

# **Clan Building System: I'm not the Protagonist?!**

## **#Chapter 211- Fang Clan Meeting [1] - Read Clan Building System: I'm not the Protagonist?! Chapter 211- Fang Clan Meeting [1]**

### **Chapter 211: 211- Fang Clan Meeting [1]**

The atmosphere in the Fang clan's main hall was thick enough to chew on.

Elder Fang Chen stood at the head of the heavy oak table, a scroll of fine imperial parchment trembling slightly in his grip.

His voice, usually a steady rumble, was tight with a mixture of fury and profound exasperation as he read the royal declaration of war aloud.

"...and the primary grievances levied by the Jade Throne against this clan are as follows!" he announced, his eyes scanning the list. With each point, his jaw grew tighter.

"First!" he boomed, "The late Patriarch Fang Yuan, upon his ascension to the Nascent Soul realm, failed to present himself at the imperial court to pay homage to the Seat Under Heaven!"

A wave of disgruntled mutters went around the table. It was a flimsy, ceremonial pretext, but a legally sound one.

Elder Fang Chen's eyes flickered up from the scroll, sharp and accusatory.

They landed like a physical weight on a young man sitting further down the table.

"Second!" he read, his voice dropping into a deeper, more dangerous register.

"Fang Tian, younger brother of the aforementioned Fang Yuan, is guilty of the high crime of kidnapping the Third Princess, Qin Yuyan!"

His gaze did not waver from the young man. Fang Tian, for his part, did not cower.

He shared the same stubborn jawline and intense eyes as his late brother, Fang Yuan, though his were currently shining with a mixture of impish defiance and zero remorse.

He offered the elder a small, helpless shrug, as if to say, *Who, me?*

Seated next to him, a girl with calm, intelligent eyes, Fang Mei, his adopted daughter merely sighed and pinched the bridge of her nose.

And on his other side, the alleged victim of this terrible kidnapping, the Third Princess Qin Yuyan herself, looked nothing like a captive.

Dressed in elegant but simple Fang clan robes, she was meticulously pouring tea for Fang Tian, her movements serene, a faint, amused smile touching her lips.

She appeared, if anything, perfectly at home.

Elder Fang Chen's eye twitched.

He forced his eyes back to the scroll.

"Third!" he nearly shouted, his finger stabbing at the parchment. "Fang Tian... launched an assault on the Crown Prince at his mansion and burned the royal residence to the ground!"

Again, his furious eyes snapped to Fang Tian.

This time, the young man had the decency to look slightly abashed, though the proud gleam in his eye suggested the memory was more thrilling than regrettable.

Fang Mei elbowed him sharply in the ribs.

"Fourth!" The elder's voice was reaching a fever pitch. "The Fang family is knowingly harboring the fugitive Fang Tian and has refused to hand him over!"

This time, every elder at the table joined Fang Chen in glaring at the source of all their problems.

Fang Tian suddenly found a loose thread on his sleeve utterly fascinating.

"And fifth!" Fang Chen finished, practically spitting the words, "The Third Princess, Qin Yuyan, has been identified within our barriers yet the Fang Family refused to admit we have her."

His final, exasperated look swept over the trio: the unrepentant criminal, his exasperated daughter, and the blissfully serene "hostage" who was currently placing a freshly peeled apple on Fang Tian's plate.

A stunned silence blanketed the hall, broken only by a soft, utterly delighted chuckle.

All eyes turned to Lin Zhaoyue.

She was leaned back in her chair, one hand idly stroking the hair of a deeply embarrassed Fang Lian, who was trapped on her lap.

The matriarch's smile was wide and full of dark amusement.

"Oh, my husband's brother," she murmured, her voice rich with pride and laughter. "He doesn't do things by halves, does he? He certainly knows how to make life interesting."

She gave Fang Lian a comforting pat, completely ignoring the fact that the clan was now officially at war with the most powerful family on the continent.

In her eyes, it seemed a small price to pay for such a fantastic story.

Elder Fang Chen's patience, worn thin by the royal edict and Fang Tian's infuriatingly calm demeanor, finally snapped.

He slammed the scroll onto the table, the sound echoing through the tense hall.

"Matriarch Lin!" he implored, his voice strained with urgency. "This is important! We are discussing a declaration of war from the imperial family! We must formulate a response, a strategy! This is not the time for... for..."

His words faltered as he gestured vaguely at her, unable to articulate the sheer incongruity of her cuddling Fang Lian in the middle of a war council.

Lin Zhaoyue's amused smile didn't fade. She held up a single, elegant finger. "Wait, wait. Elder Chen, you misspoke a very important thing just now."

The entire table fell silent. Fang Chen blinked, his righteous anger derailed.

"I... I misspoke? Which part of the emperor's extensive list of grievances did I misread?" He picked up the scroll again, scanning it confusedly.

"Not the emperor's list," Lin Zhaoyue said, her tone light but her eyes holding a strange, unshakable certainty. "Yours. When you were reading it out."

Fang Chen was utterly lost. "Mine? Matriarch, please, enlighten me. What could I have possibly said that is more pressing than the fact that the royal army is likely already mobilizing?"

She leaned forward slightly, the motion making Fang Lian stiffen in her lap.

"You said," Lin Zhaoyue began, her voice dropping to a more serious, yet still playful, note, "'the late Patriarch Fang Yuan'."

She shook her head slowly, a knowing glint in her eyes. "He's not late. He's still alive."

A dead silence blanketed the room.

It was so complete that the crackle of the torches in their sconces sounded like thunder.

Then, a wave of reaction swept through the elders. It wasn't joy or hope. It was a collective, weary sigh.

Shoulders slumped. Heads shook.

They exchanged glances that spoke volumes—looks of pity, of resignation. There she goes again, the looks said. *Our brilliant, powerful, but utterly delusional Matriarch.*

## **Chapter 212: 212- Fang Clan Meeting [2]**

None of the elders present believed her. Not a single one.

...Well, almost because Fang Tian did. Against all reason, against the weight of the royal edict itself, he believed her words without hesitation.

But he was the only one.

Everyone else exchanged glances heavy with resignation.

In their eyes, the proud matriarch had slipped into delusion, clinging to hope where there was none.

A collective sigh rippled through the hall.

At the very least, they consoled themselves with the fact that both she and Fang Tian had reached the Nascent Soul Realm.

Delusional or not, their strength was real, and with it, the Fang Clan still had a chance to endure.

Their silence was heavy, almost suffocating. None of them voiced it aloud, but the thoughts were the same, echoing quietly in every heart.

Patriarch Fang Yuan had been a Nascent Soul master, unmatched in his generation.

And yet, even he was devoured by a Saberfang. It had been a full week since that incident. No word, no signs of a miraculous return.

The conclusion was bitter and undeniable.

The matriarch had turned widow too soon.

They pitied her, pitied the stubborn hope burning in her eyes, pitying the way she still spoke his name as though he might step back into the hall at any moment.

It was cruel, they thought, but reality was reality. Fang Yuan was gone. And all that remained was her grief, raw and unwilling to let go.

Lin Zhaoyue didn't bother wasting breath trying to convince them.

Explaining that Fang Yuan still lived, that he was beyond their reach would change nothing in their eyes.

After all, the Saberfang had been under her control from the very beginning, and Fang Yuan himself had already stepped into the Hollow Spirit Realm.

In truth, he was untouchable. Invincible.

She reached out and gently brushed Fang Lian's hair, a tender smile on her lips.

Fang Chen, however, could not hold back. His voice was careful, edged with urgency.

"Matriarch... it is the Imperial Family who has declared war. They command the Divine Ice Sect, whose sect master is a peak Nascent Soul expert."

Lin Zhaoyue's gaze remained calm, her tone unshaken.

"And I stand at the high Nascent Soul realm. I can take her."

The elders stirred, exchanging uneasy glances. Fang Chen pressed on, his words quick.

"But she is not alone. The other two sects will not stand idle. They will move."

Lin Zhaoyue only smiled, soft, unhurried, as though she spoke of a spring breeze rather than impending war.

"Fret not. Everything is within control. Even Heaven itself would not be able to save them from the calamity awaiting should they dare march upon our clan."

The hall fell silent. The elders were utterly flabbergasted, caught between awe and disbelief.

Where did such impossible confidence come from? They could not see what she saw, nor grasp the depth of her certainty.

To them, it was madness dressed in poise. And yet, in her smile, there was not the faintest trace of doubt.

Lin Zhaoyue's hand stilled as she smoothed down Fang Lian's hair.

Her gaze shifted from the girl to the gathered elders, her voice turning brisk.

"Now that we're finished with that matter, how about you all make use of the cultivation caves and begin your preparations?"

She withdrew her hand, straightened, and then tilted her chin toward Fang Lian. "You too. Go to my chamber. I've prepared a special formation just for you."

The words carried across the entire hall. Every elder heard them, but Lin Zhaoyue showed no care for their opinions.

Instead, she let her eyes sweep deliberately across the room, pausing on each elder one by one.

"This child is going to be my daughter," she said, her tone imperious yet almost playful. "So of course I will spoil her. Why don't you all spoil your own with the resources you have?"

A stunned silence followed. Elders blinked, caught between outrage, disbelief, and shame, while Fang Tian, off to the side, very nearly burst into laughter.

For a fleeting moment, he swore he saw the shadow of his brother in her, the same fearless arrogance, the same unshakable will to put family above all else.

And at that very moment, Fang Yuan was traversing the depths of the forest, his figure moving in tandem with the Saberfang pack.

The great beasts had chosen their path northward, and he, without hurry or protest, decided to follow along.

From the eastern ranges they crossed into colder winds, pressing toward the shadowed expanse of the northern Dark Forest.

He frowned slightly. What was it about that accursed place that drew them? He had never understood its peculiar pull.

It was in there, months ago, that fate had entangled him with Lin Zhaoyue.

It was there, too, that he first encountered the Saberfangs, when he had been far weaker, forced to flee for his life before their crushing might.

And then there was Du Juan who swore she had hidden a rare herb within that treacherous forest to heal her sister.

All threads pointed north again, as though the forest itself was a loom weaving his path.

And now, as the Saberfangs drove forward, it was once more their destination.

Perched atop the massive beast, Fang Yuan's gaze roamed the wilderness. Every other creature of fang and claw gave way.

From dire wolves to shadow-panthers, none dared linger near, the forest seemed to bend around the Saberfangs' advance, parting like water before a prow.

Just then, his gaze caught something impossible.

A mountain... moved.

For a heartbeat Fang Yuan's eyes refused to believe what they saw.

The colossal shape rose, earth and moss cascading from its flanks, as if the very land had awakened.

Was it a beast disguised as a mountain?

Or a beast truly large enough to be a mountain?

His mind faltered, refusing coherence.

For all his composure, Fang Yuan found his thoughts sluggish, stunned into silence by the sheer immensity of the creature before him.

### **Chapter 213: 213- Tortoise**

The ground trembled as the colossal mountain-beast shifted, its sheer bulk blotting out the horizon.

With one ponderous step, it came to a halt, directly in the Saberfangs' path.

The pack snarled in unison, their roars echoing through the forest like thunderclaps. Even the peak Saberfang, the one whose body rivaled the size of a hill, seemed suddenly diminished, reduced to little more than a cub before this towering monstrosity.

Dust swirled, trees cracked and toppled under the oppressive weight of its presence.

Fang Yuan, balanced atop his mount, narrowed his eyes.

A sound like grinding stone rumbled from the creature's vast shell as its head slowly emerged, ancient and weathered, its eyes glowing like lanterns sunk deep in the earth.

The ridged plates across its back gleamed like jagged cliffs after rain, and moss clung to its carapace as though entire forests had made their home there.

"Human," the voice rolled out, deep and resonant, shaking the marrow in Fang Yuan's bones. "What brings you into my territory?"

For a heartbeat, Fang Yuan froze. It can talk? The thought flickered across his mind, brief, sharp, gone in an instant.

By the time the echo of the beast's words faded, his composure had already returned.

He inclined his head, his voice steady, almost casual.

"I came here," he said, "to watch my friends depart."

The colossal tortoise's eyes, ageless and fathomless, shifted toward the Saberfangs.

"Your friends?" the beast rumbled, its colossal head dipping ever so slightly.

"Very well. I'll take good care of them."

Its ancient gaze settled squarely on Fang Yuan. "Though I fail to see the need. That Saberfang is already a mini-king. Why would a Beast emperor level such as yourself bother to escort them here?"

The words carried an odd weight, layered with meaning Fang Yuan couldn't grasp.

To the beast, his actions spoke like ceremony, like a parent parading his children to their first day in school, driving his finest car simply to make it clear for the others as if expecting them to hear. *'This is my bloodline, this is my standing, remember it well.'*

Dropping the Saberfangs off personally was, in the tortoise's eyes, no different.

It was Fang Yuan's way of declaring, These beasts carry the mark of my protection.

Of course, Fang Yuan had no inkling of these beastly traditions.

Instead he blinked, genuinely at a loss. Whatever the tortoise meant by mini-king, or all that veiled ritual about protection, he hadn't the faintest clue.

But one thing was clear, this mountain-sized beast was not hostile.

It spoke to him face to face, its words were free of malice, and in that he found a strange kind of reassurance.

He inclined his head, voice calm. "Then I must thank you, senior."

The tortoise's ancient eyes gleamed, and it gave the barest nod, as if acknowledging an equal.



That alone was enough to unsettle Fang Yuan.

He could feel it, one true rampage from this creature and the entire Tharz Kingdom might be nothing more than dust in history's wind.

Yet here it was, speaking with courtesy.... Respectfully, even.

Behind them, the Saberfangs stood silent as stone, their fangs bared but their bodies taut, as though they were prisoners at an execution ground.

Not one of them dared to move, not even the hill-sized leader.

All they could do was watch the exchange between man and mountain, caught in a silence where even their breaths seemed too loud.

The tortoise's massive head lowered, its shadow swallowing Fang Yuan whole. Its voice rumbled like stone grinding against stone.

"I'm curious," it mused. "Man and beast were never meant to share a bond, what made you so special?"

Fang Yuan's brow arched. His reply came without hesitation. "Why? Are we not having a conversation right now?"

The mountain-beast let out a deep, thunderous sound, not quite laughter, not quite disdain.

"That is because I am an emperor beast. In your human terms... it's the Hollow Spirit Realm. I have watched kingdoms rise and crumble into dust. I've picked up the habits of mortals across the ages. But they—" Its eyes, vast and gleaming like twin moons, shifted toward the Saberfangs.

"They are still young. They should not have the capacity to understand you or have an inkling on what humans truly are capable of."

Fang Yuan followed its gaze, then looked back up, curious.

"And may I ask," he said carefully, "what that human capabilities is?"

The tortoise studied him for a long while. Then, with the patience of eternity, it nodded once. "Reproduction. Humans reproduce... far too well."

Fang Yuan froze. His mind went blank for a heartbeat before sputtering back to life.

Of all the answers he expected, this was the one the ancient beast chose?

He almost laughed, but caught himself. When he thought about it from a beast's perspective... it wasn't really wrong.

Why do you think humans were the majority despite being on the weaker side?

Fang Yuan coughed lightly, smoothing over his surprise with practiced calm. "...I suppose I can't deny that human reproduction is... excessive. But how does that explain what humans are really capable of?"

The tortoise's eyes narrowed, as if amused by his persistence.

"More humans," the beast rumbled, its voice rolling like distant thunder. "When they gather, even the mightiest beast may fall. One creature brought down, its flesh carved apart, its essence consumed... and humans grow stronger. Then more of them rise, more of them hunt, more of them feed. Piece by piece, they take the land for themselves."

Its vast eyes narrowed, an ancient weight behind their glow. "Look at you. You are proof. A human who has stepped into the Hollow Spirit Realm, a realm no mortal man has touched for millennia."

Fang Yuan then recalled as a name pop up in his memory.

His lips parted before he could stop himself. "Wait... wasn't Pill King Shan Yifeng one?"

The tortoise's gaze lingered on him for a long, ponderous moment. Then, it replied:

"He wasn't a human."

## **Chapter 214: 214- Mystery girl [1]**

Its vast head tilted slightly, ancient eyes burning with a cold, knowing light. "Beasts may be born strong. But humans... humans never stop climbing."

For a moment, Fang Yuan was silent as he took in the truth, plain and simple.

Next, he inclined his head as the faintest trace of a smile touching his lips.

"Thank you... for answering my question, senior."

The tortoise's massive eyes softened, lids lowering in something almost like approval. "As long as you stay away from my territories, you're welcome."

Its voice rumbled, ancient and steady. "Go then, human. Carry your climb as far as it can take you."

Fang Yuan clasped his hands and bowed. "And may your mountain stand unshaken."

Then, with a movement that was both ponderous and graceful, the living mountain turned, its sheer bulk carving a new valley through the ancient forest as it cleared the path.

The Saberfangs, still frozen in awe and terror, instinctively fell into step behind their new, immense guardian, their forms dwarfed into insignificance.

*This beast is so damn huge and cool!*, Fang Yuan thought, a rare, genuine flicker of admiration in his heart as he watched them depart.

There was a raw, ancient majesty to it that human posturing could never replicate.

With a final glance, he also turned and the air before him rippled as he tore open a silent, black void in the space and without looking back, he stepped through.

The world folded and then righted itself.

The scent of pine and ancient earth was replaced by the acrid tang of dust, ash, and despair.

He stood on a low rise, looking down upon what was left of Phungrei City.

It was a portrait of ruin.

The outer walls were scarred with great, claw-marked gouges from the Saberfangs' rampage.

Whole districts lay in rubble, not yet cleared, let alone rebuilt.

The few buildings still standing were darkened shells, their windows like the empty eye sockets of a skull.

A palpable gloom hung over the city, a miasma of defeat that seemed to stifle even the sound of the wind.

This was not a city in mourning instead it was a an image of a city that had given up.

With a thought, his divine sense swept out, like a vast, invisible net covering every street, every hovel, every half-collapsed manor.

This was the Gu territory, they ruled this city in an ironclad control. But with their patriach and even the patriach's father, their ancestor in his captive, he expected to see chaos and ruin and their elders in havoc ruin.

He did not.

Instead, he found order. A cold, tense, and desperate order.

The Gu compound at the city's heart was a hive of grim activity, guards posted with a rigidity that spoke of harsh discipline, not loyalty.

The city's despair stopped at its gates, replaced by a brittle, fearful efficiency.

And then he found something interesting.

In the main courtyard of the Gu Family estate, there was a faint but unmistakable to his senses, was the peculiar energy signature of a recent teleportation.

The exact same unique resonance he had encountered in the Wu clan courtyard.

A faint, cold smile touched his lips. *So, they had settled a new clan head already? And with such... external assistance. How efficient. But that changed nothing. In fact, it only sealed their fate further.*

**Today, the name Gu would be erased.**

He descended from the rise, his footsteps silent on the broken road as he walked toward the main gates of the city.

The guards at the gate were a mirror of the city itself, their armor was dented, their postures slouched.

The arrogant swagger he remembered from his last visit was gone, extinguished.

They didn't bother to even make their visitors troubled, their eyes glazed over with exhaustion and apathy.

They simply watched him pass, too tired to care about yet another stranger entering their dying world.

The streets were nearly deserted.

Those few citizens who dared to venture out moved with their heads down, their steps quick, as if afraid that lingering too long in the open would attract misfortune.

The air was thick with the silence of a place that has forgotten how to hope.

Crumbled masonry and splintered wood lined the avenues, monuments to a disaster that the city lacked the spirit to clear away.

Fang Yuan walked through it all, an island of calm in a sea of desolation.

His expression was placid, but his eyes were cold, taking in the evidence of his own handiwork and the pathetic response to it.

Fang Yuan decided to take his time. There was no need to rush.

With Lin Zhaoyue managing clan affairs, what trouble could possibly arise? Besides, it wasn't every day he allowed himself the luxury of a day off.

Hands clasped behind his back, he strolled toward the slums.

The air was heavy with smoke and sour wine, the narrow alleys alive with murmurs and the shuffling of tired feet.

He deliberately suppressed his aura, masking himself as nothing more than a weary traveler. His pace was unhurried, his steps carrying no weight of power.

Even his clothing had shifted subtly, coarse and threadbare, blending seamlessly with the commonfolk.

Not a single eye lingered on him.

He walked until the path opened into a rundown square.

There, amidst broken walls and makeshift shelters, a woman stood.

Her appearance was a jarring contrast to the misery around her.

Draped in silken robes that flowed like rippling water, her attire revealed as much as it concealed, sleeves that fluttered with every motion, fabric that traced her curves before parting scandalously at the legs, and a neckline that seemed almost deliberately careless.

She looked as though she had stepped out of some gaudy painting, a courtesan's allure painted across every line of her body.

And yet, her hands were gentle.

She knelt down with a calm patience, feeding scraps of bread to ragged children, her long sleeves brushing the dirt as though unbothered by filth.

## **Chapter 215: 215- Mystery Girl [2]**

Fang Yuan remembered the girl.

She was the same girl who once tried to bar his way at the edge of the Dark Forest.

Back then, she had tried to stop him with words and perhaps even seduction.

Perhaps it was genuine fear for his life... or perhaps it had merely been part of her profession.

A courtesan trying to coax a coin by inviting him to stay for a night.

But now that his perception had been sharpened by the Hollow Spirit Realm, he saw what he had missed entirely before.

As she handed a piece of plain steamed bun to a grubby-faced child, her movements were fluid and perfectly balanced, containing a power that no mortal could possess.

The air around her subtly bent, a miniature domain of control so refined it was nearly invisible. She was not a simple courtesan.

She was a solid Nascent Soul realm cultivator.

Fang Yuan lingered quietly, watching her movements. The woman knelt among the children, her hands graceful as she broke the coarse bread into smaller pieces.

When she noticed him at the edge of the square, she lifted her gaze and smiled, warm, practiced, a courtesan's smile.

"Would you like some as well, sir?" she asked lightly, holding out a piece as though she had been expecting him.

Fang Yuan shook his head. "No, I'm full. But thank you for the offer."

She inclined her head, neither offended nor insistent, and turned back to her task.

A few moments later, when her hand dipped into the basket again, one piece of bread had vanished, along with two of the children who had been hovering nearby.

Fang Yuan raised a brow, expecting her to scold or chase after them.

But she didn't. She simply smiled faintly, letting it pass.

Not just the children, even a few adults slunk by to snatch scraps, and she gave no sign of stopping them.

By the time her basket was empty, the sun had dipped into the horizon.

Fang Yuan realized, with a faint trace of amusement, that he had been standing there the whole time, simply watching her feed the hungry.

The woman dusted her hands, then turned back to him, lips curling into another smile.

"Sir, you've been standing there since morning. Surely you would like a piece of bread, if only to fill your stomach?" Her voice was soft, coaxing, her every gesture touched with unconscious seduction.

Fang Yuan shook his head again. "Instead of bread," he said calmly, "I'd like to discuss something with you."

Her lashes lowered. She brought one hand to cover her chest, the other to rest delicately over her skirts, as if shielding herself.

Her voice turned coy, feigned innocence dripping from every syllable. "I'm a pure maiden, sir... I can't."

Fang Yuan almost rolled his eyes. "Enough. You already know me, so let's skip the act."

For the first time, her expression faltered.

Her brows knit faintly, and she tilted her head, eyes widening with genuine confusion. "No... I don't know you."

Fang Yuan stared at her, silence stretching.

*Inside, he swore. Shit. Did I just go too far with my own narcissism? He rubbed his temple inwardly. I thought she stopped me months ago because she found me handsome—ah, wait. Of course. Back then I was in disguise.*

"Let's say you once helped me in the past," Fang Yuan said evenly. "So I came today to search for you, to repay you."

Her eyes softened.

For a heartbeat, silence hung between them, then she smiled gently. "I'm happy to have been of help. But I don't seek anything in return for what I do."

She stepped forward without hesitation, her hand rising to lightly rub his hair, as though he were some younger brother she wished to comfort.

"You're a good man," she said softly. "Thank you."

Fang Yuan was left speechless.

With his aura completely concealed, he looked no different from a wandering mortal.

And the woman before him, her eyes held nothing but sincerity.

She truly believed his words, proud of her small kindness, proud enough that he suddenly felt he couldn't bear to extinguish that joy.

So he stood still, letting her brush his hair as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Only when she seemed to realize what she was doing did she startle, cheeks coloring faintly.

She coughed into her hand and took a hurried step back. "It's late, sir. How about we... meet again tomorrow? Here."

Fang Yuan inclined his head. "That would be greatly appreciated, Miss..."

He let the word trail, clearly expecting her to fill the silence with her name.

But she didn't. By the time he blinked, she had already vanished into the twilight.

Fang Yuan could still sense her trail, faint but unhidden. *She didn't even tried to mask her trace. Not the careful type, is she? Maybe clumsy, even...*

With that thought, he turned the opposite way, seeking out a modest inn for the night.

Minutes later, the sky darkened, heavy clouds rolling in before splitting open.

Rain poured in unrelenting sheets, each drop striking like tiny arrows, drumming against rooftops in a steady war march.

Fang Yuan could have easily kept himself dry, but for once he chose otherwise.

*Better to look like any other weary traveler.*

And so he let the downpour soak him through, walking calmly as the water traced down his robes.

At last, he spotted a small inn, its lanterns glowing faintly against the storm.

Fang Yuan slipped inside, shaking the droplets from his sleeves.

The place smelled faintly of damp wood and old wine, but it was warm, and that was enough.



He approached the counter, voice shivering. "How many rooms do you have available?"

The innkeeper, a weary man with a towel slung across one shoulder, glanced up. "Seven left."

Fang Yuan gave a slight nod. "I'll take—"

The creak of the door cut him off.

Another figure stepped in from the rain, cloaked and dripping. She lifted her head and her eyes locked with his.

For a long moment, both froze.

Fang Yuan's composure cracked first; his lips twitched, then curved upward until he nearly burst into laughter.

"Ah," he said lightly, struggling to rein in his amusement. "We meet again, miss."

The girl's face went crimson in an instant.

She opened her mouth, shut it, then looked away as if she could will the rain to swallow her whole.

And in that instant, Fang Yuan understood.

The deliberate trail she had left earlier, it wasn't just her being clumsy.

It had been her attempt to lure him into chasing after her in that direction, it was all part of her little scheme.

She had probably even thought he would chase after her, and perhaps returning back, going back in the opposite direction would shake him off her trail.

The only flaw in her planning was that Fang Yuan had never really planned to chase her at all.

His expression made that clear enough, and her flush only deepened, climbing all the way to the tips of her ears.

Outside, the storm raged on. This inn was the only shelter for miles. Neither of them would be leaving any time soon.

## **Chapter 216: 216- Mystery Girl [3]**

"You're stalking me!" the girl blurted, finger stabbing the air in his direction.

Fang Yuan only shook his head, expression unreadable. "From how I'm seeing things, it's you who's stalking me. I clearly saw you heading south."

Her mouth opened, then snapped shut. Opened again—nothing came out.

She looked like a fish gasping for air before finally spinning on her heel and marching toward the counter.

"Innkeeper! I want a room. As far away from this creep as possible!"

Fang Yuan blinked. For a moment, his mind was blank.

Then, deadpan, he thought, *What the heck happened to the kind, generous maiden from earlier? How did we go from 'thank you, good man' to 'burn this pervert alive' in one afternoon?*

He rubbed his forehead, suppressing the chuckle tugging at his lips.

"Women," he muttered under his breath. *"Heaven's greatest mystery."*

The innkeeper, caught between them, looked like he wanted to melt into the floor.

His eyes darted from Fang Yuan's calm face to the girl's flustered glare, as though he'd been dragged into the middle of a marital spat he had no business witnessing.

Fang Yuan sighed and stepped forward, voice even, almost courteous.

"One room will be fine. Preferably not next to hers. I wouldn't want to encourage any... misunderstandings."

The girl whipped her head around, cheeks still flushed. "You—!"

Fang Yuan merely raised a brow, his silence the perfect shield.

After a few minutes later, they each got their own rooms and Fang Yuan arrived in his room at last.

It was a modest space, walls of plain timber, a narrow bed with rough linen, a small table with a lantern resting on it.

A single shelf leaned against the wall, sparsely lined with a few old books whose spines were cracked from use.

Since he was playing the role of a mere wanderer, Fang Yuan made no attempt to cultivate.

Instead, he stretched once, exhaled, and lay down.

An hour later, drowsiness finally claimed him—only for his sharp senses to rouse him again.

A faint creak of the door, the near-silent shuffle of feet across wooden planks. He didn't need to open his eyes to know who it was.

The girl.

Still, he kept his breathing steady, chest rising and falling with the rhythm of slumber. If he was to act the part of a harmless drifter, then so be it.

She moved lightly, but to Fang Yuan's ears each step was crisp and clear. He felt her presence circle the room, linger at the table, brush past the shelf.

She was snooping, clumsy but careful, eyes darting for signs of valuables or secrets.

After a time, she stopped. The pressure of her presence vanished.

Fang Yuan's lips nearly twitched. *She's probably expecting me to jump up the moment she leaves, then rush back in to catch me. If she does that, she's not just suspicious, she's downright mental.*

Sure enough, a rush of air stirred as the door banged open.

"Surprise!" she shouted.

The only answer was his steady, unbroken snore.

Her momentum collapsed into awkward silence.

"Uh... oh..." She scratched her cheek, leaning closer.

"So he's not a cultivator? Am I... overthinking?" she muttered aloud.

Her gaze wandered until it landed squarely on the spatial ring at his finger.

For a moment, her eyes narrowed. Then she shook her head, muttering again.  
"Nevermind. I'm definitely overthinking."

And with that, she slipped back out into the hallway.

The next morning arrived.

Fang Yuan stepped out of his room, robes neat, expression calm. He decided on leaving early and heading for the Gu Family.

But... It looked like fate had other plans prepared for him.

Just as he reached the lobby, she appeared.

The same girl.

Fang Yuan had already resolved not to bring up last night's farce. Better to ignore this lunatic entirely.

Except—

"Ahh! It's you again, mister!" Her face lit up, her tone cheerful, as if greeting an old friend. "What are you doing here?"

Fang Yuan nearly stumbled. *What is this? Did she... factory reset herself overnight?*

Outwardly, he kept his composure. "I stayed the night here."

Her eyes widened. "Oh! I didn't know that! If I had, I would have loved to have a chat with you."

Her voice carried genuine regret, as though last night's "creep" accusation had never left her lips.

Fang Yuan's gaze slid to the innkeeper, who stood frozen behind the counter, brows raised nearly to his hairline.

The poor man's expression screamed what he dared not say: *Didn't this girl call him a creep just last night? Now she wants a friendly chat?*

Fang Yuan smothered a laugh. *Very well, if she wanted to pretend nothing happened, he could play along.*

"How about we grab breakfast together, then?" he suggested lightly.

"Sure! That would be delightful!" she chirped.

Turning to the innkeeper, she produced a gleaming gold coin with a flourish. "Here. Bread enough for this, and a soup. Please." Her tone was polite, her smile warm.

The innkeeper blinked at the coin, then hurried off.

A short while later, the two of them sat across from each other at a small wooden table.

The rain had eased outside, the morning air cool and fresh. Steam curled from a bowl of broth between them, and a heap of coarse, dark bread sat piled on a plate.

Fang Yuan picked up a piece, studying it with faint curiosity.

Hard, uneven, with a rough crust, nothing like the refined meals of spirit grains and beast meats he was accustomed to.

Still, he tore it in half, dipped it into the soup, and took a bite.

The flavor was bland, the texture dense. Yet he chewed with a straight face, swallowed, and even gave a small nod.

"Not bad," he said evenly.

The girl's lips curved, pleased. "Right? It's simple, but it fills the stomach."

Fang Yuan gave her a small nod, finishing the last bite of bread in silence.

She set down her bowl, eyes bright as she leaned a little closer. "So... would you like to accompany me today?"

Her voice carried no trace of coyness, only a polite earnestness, as though she truly needed another pair of hands to help her hand out bread in the slums.

Fang Yuan's reply came without pause, flat. "No."

She blinked, taken aback by the blunt refusal. "Why?"

#### **Chapter 217: 217- Mystery Girl [4]**

"Trade secrets, ma'am," Fang Yuan replied evenly, as if that explained everything.

"Ah..." She tilted her head, then gave a small nod of understanding. "If that's how you feel, I won't force you." Her words were gentle, without a trace of resentment.

The meal lingered a little longer in companionable silence before they finally parted ways.

Fang Yuan watched her back as she disappeared into the bustling street, her figure soon lost among the crowd.

Only then did he turn, his expression cooling as his steps carried him in the opposite direction, straight toward the Gu Family estate.

Fang Yuan moved through the streets with unhurried steps, yet his eyes were sharp, sweeping over every corner of the Gu Family estate as it came into view.

He didn't walk through the gates immediately.

Instead, his figure flickered once, vanishing into the shadows of an alley.

When he reappeared, he was already circling the perimeter, his hand dipping into his sleeve.

One by one, slender formation flags slipped between his fingers.

With the ease of long practice, he planted them in the soil, wedged them in cracks between stone, or pressed them lightly against a wall until they melted seamlessly into place.

Each flag vanished from sight the instant it was set, yet the faint pulse of power beneath his divine sense marked their quiet presence.

He worked without haste, his expression calm, his movements as steady as water carving stone.

To any outsider, he was just another wandering traveler, but with every step he was weaving a silent cage, one that would close the moment he willed it.

Only after the circuit was complete did he straighten, brushing the dust from his hands. His lips curved faintly, almost amused.

Then, without warning, he shot upward.

His figure blurred against the gray sky as he flew straight over the Gu Family walls, robes snapping in the wind.

He descended like a shadow falling from the heavens, uninvited and unannounced.

The moment Fang Yuan's boots touched the stone courtyard, the air itself shivered.

The formation flared to life, swallowing the sky in shadow.

In an instant, the blazing sun was gone, replaced by a vast, oppressive darkness that pressed down on every breath.

Two Gu Family guards on patrol froze mid-step, torches sputtering as if strangled by the weight of the aura now flooding the estate.

The man stood there, calm, composed, as if he belonged to the darkness itself.

His presence radiated out in waves.

Neither guard recognized him, but the strength bleeding from his body left no room for doubt. This was no ordinary intruder.

One guard's spear trembled as he tried to raise it, his voice breaking in panic.

"Wh-who... who are you!?"

The other staggered back a step, throat dry, then shouted hoarsely, "An intruder! Sound the alarm! Call the elders—hurry!"

The other wasted no time.

He spun on his heel, sprinting toward the inner halls while shouting, "Intruder! Intruder! Summon the elders!"

His voice cracked with panic, echoing through the estate like a struck bell.

More guards emerged from nearby posts, weapons half-raised, uncertain whether to rush him or run for their lives.

Fang Yuan merely clasped his hands behind his back, watching their frenzy with calm detachment, as though the chaos itself were beneath his notice.

Within moments the entire Gu estate was in uproar.

Courtyards blazed with lantern light as disciples and elders alike spilled out in a rush, weapons in hand, their auras flaring in a ragged tide.

The family had been roused in full, faces pale, eyes fixed on the lone figure who stood as though he owned the ground beneath their feet.

Fang Yuan swept a calm gaze across them, his eyes like blades cutting through the night.

He waited until the crowd had gathered thick around him, until the last ripple of panic quieted into tense silence.

Then, hands still clasped behind his back, he spoke.

"Children should not bear the sins of their elders," his voice rang out, steady and solemn, carrying across the estate like the toll of a great bell.

"Innocence should not be chained by the weight of another's crime. But today..."

Fang Yuan's gaze sharpened, cold light flashing within his eyes.

The air itself seemed to constrict, pressing down on every chest as his voice rolled across the courtyard like a storm.

"...today, the Gu Family's name is going to be severed from this world. From this moment onward, there shall be no Gu Clan in Phungrei City."

The words fell heavy as iron, each syllable brimming with finality.

His killing intent surged, coiling with the grief he had carried for years, sharpened into a blade of vengeance.

Then, his voice dropped lower, deeper, yet somehow it struck even harder.

"The eldest son of Fang Lěi and Fèng Tíng has come to collect the debt of blood."

Lightning could have split the heavens at that moment, and it would have been no more terrifying than the weight of his declaration.

The courtyard froze.

The younger generation of the Gu Clan shifted uneasily, exchanging confused glances.

Those names meant nothing to them but among the older faces, lines etched deep with age.. recognition struck like a blade.

Several elders stiffened.

One of the senior-most stepped forward, his knees giving out beneath him as he dropped to the ground with a heavy thud.

His forehead pressed to the stone, voice trembling yet loud enough for all to hear.

"Oh great Fang Head... you yourself said children should not bear the sins of their elders. Then, I beg you, let them go. Spare the young. Let their lives not be forfeit to the blood-debts of their fathers."

The plea hung heavy in the air, but before silence could settle, another elder scoffed sharply from the side.

His lips curled in disdain, and his voice cracked like a whip across the assembly.

"The son of those two idiots, you say? Hah! Fang Yuan was devoured by a Saberfang. His bones should have been scattered by now and his soul... his soul should likely already be extinguished.



And as for his brother Fang Tian, he is but a mere Golden Core, a child playing at strength. And you..."

The old man's eyes narrowed with contempt. "You dare parade yourself as an imposter before the Gu Family?"

The crowd stirred uneasily, caught between fear and disbelief.