

The interior of his bag of holding was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. There wasn't a single reply from inside. Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide, and he let out a threatening roar. And yet, nothing moved inside the bag.

Furious, he sealed it. Then, he chuckled coldly and closed his eyes to meditate. A few days later, after he'd fully recovered, he rotated his cultivation base and sent golden light streaming toward the Heavenspan Dharma Eye on his forehead. "Alright little mask, let's see if you can hide from me this time!" With a cold snort, he confirmed that he could force open his Heavenspan Dharma Eye again. With that, he unsealed his bag of holding, and then opened his third eye just a crack. A violet eye could just barely be seen as he looked into the bag of holding. In that instant, his mind trembled, and everything vanished. His bag of holding and everything else in it turned transparent, revealing a crumpled up mask off in the corner. It had concealed itself in the lining of the bag of holding, slowly merging into the side. Clearly, if it had been given enough time, it would have been able to fully merge into the material of the bag of holding, then secretly escape out the other side. As soon as Bai Xiaochun caught sight of it with his third eye, the mask trembled and unleashed a blinding light as it attempted to break out of the bag of holding. Before it could though, Bai Xiaochun snorted coldly, and sent spiritual power streaming into the bag of holding to grab onto the mask. After dragging it out from within the lining of the bag, he pulled it out and held it in his hand to examine it with his third eye. Strangely, only his third eye could see it. His other senses, including his normal eyes, couldn't detect its existence at all. "Weird," he thought. "How come I could see it back in the Fallen Sword World?" He couldn't sustain the use of his third eye for too long, so after closing it, he drew upon his nine spiritual seas, unleashing some Heaven-Dao aura. Immediately, the air above his palm began to distort, and soon, the mask became visible in front of him. It was now a flesh-colored mask! This was the mask he had tried to crush back in the Fallen Sword World. It seemed as delicate as the wings of a cicada, and also contained some strange aura that Bai Xiaochun couldn't clearly analyze. "Could it be cultivated using the waters of the Heavenspan River?" It was an aura that came from whatever material the mask had been constructed from, and Bai Xiaochun found it quite shocking. Then he thought back to how the soul of that Blood Stream Sect disciple entered the mask and then tried to flee. "I know you're in there!" he growled. "Show your face to Lord Bai!" However, there was no reaction from the mask. Eyes shining with viciousness, he tried to crush the mask, and yet no matter how much power he exerted, nothing happened. "Not gonna come out? You really think I have no way of dealing with you?" With that, he shot down the mountain to the bank of the Heavenspan River, where he cocked his hand back, as if to throw the mask in the water. That river water was the only thing Bai Xiaochun could think of that could melt just about anything. However, before he could actually throw the mask, it trembled and suddenly cried out, "Senior, let me say something!" "Ah, so you can talk now, huh?" Bai Xiaochun said, eyes gleaming ferociously. "Get out of that mask and tell me who you are!" A mist suddenly flowed out from the crumpled up mask, which rapidly took shape into a tiny person. Although he didn't look exactly like the person he had killed in the Fallen Sword World, he looked similar. Looking completely terrified, and trembling physically, he clasped hands and bowed to Bai Xiaochun. "Please grace me with your favor, Senior," he blubbered. "Your humble servant made a mistake, I know it. I'm an Inner Sect disciple from the Blood Stream Sect. My name is Nightcrypt...." After the catastrophe of the Fallen Sword World, he had remained in Bai Xiaochun's bag of holding. His plan had been to slowly make his escape, but before he could, Bai Xiaochun had found him. Originally, he hadn't been too worried, assuming that Bai Xiaochun wouldn't be able to hurt him. He had never imagined that he would threaten to melt him in the Heavenspan River. The spiritual power of the waters of the Heavenspan River was difficult to put into

words, and even some of the most powerful defensive treasures could be destroyed by it. When Bai Xiaochun heard the name 'Nightcrypt', he was a bit taken aback, and even felt a bit nervous. The name really was very intimidating. Whether the meaning of the name meant burying people at night, or entombing the night itself, it definitely felt profoundly murderous. [1. Generally speaking, I transliterate the names of characters, and translate Daoist names or nicknames. For Nightcrypt, I'm making a bit of an exception. This is supposed to be his actual name, not a Daoist name. So if I transliterated it, it would be Ye Zang. However, it's a completely ridiculous name in Chinese, the kind of name nobody would have in real life. It's supposed to sound cool/creepy/badass, except, sort of "made up" a.k.a. not a real name. To keep the outrageous flavor of the name, I'm going to translate it out instead of transliterating it. P.S. My apologies if anyone in the audience is actually named Nightcrypt, and is offended by me calling it a ridiculous name.] Looking askance at the trembling soul, Bai Xiaochun cleared his throat. "Well, your name could use some work. Doesn't sound very good, you know. Definitely not as good as mine." Nightcrypt gaped for a moment, the subserviently voiced his agreement. However, he didn't dare to say anything else. The truth was he was feeling very sorry for himself. The Blood Stream Sect had never paid much attention to him, and he had worked very hard to reach the great circle of Qi Condensation. Originally, he hadn't qualified to enter the Fallen Sword Abyss. The truth was that he had studied a strange mix of things in the Blood Stream Sect. In addition to a bit of knowledge of medicine concocting, he had also studied the sect's divination magic. He would often divine his own future, and although the results weren't always accurate, they had provided some benefits to his cultivation. Before the Fallen Sword Abyss was opened, his divination had revealed that he would come across some incredible good fortune if he went along. Although he didn't quite believe it at first, he got the same results after numerous divinations. Finally, he gritted his teeth and paid a huge price, even undergoing significant humiliation, to get himself a spot. Who would ever have thought that, not only did he not get any good fortune, he would end up the captive of the brutal Bai Xiaochun. "Lord Bai," he said, bowing continuously, "considering your incredible might, sir, why don't you just let me go? I can be a spy for you! I'll go back to the Blood Stream Sect and report back to you here at the Spirit Stream Sect. I-I-I can even swear an oath!" Bai Xiaochun looked over at him, then snorted coldly. "Spy? Presumably this is your true appearance, right? The Nightcrypt I killed is a different person than you! I can't believe you're trying to trick me! Bai Xiaochun hates it when people try to trick him! Prepare to die!" Glaring as fiercely as possible, he knelt down and prepared to drop the mask into the river. A wave rolled by that seemed just about to hit Nightcrypt, who screamed and trembled in fear. The sensation of imminent death he was experiencing surpassed anything he had felt in his life. Then he thought about all the humiliation he had endured in the sect, and he felt like crying. "Don't kill me! I'll tell you a huge secret!!" Bai Xiaochun sneered, even more distrustful than before. With that, he loosened his grip, and the mask began to fall. Nightcrypt was scared out of his mind as the waters of the river rushed up toward him. "No! I'm serious about this secret! It has to do with eternal indestructibility!!" A tremor ran through Bai Xiaochun. As far as he was concerned, the terms 'eternal' and 'indestructible' were essentially synonymous of 'undying' and 'live forever.' Without a moment of hesitation, his hand shot out with lightning-like speed to grab the mask. "You'd better not try to trick me," he said gravely. "You already know how much I hate it when people try to trick me!" "I'm telling the truth," Nightcrypt gushed. "There's a big secret about the Blood Stream Sect. They have a relic of eternity! Nobody else knows about it except me. Not even the patriarchs of the Blood Stream Sect are aware that such a heaven-defying object is hidden inside of their sect!!" "According to the legends, whoever gets that relic and unlocks it will be able to grasp the secrets of being eternally indestructible!!" "I'm not tricking you. I'm completely and utterly serious about this!!" From what Nightcrypt could tell, Bai Xiaochun was a very moody person, which was the most terrifying type of person there was. Glaring angrily, Bai Xiaochun prepared to throw the mask back into the river. "What a load of crap. The patriarchs of the sect don't know about that thing, but you do?" On the verge of tears, Nightcrypt finally blurted out everything. "I-I-I'm not really a disciple from the Blood Stream Sect. I'm an imposter...." As imposter Nightcrypt continued to explain the details, Bai Xiaochun's eyes went wide. It turned out that this imposter was someone who the real Nightcrypt hadn't even been aware of! He had started out as rogue cultivator in the third level of Qi Condensation, with relatively good latent talent. After being chased down by an enemy, he was on the verge of being killed when an enigmatic savior from a mysterious sect appeared.

His savior had been in a bit of a rush, so after a moment of thought, gave him a mask and told him to find an Outer Sect disciple in the Blood Stream Sect named Nightcrypt. His mission was to take his place and carry out a certain task. The savior had even hexed the imposter's soul. The real Nightcrypt was actually dead by now. However, he had occupied a relatively stable position in the Blood Stream Sect. One of his ancestors had performed a great service for the Blood Stream Sect, and because of that, Nightcrypt had been guaranteed a place in the Inner Sect. The imposter's mysterious savior had visited him a second time to explain further details of his mission, which was to secretly acquire the relic of eternal indestructibility. His savior had described its appearance, and even told him where it was located. Apparently, there was a huge door guarding the way, the key to which was a unique medicinal pill. The pill wasn't difficult to concoct; even an ordinary apothecary could do it. Unfortunately, no matter who concocted it, the success rate would be fifty-fifty. Furthermore, the ingredients were very rare. Collecting them all would be a very difficult task. Thankfully, his mysterious savior's sect was very rich, and had already collected most of the ingredients. The only thing lacking was some beastbirth blood. After replacing Nightcrypt and becoming a Blood Stream Sect disciple, everything went smoothly at first. He soon became an Inner Sect disciple, but quickly came to find that he had difficulty cultivating the techniques of the Blood Stream Sect. Although he had good latent talent, he wasn't suited for blood cultivation. This problem grew worse and worse until he got stuck in the eighth level of Qi Condensation. Gradually, the sect lost interest in him, and even his mysterious savior didn't provide any help. For several miserable years, he had continued to cultivate alone in painstaking fashion.... His mysterious savior's sect was a very, very long way away from the Blood Stream Sect, and there were other things that made it difficult to go back and forth between the two. Furthermore, he wasn't able to directly plunder the relic of eternal indestructibility himself. Because of that, he only appeared three times, and those three times had all been by means of a projection, and apparently came at great cost. The first time was when he arranged for Nightcrypt's soul replacement. The second time was when imposter Nightcrypt became an Inner Sect disciple. The fanfare surrounding that event didn't seem to please his mysterious savior, but didn't stop him from explaining the details of the relic of eternal indestructibility. That was also when he gave imposter Nightcrypt the ingredients to concoct the medicinal pill, and explained that his mysterious sect would continue to search for the final ingredient. The third time he appeared was right before imposter Nightcrypt entered the Fallen Sword World. He'd explained that if he couldn't reach Foundation Establishment, that he would have to give up the mask and abandon his spy work. Imposter Nightcrypt had been left with no choice but to rely on his divination skills to illuminate the correct path ahead. Everything after that was history.... "Is that sect full of idiots?" Bai Xiaochun blurted. "Why would they possibly pick you to be their spy? Furthermore, how could the Blood Stream Sect never have suspected you?!" In his opinion, either Nightcrypt was lying, or the mysterious sect was full of fools. Of course, perhaps there was some other factor that Bai Xiaochun was unaware of, something that gave the mysterious sect no other choice than to rely on the Nightcrypt soul replacement plan.