

Maria chuckled wryly and replied, "The ring isn't a perpetual energy device. It requires a significant amount of reiki to instantaneously transport a living person across thousands of miles. Since I lack reiki, wearing the ring serves no purpose."

She looked at Charlie once more and inquired, "Charlie, I assume you infused the ring with a substantial amount of reiki, right?"

Slightly displeased, Charlie sighed, "So it drained my reiki in order to save me from danger one day..."

Suddenly, Charlie thought of something and asked Maria hastily, "But weren't you participating in military training at Aurous Hill University? I remember telling you not to leave the campus these days. Why are you here?"

Maria responded, "Two days ago, there was a thunderstorm in the suburbs. I sensed something unusual and calculated that you might encounter a calamity. So I haven't left the yard in these past two days, and I haven't allowed anyone to enter. I was afraid that you might suddenly appear while I was sleeping in the bedroom with Claudia. How would I explain that to her? Could you erase her memory again?"

The thought of potentially appearing naked in the female dormitory of Aurous Hill University made Charlie incredibly uncomfortable. He could only laugh awkwardly and express his gratitude, "So, you calculated that I would face a catastrophe and might be sent to see you by this ring, which is why you returned early and waited. I am truly grateful!"

Maria responded, "Charlie, there's no need for such courtesy." She couldn't help but speak shyly, "It's just that I calculated everything, but I never expected that you would show up while I was taking a bath..." Charlie recalled the incident and couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed.

Quickly changing the subject, he asked with suspicion, "By the way, if you lack reiki, why couldn't I erase your memory back in Northern Europe?"

Maria sighed softly and replied, "Ah... that's the point. It has evolved."

As she finished speaking, she noticed Charlie's dry lips and watched him swallow involuntarily. She swiftly asked, "Charlie, you must be thirsty, right?"

Charlie nodded slightly.

Maria giggled and said, "It just so happens that I still have the last piece of Pu'er tea cake. I've been saving it and waiting for the day when I could brew it myself for you to taste. Wait right here, Charlie!"

She added, "Miss Clark, there's no need to go through the trouble. Just pour me a glass of plain water!"

Maria stood up without looking back and said, "The tea cake I've kept is the finest Pu'er tea in the world. The Yechen cake. If you don't taste it, you will surely regret it in the future!"

Maria continued, "Besides, I'll start explaining everything you're curious about using that tea cake."

Without waiting for Charlie's response, she hurriedly retrieved her complete tea set and the cherished piece of Pu'er tea cake she had held onto for so long.

Returning to the bed, Maria carefully lit the olive charcoal in the copper stove, taking advantage of the boiling water to break apart the aged Pu'er tea cake with a delicate Pu'er tea knife.

The moment the tea leaves were exposed, Charlie caught a whiff of an extraordinary aroma he had never experienced before.

This scent was incredibly rich and mellow, with the tea cake's long period of fermentation and storage imparting a simple and rustic essence that defied description. It was refreshingly invigorating.

Charlie had observed his father drinking tea since childhood and occasionally shared a cup and a half with him. Therefore, he possessed a fair amount of knowledge about tea. However, he had never encountered such a unique tea. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that this Pu'er tea cake outshone all other Pu'er teas in its presence.

Gracefully, Maria prepared the tea by boiling the water. As soon as the tea leaves met the hot temperature, they swiftly unfurled, releasing an even stronger tea aroma that reached Charlie's nostrils, awakening his senses.

Subsequently, Maria poured the brewed tea into a small cup, offering Charlie the clear tea soup with a smile. "Charlie, give it a try."

Charlie took the cup, lifted it to his nose for a light sniff, and took a sip. The taste of the tea was incredibly rich and sweet, with a perfect harmony of aroma and flavor that widened Charlie's eyes in astonishment.

He couldn't help but sigh, "This tea is perfection itself, surpassing any knowledge I have of Pu'er tea. May I ask, Miss Clark, where did you acquire such extraordinary tea?"

Maria smiled and replied, "Charlie, this tea cake is crafted from the leaves of an ancient Pu'er tea tree known as the Mother of Pu'er Tea, dating back three hundred years. It is the progenitor of all Pu'er teas in the world. Every Pu'er tea on the market stems from it. In the past, tea farmers broke off its branches and transplanted them to different regions, giving rise to the later popularity of Pu'er tea throughout the country."

Charlie exclaimed, "So this tea truly possesses a century-old history?"

Maria nodded, "Absolutely true. However, three hundred years ago, the tree was struck by lightning and turned to charcoal. The tea you're drinking now is the last tea cake it produced in its final year. After this tea, the world will no longer experience its unique flavor."

Curiosity piqued, Charlie asked, "Did the tea seller inform you of this story?"

Maria gently shook her head and, turning around, carefully retrieved a small package. She opened it, revealing a piece of ancient lightning-struck wood.

Maria took out the lightning-struck wood and spoke softly, "Everything that lives for a long time has its own destiny, and cultivators are no exception. This tree had lived for tens of thousands of years, giving birth to countless tea plants. But it, too, had to face its own tribulations. This is what it looks like after it failed."

Charlie questioned with suspicion, "How do you know all this so clearly?"

Maria glanced at Charlie, then looked down at the lightning-struck wood in her hands, as if it was struggling. After a moment, she raised her head, meeting Charlie's gaze with her clear eyes. Her lips parted slightly as she spoke, "Because... three hundred years ago, my family resided by Heaven Lake in the southern province, and I witnessed it with my own eyes as it suffered this tragedy..."

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"You... What did you just say?" Maria's words hit Charlie like a bolt of lightning. It wasn't an exaggeration, he genuinely felt a numbing sensation, from his scalp down to his toes.

According to Maria, she had witnessed the Pu'er mother tree surviving a catastrophe three hundred years ago at the edge of Heaven Lake. Did that mean she was over three centuries old now?

Charlie found it hard to believe what he was hearing, a whirlwind of doubt swirling in his heart. Even if someone truly achieved longevity, it was usually a gradual process. People might begin their pursuit in their twenties or thirties, but it often took until their fifties, sixties, or even later to attain enlightenment.

As one delved deeper into the path, their lifespan would extend, but even the oldest monks, reaching over a hundred years, appeared no more than sixty, resembling the Marshal of the Warriors Den. If Maria were truly over three hundred years old, she should appear at least sixty or seventy, perhaps even seventy or eighty. How could she always maintain the appearance of seventeen or eighteen?

The implications were staggering and Charlie struggled to accept Maria's words.

Observing Charlie's disbelief, Maria asked nervously, "My Lord, do you think Nujia is playing a joke on you?"

Charlie instinctively nodded, then shook his head and replied, "I'm just a little shocked..."

As he spoke, curiosity took hold and he asked, "Why did you suddenly address me as 'my lord' and call yourself 'Nujia'?"

Maria laughed and explained, "In the past, it was customary for unmarried girls to address adult men as 'my lord,' and as for 'Nujia'... in every family, unmarried girls referred to themselves as 'Nujia,' which means a servant or slave even, while married women called themselves 'concubine.' Although those terms are no longer commonly used, I hadn't shared this information with you earlier, Young Master. Since we're being open and honest today, it's appropriate to use these titles."

The words "open and honest" struck Charlie, reminding him of Maria's recent state of undress. It briefly left him feeling awkward.

Sensing Charlie's discomfort, Maria quickly said to Charlie, "Please, wait a moment. I will bring something to show you!"

With those words, she rose from the bed and descended the stairs, returning with a beautifully framed scroll.

Maria approached the other side of the bed and carefully unfurled the scroll, revealing a landscape painting spanning 2.5 meters in width and 6 meters in length.

Charlie fixed his gaze on the painting, captivated by the majestic landscape unfolding before him.

The grandeur of the mountains, the Heaven Lake glistening like a mirror within the valley—the scenery on the canvas was so vivid and lifelike that Charlie was immediately drawn in. He never expected to find such profound artistic inspiration in a landscape painting. Every stroke seemed perfect and flawless, surpassing even the portrait of Marvel Bazin gifted by Mrs. Treadway. And the painting skills on display were even more remarkable.

Maria pointed to the tall, flourishing tree next to Heaven Lake in the painting, using her slender hand and said to Charlie, "My Lord, this is the Pu'er mother tree, the tea tree I mentioned. This is how it looked many years ago."

Then she directed his attention to the silhouette of a person beneath the tree and continued, "This represents my family. In the past, we would sit beneath this tea tree, enjoying tea while taking in the surrounding mountains and water."

Charlie couldn't help but ask Maria, "Did you paint this?"

Maria nodded. "I painted this scroll a few days ago, specifically for you."

Charlie was taken aback. He hadn't expected Maria to possess such remarkable painting skills. Just a while ago, his father-in-law had mentioned an upcoming painting exhibition organized by the Painting and Calligraphy Association, but they couldn't find any outstanding works. Landscape painters from all over the country were on the verge of exploding with frustration!

In that moment, Maria suddenly grasped Charlie's right hand, the one adorned with a ring, intertwining her fingers with his. She looked at him expectantly and said, "I dare you to take me there, to witness it with your own eyes. Let us see what it was like three hundred years ago!"

As if understanding Maria's words, the ring, which had remained motionless, suddenly emitted a reiki that enveloped both of them.

In the next instant, Charlie felt his vision blur. Held by Maria, he passed through an invisible gate and a rush of cool wind greeted his face. The scene before him sprang to life.

Now, he stood amidst the vast mountains of the southern province. The crystal-clear blue sky, the vibrant greenery, and the billowing white clouds were within arm's reach. Countless varieties of flowers adorned the surroundings, and the surface of Heaven Lake reflected the azure sky, fluffy clouds, and lush mountains. The breathtaking beauty defied adequate description.

Charlie scrutinized the scene, appreciating the image of Maria, sitting at a small square table beneath the Pucha mother tree, dressed in a sky-blue gown with narrow sleeves and a horse-face skirt. Nearby, tea farmers plucked tea leaves from the relatively low tea trees. Before descending the mountain with their baskets full of tea leaves, they respectfully bowed to the mother tree and greeted Maria as "Miss."

Maria recognized each of them, responding to their greetings with a smile, inquiring about their well-being.

Approaching her, the tea farmers would offer fresh tea leaves, which Maria would gently pinch between her fingers, bringing them to her nose for a sniff. Then, she would select another piece, placing it in her mouth to savor its flavor. With expertise, she would grade the tea leaves, offering advice on the appropriate processing techniques drying, airing, autoclaving and storing for that batch.

Grateful for her guidance, each tea farmer would express their thanks before bidding farewell.

For the first time, Charlie witnessed the perfect harmony between the ancients and nature.

Just as he immersed himself in the moment, the world around him transformed from bright daylight to a night cloaked in dark clouds.

Violent winds and torrential rain lashed at the Pucha tree, yet it stood firm, unyielding against the assault.

The wind intensified, breaking numerous branches and leaves, violently shaking the tree's trunk.

In the midst of the tree's fierce resistance, a thunderbolt crackled through the sky, striking the Pucha tree with a deafening bang. Instantly, flames engulfed the tree.

Undeterred by the raging wind and rain, the fire burned ever brighter.

After about an incense stick's worth of time, the once-vibrant mother tree turned to charcoal, devoid of life.

As if by agreement, the storm abruptly ceased, and the dark clouds dispersed, revealing a full moon above Heaven Lake. Its pale light cast an eerie glow upon the earth.

Beneath the moonlight, a girl in a coir raincoat and bamboo hat, carrying a basket on her back, slowly approached the mother tree step by step.

That girl was Maria.

Removing her rain hat, she picked up a charred tree trunk from the ground, holding it in her hands, and bowed to the mother tree three times.

Without looking back, she placed the lightning-struck wood in her basket and disappeared into the mountains.

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When Maria's figure vanished atop the mountain, Charlie's consciousness snapped back to reality from the depths of the southern province.

As he opened his eyes, he wholeheartedly believed in Maria's words. He believed that this girl had lived from three hundred years ago until the present.

At that moment, he finally understood why he had always sensed that there was something extraordinary about Maria, yet couldn't quite put his finger on it. She appeared to be seventeen or eighteen years old, but possessed knowledge of the esoteric hexagrams that Master Exeor couldn't grasp even at a hundred years old.

At the tender age of twelve, she was pursued by the Warriors Den and engaged in a battle of wits and courage. And at the same time she was seventeen or eighteen, she somehow coincidentally appeared before him in Aurous Hill after leaving Northern Europe. Such uncanny occurrences were rare in the world.

Moreover, this seemingly seventeen or eighteen-year-old girl possessed extraordinary talent in painting landscapes, surpassing any painter in history within seconds...

Now that she had revealed her secret, all of these questions were answered with a plausible explanation.

Her exceptional painting skills were the result of three hundred years of dedicated practice, surpassing the abilities of any other artist. The same applied to fortune-telling.

Master Exeor was only a hundred years old, while Maria had surpassed the three-hundred-year mark. The disparity between them was evident.

Simultaneously, Charlie noticed a change in Maria's demeanor.

For some inexplicable reason, with every move she made, Charlie felt a sense of hidden beauty, as if the lotus flower itself paled in comparison.

Her use of the archaic term 'Nujia' that ancient Chinese women used to address themselves gave Charlie the impression that Maria was like a kitten baring its soft belly, revealing all her secrets and vulnerabilities in front of him.

Observing Charlie's continued state of shock, Maria apologized, saying, "Please forgive me, My Lord. I didn't mean to startle you, but when you asked, I couldn't lie. I could only speak the truth..."

Charlie regained some composure, looking at Maria intently as he asked each word deliberately, "Have you traveled from over three hundred years ago, or have you lived from over three hundred years ago until today?"

Maria responded, "My Lord, my family has lived until today."

Charlie was astounded, mumbling, "Three hundred years ago, you witnessed the tea tree's calamity in the southern province... Then... How old are you now?"

Maria solemnly replied, "Master, my family was born in the second year of plenty during the Southern Ming Dynasty, which coincided with the third year of the Warriors Den, or 1646 in the Gregorian calendar."

Charlie's head spun with dizziness.

Considering her age, Maria could be considered his ancestor and the timeline recorded in the Wade family tree might not predate her! In astonishment, Charlie exclaimed, "In 1646... So... You... You are nearly four hundred years old?"

Bowing slightly, she said with utmost respect, "My lord, there is no need to address me as 'You.' Simply calling me Maria is sufficient."

"No..." Charlie spoke earnestly, "You are nearly four hundred years old... Just calling you Maria would be an understatement. It's more appropriate to call you an old ancestor..."

Maria smiled and replied seriously, "In the eyes of this Nujia, I am merely a girl who can never grow up, not an ancient witch. Though I have indeed lived for nearly four hundred years, I still remain seventeen years old..."

"Uh..." Charlie found himself in an awkward position, torn between two conflicting thoughts.

One voice said, "She's right. Even though she has lived for nearly four hundred years, she has always appeared as a seventeen or eighteen-year-old girl..."

Yet another voice argued, "But she is almost four hundred years old! Can you even comprehend the concept of four hundred years? Charlie, you haven't even reached thirty!"

Charlie tried to dismiss these thoughts and continued questioning Maria, "You..."

As soon as the word 'you' slipped out, he noticed a trace of displeasure flicker across Maria's beautiful brows, prompting him to quickly amend his words, "No, what I meant to say was..."

Maria's discontent dissipated instantly, replaced by a sweet smile as she asked shyly, "What did you want to say, My Lord? I'm all ears."

Charlie asked in amazement, "How can you live for four hundred years? How can you still look so young? Even if you possess exceptional reiki, it's impossible to retain your youthful appearance..."

Maria explained hastily, "Young Master, you've misunderstood. It's not a matter of rejuvenation. Since I was seventeen, my appearance and body have remained unchanged for over three hundred years."

Charlie was even more astonished, blurting out, "This... How is that possible? You don't possess extraordinary reiki and even if you did, it couldn't preserve your face indefinitely..."

Maria replied, "Since my family has delved into cultivation, may I ask if you've heard of the Eternal Green Pill?"

Shaking his head, Charlie confessed, "I've never heard of it... What does this elixir do?"

Maria answered with seriousness, "Upon consuming the Eternal Green Pill, one's lifespan can reach five hundred years. Within those five hundred years, one's appearance remains eternally youthful. That's precisely what I've taken. I've only lived until today because of it."

Charlie's eyes widened. "Does such a miraculous pill truly exist?"

"Of course," Maria confirmed, casting a solemn glance at her late father's spiritual tablet positioned nearby. She said earnestly, "Between the slave family and the Young Master, my late father has sworn to never deceive or conceal anything. Previous concealment was a last resort and I hope you can forgive me."

Charlie followed her gaze and read the eight characters inscribed on the spiritual tablet, "The spirit seat of my late father, Lucius Clark."

At that moment, Charlie harbored no doubt regarding Maria's words. Suppressing the shock that coursed through him, he inquired, "Did your father give you the Eternal Green Pill that you took?"

She responded, "Indeed, the Eternal Green Pill was bestowed upon my family by my father before he passed away."

Charlie was even more surprised. "If your father had the Eternal Green Pill, why didn't he consume it himself? With it, he could have avoided death. Can you explain why?"

Then, Charlie added, "By the way, please try to use 'I' when referring to yourself as much as possible. I understand that you come from a slave family or use the term 'Nujia', but as a modern person born in modern day China, I find it hard to adjust."

"Alright, I'll do my best," Maria nodded, her expression tinged with sadness. "Regarding your previous question, My Lord, more than three hundred years ago, when I was truly seventeen years old, I was embroidering in my chamber in the southern province. Suddenly, my father, who was thousands of miles away, appeared before me. He was gravely injured, much like your current state... Hastily, I arranged for my father's temporary recovery. It was then that my father presented me with an unknown pill, instructing me not to question, but to consume it obediently. I was unaware of the elixir's effects, but I dared not disobey my father's command. I took the pill and only afterward did my father inform me that it was the Eternal Green Pill and explained its purpose..."

As she spoke, her eyes grew red and she continued softly, "As for why my father didn't take it himself, but instead gave it to me, he stated that as a father, he couldn't bear to witness the day when he would see me grow old and perish before his eyes..."

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"My father also said that if there were a medicine that allowed a father to live forever and witness his daughter's gradual aging and death, then that medicine would not be a miracle elixir, but a poison..." Maria's voice trembled with a mix of sorrow and anger.

"He insisted on dying in front of me, so he could find peace. I am still young, unmarried and have no concerns for the future. After taking the Eternal Green Pill, I can live a fulfilling life of five hundred years..."

Charlie's mind suddenly raced with a thought and he blurted out, "You mentioned that you are over three hundred years old, so what about a child..."

Maria gave Charlie a stern look, her anger evident as she retorted, "My Lord, although I have lived for over three hundred years, Nujia is still an innocent girl who has never been married... Besides, for many years, my family has been pursued relentlessly, forcing us to constantly change our identities and locations. How could we have children..."

Charlie quickly wore an apologetic expression and stammered, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. It's my fault."

Maria spoke softly, "My father specifically instructed me that to avoid forming too many attachments, I must remain alone for the first four hundred years. Marriage was not allowed..."

Curiosity piqued, Charlie asked, "Why?"

Maria explained, "Because the effects of the Eternal Green Pill prevented my parents from growing old during the first four hundred years. It is only in the last hundred years that they begin to age gradually... If I were to marry during the first four hundred years, I would have to endure the heartbreak of watching my children grow old and perish. Only after that time period would I start to experience the natural aging process."

Charlie nodded, understanding the pain a parent would feel watching their children age while remaining eternally young. He realized that Maria's father had made a wise decision in giving her the Evergreen Pill and instructing her not to marry for the first four hundred years.

Curiosity still lingering, Charlie inquired further, "What happened to your father then?"

Maria sighed, "At that time, my father suffered severe injuries with no other means of recovery. He had to stay bedridden for recuperation, but luckily his life was not in immediate danger. If given enough time, he might have been able to recover..."

After a momentary pause, Maria's expression turned somber. "However, my father had informed me that the person who had injured him would arrive in the southern province within half a

month at the earliest. He urged me to take the ring and leave home quickly to avoid being discovered. But I refused to abandon him..."

Her voice choked with emotion and tears welled up in Maria's eyes. "On the seventh day after sending my father back to the southern province with the ring's help, he took advantage of my absence when I went out to buy medicine. He left behind a letter and severed his own meridians, ending his life..."

Two hot tears rolled down her cheeks and Maria hastily wiped them away with her sleeves. Her voice trembled as she continued, "After burying my father, I left home and embarked on a journey that lasted over three hundred years..."

Charlie exclaimed, "You have been pursued for over three hundred years? By whom? The Warriors Den?"

Maria's expression turned complex as she replied, "Actually, the Warriors Den was founded by my father and his sworn brother and classmate, Cedric Mirren, when the enemy army attacking the region entered the capital. The two brothers established the Warriors Den to expel the Tartars and fight against their rule. However, after my father's death, the Warriors Den underwent a drastic transformation and its name became unrelated to its original purpose. The ones who hunted and pursued me were the later members of the Warriors Den and their self-proclaimed lords."

Charlie interjected, "The Lord who emerged after the Warriors Den, could it be Cedric Mirren?"

Maria shook her head, "No, it was Cedric's younger sister, Morgana Mirren!"

Chapter 5407

"Morgana Mirren?" Charlie's eyes widened in astonishment. "The hero who shattered one of the great dynasties of that era is a woman?"

"Yes," Maria confirmed with a determined expression, her teeth gritted. "Not only is she a woman, but she is also the most formidable individual in the world, a woman!"

Surprised, Charlie asked, "But isn't she your father's younger brother's sister? Hasn't she lived for three or four hundred years?"

Maria pondered for a moment and replied, "Morgana Mirren is one year younger than my father and twenty years older than me. She is now four hundred years old."

"Then she must have also taken the Eternal Green Pill?" Charlie speculated.

"Of course," Maria said, her voice filled with emotion. "The Eternal Green Pill was the shared treasure of my father and Morgana. Originally, there was one pill and one set of cultivation

techniques left for each of them. They were meant to carry on the fight against the Warriors Den. My father kept them safe, hoping that one day, when the opportunity arose, I could obtain the pills and exercises he left behind. It is said that there is a secret within them that grants a thousand years of life. Morgana, severely injuring my father, desired to take away his ring and the Eternal Green Pill. In a critical moment, the ring was sent to me by my father, along with his life-saving pill made from his own blood..."

Maria paused, sighing deeply, before composing herself. "I suppose it's better to start from the establishment of the Warriors Den and explain everything in detail. Otherwise, it might be difficult for you to comprehend."

Nodding eagerly, Charlie replied, "Please, do tell me."

Taking a sip of tea, Maria spoke eloquently, her words flowing smoothly. "My father, Lucius Clark, was born in the year 1622 in the Gregorian calendar. Our ancestors initially served as officials in Old Aurous Hill, later relocating to Eastcliff alongside the Emperor and his family..."

"However, during the late Ming Dynasty, when the eunuchs held power and turmoil plagued the land, the Clark family's status gradually declined. By the time my father reached adulthood and married my mother, we had lost our family's official position. There was a chance to revive the family business, but with an enemy army's invasion, my father joined the resistance, adopting the name Lucius Clark and co-founding the Warriors Den with Cedric Mirren. They pledged to drive the Manchus out of our land. Despite being distantly related to the traitor William Saint, my father felt no kinship with him. He was determined to fight against the Warriors Den and restore the Ming Dynasty."

"From then on, my father and mother traveled together, battling the opposing army. When I was born, my mother's health had already deteriorated due to the hardships. She passed away when I was less than a month old. Given the intense war at the frontlines, my father sent me to my grandmother's house in the southern province. I grew up there."

"In 1650, as the opposing army advanced south to attack Hillcrest, the Southern Ming army retreated and the Warriors Den, fighting alongside the Southern Ming, suffered heavy losses. My father's dear friend, Cedric Mirren, died in the battle in Hillcrest that year."

"Cedric entrusted his younger sister, Morgana, to my father before her death. However, at that time, my father and others were cornered by the enemy with nowhere to run. Forced to find refuge, my father took Morgana to hide in the Shiwan Mountain. They faced countless perils there, nearly losing their lives. Fortunately, they were saved by a hermit monk residing in the mountains."

"The monk, a Chinese like us, witnessed my father and Morgana being pursued by the Tartar soldiers and felt compassion for their plight. He took them in as disciples and they stayed in the

mountains, cultivating their skills. In the year 1658 in the Gregorian calendar, the enemy army launched a multi-pronged attack on the southern and southwest provinces..."

"However, their abilities were limited and facing a formidable enemy, along with the assistance of traitors like Will Saint, who aided the enemy in oppressing the people, the Southern Ming suffered a major defeat in the southern province the following year, the tragic event later known as the Southern Ming tragedy..."

"In the years that followed, my father and Morgana rallied righteous individuals who were determined to fight against the enemy and restore the Ming Dynasty. In 1662, the traitor William Saint killed the Emperor in the southern province. It was a devastating blow. The enemy seized control of all territories, leaving my father and Morgana with no choice but to plan their escape to Taiwan, where they would join forces with others to continue the fight against the Tartar armies."

"However, upon returning to the Shiwan Mountain, in 1663, their Master sensed his impending demise. He made arrangements for his own funeral and presented two Eternal Green Pills to my father and Morgana, hoping that one day they could reclaim our land. My father and Morgana were devastated by the Emperor's death and the loss of their territories. In desperation, they decided to return to Shiwan Mountain, find their Master and continue cultivating in seclusion for a few more years to avoid attention and strengthen their abilities."

"However, in the second year of their return, 1663 in the Gregorian calendar, their Master, foreseeing his own demise, arranged his funeral. He also entrusted my father and Morgana Mirren with the secret prescription for the Millenium Return Pill. Then, he handed them the ring you hold in your hand. It was Morgana's attempt to claim the ring that led to the sudden attack on my father..."

"When my father was critically injured, the ring whisked him away to the southern province from Shiwan Mountain and it was only after tricking me into consuming the Eternal Green Pill that he revealed everything to me."

Charlie was utterly stunned. No wonder the man on the spiritual throne was called Lucius Clark. He was a true national hero who had never forgotten his original intentions for family and country. He stood firm against the temptation of five hundred years of longevity. Such a character could only be described as a saint.

Realizing this, Charlie couldn't help but ask Maria, "So, Morgana Mirren knows that you have taken the Eternal Green Pill and has been relentlessly pursuing you. Is it because of this ring?"

Maria nodded, her eyes filled with determination. "Yes, Morgana desires this ring above all else. Their Master once informed my father that no matter how many Eternal Green Pills one consumes, it can only extend life up to five hundred years. However, the Millenium Return Pill

can prolong one's lifespan to a thousand years! And the prescription for that pill is likely hidden within this ring."

Charlie's eyes widened in amazement. "So, there truly exists a pill in this world that can grant people thousands of years of life?"

Maria smiled knowingly. "It does indeed. Let me tell you something fascinating. The Master was born in the first year of Linde during the Tang Dynasty, precisely in the year 664 in the Gregorian calendar. And his death occurred in 1663, exactly a thousand years later, with no additional years. He lived a full millennium!"

"The first year of Linde..." Charlie muttered to himself, frowning his brows. "Why does that year sound so familiar?"

With a gentle smile, Maria replied, "Perhaps you were exceptionally knowledgeable about history during your school days?"

Charlie shook his head, a realization dawning upon him. "No... The first year of Linde I feel like I've recently come across that time point."

Suddenly, it struck him, and he asked excitedly, "Miss Clark, do you think... that Master's name was Morvel Bazin?"

Chapter 5408

Maria was taken aback by the name Charlie blurted out.

Tonight, Charlie had been constantly surprising her. From the very beginning, she had maintained a calm demeanor, but when she spoke about her late father, a tinge of sadness emerged.

However, when Charlie mentioned the name Morvel Bazin, Maria was utterly shocked. She couldn't help but exclaim, "How does the Young Master know the name of the Master? It has been over three hundred years since his passing. During the thousand years of his life, he secluded himself in the mountains, with only a few people aware of his existence."

Charlie couldn't help but sigh, "Morvel Bazin, originally named Sharad, was born in Golbare, in the first year of Linde during the Tang Dynasty. After reaching an advanced stage in his cultivation, he named himself Heavenly Lord and changed his name to Morvel Bazin..."

Maria became even more astonished, "My Lord... how do you know so much about Lord Bazin? My father once mentioned that Lord Bazin spent the majority of his life inquiring about the mysteries of the world and very few knew anything about him. Almost four hundred years have passed. Where did you acquire such knowledge, my lord?"

Charlie sighed, "Morvel Bazin, before reaching five hundred years of age, resided in seclusion in southern Donguil. By chance, he saved the ancestor of the Treadway family, who possessed two phoenix vine bracelets. To repay the favor, he allowed the Treadway family ancestor to keep one bracelet. However, when he was nearly 160 years old, he bid farewell to the Treadway family ancestor, feeling that he needed to venture out to find a way to extend his life. It is said that during that time, Morvel Bazin likely refined the Eternal Green Pill. Unexpectedly, upon his return home, he discovered that the Treadway family ancestor had passed away just three days prior..."

As Charlie spoke, he mumbled to himself, "If the Treadway family ancestor had lived three more days, perhaps he would have been the one to obtain the Eternal Green Pill..."

In horror, Maria asked, "Who is this Treadway family ancestor you're referring to?"

Charlie explained, "He was a nominal disciple that Morvel Bazin accepted during the first five hundred years of his cultivation. However, that person lacked talent in cultivation. The relationship between them, in my opinion, is more akin to a combination of Master and servant, adoptive father and son and profound friendship."

Charlie then recounted how he had accidentally rescued the Treadway family's Lady from Mexico, acquiring the phoenix vine in the process. He subsequently returned the item to the Treadway family and gradually learned about Morvel Bazin's life, sharing the details with Maria without holding back.

Upon hearing all of this, Maria was left speechless with shock. After a while, she murmured, "Such a coincidence exists in this world. The Young Master's life experiences truly surpass those of others..."

Charlie added, "Now it seems that Lord Morvel's refinement of the Eternal Green Pill is merely a matter of time. However, relying solely on the Eternal Green Pill, his life could only extend 500 years. But if he lived through the late Ming and early Quintong Dynasties, until 1663, it proves that he later refined the Millenium Return Pill."

Speaking of this, Charlie couldn't help but sigh, "It's a pity that such a powerful Master ultimately met his fate at the threshold of a thousand years of longevity. It seems that changing one's destiny against the heavens is not an easy task."

Maria nodded and remarked, "Even the Pu'er Tea Mother Tree existed in the world for over ten thousand years before it faced catastrophe. According to my father, although the Master lived a thousand years, in the end, it was just the limit of his lifespan. In the eyes of the heavens, even a thousand years is far from reaching the pinnacle of tribulation."

Charlie chuckled self-deprecatingly, nodding in agreement. "In other words, if one lives a thousand years, it's inconsequential in the eyes of the heavens. It's not worth the heaven's thunder."

Maria nodded slightly. "That seems to be the case."

After a moment, she couldn't help but sigh, "However, the Young Master and the Master did have a chance encounter. Although the Master had been cultivating for over three hundred years by the time the Young Master was born, you happened to meet during the first five hundred years and there is some connection during the next five hundred years..."

As Maria spoke, she suddenly asked curiously, "May I ask with boldness, how did you enter the path of cultivation? Which Master introduced you to it?"

Seeing that Maria had revealed all of her past and secrets, Charlie also stopped concealing anything and replied, "I stumbled upon an ancient book called the 'Apocalyptic Book,' which contains a wealth of knowledge on cultivation. I entered the path of cultivation through that ancient book."

Maria furrowed her brows tightly. " 'The Apocalyptic Book?' Nujia has never heard of it."

"Really?" Charlie expressed slight disappointment. "I thought that the 'Apocalyptic Book' might have been written by Morvel Bazin..."

Maria said, "My father never mentioned the 'Apocalyptic Book'... I have never personally met Lord Bazin and everything I know about him is based on what my father shared with me."

Charlie was curious and asked, "Have you never seen Morvel Bazin in person?"

"No," Maria replied. "The first time my father returned from the mountains, the slave family heard him speak about his ancestor. My father even attempted to teach the slave family reiki, but it is true that I lack the aptitude for cultivation. I couldn't enter the world of cultivators. If the slave family could Master reiki, perhaps there would have been a chance to meet the Lord Morvel and witness his extraordinary presence."

Suddenly, Charlie remembered something and smiled. "The portrait that the Lady Treadway gave me is kept at the Elys-Champ Hot Springs Villa. If you're interested, I can show it to you later."

Maria expressed fascination. "For so many years, the slave family had no idea what the Master looked like. Seeing his portrait would fulfill a long-held wish."

Charlie nodded gently and asked her, "By the way, although you don't possess reiki, you have immunity against my memory erasure techniques. That must be the effect of the Eternal Green Pill, right?"

"Yes," Maria smiled lightly. "After taking the Eternal Green Pill, although I cannot cultivate reiki, I have the ability to perceive it. I can sense the aura from my father, the tree from back then and even the aura from the Pu'er Tea Mother Tree. Moreover, during the incident in Northern Europe, when you attempted to erase my family's memories, I discovered that your aura-based methods had no effect on me. I can resist them."

Since the moment Maria had addressed herself as Maria in front of him, Charlie suspected that his methods would have no effect on her. However, he hadn't anticipated that Maria would possess such a keen perception of auras. He was genuinely amazed and asked, "You mentioned earlier that the Pu'er Tea Mother Tree also possessed reiki. Is that true? How can a tree possess reiki?"

"It's true," Maria replied earnestly. "The Pu'er Tea Mother Tree not only possessed reiki but was extremely powerful. Unfortunately, after it was struck by heavenly thunder, all of its reiki vanished."

Charlie was astounded. He couldn't help but glance at the lightning-struck wood that Maria had taken out from the corner of his eye and silently think to himself, "The lightning-struck wood Jasmine gave me back then was formed when the heart of the Blood Dragon Tree was struck by lightning and it was refined into thunderstruck wood. Its power is remarkable. Maria's lightning-struck wood comes from the ten-thousand-year-old Pu'er tea tree. Moreover, it failed to overcome heavenly tribulation and was struck by heavenly lightning. If it can be used to refine thunderstruck wood, its power would be even more incredible, wouldn't it?"

Chapter 5409

Charlie wanted to have Maria's Lightning Struck Wood, but he couldn't bring himself to ask for it. After all, it had been a cherished possession of Maria for over three hundred years, holding a profound significance for her.

Yet, Charlie understood that there was no need to rush. Even if Maria were to bestow the Lightning Struck Wood upon him, he lacked the expertise to refine it. With this in mind, he gazed at Maria and posed a question that had been burning in his curious mind, "Miss Clark, I am genuinely intrigued. How have you managed to survive for over three centuries?"

Maria replied, "As I am not proficient in reiki and am no match for Morgana, Nujia has spent the past three hundred years constantly evading pursuit. However, the first two hundred years were relatively uneventful. During that time, transportation was arduous and communication was underdeveloped. It was not easy for Morgana to track me down."

With a thoughtful tilt of her head, Maria reminisced and recounted, "After my father's funeral, as a young and powerless individual, I roamed through various remote locations in the southern province for decades. To avoid arousing suspicion, my family would settle in one place for five to eight years before moving on. It was during that period that my family developed a fondness for Pu'er tea."

"While traveling to different places, we took the opportunity to learn and experiment with the art of making Pu'er tea. Eventually, we resided by Heaven Lake in the southern province for a few years, where I taught the local tea farmers how to enhance the quality of Pu'er tea."

"After witnessing the tribulation of the Pu'er mother plant, my family felt as though we had lost our spiritual sustenance. Following decades of evading capture, we managed to accumulate some wealth and acquire valuable experience in survival. We settled elsewhere for a few years before it was time to move on. That's when we left the southern province," Maria continued, her voice resonating with the weight of countless experiences.

"Leaving the southern province, my family dared not venture back to the mainland. Instead, we journeyed southward and further to Myanmar, dwelling in several countries within the Myanmar region. Finally, we resided in Penang for a while," she added.

"Later, my family embarked on a journey to Brunei and Indonesia, followed by a boat trip from Indonesia to India and finally traversing the Middle East to reach the Ottoman Empire. With the advent of the Industrial Revolution in Europe, my family was astounded by the rapid advancements in science, technology and academia. We began traveling to European countries, assuming different identities and studying in numerous universities. But our time in Europe was cut short by the British invasion of China. Witnessing the hypocritical actions of the so-called British gentlemen, who colonized and flooded the world with opium, instigating the First Opium War, ignited a deep-rooted hatred within me. Hence, I left England and sailed to North America," Maria explained.

"However, my family struggled to adapt to the environment in North America. It was a lawless land where white settlers incessantly seized territories, enslaved Black individuals and mercilessly slaughtered the indigenous population. Bloodshed and chaos permeated every corner. Consequently, we boarded a merchant ship and ventured to Japan once the Civil War began," she added.

"In Japan, during a phase of rapid cultural influence and assimilation, I observed the evolving national landscape. Intrigued by Europe's accelerated progress after the Industrial Revolution and witnessing Japan's remarkable transformation during the Meiji Restoration, I yearned to return to China and contribute to my homeland. Hence, I traveled from Japan to Hong Kong Island, dedicating myself to the Azure Society," Maria disclosed.

Charlie was left speechless, utterly flabbergasted by Maria's account. He had assumed she spent her years evading capture in remote, inaccessible locations, never suspecting that she had traversed the globe, perpetually at the epicenter of world affairs.

Moreover, Maria's desire to aid China, aligned with Lucius Clark's values, demonstrated that the apple hadn't fallen far from the tree.

Unfazed, Maria resumed her narrative, "Upon arriving at Hong Kong Island, my family established contact with the Azure Society through previous connections. However, just as we were about to meet them, we were ambushed by remnants of the Warriors Den. We barely managed to escape with our lives."

Curiosity getting the better of him, Charlie inquired, "Was the secret leaked at that time?"

Maria nodded solemnly and expressed, "My family was unaware that Morgana's agents had already begun infiltrating the Azure Society."

Continuing her account, Maria revealed, "Following that narrow escape, my family realized that Morgana's influence and schemes extended far beyond Asia, permeating the entire world. As a result, we sought refuge in the relatively underdeveloped regions of South America."

"On the brink of the First World War, upon hearing of the last emperor's abdication, my family rejoiced so intensely that we couldn't close our eyes for three days. Filled with excitement, we took the risk and returned to China, only to encounter the September 18 Incident," she conveyed.

"After the September 18 Incident, sensing a sudden shift in the situation up north, my family returned to Eastcliff," Maria continued.

"With the advent of the July 7 Incident in 1937, as Japanese fascists launched an all-out invasion of China, coupled with the responsibility of caring for certain children, it was impossible for us to flee the country during the war. Therefore, we had to take them back to the United States, only leaving after the conclusion of World War II," she revealed, surprising Charlie.

Unable to contain his astonishment, Charlie exclaimed, "You've been constantly on the run, yet you managed to care for children as well?"

Maria assumed a serious expression as she explained, "Throughout our years of travel and evasion, enduring hardships alone was truly arduous. At times, I suffered injuries, even breaking a leg, with no one to offer a helping hand. Consequently, my family began adopting abandoned infants and displaced orphans one after another. We raised them, provided them with education and taught them to read and study. When we were in a particular region, the children accompanied us. For those who displayed negative character traits, we left them with some

funds and entrusted them to suitable individuals before moving on from the area," she continued, her voice filled with compassion.

"As for those who stayed by my side, as I believed their character to be sound, I would reveal the secret of my immortality at the appropriate time. After all, I had raised them since childhood. Even without divulging the secret, their suspicions would arise due to my unchanging appearance," Maria stated.

"Throughout our travels, my family amassed considerable wealth and acquired various assets worldwide. Therefore, once these children passed certain tests and grew up, my family would provide them with wealth, opportunities and even entrust them with businesses. Over time, they flourished in their own endeavors," she elucidated.

Charlie, bewildered, questioned, "Are all of them your adopted sons and daughters?"

Maria shook her head, replying, "Not entirely. I deliberately maintained a clear boundary to avoid excessive sorrow when they passed away. Since their youth, they have referred to me as 'Miss Nujia,' and even when they reach old age, they still address me as 'Miss Nujia.'"

Chapter 5410

Charlie's surprise compelled him to inquire, "Back then in Northern Europe, you were accompanied by an elderly man whom you called Grandpa. But in reality, he was an orphan you had raised, wasn't he?"

Maria smiled gently and responded, "The old man you're referring to is Marius Cross. He was the last abandoned baby my family adopted in Eastcliff after the July 7th Incident, just before we left for the United States."

She paused briefly before continuing, "In fact, most of these children, once they reach their twenties, establish themselves with the support of my family. The assets they receive are presented as entrusted care, but in reality, they are gifts from my family. I couldn't even begin to fathom the extent of wealth I've bestowed upon them."

"Only a select few, like Marius, share a deep bond with my family and willingly stay by our side. I lack self-defense capabilities and require someone to look after me during our nomadic existence. Apart from Marius, there was also an American girl born in 1942 who followed my family. Sadly, she passed away from cancer a few years ago."

"The owner of this house, who was adopted by my family prior to the July 7th Incident when he was just a baby, was later taken to the United States. He attended Yale University and upon graduation, I allowed him to oversee some of my businesses in Southeast Asia. He has

managed them remarkably well and has become the wealthiest man in the region," Maria revealed.

She continued, "Another adopted child spent years studying in the United States before returning in 1963 to contribute to the motherland. Subsequently, he experienced considerable success in the following years."

Maria paused, then continued, "After coming to the United States, my family also adopted a few orphans. However, as technology advanced and the Warriors Den's power grew stronger after World War II, we became more cautious. We spent decades in island nations in the South Pacific and Indian Ocean, continuing our adoptions. A few years ago, we journeyed to Northern Europe, where we finally encountered you..."

Charlie listened intently to Maria's narrative, his heart stirred by a whirlwind of emotions. Maria downplayed her experience of over three hundred years, but within that modesty lay countless miles of arduous journeys, incredible transformations of the world and untold trials and tribulations. The realization that Maria had endured an extraordinarily tumultuous existence over three centuries left Charlie in awe. Her past must have been rife with challenges and hardships.

After Maria finished speaking, observing Charlie's prolonged silence, she smiled and asked, "My Lord, now that you know my family has lived for so long, do you envy us?"

Charlie gazed at her, gently shaking his head and sincerely replied, "I don't envy you. In fact, I feel a sense of empathy..."

"Pain?" Maria was taken aback, questioning, "Does the Young Master feel sorry for my family?"

"Yes..." Charlie looked at her, nodding subtly.

Tears welled up in Maria's eyes as she quickly turned away, mustering a forced smile. "What's there to be sorry for? If I were to share my family's story with outsiders, countless individuals would be envious to the point of despair... Yet, even as she lifted her gaze toward the ceiling, tears streamed down her cheeks uncontrollably."

Frantically wiping away her tears, her eyes still glistening, Maria asked with a smile, "By the way, why do you feel sorry for my family?"

Charlie, his heart heavy with sympathy, explained, "At the age of one hundred, I was already overwhelmed. Now, hearing that a young girl like you has lived alone in this ever-changing world for nearly four hundred years, including the most turbulent years of human society, the countless ups and downs and pain you must have endured... It truly breaks my heart."

At that moment, Maria looked at Charlie, yearning to cry in front of him.

For over three centuries, she had never cherished her longevity. Instead, she had grown weary of a life spent in hiding. Countless times, she had contemplated ending her own existence, only to abandon the idea because her father had sacrificed his life for her longevity. He had desperately wished for his beloved daughter to live a long life, believing that even a hundred years would not be enough, five hundred years would be ideal. But her father's life had been tragically cut short at the age of forty-one.

As a result, Maria gritted her teeth and persevered through countless moments on the verge of collapse. However, her heart had long been tormented and devastated by immortality.

Charlie truly empathized with the young girl before him, even though she was nearly four hundred years old.

At that moment, Maria sighed, her eyes reddened and in a choked-up voice, she expressed, "Thank you, Master, for your compassion..."

She continued, "My family has thoroughly investigated the Young Master's past and I am aware of your deep-seated hatred for the Warriors Den. If you are willing, from this day forth, my family will do everything in our power to assist you in avenging Morgana. By doing so, my family can finally bring an end to our three hundred years of fugitive life and live a normal existence..."

Charlie nodded lightly, resolute as he calmly declared, "Miss Clark, fear not. Morgana has violated the laws of heaven and killed my parents. She has attempted to exterminate my grandparents and our entire family. I shall make her pay for this vengeance with her own blood! Morgana possesses formidable strength. Just consider how Gideon admonished the heroic spirit as he self-destructed. That powerful energy he released was all the remaining means of a hero. That alone surpasses my abilities, not to mention her three hundred years of additional experience and expertise in all matters. I cannot be certain whether I can defeat her," Charlie confided.

Maria reassured him, "Young Master, do not be disheartened. Although Morgana may be more powerful than you and has lived over three hundred years, she does not possess the same opportunity as the Young Master. What's more, my family once consulted the hexagrams to discover your whereabouts and they revealed that you possess the spirit of a dragon entering the sea. From this, it is evident that you are the son of a dragon. Even if Morgana were to live another thousand years, the Young Master will ultimately surpass her!"

Charlie sighed, wondering, "But how many years will it take?"

Maria looked at Charlie, her tone resolute as she asserted, "Regardless of how many years it may take, my family has always believed that the Young Master will triumph over your enemies. Our only wish is to witness that day with our own eyes!"

Charlie, raising his right hand with some effort, glanced at the ring on his finger and chuckled wryly. "If Morgana doesn't possess this ring, she will only have a hundred years left to live. If I can't eliminate her within this century, she will perish from old age..."

Maria laughed and responded, "My lord, there is no need to burden yourself excessively. Even if Morgana were to die of old age, it would be too merciful for her. I must personally end her life!"

With determination burning in his eyes, Charlie added, "No! If Morgana dies a natural death from old age, it would be far too lenient. I will be the one to kill her with my own hands!"

Suddenly, a realization struck him and he blurted out, "By the way, when Gideon self-destructed, I saw a woman hiding nearby. She had remained concealed until the moment of the explosion and she possessed reiki. She may be a Master, perhaps even another Marshal from the Warriors Den. She was approximately ten feet away from the epicenter of the explosion. There is a chance she may still be alive!"

Chapter 5411

"A woman?"

Upon hearing Charlie's words, Maria exclaimed, "My Lord, do you remember what that woman looked like?"

"In her thirties, she seemed quite attractive," Charlie recalled.

Maria nodded, confirming, "That must be Lady Zeba, one of the Four Marshals of the Warriors Den!"

Surprised, Charlie asked, "You're familiar with the Four Marshals of the Warriors Den?"

"My family has some knowledge," Maria explained. "Although only Morgana remains from the Warriors Den, there are still some descendants from my father's tribe. They have tried to inform me, so I have gained some understanding of the inner workings of the Warriors Den... Though the Warriors Den is officially led by Morgana, the true power lies in the hands of the Five Military Governor's Mansions. These mansions, without exception, are controlled by the Mirren family, the descendants of Morgana's original family."

"Morgana possesses immense power, longevity and a ruthless approach. Over the years, she has accumulated substantial wealth, which is mainly managed by the loyal Mirren family," Maria explained.

Continuing her narrative, Maria revealed, "The Four Marshals of the Warriors Den are Gideon Alastair, Jarvis Delgado, Zeba Salazar and Landon Prescott. Zeba is the only woman among

them, most likely the woman you saw before Gideon Alastair self-destructed. Jarvis was already killed by you and Gideon met his demise today by self-destruction. If Zeba is also severely injured, three of the four Warriors Den Marshals will have met their fate at your hands!"

Charlie contemplated, "I wonder if Zeba is still alive. If she is dead, there's no need to worry. But if she's alive, she might find an opportunity to inform Morgana."

Struggling to rise, Charlie realized that his body was still too weak to support him.

Quickly, Maria pressed his shoulders, reassuring him, "Please don't worry, Young Master. Gideon's self-destruction was incredibly powerful. If Zeba is still alive, she would likely be seriously injured. Her condition is probably not much better than yours. I believe she won't have the chance to report to Morgana anytime soon."

With determination, Charlie stated solemnly, "Regardless of her status, dead or alive, we must find her as soon as possible."

Looking at Maria, he requested, "Miss Clark, may I borrow your mobile phone?"

Meanwhile, a few kilometers away from Willow Estates, in a secluded valley...

Don Albert, Isaac Cameron, Jack and the Elms family, including Xion, searched the entire valley but found no trace of Charlie. Their anxiety grew and a sense of foreboding filled their hearts. The explosion's magnitude was immense and the figure at the center was unmistakably the remains of a human body. With such a powerful blast, survival seemed improbable.

Although they knew of Charlie's exceptional abilities, none could be certain if he could withstand such an explosion.

While others succumbed to despair and heavy hearts, Jack's hope grew with each fruitless search.

At that moment, Xion, overwhelmed by her emotions, collapsed to the ground and burst into tears, drawing the attention of the others. Hurrying to comfort her, everyone reassured Xion.

Don Albert, despite his heavy heart, took the lead in saying, "Miss Banks, please don't worry too much. Master Wade is a man favored by luck!"

"Yes, Miss Banks," Isaac Cameron chimed in, his eyes red. "As long as we have no concrete evidence of danger, there is hope."

Xion understood they were trying to console themselves. The truth was that they couldn't find any trace of Charlie, leaving them confused and deeply saddened. Xion became the first to succumb to her emotions.

At that moment, Jack stepped forward, determination etched on his face. He addressed the group, saying, "Everyone, let's not be too pessimistic for now. I genuinely believe there is a high chance that Mr. Wade has survived!"

The crowd grew excited and couldn't help but blurt out, "Really?"

Jack calmly explained, "Everyone, we must remember that just because we haven't found any traces of Mr. Wade doesn't mean we should be pessimistic. We should feel fortunate about his whereabouts."

He continued, "Consider this, the explosion was incredibly powerful. If we had found Mr. Wade's remains, we would have felt a sense of closure. The fact that we haven't found any trace or body suggests a high probability of Mr. Wade narrowly escaping."

Don Albert interjected, "Inspector Lee, there were items belonging to Master Wade at the center of the explosion. Those items indicate that he was likely there. We've searched a vast area, yet we've found no clues. Isn't this contradictory? Could it be that Master Wade managed to hide himself in a safe location during the explosion? If so, why hasn't he contacted us?"

Jack responded earnestly, "Don Albert, I have no intention of arguing with you, nor do I wish to challenge your loyalty to Master Wade. You see, the situation appears contradictory because we haven't found Mr. Wade's whereabouts or his body. However, let's consider an alternative perspective, If Master Wade possesses the means to withstand the explosion and secure himself in a safe zone, wouldn't that explain the absence of his contact?"

Don Albert's eyes welled with tears as he said, "Inspector Lee, I don't want to argue either. Nor do I wish to contest your reasoning. I just want to say that if anything happens to Master Wade, it would be as if I, Don Albert, died on the spot. Master Wade saved my life, and if he miraculously remains unscathed, it would be the greatest relief for me. I can't explain the anxiety that plagues my heart."

Understanding Don Albert's sentiments, the others nodded in agreement. They, too, held hopes for Charlie's safety, but fear lurked beneath their optimism.

At that moment, Don Albert's cell phone rang abruptly. Startled by the ringtone, Don Albert exclaimed, "Has the signal been unblocked?"

Isaac Cameron chimed in, "The helicopter responsible for the signal blockage just left. If the signal remained blocked for too long, nearby residents would inevitably raise complaints, which would create more trouble."

"Oh..." Don Albert nodded, glanced at the unknown caller ID, and hung up the phone, wiping away his tears. He stated, "Let's continue searching!"

But before he could finish speaking, the phone rang again.

Already agitated, Don Albert answered the call in frustration, "What's wrong with you? Can't you stop calling?"

From the other end, Charlie's voice came, "Don Albert, why are you so angry?"

Chapter 5412

The moment Don Albert heard Charlie's voice, he was momentarily stunned. His senses took a moment to register and he found himself staring blankly at the sky, murmuring, "No way... This can't be a dream, can it? Is God truly so merciful?"

Charlie's voice came through the phone, asking, "Don Albert, what are you mumbling about?"

Snapped back to reality by Charlie's question, Don Albert asked in a mix of horror and disbelief, "Wa... Master Wade? Is that really you? Or am I hallucinating?"

Don Albert's words triggered an explosion of reactions from everyone around. They bombarded him with questions, doubting if it was indeed Charlie who had called.

Charlie pressed further, "Can't you hear my voice?"

Only then did Don Albert confirm that it was indeed Charlie speaking to him on the other end of the line.

Overwhelmed with joy, Don Albert's tears flowed freely as he exclaimed, "Master Wade, where are you? We've been searching the valley for almost an hour, but we couldn't find you. We were almost in a panic..."

Charlie asked, "Who are you with?"

Don Albert said "I'm with Isaac, Inspector Lee and the Elms family brought by Miss Xion."

Charlie inquired further, "Is anyone else there?"

"No one else," Don Albert quickly responded. "We didn't notify too many people to avoid any leaks."

Charlie praised, "Don Albert, you did a great job."

Don Albert's pride was overshadowed by his quick question, "Master Wade, where are you?"

Charlie coughed and replied, "Ahem... I can't explain it right now, but don't worry, I'm fine for the time being."

Relieved, Don Albert wiped his tears and exclaimed happily, "That's good! As long as Master Wade is fine, it doesn't matter even if I die!"

Charlie was about to respond when Jack's voice came through the phone, "Mr. Wade, are you okay?"

Charlie smiled and replied, "Thank you, Detective Lee, for your concern. For now, I'm fine. How are my grandparents and the others doing?"

Jack hurriedly reassured him, "Don't worry, they're all safe in the villa up the mountain. They're concerned about you, though."

"Good," Charlie sighed in relief. "Inspector Lee, when you return, please comfort them and let them rest at the villa. I'll visit them when it's convenient."

Jack promised, "Okay, Mr. Wade, I will convey your message."

Then, Jack inquired, "By the way, Mr. Wade, where are you now? Is there anything we can do to help?"

Charlie ordered, "Inspector Lee, put the phone on speaker. I need your assistance."

Jack quickly activated the speakerphone and said respectfully, "Master Wade, go ahead. Everyone is listening."

Charlie nodded and continued, "Inspector Lee, when you return, please ensure the emotional stability of my grandparents. Also, let them know that if they hear the sound of helicopters nearby, they should stay in the villa and not venture out. Additionally, ask Xion to take her family to the hot spring hotel discreetly and refrain from discussing today's events with anyone. And Isaac, along with Don Albert, keep a close watch on the vicinity of my villa and prevent anyone from approaching."

Isaac Cameron replied without hesitation, "Understood, Young Master. I'll take care of it."

...

Charlie ended the call and returned the phone to Maria. He asked, "I told them to send a helicopter to pick me up, but you insisted on not doing so. I can hardly walk now. How will we reach Elys-Champ Villa?"

Maria smiled and explained, "If we let them pick you up, how would you explain appearing in a girl's chamber, kilometers away, in the middle of the night? Besides..."

As she trailed off, Maria blushed slightly and continued, "Besides, My Lord, you haven't dressed yet. If word got out, I wouldn't mind, but how would you explain it to your esteemed wife? Moreover, Marius and the others live downstairs. If a helicopter suddenly arrives at night and several men come into the girl's chamber to take away a man without clothes, what would they think of the girl?"

Charlie nodded, helpless and said, "You're right, but what do we do now?"

Maria reassured him, "My Lord, wait a moment. My family will make arrangements."

After speaking, Maria swiftly descended the stairs to change into a simple T-shirt and jeans. She made a phone call and twenty minutes later, a two-seater light helicopter swiftly descended into the courtyard and landed gracefully.

The pilot alighted from the helicopter and immediately left through the courtyard gate without looking back.

Once he was gone, Maria approached the courtyard, retrieving a brand-new airport maintenance uniform from the helicopter's co-pilot seat. She returned to the second floor with the uniform in hand.

By now, Charlie had managed to sit up, his waist covered by a quilt.

Thanks to the enhanced version of the Regeneration Pill, his aura was completely clean and his physical condition had improved to some extent. He was no longer as weak as when he first arrived.

Seeing that he was upright, Maria placed the uniform beside him and said softly, "The helicopter has arrived, Young Master. Change into these clothes and I will accompany you to Elys-Champ Hot Springs Villa later."

Charlie nodded, feeling a bit embarrassed. He said, "Miss Clark, please give me a moment..."

Maria blushed and asked, "Can you manage by yourself? Do you need assistance from your servant?"

Charlie quickly waved his hand. "No, no, I can handle it. It might take a little longer, though."

Maria swiftly replied, "I'll turn around then. Call me when you're dressed and I'll help you downstairs."

Charlie shook his head and insisted, "I can manage to go downstairs myself..."

Maria firmly stated, "Young Master, you're still quite weak. It's fine if you dress yourself, but I'll help you downstairs."

Seeing her determination, Charlie didn't argue further. It took considerable effort, but he managed to change into the maintenance crew uniform.

After changing, Maria assisted him down the stairs.

In the courtyard, Charlie noticed there was no one else around except for the helicopter. There was no pilot on board either, which puzzled him. He asked, "Miss Clark, what's our next move?"

Maria replied nonchalantly, "Nujia is here to escort the Young Master, ensuring that no one lays eyes on you."

Surprised, Charlie questioned, "Can you fly a helicopter?"

Maria nodded casually, a smile playing on her lips. "Yes, I've lived for a long time, so I naturally know many things."

Charlie was initially taken aback by the fact that Maria could fly a helicopter. But upon reflection, her words made perfect sense. Someone who had lived for over three hundred years would undoubtedly acquire a vast array of skills. If Maria were to tell him she could fly a jumbo jet, he wouldn't be surprised.

With that, Maria helped Charlie board the helicopter and took her place in the cockpit on the opposite side.

Inside the helicopter, Charlie put on a noise-canceling communication headset and asked Maria, "Miss Clark, where did you find this helicopter?"

Maria replied, "I asked Larry Cole to arrange it. But don't worry, My Lord. I made sure to acquire only one. Nobody will know your location since the pilot was taken away from Zilian Villa immediately after delivering the helicopter."

Maria asked with surprise, "Has everything been arranged at Elys-Champ Villa? As long as nobody approaches the villa, we should remain undetected."

Charlie nodded and confessed with a touch of embarrassment, "Miss Clark, I appreciate your kindness."

Maria smiled and said, "My Lord, you're being too polite."

With that said, she skillfully started the helicopter and effortlessly maneuvered it into the night sky.

Chapter 5413

As Charlie and Maria flew together towards Elys-Champ, Jack, Isaac Cameron, Don Albert and the others who were relieved from their search returned to the villa first.

Jack knew that the Evans family was anxiously waiting for news about Charlie's safety, so he hurried back to the villa as soon as he disembarked from the plane.

In the living room, the Evans family stood with solemn expressions, hoping that Jack would bring back positive news.

Charlie had become incredibly significant to the Evans family, as his presence had impacted their lives for the past twenty years. Moreover, his true identity as the benefactor who had once saved the Evans family had elevated his status even further. For the Evans family, Charlie had surpassed everything else.

As Jack entered swiftly, the entire Evans family stood up expectantly. The Lady instinctively walked toward him and murmured, "Jack, have you found him? Where is Charlie?"

Jack smiled and reassured them, "Auntie, we have located Mr. Wade. He is safe and asked me to assure you that he will come to meet you once he finishes his work."

The Lady breathed a sigh of relief, tears welling up in her eyes due to her overwhelming joy.

The rest of the Evans family erupted in excited cheers and even the typically reserved Samuel Evans couldn't help but laugh and cry.

At that moment, the safety of Charlie was their most fervent wish.

The Lady couldn't help but ask again, "Why isn't Charlie coming here now? Is he injured?"

Jack shook his head and replied, "I'm not entirely sure what happened. When we arrived at the scene, Mr. Wade was already gone. We searched for a long time but couldn't find him. Eventually, Mr. Wade called Don Albert and we learned that he wasn't in immediate danger."

The Lady's relief was palpable. "If it was Charlie who called, it means his life is not in danger..."

She choked up and continued, "We owe Charlie and Charlie's parents an apology. Charlie clearly harbors resentment towards us, yet he has saved us twice. I understand why he doesn't want to see us for now."

Jack quickly interjected, "Auntie, Mr. Wade cares deeply for all of you. When he said he hated you earlier, it was just a ploy to distract the enemy."

Samuel Evans sighed, "Charlie has every right to resent us. I did wrong in the past."

Jack spoke earnestly, "Uncle Evans, Mr. Wade may hold grievances against you, but when you were on the verge of death, he asked Miss Sun to deliver a life-saving elixir to you. This shows that, despite any grudges he may have, he still cares about you. He may harbor complaints, but not hatred. In his eyes, you are still his family."

The old man exclaimed, "Is that true? Did Charlie give me the pill that Miss Sun delivered?"

Jack confirmed, "Uncle Evans, I assure you, any truly effective pill like this one must have been made by Mr. Wade. Regardless of who delivered it to you, it ultimately came from him."

Excitement washed over the old man. "You're right... You're right! It seems Charlie still considers me his grandfather..."

The rest of the Evans family couldn't help but smile with relief.

Only Desmond wore a peculiar expression.

Observing the clue, Tece asked curiously, "Brother, what's the matter?"

Desmond chuckled, "I just realized something. It was Charlie who conspired against me and got me expelled from the Rejuvenation Pill auction."

The old man chuckled, "You deserved to be expelled. Charlie clearly stated that the pills must be consumed on-site and cannot be taken away. You were challenging his rules, so it was only right that he expelled you."

Desmond mumbled dejectedly, "Father, I wasn't challenging Charlie's rules on purpose."

Marcus patted Desmond on the shoulder and smiled, "Alright, brother. Even though Charlie kicked you out of the auction, we should be grateful. If it weren't for you, our Evans family probably wouldn't have caught Charlie's attention so soon. It's a good thing. The entire family owes you a debt of gratitude!"

Desmond sighed sincerely, "Well, being kicked out by my nephew isn't a big deal. I just didn't expect that my nephew would be so capable and our savior. When I think about my words and actions at the auction, I feel a little embarrassed."

At that moment, the sound of a helicopter's roar could be heard outside the villa.

The Lady grew excited and asked Jack, "Has Charlie arrived?"

Jack hurriedly replied, "Auntie, Don Albert mentioned earlier that martial law will be enforced here tonight for our safety. He specifically instructed us not to venture outside casually. The helicopter is probably on patrol or something. There's no need to worry. Just rest tonight and perhaps Mr. Wade will come to see you tomorrow."

Everyone accepted his explanation without suspicion. They had become somewhat accustomed to the frequent takeoffs and landings of helicopters throughout the night.

After approximately ten minutes of flight, Charlie and Maria had arrived directly above Charlie's semi-mountain villa.

With her hands on the joystick, Maria skillfully landed the helicopter in the courtyard. As soon as the helicopter came to a halt, she jumped out and rushed to the other side to assist the disabled Charlie.

Supported by Maria, Charlie made his way into the villa and took her directly to the basement.

In the sealed basement, Charlie checked the mobile phone he had left behind and felt relieved to find that no one had been searching for him.

The time for his actions tonight was in the dead of night. Under normal circumstances, no one would come looking for him.

Moreover, before leaving home, he had laid the groundwork with Claire, who was far away in the United States, as well as with his mother-in-law and father-in-law. He had informed them that a client had requested him to temporarily inspect Feng Shui at another location. This way, if anything happened, his absence during the night wouldn't arouse suspicion from Jacob and Elaine.

What worried Charlie the most was whether Elaine would sneak into his and Claire's room again in search of valuables. If she found the letter he had left for Claire, it would be disastrous.

However, since no one was searching for him, it meant that Elaine had indeed calmed down considerably.

Afterward, Charlie set down his mobile phone and took out a Reshaping Pill and two Regeneration Pills from the pill container.

Despite being seriously injured, the Rejuvenation Pill didn't have a significant effect on his recovery. The best and quickest way for him to regain his strength was to take the Reshaping Pill. Furthermore, his reiki had been depleted and only the Regeneration Pills could swiftly replenish it.

These three elixirs would restore his body to its original state.

However, he didn't rush to take the medicine. Instead, he retrieved an enhanced version of the Life Saving Pill from his collection of elixirs and handed it to Maria. He said, "Miss Clark, keep this elixir. If you encounter danger or sustain severe injuries in the future, this elixir can save your life."

Maria hastily took a step back, waving her hand. "My Lord, I can't accept such a valuable gift..."

Charlie asked her, "Didn't you already take one while you were in the dormitory? Did you refuse it then?"

Chapter 5414

Maria spoke subconsciously, "That's different..."

Charlie countered, "Why is it different? You accepted it when you called me Charlie, but you can't accept it when you call me Young Master or 'my lord'?"

Maria awkwardly replied, "Nujia... Nujia doesn't mean that... I just think this elixir is too valuable... I accepted the previous elixirs because I was afraid that if you were in danger one day, the elixir I kept could be used as an emergency gift. But now that you're safe and sound, it doesn't feel right for me to accept your medicine..."

Charlie asserted without a doubt, "Then you better change your perspective as soon as possible. Tell yourself that there's nothing inappropriate about it."

Charlie directly placed the elixir in her hand before she could react. Then, he took out another Rejuvenation Pill and placed it in her hand, saying, "This is the Rejuvenation Pill. It can cure all kinds of diseases when consumed by ordinary people. Even for those who aren't sick, it can extend their lifespan by twenty years. Its effects are stronger than the first pill. If the Life Saving Pill is no longer effective, just take this!"

Maria stared at the two pills in her hand, unsure of what to do. Helplessly, she said, "Mr.... This... This is too precious..."

Charlie ignored her and handed her another Reshaping Pill, saying, "This pill is even more powerful. It's a Reshaping Pill. It can reconstruct a person's body even if it's been beaten into a pulp, as long as their brain is still intact. I hope you never have to use it, but you should still accept it because it represents my heart."

Maria didn't expect Charlie to give her such an extraordinary pill, leaving her at a loss for words.

At that moment, Charlie took out another Regeneration Pill. After hesitating for a moment, he placed it in her hand and said solemnly, "This is the Regeneration Pill, which replenishes reiki. I know you probably don't need it, but it's my way of showing gratitude for saving my life. Please accept it."

Maria couldn't help but laugh helplessly, "My Lord... You said I couldn't use it, so giving it to me would be a waste..."

Charlie said firmly, "No! Not a waste! You have to understand that you saved my life and this is my heartfelt appreciation! You've lived for three or four hundred years. What do you lack? I'm sure you've seen and experienced everything. The only thing I can give you to express my affection is these little pills. I accepted the ring you gave me when I was in Northern Europe. So today, I'm giving you these four pills. You must take them all and you can't refuse anything!" Witnessing Charlie's sincerity, Maria's hand subconsciously held his and despite feeling shy, she couldn't help but be moved. Thus, she spoke instinctively, "I'll keep these medicines for now and hold onto them until the next time the Young Master visits..."

Realizing her words, she quickly shook her head and said, "No, no, I misspoke. Please don't mind, My Lord."

Charlie suddenly understood and quickly responded, "No, no, I don't mind. But you reminded me."

He turned around and took one of each of the four pills, stuffing them into Maria's other hand. The two of them held each other tightly, like two people sharing their deepest thoughts. Charlie spoke solemnly and earnestly, "You deserve to have a share of these too. Accept them as if I've temporarily entrusted them to you. After all, I still don't know how to make your ring recognize me as its Master. Until it recognizes me, in case something unfortunate happens, it might bring trouble to you. With these pills, you can be prepared for emergencies..."

Maria blushed at the thought of the time when the ring sent Charlie into the hot spring pool. She couldn't help but blush again, even though she felt embarrassed. She understood that Charlie's concerns were not unfounded. As long as he still wore that ring, if he were to encounter danger again, the ring would likely transport him away. The pills served as a preparation in such scenarios.

With this in mind, she nodded vigorously and said, "Don't worry, My Lord. I'll take good care of these pills! Since you have so many miraculous medicines, you should take some to heal your wounds first! I can't do much and I won't feel at ease until I find out whether Zeba is alive or dead."

Charlie then said, "Help me board the helicopter. Once we're on board, I will take the medicine, and you can fly us to the incident location. By the time we arrive, I should be almost recovered."

Without hesitation, Maria spoke, "Okay, I'll assist you!"

Chapter 5415

As Maria took off in the lightweight helicopter once again, thousands of miles away, Morgana anxiously paced back and forth in the headquarters of the Warriors Den.

Despite being four hundred years old, Morgana appeared as if she were in her thirties, radiating both charm and a formidable aura. At this moment, her restlessness was evident on her face, making her quite intimidating.

The last time Morgana experienced such restlessness was when she and Lucius Clark were first chased into Shiwan Mountain by the invading army. Although she had never found Maria over the years, the cat-and-mouse game lasting for three hundred years had never caused her such anxiety.

What troubled her the most at this moment was the disappearance of the two marshals under her command, who had been out of contact for over an hour. She had no idea what they had encountered.

Morgana's greatest concern was the fate of the two marshals. Jarvis's death and the destruction of the entire Cyprus slain garrison had already caused great panic within the Warriors Den. If these two marshals also encountered unforeseen circumstances, the Warriors Den would undoubtedly plunge into unprecedented turmoil after more than three hundred years.

Just as she grew increasingly anxious, a knock sounded at the door, and an old man's respectful voice came from outside, "My Lord, subordinate Aemon seeks an audience."

Morgana coldly replied, "Enter!"

With a wave, the heavy iron door opened automatically.

An old man in a long robe quickly walked inside. This person was Aemon Mirren.

Aemon Mirren, a direct descendant of the Mirren family and the bloodline of Morgana's elder brother Cedric Mirren's son, was now 110 years old. Highly regarded by Morgana, he served as her most trusted confidant and the think tank of the entire Warriors Den.

As he entered the room, Aemon respectfully said, "My Lord, I have obtained some rumors regarding Aurous Hill..."

Morgana impatiently interrupted, "Get to the point!"

Aemon reported, "I found some information on the local network and short video accounts. Tonight, there were continuous thunderous sounds near the Willow Estates where the Evans family resides. Moreover, an extremely powerful explosion occurred in that area, its sound reaching across Aurous Hill. I could hear it clearly..."

Morgana's expression turned cold as she anxiously inquired, "An explosion? What kind of explosion? Was it similar to the thunder from before or more like a bomb blast?"

Aemon responded, "My Lord, it was indeed an explosion!"

Frowning, Morgana asked, "If it truly was an explosion, perhaps Gideon died while trying to break the Warriors Den..."

Aemon exclaimed, "My Lord... What kind of enemy could be so strong that it caused Gideon's death?"

Aemon had been practicing martial arts under Morgana's guidance since childhood. Additionally, he was her confidant, so he understood the actions Morgana had taken against the Four Marshals with the Soul Palace.

At this moment, even Morgana felt a twinge of worry. She muttered to herself, "Gideon was already formidable and with the magical artifact I gave him, he became even stronger. If he truly perished, it means the one who caused his death must be even more powerful than him..."

As she spoke, Morgana couldn't help but marvel, "I never expected there to be such Masters in Aurous Hill. Based on my knowledge of the Evans family, it is highly unlikely that they would have any connection with such powerful individuals. So, what is the background of this person?"

Aemon couldn't help but ask, "My Lord, it seems that this person must be acquainted with the Evans family. Otherwise, why would they save the Evans family in a critical moment?"

With a gloomy expression, Morgana shook her head, "I don't know. If Gideon truly perished, his opponent must be a stronger cultivator. However, I've had people secretly monitoring the Evans family for many years and I haven't found any connections between the Evans family and any cultivators."

Aemon inquired further, "Could it be that Gideon accidentally offended a local expert in Aurous Hill?"

Morgana pondered for a moment and said, "That possibility cannot be ruled out. I stumbled upon the magical artifact by chance. If there is a magical artifact, it's highly likely that there are cultivators nearby. Moreover, I'm beginning to doubt whether the magical artifact Gideon discovered in Aurous Hill was actually a trap set by the other party long ago. The so-called magical artifact might just be bait to lure Gideon into their clutches!"

Aemon exclaimed, "If that's the case, then the other party anticipated Gideon's journey to Aurous Hill?"

"It's possible," Morgana replied, her expression complicated. She suddenly thought of something and blurted out, "Tonight, I had Zeba secretly tailing Gideon. If something were to happen to Gideon, then she would be in danger!"

Aemon widened his eyes and said, "If Zeba also encounters an accident, it would be a major blow to our efforts to break the Warriors Den! You've spent so many years nurturing these four marshals. If three of them meet with misfortune, the people below will undoubtedly become disorganized..."

In a cold tone, Morgana declared, "Disorganized? Remember this, if anything untoward happens to Gideon and Zeba, anyone in the Five Armies Commander's Mansion who exhibits disorder will have their feet severed. One! And if severing one isn't enough, then sever two!"

Respectfully, Aemon said, "Your subordinate obeys!"

Morgana added, "If something happens to both of them, we must strictly control information in the Fifth Army Commander's Mansion. Anyone who dares to leak information will be killed!"

Aemon cupped his hands and replied, "Rest assured, My Lord. Your subordinate will deliver the message without fail!"

Afterward, Aemon knelt on one knee and respectfully said, "Lord, I have one more question to ask!"

Morgana coldly uttered, "Speak!"

Aemon said, "My Lord, if both Gideon and Zeba truly perish in Aurous Hill, I dare to suggest that we call upon the three elders from the Presbyterian Council. We should send them to Aurous Hill, as their combined efforts would surely be able to eliminate the Master lurking in the shadows!"

Morgana's brow instantly furrowed as she replied, "The three elders have been in seclusion for a hundred years and are in the critical stage of opening their Soul Palaces. In another ten or twenty years, all three of them will open their Soul Palaces one after another, further breaking the Warriors Den. Their strength will reach new heights. If we were to call upon them now, it would undoubtedly disrupt their progress in cultivation. It might even delay their Soul Palace openings by another twenty years. This decision cannot be made lightly..."

Continuing, Morgana said, "You must understand that the three elders are my hidden trump card. Only five people have known of their existence for over a hundred years. Besides you, the other four are the Marshals. I can't deploy this card unless it is absolutely necessary!"

Aemon hurriedly responded, "My Lord! If Gideon and Zeba truly perish today, I can conclude that the person who killed them is the same as the one who killed Jarvis, rescued the Evans family in New York and saved Maria in Northern Europe. They are undoubtedly part of the same faction!"

"In that case," he continued, "It proves that the other party is not just an individual, but rather a colossal organization like the Warriors Den. They possess traditional cultivators as well as expertise in modern weapons, such as close-in defense guns. Their capabilities are vast. If allowed to continue growing, they will undoubtedly pose a significant threat to the future of the Warriors Den!"

Chapter 5416

After a momentary pause, Aemon continued, his voice filled with urgency, "Moreover, they have been achieving victory after victory recently and they are on the verge of a breakthrough. If we don't eliminate them, we'll face even greater troubles in the future! My Lord, this crisis is unlike anything we've faced before. We can't afford to hesitate any longer!"

Morgana fell into a momentary silence. Aemon's words had struck a chord, stirring anxiety and apprehension within her. She knew that his concerns held merit. If she allowed the opposing faction to continue growing in secrecy, they would pose a significant threat to her own future.

With a determined grit of her teeth, she spoke, "Notify the Chinese military's governor's office immediately. Ask them to dispatch their top scouts to Aurous Hill via plane for investigation! Within a hundred meters of the explosion site, once dawn breaks tomorrow, as long as they fly over Willow Estates, they should be able to locate the exact spot of the explosion! If it is confirmed that Gideon has perished in the explosion, I will allow the three elders to intervene. They will go to Aurous Hill and work together to track down that person. We will tear their bodies into pieces and ensure they never pose a threat again!"

...

On the other side.

The helicopter piloted by Maria was now directly above the epicenter of the explosion. Since Charlie had already taken the Remodeling Pill, he could hardly move his body. Thus, Maria took the reins, activating the helicopter's searchlights as it flew low over the entire valley, nose tilted downward, carefully surveying the area below.

Meanwhile, Charlie was experiencing the profound healing and regeneration of his bones, organs, muscles and meridians. Luckily, his injuries weren't as severe as Jack's were back then, so the recovery process was much quicker.

At the same time, Zeba found herself nestled within a natural crevice, seeking temporary refuge after enduring significant injuries. Her meridians, dantian and internal organs were severely damaged. She had managed to find solace under a boulder, taking shelter there after enduring great hardship.

Originally, her plan was to hide there, recover for a few days and then find a way to leave. In her estimation, even though Charlie had seen her at the moment of the explosion, the power of Gideon's self-destruction was so immense that Charlie was likely doomed.

Therefore, she concluded that no one on the other side knew of her existence, allowing her to heal her wounds in peace.

However, she never expected that just as she began to entertain such wishful thinking, another helicopter appeared. It circled the valley as if searching for something. She wondered to herself, "Could it be that those people couldn't find Charlie and refused to give up, so they returned?"

With that thought, a sense of relief washed over her. She whispered to herself, "As long as they don't come for me!"

Then, she suddenly thought of the British Lord and internally exclaimed, "Today, Gideon blew himself up and I vanished along with him. The Lord will surely investigate thoroughly and I must ensure she doesn't discover I'm still alive!"

She then retrieved her mobile phone. The phone was in complete disarray, deformed and battered. Even the battery had swollen due to the impact. Seeing this, she finally breathed a sigh of relief, believing it impossible for the phone to continue transmitting her location to her.

Approximately ten minutes later, Charlie fully recovered from the effects of the Remodeling Pill. He stretched his neck and vigorously extended his body within the confined cabin. No longer did he resemble a severely injured and feeble individual.

Maria, astounded, exclaimed, "My Lord, have you recovered?"

Charlie nodded and replied, "My body has healed, but my reiki is still lacking."

He then took out two more Regeneration Pills and placed them into his mouth. As the elixir entered his abdomen, it transformed into pure reiki, coursing through his entire body via the restored meridians and dantian.

Charlie felt the surge of aura returning, filling him with indescribable comfort.

Beside him, Maria sensed his body brimming with reiki once again and exclaimed in surprise, "It seems the Young Master has fully recovered!"

Charlie nodded slightly and couldn't help but sigh, "My body has indeed recovered, but the ring's needs are still present. It requires an abundance of reiki, so this can only be addressed gradually. Miss Clark, did you find anything in this valley?"

"If she is still alive with a high probability. Moreover, as we flew at low altitude, the strong wind from the helicopter could displace vegetation. Considering her severe injuries, it is highly unlikely that she climbed out of the mountains herself. There is a high probability she is hiding at the base of the surrounding mountains. We should descend and conduct a thorough search."

Charlie nodded, expressing his agreement, "Miss Clark's theory is quite reasonable. In that case, please lower the helicopter's altitude as much as possible to the mountain's base and I will utilize my reiki to investigate."

"Alright!" Maria immediately reduced the helicopter's altitude to the lowest level, almost grazing the treetops as it slowly flew toward the mountain's base.

Charlie released his aura, utilizing it to perceive the whereabouts of Zeba.

Meanwhile, Zeba found herself at the far end of the valley. Observing the helicopter not only refusing to depart but instead lowering its altitude, gradually approaching her position along the mountain's base, her heart raced in her chest. She was acutely aware of her current predicament. If discovered, she didn't need an expert to end her life. Even a ten-year-old child could effortlessly accomplish the task.

Furthermore, she knew that falling into the hands of the Evans family would only result in a more tragic fate. The Warriors Den had already killed Lily and her husband Bruce of the Evans family twenty years ago, embedding a hidden thread within the Evans family for two decades. They had even made two attempts to annihilate the Evans family. Moreover, Lily and Bruce's son, Charlie Wade, fell victim to Gideon's self-destruction earlier that day. At this moment, the Evans family regarded the Warriors Den as a mortal enemy among mortal enemies!

Nervous and strained, she exerted every ounce of effort to conceal herself deeper, hoping the boulder's cover would shield her from detection by the opposing helicopter. She believed that the other party consisted of ordinary individuals unaware of the existence of aura. She concluded that they were merely searching for Charlie, paying no attention to anyone hiding beneath the boulder.

Little did she know that Charlie had discovered her location not through sight but through his heightened perception of aura.

As Maria guided the helicopter, diligently searching along the mountain's base, Charlie's expression suddenly froze. He immediately pointed to a dark area on the left and said to Maria, "Over there!"

Chapter 5417

As Charlie gestured in a specific direction with his hand, Maria didn't bother to glance at it. Instead, she swiftly adjusted the helicopter's joystick, guiding it precisely towards the destination indicated by Charlie's finger.

Meanwhile, Zeba, concealed within the gaps between boulders, remained unaware that she had become the target of their pursuit. Her sole objective was to stay as still as possible, refraining from making even the slightest sound. Once the individuals aboard the helicopter completed their inspection rounds, she believed she could depart from this place unnoticed. She possessed absolute certainty that she wouldn't be discovered.

The helicopter circled the valley multiple times, yet its occupants never descended to search the area. The massive boulder obstructing Zeba's view was thick enough to defy any attempt at detection, even with advanced equipment like thermal imaging. No one could see beyond it to discover her whereabouts.

However, unease began to creep into Zeba's heart when the helicopter suddenly veered towards her. As it grew closer, her heart raced with anxiety.

Eventually, the helicopter arrived at the summit of the boulder, situated at the foot of the mountain. Charlie suddenly announced, "This is it! I can already sense her presence. She is gravely injured!"

With those words, he swung open the helicopter door, preparing to jump straight down from the aircraft.

In a reflexive moment, Maria instinctively clutched the hem of his clothes and blurted out, "My lord, since Zeba is in such a dire state, why don't you wait for me to join you? I wish to meet her alongside you for a brief moment."

Observing her plea, Charlie relented. Instead of jumping down, he decided they should land the helicopter in an area affected by the explosion. From there, they could proceed on foot together. Maria nodded in agreement, deftly manipulating the controls to spin the helicopter around on the spot.

Underneath the boulder, Zeba couldn't help but exhale a long sigh of relief as she witnessed the helicopter turn around and depart, its presence no longer looming above her head.

Little did she know, Maria had already positioned the helicopter at the edge of the blast zone. After bringing it to a halt, she turned to Charlie and disclosed, "Young master, my family has information about her. Although Zeba, one of the four esteemed Marshals of the Warriors Den, suffered severe injuries, she has always devoted himself to the path and seldom acted against principles and morality. Today, Gideon's self-explosion raises suspicions, and it seems there

may be more to it. If you exploit this opportunity, you might be able to persuade Zeba to join our cause."

Charlie offered a slight nod and replied, "If there is indeed something amiss with Gideon's self-explosion, no one knows better than Zeba, aside from Morgana. Immediately, both of them leaped off the helicopter and proceeded toward the boulder where Zeba hid.

At that moment, Zeba had finally relaxed and planned to take a brief respite before devising an escape strategy. However, she was caught off guard when the sound of rustling footsteps reached her ears.

Her heart skipped a beat, and inwardly, she exclaimed, "Could it be that the individuals from the helicopter have arrived on foot?!"

This thought instantly rekindled her anxieties. She was well aware of her grave injuries and her inability to resist anyone, regardless of their identity. All she could do now was silently pray that the approaching footsteps wouldn't lead them to her and that the person responsible for those footsteps wouldn't discover her presence.

Unfortunately, her prayers seemed to be in vain. The footsteps drew closer and closer until they eventually halted just a mere ten meters away from her hiding spot.

Zeba's nervousness reached its peak. She understood that if she was discovered, her chances of survival were practically nonexistent. The captors would resort to any means necessary, including torture, to extract information about the Warriors Den and the Lord from her.

Furthermore, the Warriors Den had repeatedly attempted to eliminate her family. Falling into their clutches would likely result in a dire fate, even if she cooperated obediently.

Thus, her last flicker of hope rested upon the prospect of remaining undiscovered.

Just as she held onto that final strand of delusion, Charlie's voice boomed, breaking the silence. He declared loudly, "Zeba, you were watching me and Gideon fight in the darkness earlier, and now you're hiding in the shadows. Isn't that unreasonable?"

Zeba's mind was jolted by Charlie's words, much like a thunderclap in her brain.

In that moment, a multitude of thoughts flooded her mind,

"This person actually found me?!"

"This person... he's Charlie Wade, the one who fought Gideon just now?!"

"But... how is this possible? I saw him sustain severe injuries during the explosion. He vanished at an incredible speed. How could he have survived?! Moreover, his voice suggests that he isn't injured at all!"

Countless questions swirled in Zeba's mind, causing her anxiety to escalate even further.

Although she possessed reiki and was an accomplished martial artist, the foreboding sensation of death filled her entire being, rendering her both helpless and afraid.

Outside the boulder, Charlie noticed her lack of response. He smiled faintly and remarked, "Zeba, you've lost your cultivation and sustained severe injuries. Without assistance, you may not be able to escape this valley. Your mighty and wise Lord won't be able to rush to your aid in such a short time. Instead of resigning yourself to die in despair, why don't we sit down and have a conversation? What do you say?" Charlie's question caused Zeba to shudder involuntarily.

Recalling the tragic demise of Gideon, she felt a mixture of shock and resentment in her heart. Moreover, the powerful self-destruction formation within her Soul Palace intensified her unease. For her, she'd rather meet her end in this serene valley than return to her master and continue being a living weapon.

Furthermore, she had no knowledge of how many activation methods existed for the formation embedded in the Soul Palace of the four marshals. It remained unclear whether the Lord could detonate the formation with a mere thought.

Based on Zeba's understanding of the Lord, he would undoubtedly leave behind such a contingency plan. As long as she remained within his detection range, he could obliterate her at any moment.

After contemplating for a moment, Zeba gritted her teeth and weakly replied, "Since Mr. Wade wishes to converse, I have no objections."

Her words stemmed from the depths of her heart.

Having witnessed Charlie's superiority during his battle with Gideon, she knew he surpassed her in strength. Furthermore, his survival of the recent explosion led her to believe his capabilities were unfathomable. Subconsciously, she considered herself inferior.

Having expressed her consent, Zeba mustered her strength to stand up. Although she had chosen to submit to Charlie, as a martial artist, she didn't want him to witness her crawling out from the gap in the boulder.

However, her body had been ravaged by severe injuries. Climbing from the blast zone to her current location had depleted her energy reserves, leaving her legs trembling like fragile reeds.

As she clenched her teeth and attempted to take a step forward, a sharp pain coursed through her right leg, causing her to collapse uncontrollably.

Observing Zeba falling face-first onto the gravel, perilously close to striking the rough and jagged surface, Charlie reacted swiftly and thrust his hand forward, redirecting her trajectory and averting the impact.

Chapter 5418

A formidable gust of wind surged forth from Charlie's clenched fist, creating a hurricane brimming with immense power. This whirlwind moved with such incredible speed that it caught Zeba, who was already at a precarious forty-five-degree angle, suspended in mid-air!

As Zeba teetered on the edge of falling, she had already resigned herself to her fate. She knew that if she tumbled forward, her face would be irreparably maimed. Yet, in her current state of complete physical debilitation, she was powerless to stop the impending descent.

However, she never expected that Charlie, who stood a few feet away, would unleash a forceful gust of wind!

To her astonishment, this powerful gust not only caused no harm to her, but also acted as a protective barrier, firmly supporting her body, preventing it from hurtling downward!

Just as she marveled at this phenomenon and remained suspended at a forty-five-degree angle, she caught a glimpse of Charlie striding towards her out of the corner of her eye.

At the moment when the wind began to weaken and she was about to resume her forward plunge, Charlie had already reached her side.

Without delay, Charlie stabilized Zeba's body with his right hand, exerting a gentle force that straightened her posture.

Relieved, Zeba was about to express her gratitude when, unexpectedly, Charlie's left hand swiftly approached her face!

Zeba, witnessing Charlie's rapid left-hand movement, presumed he intended to slap her. A barrage of question marks flooded her mind, accompanied by a surge of indignation.

Having lived for over a hundred years, she had never endured a slap to the face.

However, she understood that as Charlie's captive, she had no choice but to endure any humiliation and torment that came her way.

Just as she felt the height of humiliation, Charlie's left hand didn't strike her face but instead delivered a black pill into her mouth.

Zeba was further startled, believing Charlie had fed her some sort of poison, similar to what the Lord might do.

Before she could even finish chastising Charlie in her thoughts, she felt the pill he had given her transform instantly into a warm, pure energy that rapidly mended her body!

Zeba had never encountered such a potent elixir before. Combined with her grave injuries, the elixir evoked a sensation similar to a person freezing in the snow suddenly plunging into a hot spring, enveloped by its soothing warmth, instantly revitalizing the frozen body.

Even the severe injuries sustained in the recent explosion began healing at an astonishing rate!

Although one rejuvenating pill couldn't fully restore her to normal, it allowed her to reclaim her life from the brink of death.

Only then did she realize that the substance Charlie had fed her was not poison, but an incredibly precious elixir!

Despite her initial inability to stand, she now felt that her fractured bones had mended, enabling her to walk unaided.

Overwhelmed with shock and gratitude, Zeba respectfully bowed to Charlie and, with teary eyes, uttered, "Thank you, Mr. Wade, for saving my life..."

Charlie released his grip on her and calmly stated, "If you truly wish to express your gratitude, save it for later. Instead, share with me all the information you possess."

Without hesitation, Zeba replied, "Rest assured, Mr. Wade. I will divulge everything and spare no detail!"

Charlie nodded, refraining from further words, and turned to leave.

Zeba hastily followed, catching sight of the graceful figure standing before her.

As she observed the person's face clearly, a look of terror crossed her own. She exclaimed in disbelief, "Ma... Maria?"

"It's me!" Maria responded crisply. She gazed at Zeba, mischief twinkling in her eyes, and remarked with a smile, "So, you're Zeba? I've heard tales of your beauty and charm. Judging from today's encounter, your reputation is quite justified."

Zeba stared at the youthful Maria, her dark eyes filled with tumultuous emotions. She couldn't help but inquire, "Miss Clark, is it true that you have lived for over three hundred years?"

Maria calmly nodded, maintaining her composure. She smiled and replied, "Indeed, as one of the four Marshals of the Warriors Den, you must have heard of me decades ago, haven't you?"

Zeba concealed nothing as she responded, "That's correct. I heard of Miss Clark's name eighty years ago. It is an honor to finally witness Miss Clark's true appearance..."

Maria knew that Charlie aimed to win Zeba over to their side. She smiled at Zeba, cleverly stating, "Zeba, it is not an honor for you to meet me. Instead, it is an honor for you to encounter Young Master Wade."

"If it weren't for Young Master Wade, even if you survived tonight, Morgana would undoubtedly hunt you down relentlessly. You wouldn't even need her to find you; you would willingly return to the Warriors Den. But the outcome wouldn't be as you expected."

"Furthermore," Maria continued, "without Young Master Wade, your cultivation would be lost and worthless in Morgana's eyes. Being severely injured would only burden her, as you still hold many of her secrets. She won't attempt to save you but rather choose to eliminate you to prevent any potential future trouble."

These words left Zeba standing there dumbfounded.

While she had no desire to return to Morgana's control and manipulation, she never anticipated that even if she wished to do so, her loss of cultivation and severe injuries rendered her incapable. Her injuries were beyond recovery, and Morgana would never expend her own reiki to save her.

Consequently, she held no value to Morgana.

Morgana wouldn't keep someone worthless around.

And when it came to someone deemed worthless yet in possession of Morgana's secrets, she would not allow that person to continue existing!

Upon realizing this, Zeba's determination to cooperate with Charlie grew stronger.

Thus, she knelt on one knee, gratefully gazed at Charlie, and respectfully declared, "Zeba is forever grateful to Mr. Wade for saving her life!"

Charlie admired Maria a little more inwardly, thinking, "This girl, over three hundred years old, is truly astute. She hits the mark with every word she speaks. It seems that longevity brings about a different kind of wisdom!"

However, he soon dismissed these thoughts, offering a slight nod to Zeba. He calmly stated, "The elixir I administered earlier was only meant to provide initial relief for your injuries. After some time, I will find an opportunity to restore your cultivation to its former glory."

Zeba was astounded but couldn't contain her astonishment as she exclaimed, "Mr. Wade... is it truly possible for you to restore my cultivation to its former state?"

Charlie replied nonchalantly, "When Gideon exploded, I sustained more injuries than you. How do you think I am recovered now?"

Chapter 5419

Charlie's words lifted Zeba's spirits, infusing her with newfound hope.

When the explosion erupted, their eyes locked, and at that moment, Zeba believed that Charlie was destined to meet his demise.

Yet here he stood before her, clad in fresh attire, unscathed. A gust of wind emanated from his clenched fist, a testament to the strength that firmly supported his body.

His power surpassed her own by more than a realm.

In Zeba's estimation, Charlie's strength paled in comparison to that of a true hero. However, the remarkable aspect was that Charlie was merely twenty-eight years old! Meanwhile, Morgana, the hero, had already lived for four centuries!

If this trend persisted, Charlie would soon catch up!

Contemplating this realization, a tinge of regret overcame her. According to her calculations, she had a little over two years left to live. Witnessing Charlie's strength surpassing Morgana's in such a short span of time would likely remain a distant dream.

Unbeknownst to Zeba, Charlie was oblivious to her inner musings.

Together with Maria, he escorted the injured Zeba to the awaiting helicopter.

The light helicopter accommodated only two seats, and Charlie couldn't be completely at ease leaving Zeba alone. Thus, he dispatched Maria back to the villa and requested that Don Albert bring another helicopter. Charlie personally accompanied Zeba on the second helicopter, guiding her back to the mountain villa.

With less than half an hour before dawn, Charlie commanded Don Albert to maintain martial law throughout Champs. Then, he led Zeba into the villa.

Inside the villa, Maria awaited their arrival. Charlie guided both women to the basement, where he arranged a comfortable sofa for the injured Zeba. Seated opposite her, he positioned himself beside Maria.

After settling down, Charlie inquired, "Zeba, why did you come to Aurous Hill?"

Zeba truthfully replied, "Mr. Wade, I was initially dispatched to the Far East to locate Miss Clark. However, a few days ago, Morgana ordered me to come to Aurous Hill and spy on Gideon. I rushed here overnight."

Curiosity piqued, Charlie pressed further, "Why did Morgana task you with spying on Gideon?"

Zeba explained, "She suspects that Gideon has ulterior motives. Morgana knows he possesses at least two magical artifacts, yet he withheld that information from her, claiming to have acquired only one."

With a hint of frustration, Zeba continued, "She discovered that Gideon's movements led him from Antique Street to the mountains. Furthermore, she monitored Aurous Hill's internet activity and learned of a violent thunderstorm occurring on the very mountain Gideon visited. The Aurous Hill Meteorological Department even issued an early warning. Morgana believes this event is connected to the magical artifact Gideon acquired. However, Gideon only informed her about a ring. I speculate that Morgana deduced Gideon's involvement when he used the magical artifact you sold him, Mr. Wade. Gideon deliberately concealed the true extent of the artifact's power to arouse Morgana's suspicion."

Charlie frowned, remarking, "Morgana is truly keeping up with the times. Not only does she track your movements, but she also uses the internet to gather information and aid her judgment."

Zeba nodded, confirming his observation. "Morgana stays abreast of current trends. She possesses her own satellite communication system and has developed encrypted communication software. To preserve her anonymity and gender, she even employs a voice changer to obscure her audio during communications. As far as I know, she frequently utilizes the internet, keeping a close eye on major platforms."

Charlie acknowledged her words and inquired further, "So, how did Morgana obtain your movement details?"

Zeba produced her severely damaged cellphone, explaining, "This is a specially designed mobile phone provided by the Warriors Den. It possesses real-time tracking capabilities, transmitting our coordinates to a server."

Charlie's eyes widened in amazement. He chuckled and remarked, "Tonight, Morgana must be at her wit's end. Shortly after Gideon arrived at Willow Estates, I blocked all signals in that area, causing both Marshals to vanish simultaneously. She must be tossing and turning in bed."

Zeba nodded, saying, "Indeed, my phone lost all signal as well. I imagine Morgana is incredibly anxious. Given her personality, she will dispatch someone to Aurous Hill to gather information as swiftly as possible."

Charlie smiled mischievously. "Perhaps she'll send the Fourth Marshal?"

Zeba shook her head, replying, "It's unlikely. Gideon has been killed, and I have disappeared. Three out of the four Marshals are gone. I believe Morgana fears Aurous Hill and wouldn't risk sending Landon."

Charlie probed further, "Given her cautious nature, would she come to Aurous Hill herself?"

Zeba firmly denied, "No! Morgana exercises extreme caution and would never personally venture out to resolve such matters. Besides, she possesses a trump card that has been dormant for a century..."

Charlie and Maria exchanged surprised glances, their voices merging into one as they eagerly asked, "What trump card?"

Zeba truthfully revealed, "Beneath the surface, the four Marshals appear to be the Warriors Den's most formidable individuals aside from Morgana. However, above us lies the Presbyterian Council. This council consists of three elders, all belonging to the Mirren family. They have earned Morgana's unwavering trust and have secluded themselves for over a hundred years. Their power far surpasses that of the four Marshals, and they are on the brink of unlocking the Soul Palace."

Charlie's heart was filled with horror, and a deep sigh escaped his lips involuntarily.

He had always believed that the "Apocalyptic Book" was a precious cultivation treasure, but now it appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary practice manual, like a monk reciting ancient verses.

If one were to compare the path of Taoism to a cosmic exploration of stars and oceans, then the "Apocalyptic Book" might not have even surpassed the Earth's boundaries. Only by unlocking the Soul Palace could one truly venture into outer space and embark on a journey to explore the vast universe.

Fortunately, the "Apocalyptic Book" holds an exceptionally detailed wealth of knowledge. It explores the mysteries of Feng Shui, the enigmatic Eight Diagrams of the Book of Changes, as

well as the intricacies of formations, weapon crafting, and the captivating art of alchemy. It was as if these teachings compensated for Charlie's own lack of cultivation.

Otherwise, with his current strength, he stood no chance against Gideon.

Curiosity burning inside him, Charlie inquired, "Has Morgana unlocked the Soul Palace?"

Zeba responded without hesitation, "Of course. Morgana is the first to have unlocked the Soul Palace over a hundred years ago. Her power soared to new heights! Having personally experienced the benefits of unlocking the Soul Palace, she carefully selected three individuals with the highest aptitude from the Presbyterian Church. She assigned them a hundred years of seclusion to focus on unlocking their own Soul Palaces."

Charlie pressed further, "Have the three of them succeeded?"

Zeba replied, "It is rumored that they will achieve success within the next decade or two. Morgana has promised us that once the three elders successfully unlock their Soul Palaces and emerge unscathed, she will grant the four of us an opportunity for seclusion. During that time, she will teach us the art of unlocking the Soul Palace. But what we're waiting for might just be a grand deception..."

As Zeba spoke, his fists clenched tightly, anger burning in his eyes. "Speaking of the Soul Palace technique, Mr. Wade, there's something else I must truthfully reveal to you..."

Chapter 5420

Charlie noticed a sudden change in Zeba's expression, her features sharpening. He furrowed his brow and asked, "What's the matter? Tell me."

Gritting his teeth, Zeba replied, "Morgana warned us from the beginning that it would be dangerous for us four to embark on missions outside. She lost her life to a formidable monk, and that's why it took several years to set up an incredibly secretive and powerful formation in the Soul Palace. She claimed that activating this formation during a critical moment could save our residual souls, allowing our bodies to perish while our souls endure. But today, Gideon revealed that it wasn't a soul-preserving formation at all. Instead, it was an immensely powerful self-destruct mechanism..."

Charlie nodded slightly, absorbing the revelation. "No wonder Gideon pleaded for mercy initially. He resigned himself to death when the critical moment arrived, believing that he could truly change his physical body."

Zeba, his voice laced with anger, continued, "But I never expected that it was a deception. A deception that turned out to be a highly destructive force..."

Sympathizing with Zeba's frustration, Charlie asked, "What do you think of Morgana? What are the chances of her sending the three elders?"

After pondering for a while, Zeba replied firmly, "Based on my understanding of her, I'd say 100%!"

Charlie squinted his eyes, skeptical. "Is that so? If what you say is true, these three elders have been in seclusion all this time. Interrupting their cultivation and making them retreat again will lead to substantial unseen losses. Will Morgana be willing to take such a risk?"

Zeba spoke earnestly, "Mr. Wade, Morgana has consistently underestimated her opponents. She believed that disposable soldiers could defeat the Evans family, and that the Wilson Cavalry Guards would be sufficient to capture Miss Clark. However, both attempts failed. She then sent four marshals, thinking that her uncle's achievements would uncover the flaws in the Cypriot Cavalry Guards, only to have Jarvis beaten to a pulp by their close-range defense weaponry. She believed that Gideon and I could eliminate the Evans, but now even that plan has failed..."

"In such circumstances, she will undoubtedly dispatch the three elders to eradicate the problem. They are her last resort. If they succeed, it's perfect. But if they fail, she may have to abandon her hideout and flee for her life!"

Maria couldn't help but interject, "Do you know how powerful these three elders are?"

Zeba replied, "Miss Clark, I've never met the three elders myself. Since joining the Warriors Den, they have remained secluded. According to Morgana, even a hundred years ago, their strength rivaled that of Gideon. Considering their hundred-year-long seclusion, their power must have increased significantly. The four of us are no match for them."

Charlie and Maria exchanged brief glances, their expressions subtly changing. Zeba's words revealed that the three elders surpassed the four marshals by a significant margin. Dealing with even one of them would prove extremely challenging, and if all three acted together, their strength would be immeasurable.

Charlie understood that while he could defeat Gideon, overcoming the elders with a hundred years of cultivation experience over Gideon was an insurmountable task.

Maria turned her gaze toward Charlie and spoke, "My lord, if Morgana indeed unleashes the three elders, I'm concerned that you alone won't be able to defeat them. For safety's sake, it might be wise for you to temporarily leave Aurous Hill and avoid the limelight..."

Zeba concurred, adding, "Mr. Wade, Miss Clark is correct. Even Morgana would struggle to defeat the combined strength of the three elders. You haven't opened your Soul Palace yet, so if you remain in Aurous Hill, it will be challenging to escape once they arrive!"

Charlie contemplated for a moment, then shook his head. "It might be easy for me to leave, but what about my grandparents' family? They are the primary targets, and there could even be Warriors Den infiltrators among them. The organization will relentlessly pursue them, no matter where they hide. They won't be able to escape the three elders' pursuit, no matter how hard they try..."

With a serious tone, Charlie continued, "Moreover, Aurous Hill is my foundation. My family and friends are here. If I leave, I can't guarantee their safety. Furthermore, if the enemy discovers my identity, they may take out their vengeance on my loved ones. I will never forgive myself."

Then, addressing Zeba, Charlie asked, "What do you think of me? How much do your parents know? And do you know why Morgana targeted my grandparents' family twenty years later?"

Zeba replied truthfully, "Mr. Wade, I only know that your parents discovered the secret of longevity before Morgana did. That's why she ordered Gideon to hunt them down twenty years ago. However, I'm unaware of the reason behind targeting your grandparents' family after all this time."

Frowning, Charlie asked, "The secret of longevity? Gideon mentioned it several times, but I still don't know what it is exactly."

Zeba shook her head, saying, "I don't know either. It's just what Morgana mentioned. None of us four know the actual secret."

Charlie felt a pang of disappointment. He couldn't grasp the connection between the secret of longevity and the deep-seated animosity between his parents and Morgana. Nor could he fathom why, after two decades, Morgana still desired to exterminate his grandparents' family.

Maria suddenly recalled something and swiftly inquired, "Where is the current headquarters of the Warriors Den?"

Zeba answered, "It's located underground on an uninhabited island in South America, near the Antarctic Circle. I don't know the exact coordinates. The British authorities have always been vigilant against us. We travel by seaplane or small submarine, making our first stop in Argentina. However, during our stay in Argentina, we are cut off from the outside world, unable to enjoy any scenery or carry any modern devices like mobile phones when we reach the island."

Zeba added, "But it should be near the Antarctic Circle. If one conducts a thorough search, eliminating possibilities one by one, it's not impossible to find it."

Charlie shook his head, "I don't even know how to handle the three elders. How can I locate the Quintonghui's lair?"

Worriedly, Maria suggested, "Young master, why not consider leaving Aurous Hill immediately to ensure your safety? I suspect that none of your immediate family members collude with the Warriors Den. It's highly likely that the infiltrators have foreign surnames. Hence, you can only take the Evans family with you and maintain strict control over the dissemination of information, preventing any contact with the outside world. That way, you can ensure everyone's safety..."

"No," Charlie said resolutely. "Aurous Hill is my stronghold. My family and friends are here. I can't abandon them. Furthermore, if I run away, Morgana might discover my vulnerability and unleash her wrath upon my loved ones. I won't allow that to happen."

With determination in his eyes, Charlie continued, "Besides, can you really expect me to flee with everyone? Initially, I was still in the dark with Morgana. If I make such a conspicuous move, I would be walking into her trap."

Maria expressed her concerns, "Young master, while South America is vast, once those three elders are released from seclusion, Morgana will undoubtedly send them rushing to Aurous Hill as quickly as possible. They'll arrive within 24 hours. After that, leaving will be far more challenging..."

Charlie fell silent for a moment. His expression grew resolute as he exclaimed, "I won't go! The Evans family won't go either! If Morgana has set her sights on Aurous Hill, I'll play the 'Empty City Strategy' with her! Let's see if she dares to bring the fight here!"