

A huge boom echoed out as the rock shattered. As Bai Xiaochun waved the shrapnel aside, cold air came rushing in. The fire danced, its flickering light revealing a tall, sturdily built man standing outside.

He was muscular, with icy eyes, and a long spear in hand. He was in the eighth level of Qi Condensation, and seemed to be even stronger than Chen Yue had been. "The crown prince was dead on," he said. "With rain like this and injuries like yours, you couldn't handle the cold, and were forced to find a place like this to hide. I had to search over a hundred mountains before I found you, but here you are." Even as the words were still leaving the man's mouth, Bai Xiaochun's eyes blazed with ferocity as he leaped into action. Although the burly man seemed like the impulsive type, he was actually quite cautious. Instead of charging into the cave to fight, he actually fell back. In the blink of an eye, Bai Xiaochun was out of the cave and in the pouring rain. Clearly, the burly man didn't intend to actually fight, and was focused completely on defense. That caused Bai Xiaochun's heart to begin to thump. He was getting a very bad feeling, and yet he gritted his teeth and ignored any possibility of injury as he charged forward in a mad attack. A gust of frigid wind blew into the cave, extinguishing the fire. Hou Yunfei tried to struggle to his feet, but then coughed up another mouthful of blood. Du Lingfei gritted her teeth and hobbled to the mouth of the cave, where she performed an incantation gesture and pointed out, sending a flying sword shooting toward the burly man. A moment later, a bloodcurdling scream echoed out into the stormy night. The burly man had been stabbed through the chest by a wooden sword, and yet, in the moment before dying, he hurled his spear out, which partially stabbed into Bai Xiaochun's right thigh. The burly man glared at Bai Xiaochun. Groaning, he said, "You won't get away! The crown prince will be here soon!" Then he coughed up a mouthful of blood, and his head slumped over in death. Bai Xiaochun's face was pale, and he was trembling. In order to kill the man as quickly as possible, he had drawn upon so much energy that his injuries had worsened. Pain radiated up his right leg, and when he looked down, he saw the spear still embedded into his flesh. He was also soaked with rainwater, which intermixed with the blood to flow down onto the ground. He felt half frozen to death. Du Lingfei staggered over, and when she saw his leg, she began to weep. She reached out, grabbed hold of the spear, and gingerly pulled it out of his leg. To Bai Xiaochun, it felt as if his flesh and bones were being ripped apart. He trembled, but held back from shouting out. The dying words of his opponent, plus the fact that the man had obviously been trying to buy time, caused his heart to sink even lower than before. He could even sense fluctuations in the wind that told him it wouldn't be very long before more pursuing members of the Luo Chen Clan showed up. Du Lingfei threw his arm over her shoulder, and the two of them managed to get back into the cave. Bai Xiaochun kept the spear. Back in the cave, Bai Xiaochun began to pant. His right leg hurt, but thankfully the spear hadn't stabbed into the bone. After binding the wound, he could still feel it, but considering the mortal danger they were in, it wasn't a major issue. "We need to go. The Luo Chen Clan could show up at any moment!" Taking a deep breath, Bai Xiaochun slowly rose to his feet. He looked down at Hou Yunfei, and saw him laying there, struggling for breath. Their days of flight had been like a torment, and he was losing his ability to keep his injuries under control. Du Lingfei was sallow and wan. Her qi passageways had been severely injured, and some had even been severed. It had been an incredible struggle for her to emerge and help Bai Xiaochun in the fight earlier, and now all she could do was look up at him. In the darkness of the stormy night, her eyes seemed especially beautiful. "Junior Brother Bai...." she said softly. "Forget about us. You're much faster on your own.... Go!" Off to the side, Hou Yunfei struggled into a sitting position. Looking exhaustedly at Bai Xiaochun, he nodded in agreement. Bai Xiaochun's eyes were bloodshot as he said, "We can get out of the 5,000 kilometer area in only three days, guys, shut your m--" Before he could finish his sentence, Hou Yunfei cut him off. "Junior Brother Bai, you escaping and getting word to the sect is the best chance Junior Sister Du and I have...." Bai Xiaochun chuckled

bitterly. He was no three-year-old child to believe a lie like that. He knew that even if he did escape and get word to the sect, by the time anyone arrived to help... Hou Yunfei and Du Lingfei would already be dead. Seeing that Bai Xiaochun seemed determined to stay, Hou Yunfei started laughing. "Fine. If I die, then you'll leave, right?" A tremor ran through Bai Xiaochun as he realized that Hou Yunfei was stirring his last bit of spiritual energy as if to destroy his own qi passageways. Hou Yunfei looked at him calmly and continued, "Junior Brother Bai, are you going to go, or not?!" Bai Xiaochun was miserable and heartbroken. He took a few steps backward, mixed emotions on his face as he stared at Hou Yunfei and Du Lingfei. A gust of wind blew a strand of Du Lingfei's hair across her face. She tucked it behind her ear and looked at Bai Xiaochun. Although her face was ashen, somehow, she looked even more beautiful than ever. Her voice soft, she murmured, "I hope... if there's another life after this one... that I'll have the chance to meet you again.... Junior Brother Bai... you have to stay alive!" The instant Bai Xiaochun heard the words "stay alive," a violent tremor ran through him, and he felt as if he had been struck in the chest by a hammer. Taking another long look at Du Lingfei and Hou Yunfei, he finally turned and walked out of the cave, unsure of what exactly he was feeling inside. A moment later, he was speeding through the stormy night. Seeing that Bai Xiaochun had finally chosen to leave, Hou Yunfei let out a soft sigh. Du Lingfei watched him leave, wishing him the best in her heart. She truly wished... that she could make time flow in reverse, that she could return back to the time... when she had first met Bai Xiaochun. Everything was quiet for a moment, but then Hou Yunfei and Du Lingfei suddenly looked out in Bai Xiaochun's direction, and their faces flickered. His cultivation base was erupting with power, his internal spiritual energy surging outward, even causing the rainwater to distort. He was like a brightly burning torch on a dark night that not even the coldness brought by the rain could dispel. Even someone very far away would be able to sense it. Lightning snaked across the sky as Luo Chen Clan cultivators from several different directions suddenly sensed Bai Xiaochun. Chen Heng's eyes glittered as he looked in the direction of the upsurge of power. Bai Xiaochun flickered into motion, flying up the mountainside past the cave. As he flew by, Du Lingfei and Hou Yunfei could hear him whispering something to them. "I'll get their attention. You two find a way to escape... Come on, go!" Tears began to stream down Du Lingfei's face as her heart was battered by incredible waves of emotion. Hou Yunfei was likewise shaken. At the same time, Bai Xiaochun burst out with incredible speed as he picked a different direction to flee in. Bai Xiaochun sped along, cackling madly and crying out at the top of his lungs, "Dead! They're dead! Luo Chen Clan, I can't wipe all of you out, but the Spirit Stream Sect will definitely come and kill you all!" He appeared to be heading in a direction which would quickly lead out of the 5,000 kilometer area. Furthermore, from the way he was yelling, it seemed obvious that his two compatriots were dead, and that he was hysterical. Even if he might die in the attempt, he would break out and pass word to the sect, to make sure that revenge was had. Chen Heng instantly realized what was happening, and his face flickered. Although he couldn't be sure whether or not Bai Xiaochun was putting on an act, he could tell that, based on his current speed, he could succeed. Chen Heng definitely didn't dare to gamble with the fate of his sect by ignoring the threat. He immediately transmitted a message to the other Luo Chen Clan cultivators. "Everyone kill him! Even if his friends aren't dead, they're definitely seriously injured. We can track them down after we kill this one!" All of the Luo Chen Clan cultivators shot through the rain at top speed toward Bai Xiaochun. Lightning crashed and rain fell. Back in the darkness of the cave in the mountain, Du Lingfei gritted her teeth and wiped the tears off of her cheeks. Then, her eyes began to glow with determination. She knew that the only way to save Bai Xiaochun was to escape the 5,000 kilometer area and get word back to the sect. She looked over at Hou Yunfei, whose eyes flickered with the same determination as hers. "Don't worry about me," he said. "Let's split up. Whichever of us gets out first can bring help from the sect to save Junior Brother Bai!" Hou Yunfei was determined to use his last bit of energy to try to break out and get help for Bai Xiaochun, even if he died in the process. The two of them took deep breaths and then ran out into the rain, splitting up and heading in two different directions, calling upon all the strength they could manage. They were already on the verge of collapsing, but by sheer force of willpower, they managed to exceed the limits of their bodies. Thunder boomed and lightning fell. Bai Xiaochun was speeding along as fast as he could. He had already lost sensation in his right leg, and his eyes were crimson. A sensation of deadly crisis thrummed in every inch of his body. He was scared, terrified of dying, certain that death was right on his heels, on the very brink of swallowing him up. He

wasn't sure if his actions just now had been impulsive or not, or whether or not he might regret his decision. After all, the purpose of immortal cultivation was to live forever. In fact, there was still a voice in his head telling him... to run away on his own.... However, he couldn't forget the feeling of what it was like to be struggling with his two friends to survive. That feeling of facing the danger as a team was something he couldn't get rid of. He couldn't forget how Hou Yunfei had threatened to kill himself to get Bai Xiaochun to leave, nor the beautiful smile on Du Lingfei's ashen face. If he could only pick fear of death, or loyalty to friends, he would pick the latter! "Elder Sister Du, Elder Brother Hou, you have to stay alive!" Gritting his teeth, he flew onward with reckless abandon. "You want to wipe us out, Luo Chen Clan? Alright, bring it on!" Bai Xiaochun's eyes glowed with savage fury, like a caged animal ready to fight for its life.