

DEMON SLAYER

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Summary

二十八: Story of the Four Brothers

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[B] [C] Contents

Sui Long continued to polish his sword in the empty house. By now, everyone has left and he is alone. He continued to polish the sword with an angry look in his eyes. It is unfortunate that no one was here to see the look on his face, for it is the look of someone who was about to do something very irrational. He continued to clean the blade with a hand cloth, a redundant task he has been doing for the past few hours, as his mind was bent on revenge.

He went to Jiang Ye's tombstone and took off his straw hat and mask and stared at the inscription for a long time. It is true what they say, you do not treasure someone until they are gone. Staring at the tombstone, Sui Long had a flash back of his first meeting with the War God.

Sui was on the run from the law. The East Brigade, a unit of law enforcers who work under the high eunuchs, were after him and chased him all the way to the Valley of Death. They were hot on his trail and he went into the valley, thinking that no one will go there because they would be afraid of the rumors. He was right; none of the soldiers would chase him beyond that territory. However, this put him in grave danger.

As Sui walked down the mountainous area, he felt someone following him. "Who's there?" he asked, looking around cautiously.

"You dare to trespass into the Valley of Death?" said a distant voice. Suddenly, a man jumped down and landed behind him.

Sui turned around and saw the War God for the first time – he was wearing battle armor and a straw hat that covered most of his facial features. Sui Long was startled, but he did not panic like most would. "You are the Legendary War God?"

"Knowing that you still came here? You sure have guts."

"I did not come here to fight you." Sui said. "I was on the run from the imperials. All I want to do is survive."

"Enough of these stories!" Genzo drew his sword and charged forward at lightning speed.

Sui Long quickly dodged. *Whoosh* If he had reacted a second too late, it could have been fatal. Obviously, the War God is no mood to listen, and he had no choice but to fight.

Genzo charged at him and slashed. *Clang Cling* They jumped away from each other.

Sui panted for breath. He could not keep up with someone of his opponent's caliber. "You truly are as good as the legends say. It must be my unlucky day."

"Just because you said that doesn't mean I am going to go easy on you." said Genzo. His Fire Sword began to glow and flames grew out of it.

Sui was shocked. "That's the legendary artifact the Fire Sword! The fact that you possess it means...that you're Genzo, one of the Four Brothers!"

Genzo lowered his head. "Since you know my identity, you must die today." He charged and slashed.

Sui dodged, but was hit in the stomach. *Slish* He fell on one knee and stuck his blade to the ground. "Ugh..."

As the War God approached, ready to make a move, Sui put his palm up. "I apologize for intruding into your territory...you truly are as good as the rumors say. I want you to be my master!"

"What was that?"

Sui bowed down with his forehead on the ground. "I want you to take me in as your student! You are the best swordsman I have ever come across!"

"Grrr. Is this some sort of joke?"

"Please, take me as your disciple...or finish me off. Either way it is fine."

Suddenly, Genzo was no longer in a killing mood. The Fire Sword lost its glow and he put it back into its sheath. "I do not take students. Now leave." The War God walked away.

At nightfall, everyone was tired and returned to their quarters. Alex cannot sleep and decided to get out of bed. He searched for Sui Long and expected him to be in his bedroom, but he was not there. He checked the living room, and he also was not there. Apparently he left a note on a table.

Alex read it with wide open eyes. He crumbled it. "No...Sui Long!" He ran out of the house.

Gallop gallop Sui was now seen riding a horse. He pulled the reins hard, making his horse run at full speed, for he was in a hurry. His heart was aching for revenge, and to him there is no room for hesitation.

The War God came to the mountainous cave and saw the same swordsman he ran into the other day. "You again?" he muttered out loud.

Sui Long kneeled. "I am asking you to accept me as your disciple, Master Genzo!"

"That is not how you address me." replied he.

"But you are Master Genzo, the renowned swordsman. You have the Fire Sword in your possession, which means you are Genzo."

"Genzo is already dead. He died a long time ago. The person you see before you is a wanted murderer."

"So am I!" Sui Long replied. "I have no place to go, so please, take me as your student!"

"You sure are a persistent one, aren't you?"

Sui Long's eyes lit up, as it was a compliment coming from the great one himself. "Yes. I will do whatever you say if you accept me. I don't mind the hardships. Just teach me sword craft and I will be completely obedient to you."

Genzo realized that this person is going to do whatever it takes and will not give up. His continuous refusal will only make him more determined. What a bother, he thought to himself.

Genzo turned around. "I do not take students. Leave before I change my mind and you to my death count."

"I know you are not that kind of person, master!" Sui Long shouted.

The War God froze for a moment, for those words struck him somehow. Those words have some truth to them...no, it is not true at all. What would this

youngster know about my struggles, he thought to himself. He doesn't understand a thing at all.

Sui Long walked into the courtyard, very well knowing that he could die today. He will either spill the blood of his enemy, or die trying, and that is his resolve. The notorious duo, Jin and Roh, were waiting for him.

"Brother, look, he actually came." said Jin.

"He thinks he can take us alone? I did not think a student of the War God would be so foolish."

"He's underestimating us. I will teach him a lesson."

Roh put his arm forward. "No. I will do it." said he, walking forward to face his foe.

Sui and Roh stared at each other without saying a word. The wind blew hard and the tension of these two forces can be felt right away.

"You killed Jiang Ye. And today I must avenge him." said the masked man in the straw hat, Sui Long.

"You should've stayed in the palace where it's safe. Coming here to challenge us directly is a foolish mistake...and your last."

"Your days are numbered!" Sui drew his sword and charged forward. Roh drew his blade as well and they clashed into each other. *Clang* After a few hits, they jumped back.

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While they were fighting, Alex was hurrying to the scene, panting for breath. He ran a long way, but he must continue, not stopping to rest, for he must save his friend.

Clang Roh blocked Sui's attack. "Ohh, not bad. You are worthy of being the number one student of the War God."

Sui grunted as they were in a power lock, and he pushed and Roh stepped back, dodging the swing.

"Quite violent, aren't we? I will send you to see your master in hell!"

Sui Long screamed and charged forward as his enemy charged at him. They went past each other and stood there for a moment. Sui thought he inflicted a wound on Roh, but in fact, it is him who was wounded. His straw hat was cut in half, and his mask fell off.

"Impossible..." His coughed blood and fell to the ground.

Sui now realized that he had a lost, and victory is not possible at this point. His life is now over, for he had thrown it away. But he had no regrets, for it was his choice to come here. To kill or be killed, that was his motto from day one, and his meeting with Master Genzo were woven by the hands of fate.

"Young man, I must say, I have never met anyone as persistent as you. I shall teach you sword craft."

"Master Genzo..."

Roh walked over to the bleeding man and stabbed him one last time, ending his life instantly.

Alex ran to the scene and saw the fallen Sui Long, lying on a pool of his own blood. Then he glared at the Demon Brothers. "You...you did this to him!"

Roh and his brother Jin jumped over the wall, escaping in their ninja like fashion. Alex, still in shock, walked over to Sui Long. He touched the man's pulse, and thus confirming what he already knew.

"Sui Long...SUI LONG!" Alex screamed at the top of his lungs. His legs grew weak, and he fell on his knees, and continued to scream the name of his friend.

Li arrived, but she was too late. Standing by the entrance, she felt awkward being there, and hid behind the wall, and cried silently.

Tears spilled out of his eyes and rolled down his face as he sobbed. Never did he imagine he'd cry this hard; nor did he remember crying this much for anybody before. During Duke Xiang's reign, Shen Long and Sui Long were assigned to be Alex's bodyguards, and the remained as such after Xiang's death. Though they wore masks all the time, Alex trusted them completely. He never thought of them as bodyguards, but allies; no, as friends.

They were there for him when he was attacked by the mercenary Tao, when he raided the palace to save King Liu, and countless other occasions on his journey.

These tears were tears of sadness, anger, and regret; sad that both his friends are gone, anger at the ones who killed Sui Long, and regret that he did not come sooner. Would it have made a difference if he arrived earlier? He will never find out.

The heroes now grieve over two deaths instead of one. It is unfortunate that things turned out this way. If they had stayed in the palace, could their deaths have been prevented? Yet, if Shen Long did not go to rescue his sister, would Xiao Ye and Li Cheng have died instead?

Shen Long wanted to see his sister so badly, he'd go to any length to keep her safe, and as a result, shielded her from the rain of arrows. They fell into the devious trap of the Demon Brothers. Sui Long, who always acts with a clear head, upon losing his long time friend, acted out of anger, and lost his life in a duel with Roh Demos. One thing led to another, and there are many possible outcomes that could have occurred, but alas, it is too late to discuss them, for the story must move on.

Everyone is restless from the fighting and grieving. A lot has happened lately and they need some quiet, but there is no time to rest, for they must plan their next step.

Xiao was sitting by herself in the corner, holding onto her weapon while everyone was discussing the next right step.

"Sui Long ran off by himself to take revenge? What was he thinking?" Zi said.

Alex was standing by the window, looking at the sky. "Sui Long and Shen Long are gone now. There is nothing we can do to bring them back. We need to save our anger for the battlefield." It was hard for him to say this, but in this situation, he must say this because everyone was depressed and gloomy.

"This is all Liu Zhang's doing. The Demon Brothers are in alliance with him. He is the source of all our troubles...that traitor eunuch."

"The problem is that we cannot find him since the rebellion." said Zi.

"Shu Tai reported to me that his forces broke down a fort in the border of the city." said Alex. "They managed to escape Yi Ling. This is bad because once they are outside the city, we have less control because of the distance."

Li took out a map. "Yi Ling has roads that connect to three other cities, one of them being Yi Ting, called the Commoner's Paradise. It is the biggest province of the kingdom. This is where he would most likely hide to avoid being found. Yi Ting, however, connects to two other cities. They could be anywhere within this area." She made a circle on the map.

"That is too big of an area to search." Celina commented. "We cannot freeze every suspect city. Each one of them has their own magistrates who set their own rules."

"This cannot be..." Zi said. "How could we have lost track of an entire group of rebels?"

"This goes to show you how clever Zhang is." Li replied. "He is not to be underestimated."

"Heh." Zi said, "I bet he's hiding in some cave like a coward."

"Don't be stupid. Knowing the type of person Zhang is, he always plans ahead. If I were him, I'd figure out how to regroup my army and stage my comeback."

"To search the entire area that Li mentioned would take too much time." Alex said. "Also, how do we know if the magistrate hasn't been bribed by Liu Zhang? There are so many things we need to consider."

"I know someone who can find them." Xiao said, gaining everyone's attention. She has been silent the whole time, so they assumed that she was still grieving over her brother's death. "If we cannot rely on the authorities or the imperials, then there is one organization that can do the job."

Li knew the answer. "You mean-"

"The Council of Heaven."

"Of course!" Alex said, hitting his own palm. "They are an information network made up of swordsmen and they have hideouts in all the major provinces. Although they are considered criminals by law, they claim they deliver justice for the good of the country. If anyone can find Liu Zhang, they can."

"But the problem is how do we get into the Council?" Celina asked.

"Leave that to me." said Li. "I have connections there." Xiao glanced at Li with much curiosity on her face.

Li took her group to see Vincent Chan. "Ah Ms. Cheng, I am glad you decided to seek our help."

"We need the resources of the Council of Heaven to find the traitor eunuch, Liu Zhang." said Li.

"I assure you that you will not regret your decision." said he, putting a fan over his face. "Ah, this must be the famous Demon Slayer." He eagerly shook Alex's hand. "It is an honor to meet you."

"The honor is all mine." Alex replied.

"Yes, let me introduce you to everybody." said Li. "This is of course, my brother, Alex Cheng. This is Xiao Ye."

Xiao waved. "Hi!"

"This is Lady Ce."

Celina bowed. "Nice to meet you."

"And this is Zi Lai, Alex's servant."

Zi was displeased. (I'm a servant now?)

"It is a pleasure to meet you all, and I hope to become better acquainted with you. I will take you to our secret headquarters. No one followed you here, correct?"

"We've taken precautions, so rest assured. Please take us to the meeting."

Vincent took them to a backdoor alley, a place in the slums of the province where no one would want to step into. This is the perfect place to have a hideout for an organization of this size. Vincent opened a trap door on the ground which revealed a staircase, thus, they walk down the staircase, only to be met by a steel door. He knocked on the door twice.

"Do you know that birds cannot fly up to heaven?" said a male's voice on the other side.

"Only angels can fly that high." Vincent replied.

"That is the right password." Cho opened the door. "Welcome Vincent. Oh, you have company today. Please come in."

Vincent took the group into a room where there was a golden Buddha statue in the front.

"Everyone, please remember that now you have been exposed to the Council, you must keep our secrets to yourselves and tell no one. Do not tell outsiders of our activities, especially the authorities. Our bases are located all over the kingdom; this is our headquarters in Yi Ling. In order for our members to recognize one another, we have a password phrase that we use. The first person says 'Birds cannot fly up to heaven.' The second person will respond with 'Only angels can fly that high.' The pass phrase changes periodically, and you will be notified only if you are a regular attendee of our meetings."

Alex was impressed with all the security that this organization is taking. The organization works with the utmost secrecy, and that is why they have never been caught by the East Brigade. "Thank you for showing us all this."

"Naturally, because we consider you our comrades." Vincent replied. "Even though you're an imperial, Demon Slayer, you are considered a hero amongst our organization. Your name has been mentioned countless times ever since you became famous. However, should you betray us, you will become enemies of the Council, and you will never be forgiven."

"Understood." Alex replied.

"Our headmaster, Taishi, only speaks to members of the Council of Heaven. Before you meet him, you must agree to be members and abide by our oath."

Zi had a look of hesitancy on his face, and he glanced at Alex, who glanced at Celina. Xiao, however, stood up. "I trust the Council of Heaven, and I have no problem abiding by the oath. Your secrets are safe with us, Mr. Chan."

After Xiao's declaration, Zi, Alex, Li, and Celina also agree to it.

"Good." Vincent said, fanning himself. "I know you are in a hurry, so we will do the initiations another time."

Celina raised her hand. "Did you say that the headmaster's name is Taishi...could he be Taishi Tze, the legendary swordsman and one of the Four Brothers?"

"That is precisely him." Cho replied.

The old man they speak of entered the room, and his magnificence can be felt instantly. His long, white beard reached all the way down to his chest. Tradition says that the longer the beard, the wiser that person is, particularly if the beard is white. His eyebrows were long enough to reach his cheekbones, and the hair on his head was long as well. Nearly everything about his appearance is a picturesque example of a powerful and wise man.

"Greetings, friends. Vincent told me that you would be coming." He sat down. "Please, sit."

"Master Taishi...it is good to finally meet the legendary person himself." Alex said. "You are just as the rumors say, wise and skilled."

"I have many books written about you, and heard stories of your heroic exploits against demons." said Celina. "But reading is one thing, and to meet you in person is a completely different thing. It is an honor to meet you, sir."

Taishi rubbed his beard and smiled. "Oh ho ho ho. You youngsters do know how to respect your elders."

Xiao stood up and stood in the center of the room. "Master Tze...it really is you. It has been a while, hasn't it? Master!" She kneeled before him. "Xiao Ye pays respects to Master Tze."

The others watched in awe. "Does she know him?" Zi asked.

Taishi was awed. "Xiao Ye...is that really you? Your eyes are open?"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "I can see your face at last."

"Oh, you are no longer blind. How splendid. Stand up." said he.

Xiao stood up.

"I assume you know each other?" Li commented.

"Master Taishi taught me how to use the Walking Crane Style. I happened to run into him one day when I was attacked by a hoodlum. He saved my life and offered to teach me martial arts."

"Now it makes sense." Li said. "He taught you how to fight when you could not see. You could not have taught yourself the Walking Crane."

"Who would have known?" said Celina. "This is a small world after all. Since you are Xiao Ye's master, this means we are all on the same side."

"Well said." Taishi stood up. "Please, come with me so we discuss what you are here for." Taishi took the guests into another room.

There are no chairs in this one, except for some mats, so they kneel down. Taishi sat with his legs crossed. A man came in to pour tea for them and promptly left the room.

The old man touched his beard and began. "Is that..." he asked, looking at Alex's sheath.

Alex handed the sword to him, and Taishi took it out of its sheath. After careful examination, he said: "This is indeed the Fire Sword, the weapon used by Master Genzo. It has been over fifty years since I have seen this sword. He entrusted it to you, so you are the owner of it."

"Yes, this was the last thing he gave me. I never got the chance to repay him...and now he's..."

"Did he leave any last words?" inquired Taishi.

"No, I was not there when he was murdered." Alex replied.

"I am sorry about the death of your master. He was my comrade for many decades." Taishi handed the sheath back to Alex. "Genzo was my most trusted comrade. He was extremely reliable and skillful on the battlefield. His skills far surpass that of mine. He is a true legend, and that is why he was dubbed the War God. Unfortunately no one knew who he truly was."

"I have something to show you." said Li. She gave him the Ice Sword.

Taishi examined it just as he examined the Fire Sword, with a nostalgic look in his eyes. "The Legendary Ice Sword...how did you come into possession of this? Did you steal it from Chu Yen?"

"No, I took it from Rubble, the Ice Hunter. He was given the Ice Sword from Chu Yen."

"Master Taishi," said Alex, "Vincent told us that you have all the answers that we seek. We have many things to ask you today. We have already lost many of our comrades, and we do not wish to lose more."

"Rumors have it that a swordsman by the name of Ragnarok slain the War God. It is said that he is a true hero and one who represents justice and benevolence. But this Ragnarok person is most likely Chu Yen."

Li banged her fist on the table. "I knew it! My suspicions were correct. He is the one who killed my master."

"He attacked Genzo hoping to take the Fire Sword, however, he had already given it to you, Cheng. Thus, Chu Yen grew upset and killed Genzo. He is a traitor to the Brotherhood. How could this have happened to the Four Brothers...Genzo, Chu Yen, Rajun, and myself...it was fifty years ago yet I remember it like it was yesterday."

The Four Brothers stood on a cliff and they raised their swords together. "All for one and one for all!"

"We made an oath of brotherhood under heaven after we found the legendary swords. These swords were forged by the legendary blacksmith Cho' Ann0. His background is unknown and nothing is known about him, except that he is exceptionally good; no, he was the best at forging swords. However, before his death, he dispersed the legendary swords to different locations. Each one of us had to go through much hardship to acquire them. I, with the Thunder Sword, Rajun with the Wind Sword, Chu Yen, wielding his Ice Sword, and Genzo holding his Fire Sword – we were invincible.

After we formed the pact of brotherhood, we drove the demons out of our land. The land that you live in now...is no longer infested by demons thanks to the work we did. We were at the height of our careers, and back then I was young and at the peak of my physical abilities. But things only went downhill from there."

"How did the Brotherhood fall apart? Was it because of Chu Yen?" Li asked.

"It is precisely as you said. Every tragedy that occurred was because of him. Being the youngest one of the four, he was physically strong but mentally unstable. He turned against us before we knew what happened."

[C] Title Contents

One day, in the old city of **Seirun**, a soldier was harassing a girl on the street. He was holding her arm while she tried to get away. "Come on baby, let's go on a date."

"Let me go, you jerk!" she pushed him away, and made a run for it.

He grabbed her hand. "You refuse me? It's a privilege you won't get in ten lifetimes."

Suddenly, a tomato was thrown at the soldier's face. "Who dares?"

The man who did it was a friend of the girl, and the girl ran to him and hid behind him.

"Don't go around and harass whoever you feel like." yelled the young man.

The soldier approaches him. "How dare you...do you know who I am? I am a Red Soldier!"

"Tch. Just because you're a Red Soldier doesn't mean you can do as you please. The Red Army is supposed to protect the citizens."

The soldier became more displeased. "You insolent..." He drew a sword and pointed it at that man's neck. "Assaulting an officer like me is a crime."

The girl shrieked and the man grew nervous. "If you're going to arrest me, do it. Leave her out of this."

"You have no say in the matter." A hand touched the troop's shoulder. "What is it?" Upon seeing one of the Four Brothers, his attitude quickly changed. "Master Genzo."

"Let them go. A Red Soldier like you can be forgiving, can't you?"

"B-But he assaulted me."

"A tomato in the face can hardly be called an assault. Maybe he wanted to give you free food? These people are my friends. Give me face and let them go." said Genzo.

"Yes, my lord." The troop turned to the girl and the young man. "You're in luck today." With that, he walked away.

The girl and her protector thanked Genzo a dozen times. Genzo, however, remained modest and insisted they do not need to pay him back.

Later on, Genzo confronted Chu Yen regarding the matter. "Chu, you are getting too arrogant. Your soldiers are becoming like you."

"I don't know what you're talking about." Chu replied. "We have agreed to split the country into four sections, and each one of us will rule our own section. I know how to govern my section, the Red Territory."

"And you have done a poor job, Chu. Your soldiers are spoiled and arrogant, and they show no regard for the well being of the people. Your leadership is lacking and it is being revealed in the morale of the Red Soldiers."

Chu turned around. "Tch, listen Genzo, you have no right to tell me how to govern my territory. You worry about running your territory. I do not need you to teach me how it is done." He walked away, leaving a bitter feeling between them.

That was merely one incident in which those bitter feelings were revealed. Chu Yen and Genzo have often argued in front of Rajun and Taishi. Genzo usually has the final say because he is the senior and he is wiser than Chu is, which makes Chu frustrated.

Chu sat by the window in the dark, looking out the tower. He was extremely displeased with Genzo, who happens to be the leader of the Brotherhood. He feels superior to the other three, and feels that Genzo is holding him back. ([How dare he...trespass into my territory? I have had it with Genzo.](#)) Over that night, he thought long and hard, and came up with a solution.

Taishi and Rajun burst into the room, upon hearing the urgent news. "Chu, what happened?"

"Genzo took the Fire Sword, and he stole the other three legendary swords as well."

"What did you say?" Rajun asked.

"That's impossible!" Taishi said. "Why would he do such a thing."

"It had to be him!" Chu replied. "Only we have access to the swords. Genzo has been planning this from the beginning. He wants all the power for himself. I have already put a search party for him, and once they see him, he is to be arrested!"

Taishi put his hand on Chu's shoulder. "Hold on, we do not have all the facts yet."

Chu shook his hand off. "Tch. If not Genzo, then who did it? Do you think it was me? Or perhaps it is one of you two?"

Taishi and Rajun remained silent.

Genzo was walking peacefully along the road, and suddenly, Red Soldiers appeared in front of him. Behind him, two other troops appeared. Chu Yen revealed himself. "Where are you going, Masai Genzo?"

"Yen, what is the meaning of this?"

"Funny, I should be asking you that question. Where have you taken the other three legendary swords?"

"Stolen? What are you talking about?"

"You dare betray the Four Brothers. You are a disgrace, Masai."

Genzo suddenly realized what Chu was up to. "You are framing me for stealing them? That is low, even for you, Yen!"

Chu smiled. "Hand over the swords or else..."

The troops pointed their swords at him and stepped forward. Genzo drew the Fire Sword and fought his way through. *Slash* He ran away.

"After him!" Chu yelled. "Get that traitor!"

Taishi continued his lengthy explanation. "Ever since that day, Masai Genzo became a fugitive. He was no longer our leader, but a criminal, and he could no longer stay in his own territory, and escaped to the wilderness. He reached a place called the Deep Valley, but later it became known as the Valley of Death. I have not seen Master Genzo since that day. Over time, his real name was forgotten, and he became the War God.

Unfortunately, we were too late to catch on to Yen's plot. By the time we figured it out, he framed us for treason as well. It is a good thing that Rajun escaped with the Wind Sword, and Genzo took the Fire Sword with him. I lost my Thunder Sword and was expelled from my own territory. I too, became a fugitive, but I fought back my own way."

"So that is what happened on that day." said Li. "It is all starting to add up now."

"What happened to Rajun?" Alex asked.

"His whereabouts are still unknown to this very day." Taishi said. "My information network covers all four kingdoms, yet I am still unable to find him. He is the type of person who can never be found if he wishes not to be."

"Could it be possible that he killed Master Genzo?" Alex inquired.

"No." Taishi said. "He is the least likely one to do so, he was always on Genzo's side, and he is not the traitor type. It had to be Chu Yen...who has now renamed himself to Ragnarok. His name is now famous in the martial arts world. This is probably what he planned...to spread the name of Ragnarok to gain support of the martial arts world."

"It was him...I saw him in the palace." Li said, clenching a fist. "I am sure of it. He is Liu Zhang's student."

Alex suddenly recalled fighting someone during the Red Feather Rebellion with exceptional skill. His opponent, however, never introduced himself, but his face resembles that of Taishi's description - a young, arrogant fighter who wears a yin-yang headband.

"Liu Zhang is the one who turned Chu Yen against us...at least that is what he calls himself today."

"What do you mean?" asked Celina. "Did he have a name prior to that one?"

"The demon's original name was Ko-Rashm. He renamed himself Liu Zhang so he can hide himself within the royal family." Taishi explained. "This crafty demon changes his appearance and identity every few decades."

"But in the Liu family, there is someone named Liu Zhang who is a distant relative of Liu Bei." Celina said.

"The real Liu Zhang was killed by Ko-Rashm a long time ago. I suspect the same thing happened to Duke Xiang. The demon killed the duke and changed its appearance to that of the duke, and waited for the right time to strike."

"According to what you said, Master Tze, there could be more demons lurking in the palace?" said Li.

"That is quite possible." Taishi replied, rubbing his beard. "We have not confirmed if there are any more demons being disguised as eunuchs or high-ranking nobles, but do not be surprised if there are. Liu Zhang is a clever one and always has elaborate schemes. You must take caution when dealing with him, for he is a formidable foe in skill and intelligence. This demon has been alive for five hundred years."

Xiao nearly spit out her tea. "Five hundred years?"

"Ko-Rashm, or Liu Zhang, as he is known, has mastered virtually every sword style and martial arts style in the world during his five hundred years of existence. He is familiar with all of your fighting styles and every stance and combination in association with it. This demon, who has defeated countless masters, is called the **Vanishing Warrior**."

"The Vanishing Warrior? I've heard of it somewhere." said Li.

"As the name suggests, he shows up, kills everyone in sight and vanishes without a trace. Over the centuries, countless deaths of martial arts experts have remained unsolved...these deaths have been spread all over the country. It is believed to be done by the same demon, and in folklore he is called the Vanishing Warrior. He is probably the single deadliest swordsman in the world."

Everyone was too shocked for words. Alex suddenly remembered something that Liu Cao told him: Take caution when dealing with Liu Zhang, he is stronger than you think he is. Alex felt extremely uncomfortable and he spoke up. "So this is the enemy that we've been dealing with...someone who has five hundred years of combat experience...and to top it off, he has Chu Yen under his wing. Our enemy is this strong?"

"Even if he is unbeatable, he is only one man." Li said, being her usual arrogant self.

"He is one man with one of the Four Brothers as his disciple, and an entire army of rebels who are willing to follow his orders." said Zi, nullifying Li's statement. "He single handedly caused the death of the former king, started a rebellion and injured our current king. Also, the Demon Brothers are somehow under his command. Duke Xiang was probably one of his subordinates. This is someone we cannot take lightly..."

"He also has financial backing from three of the high eunuchs who served under Liu Bei - Lord Huong, Lord Sima and Lord Fei. I am afraid that this one may be too big for us." said Celina, clenching her fists on her lap.

"Our foe may be powerful, but it is not impossible to defeat him." said Taishi, making everyone feel a little at ease. "This is what the Council of Heaven is designed for, to deal with situations like these. Our purpose is to protect mankind from being corrupted by evil, whether the evil are demons or humans. We shall further discuss this at another time. You are now members of the Council, so please do not act without consulting with me first. It is getting late, why not take a rest? I will have my men prepare your quarters."

"Thank you, Master Tze. That information was extremely valuable." said Alex. He and everyone else stood up and left the room.

After hearing something so unsettling, Alex had to find out the truth for himself. Celina suggested they do research in the imperial library, the biggest source of knowledge in the kingdom. They went alone since they were the only ones who had access to the library.

"Wow." Alex exclaimed. This is his first time in the library and he was awed at how big it was. Celina's description of "big" is an understatement. There were countless shelves with spacious aisles in between. Each shelf stacked up as tall as the ceiling and the books on the top required a ladder to reach them.

Celina's reaction was the complete opposite since she spent much time here as a concubine. In her free time she'd come here to write letters to Liu Cao, her only penpal. Tai was her trusted friend but he was always busy with duties and they never had time to chat. When she's not writing letters, she'd read books in her areas of interest - the history of sword styles, the art of doctoring, and politics.

"Let's begin, shall we?"

"Uhhh you've been here before right? I may need some guidance."

Celina smiled. "Mmm. Of course."

After hours of searching, Celina found a book of relevance. "Look!" She flipped the pages. "I found the records of the Liu family's history. Liu Zhang's record is on page 300. And here's a picture of him." The picture of Liu Zhang was done in black ink, it was rough but detailed. The man had a pointy black beard with a mustache to compliment it, and wearing a lord's hat. They have seen Liu Zhang in person and the picture is nearly a perfect representation of him.

"Celina, look at this." Alex put down a book and flipped the pages. "Here is a record of the eunuchs and warlords during the Han Dynasty. This is the crazy part." There were portraits of all the warlords...and one of them was named Duwei and his face was the same as Liu Zhang's. "It's the same person."

"But that record was over 100 years ago!"

"The artists who drew this were the best of their time. There is no mistake about it. I'm sure if I look up prior records of the Han Dynasty, more portraits of him will show up. Taishi is right about him being the Vanishing Warrior...he's over **500 years old.**"

After the talk, Taishi sat by himself in the empty room. He was no longer in the mood to drink tea. The information he gave out was confidential, yet he felt it was right time to tell the youngsters...because he has a feeling that these ambitious individuals can change the future of the Council.

There are still many uncertain things, however. Was the War God's death part of Liu Zhang's ploy, or was it Chu Yen acting on his own? Taishi has been trying to catch the Vanishing Warrior for fifty years. Not only is the enemy 500 years old, but he has mastered every sword style that has ever existed, is a master of politics and a mastermind. Can he really defeat this ancient and powerful foe?

二十九: The Calm Before the Storm: Taishi's Training

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After Jiang Ye's tragic and untimely death, his old friend Sui Long goes to challenge Roh to avenge him, but he failed and became a casualty himself. After losing two valuable friends, the heroes went into lamentation and seek a new answer in their quest. It was Xiao Ye who then suggested they visit the Council of Heaven, where the famous Taishi Tze awaits them. Being one of the former Four Brothers, as well as headmaster of the most impressive information network in the kingdom, Taishi tells them of many things that are related to the past and present. Their enemy is no ordinary foe, for he is the 500 year old Vanishing Warrior. After hearing such disturbing news, the heroes now realize they have a long way to go before they can fight such a powerful enemy...

As instructed by Alex, Zi is to return to the palace to help finish the reparations. Tai happened to see him and approached him to talk. "Zi. How are you?"

"I'm fine, thank you, Captain Tai." replied he.

"The reparations are almost complete, as I can see. You have done well."

"Please, don't say that. This is not a job that I'm cutout for." said Zi.

"Oh?"

"Managing something like this just isn't for me. All this fighting and killing isn't for me either."

"But you are Alex's servant, aren't you. I'm sorry, I meant his friend." said Tai. "You have been with him since the beginning."

"I know. But with Sui Long and Shen Long's death, I have a feeling that things are only going to get worse...Alex is not going to stop here. I just want to live a peaceful life, like that of a wealthy man, to eat well and have fun with lots of women. I don't know about anything else."

"I understand." replied Tai. "But you are choosing to stay here, no? You can flee any time you want."

"I guess you're right." Zi replied. "I guess this stuff is too interesting to leave behind. Being with Alex never gets boring. He's always running into trouble..."

Xiao and Taishi, drawing their swords, were ready for combat. "Ready?" her master asked.

"Yes." she replied.

Without uttering another word, the two engaged in swordplay, exchanging moves at the caliber of experts. *Cling cling* Their sparring is friendly, yet serious at the same time.

They both use the Walking Crane style, for it is Taishi who taught Xiao how to fight, starting from that day many moons ago. Although she was not a Council member then, he decided to make an exception and teach her swordcraft because he thought Xiao had potential for someone who was blind.

The Walking Crane draws its origins from that of a grasshopper. It is an insect that is silent, yet deadly at the same time. It strikes suddenly, and its claws are sharp and fatal. The grasshopper can blend itself into the grass easily, as it hides and stalks its prey, and it can jump rather high, going from each strand of grass with ease. Such is the essence of the Walking Crane - to strike where one is not expected, and making each strike count, with variations of slow and quick movements to throw the enemy off. The attacks range from high strikes to very low strikes, also as a way to fool the opponent.

Over the decades, many forms of Walking Crane have developed; however, the original, pure form of the Walking Crane Style was founded by none other than Master Taishi himself. He states that the other styles are mere imitations, only he uses the true Walking Crane, and in this instance, both student and master are using the true style.

Clang Taishi was on the offensive, using thrusts of the sword while he advances using footwork. The purpose of this spar is not to train, but to see how much Xiao has improved over the years.

Unfortunately, two minutes into the fight, her stamina runs low, and her defense weakens as Taishi advances. At some point, they both give the eye signal and stopped fighting.

"You've improved, Xiao Ye." said the master. "But not as much as I expected."

"It's not the same." she said, sweating heavily.

"What do you mean?"

"Fighting while not seeing, and fighting while seeing are two different things."

"Hmmm. I see. When did your eyes heal?"

"Only recently, master." she said. "That is why I am not used to it. There are so many things about this world that I do not understand, such as why the sun hurts my eyes whenever I look at it."

Suddenly, Taishi thought of something and threw her a blindfold. "Here, put this on."

"Put this on? But what is the purpose of that?"

"Let us see if you fight any different in darkness."

Xiao was confused, but she decided to trust her master and do as he suggests. She proceeded to blindfold herself, tying the knot on the back of her head, and stood there motionlessly.

"Now, I want you to attack me head on." said Taishi.

Xiao held the sword with a tight grip, and stood in fighting position. Once again, she is in the world of darkness, and must use her ears and other senses to retrieve information. Since the courtyard is silent, with the exception of the wind, she can hear every little sound that is not natural. Indeed, now she can "see" the whole courtyard, starting from the ground she was standing on. The wind blew against the tree, and from that, she can determine the tree's shape and size, and everything about it, including every single branch and leaf that falls off.

As Taishi makes his first step, she can determine his exact location, based on the vibration of his foot against the concrete. She also knew his exact height and body shape. Although she is not able to see his face, she can clearly see his limbs, both arms and legs, and their movements. She can see the length of his sword, as it brushes the air. *Whoosh*

In her mind's eye, Taishi is now a figure with outlines. The details are blank, such as his face and his clothes, but each movement he makes is clear and concise. Each of his footsteps creates a wave-like vibration against the ground, much like how a pebble is thrown in water.

Before the blindfold came on, she knew the distance between them. This, added to all the information she has now, is more than enough for her to fight. Xiao

screamed and charged forward. *Froom* Each of her footsteps also creates a vibration, the harder the step, the bigger the vibration.

Now at attacking distance, she strikes. *Clang* Taishi blocked it and continued to move back as Xiao advanced. *Clang*

After blocking three more of her attacks, Taishi retaliated. They continued to clash blades, moving back and forth, at almost the same speed. Their movements were quick and swift, deadly and unforeseen, except to each other.

Xiao's movements began to flow more easily, the sounds of metal banging each other became music to her ears, and the wind became a warm breeze upon her cheeks. To be able to do and feel all these things is no easy task, and is something she does not take for granted.

At this close distance, she can smell the scent of a male. Normally, she can smell fear and hesitation, but since it is Taishi, she senses no such feelings from him.

When practice was over, Xiao removed the blindfold. "You are right, master. This is completely different. My movements felt so natural...and I can see you clearly."

"You were using your mind's eye." said he. "When your eyes are open, you hesitate to attack, and thus you became crippled. This is because you are not used to seeing."

Xiao began to understand her master's wisdom. "I see...somehow I fight better when I choose not to use my vision."

"Not necessarily." Taishi retorted. "It applies in only certain situations. The advantage of fighting blind is that you will not be distracted by the sun's bright rays, nor other things related to nature. Such as that of rain, or mist, things that may block your vision. Other fighter's disability is your advantage. But, fighting without using your eyes can be detrimental at times, Xiao. For example, if you were fighting where there is noise, then you'd not be able to concentrate on your enemy. You cannot see him, nor can you hear him due to the distractions. In that situation, you'd lose two of your senses, and that will be your demise."

Xiao listened carefully to watch Taishi said. His words become truer and truer by the moment, and she realized that her trip to the Temple had not been a waste.

"Xiao, you once told me that you can tell someone's emotions using your mind's eye, correct?"

"Yes." she replied.

"Yet without vision, you cannot see one's face. How would you tell a foe from friend during a battle? As a matter of fact, you will not be able to see what is not moving, such as pebble on the ground. An animate object like that creates no vibrations, and you can trip over it and be at the mercy of your enemy."

How true indeed, for that scenario actually happened back at the Temple.

Xiao listened hard for those footsteps, but all she heard were the noises that the students were making. By the time she heard the footsteps, he was already two paces away. Whoosh. She jumped away and avoided a fatal hit.

Guan continued to push her further with his circular attacks. Xiao stepped back while defending, and her foot stepped on a pebble and she almost tripped. Guan took this chance and swings his blade as to knock the sword out of her hand. He pointed the sword at her chin.

"You lose, Miss Ye."

"You have proven your point." Xiao walked over to her sword to pick it up.

"In essence, there are two worlds - that of darkness and of light. One has information that the other has not. You can think of your senses as filters...each sense filters out information that the other senses do not. You have the unique ability to fight with or without your eyes. I cannot even name a single warrior who can perform a feat such as you... You are true prodigy and I truly believe that you can defeat any swordsman in single combat, provided enough training and time."

"Even you, master?"

Taishi laughed. "Your eyes are bigger than your heart, no pun intended."

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Xiao was not the only one who was practicing hard. *Whoosh* Alex stabs his sword against the air, maneuvering it according to the stances that he was taught. His movements were circular and fluid, not rigid and mechanical, like many swordsman are.

Standing behind one of the columns stood Celina. She was not hiding, yet not revealing herself completely, as she watched curiously. Ever since that time she spied on him in the palace, she had this habit of watching Alex when he practiced. For Alex, this is just a routine, but his training is somehow enchanting for her, as she was watching a show. Through his routine, she gets to discover the real Alex; the dedicated worker, the passionate and loving one, the one who is not afraid to sweat to get what he wants.

At first, she'd hide herself completely, not wanting to interrupt him. She has always been shy like that, particularly around men, but with Alex it is different. Since their relationship has changed, she can openly talk to him even when he is training.

When Alex stopped the movements to take a break, Celina went to the courtyard. "Are you tired?" she asked. "Why not take a break and drink some water with me?"

"I appreciate you caring for me, Celina, but I do not want to rest." Alex replied.

"But you have been training all morning. Even a swordsman like you needs to rest."

"I just cannot settle down right now...especially after knowing Zhang's true identity. I feel like I am falling so far behind. You heard Taishi, right? He has been fighting for hundreds of years. Damn it...our enemy is too far fetched to comprehend. I am not even confident if I can fight Chu Yen on even ground...how will I avenge my master? "

"Alex..." Celina murmured. It pains her to see him so frustrated and lost. It is clear that he wants to be stronger, and this desire has caused him to work very hard at his swordcraft. But he feels like he is making no progress. If only he had a master, or a training partner...and the thought suddenly hit her. "If you want, I can be your training partner."

Her eyes told him she meant it. He just had flashbacks of her Dance of the Sword Style - she used those fluid, graceful movements to defeat many foes at once. "Very well then. I'd love to have you spar with me."

Without further ado, the two barred their weapons at each other and stood in their respective fighting stances. Celina, as usual, held two swords, both facing forward, one low and one high, below the stomach and over her head. In this society, a couple is not supposed to spar with each other because it is not befitting the image of the perfect woman. Female swordsmen are rare, and female swordsmen in a relationship are even rarer, an archetype that is unheard of. It is shameful because the man let the woman hold a sword, so to speak. Yet for these two, it is completely natural for them, and the thought of shame never even occurred once.

"Are you ready?" Alex asked.

"I am." she replied.

Given the nature of their relationship, they just want to feel each other out. Obviously they do not want to injure each other. In martial arts schools or soldier's training camps, sometimes men take sparring too seriously and act as if it's a real fight. A good sparring partner is as rare as a precious diamond.

They stood in fighting stance and waited for the moment to attack...the wind blew hard. Suddenly, both of them charged at the same time and they clashed blades. The Dance of the Sword was taught to her by Master Fa, who learned it from her master long ago. It is a sword style used by dancers of the Mu Fa Theatre. Although it is not illegal, it is frowned upon for women to learn martial arts.

One day, a certain dancer found a way to hide her martial art in the form of dance. The dance moves were the same as the attack moves. It was a brilliant way to hide her skill. She would dance by day and use swordcraft by night when no one was watching. Over the years she kept refining her skills and it became the Dance of the Sword known today.

Clang clang Alex had difficulty keeping up with Celina's footwork. One second she's to his left, the next second she's to his right. *Clang clang* Her movements are graceful like swan but deadly like a tiger. He has seen her fight only one time, but memorized all her moves.

However, Alex was able to defend against all of her attacks thus far, and he went on the offensive using his Heaven's Wrath Style. He always thought of Master Genzo as the founder of this style, but no, it is actually as ancient as Dance of the Sword. A straightforward style, it uses explosive attacks using brute force, sometimes from the air.

When the time felt right, Celina used the Dance of the Eagle. She held her twin blades crossed over each other like a scissor and charged forward. Usually this attack would cut her victims twice, cutting deep into their bodies. Alex blocked it by holding his blade vertically and stopping her blades at the crossover.

Schhhhhling She continued her relentless attack while Alex defended. At this point they forgot about the fact that this is sparring session and fought as if they were in a match.

Alex felt it was time to use Heaven's Retribution. He dashed forward and unleashed a combination of attacks. *Swipe swipe swipe* One attack came from overhead. She blocked it. The last attack was a slash at point blank, and Celina blocked with both blades stacked together. With one hand holding each sword, her power was halved, so she has to make it up with speed.

Both of them were at a safe distance and stared for a moment. Celina placed her swords horizontally, one pointing left and the other pointing right. Alex grew cautious as he knew what was coming. "Final form: Dance of the Dragon!" She started spinning towards him and the blades came at him different angles. He defended himself while retreating. *Cling cling* It became difficult to track where the next attack will come from. Actually, it was more than difficult, it became a desperate situation for him. (Ugh! Is this what it's like to fight someone like her? This is the power of the dragon's dance!)

Just defending took all of his energy. Suddenly, his foot took a wrong step and he stuttered. Celina's blade scraped his shoulder, causing him to drop his sword and fall on one knee. He placed his hand over his bleeding wound. Celina gasped and dropped both swords. "Are you alright?" She helped him stand up and took him back to his quarters.

Celina came into the room with bandages and sat on the bed next to Alex. "I'm sorry, I got carried away." She said as she wrapped his wound.

"It's fine. I wasn't able to defend your last attack."

"I've hurt you. I am not a good training partner."

He placed his hand on top of her hand. "Accidents happen during sparring."

There was a moment of silence between them. "I want tell you about the secret of the Dance of the Dragon."

"Wait, you don't have to-"

"The Dance of the Dragon is the final attack of the Dance of the Sword. You have seen dance moves where the user spins a lot, right? The idea is to use those spinning motions to build momentum, so that each attack becomes stronger. This is

offensive and defensive as well. And sometimes we reverse directions so we don't get dizzy. But this technique has a weakness, it is the dragon's tail."

Alex pictured a green dragon and focused on its tail. "The dragon's tail? You mean the feet?"

"Yes, but more precisely the ankles."

"During Dance of the Dragon, the user is spending all of her energy into her attacks, leaving the ankles open. The footwork required to use this powerful technique requires us to put our feet together during the moves. If you were to hit the feet or ankles, the user will trip and fall."

Alex's eyes grew wider. He flashed back to moment when Celina used the Dance of the Dragon. He did not pay attention to the lower part of her legs, but now that he thought about it, her feet were close together during the spinning motions. "I see. That makes sense." He turned to face her and smiled. "Thanks Celina."

She blushed a little bit. "Well I better let you rest so I should get going." She went towards the door but stopped for a second. She looked like she was about to say something, but decided not to, and opened the door.

"Don't feel bad for what happened to today." said Alex.

Celina left the room without a reply.

Alex placed his hand over his wound. He did not want Celina to feel guilty about it, but knowing her personality, she will definitely feel guilt.

When night time falls, Zi was drinking alone on a roof top. He has done much work during the day and feels like he needs to relax. Working isn't his favorite thing to do, but drinking and having a good time is. As he gulped down half his wine, he saw Li walking on the ground.

He leaped down from the roof and landed in front of her. "Hey there, beautiful. Where are you going to on this lovely night?"

"Zi Lai? Aren't you supposed to be at the palace?"

"I'm done with my duties for the day. Things are finally calming down over there. I'm not needed anymore."

"And you came here? Are you a member of the Council?"

"Ha ha ha. I can become a member of anything I want, Li."

"Whatever." she replied nonchalantly. "If you don't mind I have business to attend to."

"Business? Fuhget about business. Hang out with me for the night, won't ya?" He proceeded to put his arm around her shoulders.

She pushed his hand off. "Get off me you idiot!"

"How cold." he said. "Alex and I have been searching for you for so many years...you don't even know how hard we looked. You should show some appreciation, ya know? How are you going to repay me for my kindness?"

Li drew the Ice Sword and pointed it at his neck. "I can repay you by slicing off your head."

Zi was surprised and snake bitten. He opened his palms and to show he is not a threat. "Okay okay...I get it. I was only joking."

"Frankly, you're annoying. And your attitude towards women is horrendous. I don't know how you ever became friends with Alex." Li withdrew her sword and walked away irritated.

Zi continued to stare at her curiously, as if what happened was just a game.

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Cao claims his wounds are gone.

Cao asks Tai where are the others. He says he knows of Alex and Celina's affair.

Tai assures him that they are doing their job, which is to find Liu Zhang.

Tai leaves and thinks by himself.

Mention how celina pardoned him

The Messenger of Death sneaks into the premises. He hides under a bridge. A guy from the Council thinks he saw something. he takes a look. MD kills him.

Alex finds the man's corpse.

MD sneaks into the building to get a scroll. Alex attacks him in the courtyard.

MD doesn't want to be discovered, so he fights.

Li senses something and comes to the courtyard, she's shocked to see MD. she recognizes him

三十: Mysterious! The Shadow's Mask

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Taishi trains alex, to see if alex is truly the student of masai genzo

Li senses something, and she says she has to go to the bathroom. She goes to the roof and sees MD.

MD: asks her to join him once again

Li is worried the whole night and she can't talk to her brother. She avoids everyone. She goes to Jiang and Shen's grave.

Li Flashback #1: she sees duke xiang's face and runs away
flashback #2: MD orders her to kill an entire household. they kill the entire household and burn the house. he made her kill innocent lives.

Vincent checks to see if she's okay, she says she's fine and doesn't need his help.
Li: Thank you for everything, Vincent. I do not want to lead you astray, or give you false hope. I am not interested in starting a relationship with anyone.
Vincent is disappointed.

Alex is walking somewhere, and MD shows up. They fight.
Celina and Xiao show up. They're no match for MD.
Vincent shows up and he can't do shit.
Li shows up to block MD's attack. They fight.

Seeing that he's outnumbered, MD escapes. Alex is wounded from the fight.

Everyone talks about MD's amazing power. Li is silent the whole time, and her sudden outburst surprises everyone. Li: excuse me.

Li visits the place where she last met MD. He shows up, scaring her. She points a sword at him and backs up.
MD: Do you really intend to fight me?
Li: Why are you showing up after all this time
MD: you are not safe with the Council. You are safer with me.
Li joins MD in his quest.

三十一: Secret of the Map. Can Li Cheng Be Trusted?

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Alex says his sister is gone again. Zi says don't worry about it.
Li is practicing by herself. She's listening to MD's orders to keep in shape.

MD goes to steal a map.

The map leads to a secret tunnel that has the secrets of the shadow style. It has the secret to mastering the shadow puppet technique.

Tsu is an old man whose mansion has the map.

Chung is Tsu's bodyguard

MD fights Lord Tsu

Li sneaks into the mansion with a mask. She opens a safe and finds the map. Chung discovers her and they fight.

He stops her from drawing the sword, and continues to hit her. She jumps out the window and escapes.

MD kills Tsu's bodyguards. Tsu runs away and MD throws a sword into his back.

Ragnarok sees the whole thing. He politely "requests" that Chung give him a copy of the map.

A scout reports to Vincent that Li is seen with MD. Worried, Vincent tells the others. The heroes are suspicious of Li's activity. Alex still believes she's innocent. Celina says she's a shady character.

Celina sneaks in while Li is bathing, and takes the map.

Li Flashback #2: While in the Valley, MD requests that she join him. She accepts.

Celina brings it to Alex & Tashi. They look at it.

Taishi says it's the location of the secrets of the shadow puppet technique.

Celina brings the map back to Li's room

三十二: The Shadow's Threat: The Messenger of Death

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Li flashback #3: in the valley, MD gives a visit to War God.

MD: I need your help. You are the only one who can help.

WG: No way.
MD senses Li. Do you teach your subordinates to be obedient.
Li realizes she's been found and reveals herself.
MD asks her to join him. She accepts.
She says goodbye to WG and Feng Long and Shen Long and they're on their way.

Flashback:

Chung gives Ragnarok the map.
Ragnarok hides it from Zhang, but Zhang knows he's hiding something.
Ragnarok tells him about his fight with MD. It was his only defeat. Li was there too.

Flashback:

Ragnarok vs. MD.

Zhang wonders what the shadow style is. He's learned every style except for this one. He knows MD killed Ekin and stole the Thunder Sword.

Celina tends to Alex's wounds and sticks with him the whole day.
Li comments that he can do things on his own. And she insults Alex.
Celina defends him. They argue.
Alex: No matter how much she insults me, she's still my sister.

Celina goes to talk to Li about herself.
Li: I know you took a look at my map. I'm a ninja and I can sense it when you come into my room. Even when I'm bathing.
Celina is surprised. They argue.
Celina goes outside and wonders how Li can be Alex's sister. They're so different.

Flashback:

Li hands the FS back to Alex. She yells at him.

Li has a hard decision. She leaves the Council and goes to join MD.

三十三: The Shadow's Secret: Duel in the Cave

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Li & MD goes to the secret cave for the shadow puppet secret.
they get there on a rowboat.

celina was on a rowboat, she knows where it is because she memorized Li's map

MD sees the inscriptions on the cave walls.
Zhang and MD face off in the cave.

MD uses shadow puppet. Zhang sees that it's just an illusion.
MD presses something by accident, and the whole place falls apart.

The heroes escape.

Celina and Alex argue about Li. She gets upset and storms out of the room.

Liu Cao asks Lady Ce and Alex to see him.
Cao: I know you've been at the Heaven's Council. They are natural enemies of the Liu's, so don't go near them anymore.
Alex: But they have the same objectives as we do.

Alex and Ce walk out of the room pissed off.
Ce: I understand he has his duties as king. The grudge between the Four Brothers and the Liu's have been going on for 50 years.

A messenger from Leinwan visits the palace. Cao receives a decree from the king of Leinwan. Due to the Demon Brothers escaping to Shen, Leinwan request that Shen let Leinwan troops enter to find the Demon Brothers, cuz they're too dangerous to leave alone.
Cao refuses. He sends an insulting letter to Leinwan.
The general receives the letter and he's pissed. It turns out he knows Cao, in fact, he was the one who trained Cao.

Move to season 2:
Leinwan ships go near the harbor of a Shen city. Shen ships show up. Neither side fired, they are at a stare off. Negotiations are still being made.

Ce, Alex, and Xiao mention that this upcoming war is horrible.
Alex: it could be a blessing in disguise. With the king occupied, he will not have time to watch over us, which means we can go to the Council freely.
Celina disagrees and says they should follow the rules. Alex and Celina argue again.

MD trains Li. She's trying to keep up, since she's learning the shadow style.

Xiao and Alex have a nice talk. When Alex leaves, Xiao is left with a good impression of him.

Flashback:

Alex convinces Xiao to go to the Temple to heal her wound.

Flashback:

When at her brother's grave, Xiao cries like hell, and cries into Alex's chest. She feels he's a strong man.

Alex accidentally sees Xiao changing. He's like really sorry. She's like it's okay.

Don't talk about again.

They both come out together.

Celina is beginning to have misunderstandings.

Zhang gives the Demon Brothers a little present, a piece of the Sacred Bead will give them one more life. They graciously accept. Zhang explains there are two types of immortality:

Living forever and having two lives.

三十四: A Game of Death: Alex's Decision

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Alex and Xiao train. Xiao says she appreciate his help. And he's special. And he blushes. Ce overhears them.

Ce is standing on a cliff, pissed off. Alex comes and explains that there is nothing between him and Xiao.

The Demon Brothers force Alex and Celina Ce to fight each other to the death.

Xiao and Council men show up.

Xiao vs. Roh. Winner: Xiao

Alex vs. Jin. Winner: Alex

Alex and Ce make up and everything is okay.

三十五: Beware! The Vanishing Warrior's True Strength

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Jin and Roh are still alive. They kill some guys and leave the gravesite.

Shen's ships continue to standoff against Leinwan ships. Cao is pissed off that the general would pull something like this.

All ships fire arrows. The standoff lasts for a few days.

Eventually, Leinwan withdraws.

Cao and Tai and others are relieved. Cao asks Alex of his progress on Zhang.

Alex explains everything.

Rangarok's flashback:

 Liu convinces him to join him. And betray his Brothers.

Chu Yen falls for Liu's words because he's jealous of Master Genzo
he's always trying to surpass him and it's a thorn in his chest

Vincent reports to Taishi that they found Zhang's whereabouts.

Duel with Vanishing Warrior:

 Zhang is in a carrier, going somewhere.

 Celina, Li, and Xiao attack him.

 He goes to see Lord Huong, Sima and Fei. They're very impatient.

 Zhang explains immortality to them.

三十六: Liu Zhang's Trap: The Mask Falls

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Chung befriends Liu Zhang and they cooperate.
chung is promised immortality as long as he cooperates and gives command of his troops over to zhang

Li and MD go to fight Chung. he leads them to a trap set up by Zhang.
they're in a building
the doors are locked
Zhang is standing on the balcony
the front door opens and these ugly people come in, they walk like zombies
then they transform

MD's mask falls off. it's Zi Lai
Li is shocked as hell.
they fight their way through the demon horde

As soon as the two escaped the deathtrap of a building, Zi pointed his blade at Li's neck. "You know my identity." said Zi. "That means you must die."

She stepped back until she was against the wall. There was a small gap of several inches between her neck and the blade's tip, thus so could still draw her sword to fight back if she wanted to.

Zi frowned. "With your skill level you can escape if you wanted to. Although I'd say your chances are 20% at best, against someone like me."

"I won't tell anyone." Li said. "If you have to kill me, then do it. But there is something I must ask. Why does it have to be you?"

Zi sighed. "You're too useful to me to get rid of. Continue to serve me and take my identity with you to the grave."

"I've already sworn my life to you, master. I won't tell a soul." She said with a hand over her chest. Her eyes showed that she told the truth - those are the eyes of someone who's fiercely loyal. Alex has the same eyes, whether it's genetics or sibling similarities, those two are the same. Zi did not know whether to be annoyed or impressed.

Still in the danger zone, Zi and his student retreated into the deep forest, deep enough to not be found by a search party. They sat on top of logs and surrounded a bonfire. There was an comfortable silence between them for the whole trip.

Li broke the silence. "I know I should not ask. But I have to know. Why of all people, it has to be you? I just don't get it?"

Zi sighed. "Fine. I didn't think this would happen. This might be the time to tell you everything." Li paid full attention without blinking. "Why am I the Messenger of Death? Why do I commit all those crimes? Why do I know the Shadow Style? That is because I am not human or demon, I am a half demon."

Li's eyes grew wide opened and her jaw dropped. "Half demon?"

"Or more precisely, a quarter demon. My grandfather was a demon and my grandmother was a human. People think that humans and demons can't make offspring, but my existence proves them wrong."

Zi's grandfather was a demon who was originally a man named **Zho Lai**, a farmer but also fighter from a poor village in an unknown province. Sometimes demons wander into the village, endangering everyone in it, so it is up to Zho and the fighters of the village to kill these demons. One day, a group of ten fighters went into the wilderness to search for wandering demons. They found two and killed them swiftly, but two of the fighters were wounded.

"Good job today Zho!" said a comrade of his.

"It was nothing." Zho replied with a hand on the back of his head. "I just do what I usually do."

"I'm just glad someone like you is defending our village." said the comrade.

"But our situation is getting worse. I wish I was stronger so I can protect my village."

The group of fighters returned to their home to report the good news to the village elders. Zho would often think to himself he wants to be stronger. Day after day he would train in his backyard non-stop, but he was still a human doing battle with demons. The human body has limitations and Zho would try to constantly overcome those limitations.

The village elders congratulated Zho on today's success, and Zho would reply how he usually does. "I'm just doing my job, that's all. But I wish I was stronger. It's quite difficult for us to fight demons even if we outnumber them. I worry about the day there are too many demons to handle."

"You worry too much, young man." said the elder. "Your group of fighters are doing just fine protecting our village. We all appreciate what you do."

One of the elders had his gaze intently on Zho Lai, unbeknownst to him. It was the gaze of someone cooking up a scheme.

Zho went home and was greeted by a woman named Dae. "Welcome home dear." She was a skinny woman with a long, brown hair, pale skin and small eyes.

"I'm back Dae!" Zho and her gave each other a good embrace. "How is my fiancé doing?"

"Today was really productive. Some of the village women attended a sewing class and I learned many things about sewing."

"That's great. You can make me a sweater sometime."

"I will before winter comes. Dinner is almost ready."

How this couple has dinner is the same as the entire village - they put a pot over a burning fire, and put the water into the pot with ingredients to make soup. The meat is placed on dishes and they use chopsticks to put the meat into the pot to cook it. After about an hour of eating, they were both full and Dae cleaned up. Zho usually over eats.

"Man that hit the spot!" he said, rubbing his stomach. Knock knock. Zho answered the door and he was surprised to one of the village elders at his doorstep. "En Ko? What's going on?"

En Ko was a man in a straw hat, wearing plain clothes and sandals. "I have something I'd like to discuss with you. Please come to my house."

"Uh, sure." Not knowing what this was about, Zho put on his sandals and followed En Ko into his house. As soon as Zho closed the door, his life was about to change forever. "So Mr. Ko, can you tell me what this is about?"

En Ko put down his straw hat. "Before I do that, do you mind if I read your mind?"

"Read my mind? As in sorcery? Naw, such a thing doesn't exist."

"I'm going to show you right now..." En Ko put his palm on Zho's forehead. Flashes of images entered Ko's mind and it was an intense experience for both of them. Zho stuttered backwards and hit the wall.

"Ugh! I have a headache. What did you do?"

En Ko was sweating and panting for breath. "I read all of your memories since the day you were born. Hmmm, I see. You want more strength to protect your fiancé and protect the villagers. What a noble spirit you are."

"That doesn't prove you read my mind!"

"Alright. Let me tell you something that only you know. You and your fiancé Dae have sex on a regular basis, and your favorite position is-"

"Aaaah! That's enough!" Zho exclaimed. "Okay I believe you!"

"Zho Lai, what if I told you - you can get the power you wanted for a small price. But you will no longer be yourself."

"Huh? I dunno what you mean. But I am willing to do anything to protect my village! I grew up here!"

"Anything?"

"Yes anything! I'll gladly sacrifice my own life if it comes down to it!"

"Even if it means losing your humanity?"

"I dunno what you mean?"

"Are you willing to become a demon to gain the ultimate strength?"

"A demon? Hell no! Those are the enemies we're trying to fight. Why would I become one of those things?!"

"There are different kinds of demons. Someone like you will never become like those mindless zombies. You can become a demon but still be yourself. You'll look the same as you are now."

"Really?"

"You will become stronger, faster, more durable, and less likely to die from blood loss. You'll be physically superior to your former self in every way! And best of all, you won't change physically. Transforming is completely optional. If you want you can stay in your human form your whole life."

Zho gave it a lot of thought. "That does sound pretty good. Are you saying that you can make me like that?"

"Of course. As you've guessed, I am a demon myself."

"No way! I couldn't tell all this time."

"See? No one can tell the difference. You'll be able to protect your precious village and no one will know your secret."

"Hmmm...But there has to be drawbacks, right? Can demons still...do that?"

"Do what?"

"You know...that thing...with a woman."

"Oh ha ha ha ha. Don't worry. You can do that all you want. You and your woman can make healthy babies. Healthy human babies. They'll have some demon blood, but they won't transform. Your sons and daughters will be half demons. Your grandchildren will be quarter demons. Your great grand children will have half of that...and your great great-"

"You're going too far ahead! Anyways, I get what you mean." Then his face grew serious. "Mr. Ko, please turn me into a demon."

"Once the process begins there's no turning back."

Zho nodded. Once he makes up his mind, he will go through with it no matter what.

Grandfather - Zho Lai

Grandmother - Dae Lai

Father - Shun Lai

Mother - Mei-Lei Lai

but the villagers found out, and they were banished

Zho and Dae must run to another village

En Ko found them. He says zho must absorb souls or he will die

Zho decided to become a bounty hunter so he can get money and take souls

En Ko trains him. Zho develops the shadow style.

he joins the assassin lodge

the headmaster wants to see his abilities. Zho vs some guy

he shows the shadow style and defeats some guy, headmaster is impressed

Zho and Dae had a son

the kid showed super human strength and speed

Shun was told not to show off his powers in front of others

one day he was bullied, and he beat up the bully. all the students saw it. and the teacher was told of it.
he could no longer go to school...suspected of being a demon

Zho and Dae took their son to another town
Shun grew up and married Mei-Lei Lai
they had a son named Zi
Zi is half demon, half human, and he's the target of both. He has demonic powers, but ages like a human.

zi and alex were neighbors so he'd come to play often
but alex's sister and her parents were always working, often leaving alex alone
so zi kept him company
Mei-Lei told Zi to not spend so much time with the neighbor's boy, lest he should get attached. Shuns says don't worry about it

zi kept seeing alex and play with each other and sometimes zi saw alex's sister
but she's always working so she's rarely seen at the house

one day li came back and was scared to death. she muttered something that didn't make sense and ran away from home
alex's father ran after her.

li says she must run away, her father is still puzzled
then authorities arrested him
hearing about the arrest, alex's mother went to the local police office, leaving alex by himself. she was arrested too.

alex was being chased by soldiers. he defended himself with a kodachi. one of them slashed his right arm. he fell.
zi killed the soldier despite being a kid. other soldiers saw that. they realize he has demon's blood.
zi takes alex and runs. they go to the local doctor. he bandages alex's right arm.
zi is worried about his parents so he goes to check on them

at zi's house...mei-lei's on the floor with a sword stuck in her back. shun is extremely pissed off. he charges at the soldiers
they stab him with spears, one after another, pushing him back.
the commander makes a taunt. shun throws a knife at his eye, commander screams like hell.
soldier stabs shun in the back, and they all push their spears into him. he coughs blood and dies.

commander orders the house to be burned. zi shows up to watch his house burn.
he falls on his knees and cries.

zi goes back to alex. zi falls down and cries. alex also cries.
despite being wanted, the kids managed to not get caught, they move from house
to house. alex insists on using swords, despite not being able to swing one because
of his injury. zi pretends to be a slacker to make alex not feel bad.
no word of alex's parents. don't know if they're dead or alive.

a tear drips down li's eye. she feels bad about what alex has to go through.
then li tells her version of the story.
li was working at the palace and saw something she shouldn't have
went home to give her family a warning.
her father chases her. she says she's running away. she went to Yi Ting but saw
wanted posters of her face. she can't go to any town so she hides in the forest.
but she can't survive there...no food or water and being hunted by animals.

then by sheer luck she found the temple
was greeted warmly by everyone
she trained a few years. but this is not the strength she wanted. she wants revenge
on the duke for this outrage. she left the temple & said her goodbyes.

then she went to the valley of death.
begs the war god to accept her as a student
he does. they train a lot. then one day li says she's leaving.

back to the city. li saved a kid from being bullied by a corrupt policeman. she
wanted to test her skills. she killed him quickly.
li sat on a rooftop. saw a commotion

soldiers were attacking the messenger
li was curious so she showed up, killed a soldier.
fought the messenger and lost. she begs him to teach her swordcraft. he refuses.
she's persistent about it. then he accepts - condition is she works for him and never
questions his orders.

a few years later, messenger says he's going solo. she's free to go. without a place to
go, she goes back to the valley.
she fights Sui Long to test her new skills. war god is impressed.

one day after much searching alex found a dude who says he saw li cheng, as well
as an older dude who's her father. they're going to the temple
with this lead alex decides to visit the temple

三十六: Liu Zhang's Trap: The Mask Falls

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Episode 37:

The escape:

chung gives a tip to the council, its info on the messenger. he's a lord so it's seen as reliable info

The Council get more info on MD, and they find his whereabouts.

Li and MD are hiding in a cave. council troops are coming
they separate

Chu Yen was waiting for her to come out

Chu Yen vs Li Cheng

he evades the ice sword attacks

he takes the ice sword back from her

says it's wasted on her

三十七: Liu Cao Challenges the Council

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MD wants to personally train Alex, Ce objects.

Cao and Tai and the army come to the Council hideout.

He tells Alex, and Ce and Xiao not to get near Taishi.

he insists on a 1 v 1 duel - heaven's eye

so they go into another courtyard - Cao and some of his royal guards

Taishi

Cao vs. Taishi.

He says if he wins, Taishi will disband the Council

Winner: Taishi

after watching Taishi's match Alex decides to take on MD's training
The War God is gone and he has no master
MD trains alex for a few months.

Winter passes, they train everyday.
Ce watches Alex from the columns, a habit she had from the palace

When spring comes, his training is complete.
Alex vs. Li, Xiao, and Ce. He beats them all. They're all amazed at his skillz.
Alex Cheng is different than before. he's confident and has the skills

三十八: The Messenger's Final Message

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li has been visiting zi lai
she knows his identity so it's more convenient for them to talk
Zi is there to support his best friend
and he dresses up as MD during training time

Celina still doesn't trust Li, so she follows her
she over hears the convo between Li and Zi. she learns that Zi is the MD.
She gasps and sneaks away.
Zi hears it. he appears in front of Ce. And knocks her out.

MD kidnaps Ce.

Liu Cao and Tai discuss the current situation with Leinwan. it's bad.
both liu cao and the king of leinwan are stubborn
Lumeng gives his ok to general tsai to attack a city in shen
Tsai prepares the boats

huong and liu zhang discuss their alliance
sima and fei as well. their armies combined with liu zhang's army makes it bigger
Ragnarok is chosen to lead the armies

Yu suspects the other eunuchs have betrayed the crown.
many troops are stationed in Yi Ping for a possible war, leaving few troops to deal
with homeland issues.

things are looking bad.
there's no time to recruit new soldiers and train
where else can they find so many fighters in one place?
he thinks an alliance with the council would be wise.
liu cao reluctantly agrees

MD mentions there is one final training.
He forces Alex to risk his life to save Ce. She's hanging from a tree and gagged.
Alex cuts off his mask, revealing Zi.
Moment of shock
Zi reveals everything while they fight
Alex loses motivation

There's loaded arrows on the ground. Zi cuts the rope, arrows hit Ce,
and alex is extremely pissed off thinking she's dead

Alex's fire sword burns brightly and he charges at full speed
they charge into each other
They hit and MD falls.
Zi says his last words

Li Cheng shows up
she wakes up celina and reveals that she's not dead
she unties celina, he stuffed pillows under her clothes, so the arrows hit her pillows

Alex is shocked.
Zi says his final words

三十九: Punish the Traitor: Operation Dragonclaw

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everyone's shocked at zi lai's death
li cheng reveals she knows his identity for a while
they dig a grave for him to honor him.
flashbacks of Zi and alex together

lord huong sima and fei secretly send their troops to zhang
yu's spies inform him that zhang's army is growing

ragnarok stands atop a balcony and smiles. he raises his ice sword to the air and the troops hail. zhang watches from behind him, also with a smile

alex and lady ce visit the king. they reveal who zhang really is. he's a demon and also the vanishing warrior. also the guy that destroyed the han dynasty.

yu and eunuchs and the king have a meeting, there's a map on a table
things are getting out of hand and zhang needs to be stopped, otherwise there's going to be a civil war
they will gather an army to attack zhang's base
they call this Operation Dragon Claw

tai asks alex to ride with him, his presence as demon slayer & savior of shen will motivate the troops

xiao visit the council. taishi tze decides it's time to take action
he flashes back to the Four Brothers and how they fell apart
he wants retribution for what Liu Zhang did to them

四十: Hero vs Hero: A Duel of Fire and Ice

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Khan vs. Vincent

Xiao vs. Roh.

Roh transforms into an electric demon



Lady Ce vs Jin
Demos



Alex vs Ragnarok -
Ice vs Fire

四十一: Save the Dynasty: A 500 Year Destiny

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his royal guard tells Cao not to engage in battle. but he doesn't listen
Cao vs. Chung.
Cao is the winner

vincent beats khan

Zhang vs. Taishi. they fight while talking about their history and how Zhang
ruined the brother hood
Taishi is killed.
Xiao and Vincent were too late. they grieve for their fallen master
a moment of sadness to reflect on taishi's life and all that he's done

Zhang vs. Alex.
Alex is defeated
Li and Xiao attack him
Even Ce shows up, despite her condition
It takes a team effort to defeat him. finally he's defeated.
he transforms into an ogre
they combine their strengths - fire sword ice sword and thunder sword and beat
him

alex strikes the sacred bead
zhang is surprised
they slay zhang

alex and li beat zhang
he becomes a blue ogre
li is injured and needs to rest
xiao shows up
celina shows up to help
xiao beats him with the thunder wave

zhang becomes a lizard creature - specialty is hard scales
it roars, sounds like godzilla

zhang becomes a dragon
celina says it would be interesting to use dance of the dragon on a dragon

alex gives her the chance
the dragon breathes fire, alex neutralizes it with the heat wave
celina uses dance of the dragon, slashing it and breaking it's scales
the dragon screams, it slaps celina away

li tells him to use the fire dragon, alex says he's never done it before
li uses ice to neutralize the dragon's fire breath, then she falls

xiao says it has to be alex who kills liu zhang
she will give him the chance
the dragon flies and lands in another part of the room
xiao uses thunder to strike it, paralyzing it
alex uses the fire dragon, turning it into ashes

四十二: The Demon Slayer & Savior of Shen

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epilogue

liu cao and lord yu and other lords decide Alex gets another badge
he is demon slayer, savior of shen, hero of the ages

Xiao visits Taishi's grave, along with council members

Li practices the shadow puppet.
Alex and Celina now can live in peace and happily ever after.

Xiao: For a living, she does performances blind. Everyone's amazed at her abilities
and they pay to see shows that feature her.

Vincent and Cho, senior members of the council, ask her to be the headmaster

Name	Role	Personality
Alex Cheng	Demon Slayer	S
Zi Lai	Alex's best friend	A
Li Cheng	Third student of War God	S - A

Feng Long	Second student of War God	S
Jiang Ye	First student of War God	S - T
Xiao Ye	Jiang's little sister	S
King Liu Cao	The current king	A
Lord Zhang	The King's relative	S
Lord Ragnarok	Lord Zhang's henchmen	S
Taishi Tze	Founder of the Heaven's Council	S
Vincent, Cho	Member of Council	R
Roh	The elder Demon Brother	A
Jin	The younger Demon Brother	A
Jiax	Henchmen of Zhang	A
Khan	Henchmen of Zhang	A
Ko-Ragnarok	Ragnarok	?
Ko-Rashm	Liu Zhang	?