

Divine 2281

Chapter 2281 - 2281: Mission 12

The more Lady You dwelled on the matter, the more apprehensive she became.

It wasn't as though Lian Xue had never participated in the clan competition before. Back when she was considerably younger, she had taken part. During that period, she had been the weakest in the Shen family, and as a result, Lian Xue had been subjected to mockery and bullying within the clan. Were it not for that competition, Lian Xue would not have endured such torment.

Furthermore, Lian Xue had just experienced the annulment of her engagement. In light of this, Lady You shuddered to think of what might occur during the clan competition.

Lady You grew increasingly anxious, struggling to come to terms with the situation.

Gu Chaoyan found Lady You's reaction both vexing and amusing.

Lady You had grown accustomed to her meekness after enduring bullying for an extended period, making her instinctively believe that any new situation would invariably lead to adversity.

She seemed to have forgotten that she was now at the Ninth Heaven of the Martial Warrior Realm, while Shen Lianxue had achieved the Martial Master Realm. On the day of the competition, Shen Lianxue could simply adjust her cultivation to the Martial Warrior Realm. It was a relatively straightforward matter.

Upon her arrival, Gu Chaoyan had observed the severely underdeveloped martial culture on this continent. Even if she didn't reveal her true Martial God cultivation, if she portrayed herself as a Martial Saint, the royal family would likely value her and seek to secure her allegiance.

Lady You had no need to fret over this situation.

Gu Chaoyan tried to reassure her. "Mom, what's there to worry about? I'm a

Martial Master now, and even if I can't secure first place in the competition, I'll still stand out among the younger generation of the Shen Family. Moreover, you're a Ninth Heaven Warrior, and if anyone dares to mistreat me in the Shen

Family, you can employ your spiritual energy."

Gu Chaoyan's explanation made things sound much simpler.

Lady You's face, previously tense with anxiety, now relaxed. She appeared to have suddenly realized something. "You're right. I'm now a Ninth Heaven Warrior, and Lian Xue, you're a Martial Master. Among the Shen family's younger generation, you're one of the best. Why should I worry about you being mistreated?"

Among the younger generation of the Shen family, Shen Ningyu stood out slightly. She had reached the Ninth Heaven of the Martial Arts Realm, which was considered quite powerful among her peers.

Considering that the head of the Shen family had cultivated for many years and had only reached the Martial Master level, Shen Lianxue's status as a Martial Master meant she had a good chance of winning.

With this in mind, Lady You began to feel hopeful and even eager to participate.

Lady You smiled joyfully. "I completely forgot how significant this competition is. It's just a competition, and there's no need to fear it."

Gu Chaoyan nodded in approval. That was the right attitude.

She believed that Lady You was actually a naturally cheerful person.

Furthermore, she seemed somewhat carefree. Presumably, before entering the Shen family, Lady You had been a lively young girl. After spending so many years in the Shen family, she had suppressed her timid nature.

However, things were beginning to improve, and Gu Chaoyan was eager to see Lady You regain her happy and optimistic demeanor.

“What do you say? Take these pills and start cultivating. I’ll also meditate in my room to see if I can break through to the Warrior level. That way, we can be confident about winning the competition,” Gu Chaoyan suggested.

Lady You nodded, believing that it was indeed possible..

Chapter 2282 - 2282: Mission 13

Gu Chaoyan spent the remainder of her time confined to her room, a prisoner of boredom. When dinner time arrived, Lady You would bring her some simple dishes.

In truth, given Gu Chaoyan’s advanced level, she had no real need for sustenance. However, Lady You, being of a different caliber, still required three meals a day. Consequently, it was agreed upon that Gu Chaoyan should partake in the meals as well.

Gu Chaoyan obliged and had some modest food, finding herself with little else to occupy her time in this place.

The spiritual energy on this continent was astonishingly scarce, rendering her cultivation attempts futile. Her only recourse was to spend her time refining pills and medicine within her secluded space.

The pills she produced were exclusively for Lady You, primarily basic in nature and effortlessly concocted. In fact, her stockpile had nearly reached completion, sufficient to last Lady You a lifetime.

As she diligently worked on her pill refining, the moment of the impending competition drew near.

Gu Chaoyan stored the freshly made pills within her interspace and emerged, resolute in her intention to engage in the clan competition alongside Lady You.

The Shen family's residence was situated not far from their current location.

In essence, the Shen family's residency served as the central courtyard within the Shen family's compound, encompassed by various branch courtyards. A convenient, designated entrance allowed passage from one side to the other, with one side leading to the clan's territory and the other to the Shen family's residence. Ordinarily, without prior notice, members of the Shen family's branches were restricted from entering the clan's territory, just as clan members were discouraged from freely wandering into the branch courtyards.

Today marked a typical clan competition day, where elders sought to gauge the progress of the younger generation. Thus, they were free to traverse between the clan and the family residence.

Gu Chaoyan and her peers could not venture to the clan independently. They had to wait for all the young members of Shen Chengwang's family to gather before proceeding together.

She and Lady You had arrived early and decided to wait here for the others.

One by one, the rest of the group arrived. As they caught sight of Gu Chaoyan, their expressions displayed a mixture of disdain and the excitement of watching a spectacle.

Shen Ningyu, seemingly the most troubled among them, arrived last, still visibly perturbed.

The others greeted Shen Ningyu with great respect, even trying to flatter her from time to time.

It was only after this interaction that Shen Ningyu managed to suppress her impatience and approach Gu Chaoyan.

Once Shen Ningyu arrived, they were ready to depart. However, she unexpectedly halted and approached Gu Chaoyan, her gaze filled with disdain as though she was savoring a delightful spectacle. "You? What are you doing here?"

Gu Chaoyan remained unfazed, seemingly uninterested. ‘

Shen Ningyu continued, her voice dripping with sarcasm, "Our branch had already suffered a significant loss of face in the past. Now, you want to participate in the competition. Do you think our branch hasn't been humiliated enough?"

Gu Chaoyan retorted casually, "Father and your mother made the arrangements for me to participate. If you find it inappropriate, I suggest you discuss it with our Master and Lady. There's little point in discussing it with me."

Shen Ningyu was taken aback. She hadn't expected Shen Lianxue, who usually complied readily, to talk back to her, let alone without any concern for her dignity.

Speechless, Shen Ningyu knew very well why Shen Lianxue had decided to participate in the clan competition. It was a calculated move by her mother to further disgrace her, setting the stage for a hasty marriage and the acquisition of low-level cultivation beads from her future husband's family.

She had wanted to enjoy the spectacle alongside Shen Lianxue, so how could she discourage her from participating now?

Chapter 2283 Mission 14

Shen Ningyu knew that openly expressing her true feelings was out of the question, but she needed to find a way to assert herself.

With a forced and uneasy expression, Shen Ningyu remarked, "I suppose Father and Mother are exceptionally generous to allow someone of your caliber to participate in the competition."

Gu Chaoyan remained unruffled, offering a calm response, "I'll be sure to treasure this opportunity."

Shen Ningyu added with a hint of finality, "Do cherish it indeed. If you embarrass yourself once more, you may not have the privilege of competing in the future Shen family events."

Gu Chaoyan replied coolly, "Rest assured, I intend to make the most of it."

Shen Ningyu let out a cold snort and decided not to engage in further argument.

She knew that after the clan competition, she would have ample opportunities to deal with Gu Chaoyan. Shen Lianxue's life would never be peaceful; she would forever be overshadowed by her.

Shen Ningyu moved ahead confidently, with Shen Cheng closely following, attempting to earn her favor. Meanwhile, Shen Lianxue was left behind, seemingly destined to be ignored.

Being ignored was probably the best outcome for Shen Lianxue at this point. It was unlikely that she would escape unscathed from everyone's taunts and bullying.

Aside from Shen Ningyu, nobody in the Shen Family had any desire to provoke Shen Lianxue. They all knew about her affiliation with the Qian Family, and no one could match her skill in verbal sparring.

As they arrived at the Shen family clan grounds, it became apparent that the clan treated the juniors from various branches with equal consideration.

Gu Chaoyan was quietly impressed by the atmosphere in the clan.

Shen Ningyu, with an air of superiority, approached Gu Chaoyan and inquired, "Do you know why the clan is holding this competition?"

Gu Chaoyan replied, "I'm not sure."

Shen Ningyu explained with a hint of pride, "The competition is to decide who will represent us in the palace for the clan. I used to be the representative, and this year it should be me again. As for the Qian Family, they will undoubtedly have their own representative. Zhi'ang plans to request the emperor's approval for our marriage when he enters the palace this year." She wore a self-satisfied smile as she spoke.

Qian Ziang stood out as the most exceptional junior within the Qian Family.

Once upon a time, he had been betrothed to Shen Lianxue, all because of certain assets held by her mother.

However, circumstances had shifted...

He had since broken off the engagement, and now, he wished to wed someone else-Gu Chaoyan.

In the presence of Shen Lianxue, Shen Ningyu couldn't contain her excitement. It would bring her immense satisfaction if she could witness even a hint of anguish on Shen Lianxue's face.

Upon hearing this news, Shen Lianxue responded with a slight nod. "I understand."

This reaction slightly surprised Shen Ningyu.

In the past, whenever Qian Ziang's name was mentioned, Shen Lianxue would invariably be overcome with despair. But today, there was no discernible reaction from her.

"Qian Ziang, he was once a man solely driven by self-interest. Why are you so delighted to marry him now? He coveted my mother's possessions and even swindled me out of my Cultivation Bead. Once he obtained what he desired, he abandoned me and terminated the engagement. You claim to be of value to him now, prompting his desire for marriage. Do you believe you won't end up like Shen Lianxue after he has extracted all he wants from you? Your apparent happiness at contemplating your future is truly pitiable. I, for one, am relieved to have severed ties with such an unscrupulous individual," Gu Chaoyan commented earnestly.

Hearing these words, Shen Ningyu abruptly turned around. Her anger was evident as she confronted Gu Chaoyan. "What are you talking about? Shen Lianxue, only someone as worthless as you would have their engagement broken. I will not meet the same fate. Brother Ziang treats me and you differently, and you will never measure up to me. Do you comprehend that?"

Chapter 2284 - 2284: Mission 15

Shen Ningyu exclaimed with excitement.

However, Gu Chaoyan displayed a disapproving expression.

For someone like Qian Ziang, it seemed that self-interest was all that mattered. Would Shen Ningyu be an exception? It appeared unlikely; he was currently coaxing her because she remained indispensable.

Only a person like Shen Ningyu would wield this situation as a means of flaunting her importance.

Gu Chaoyan regarded her with pity, as if looking at someone pitiable.

Shen Ningyu disliked Shen Lianxue's expression; it wasn't the effect she desired, and this infuriated her.

"Shen Lianxue, wipe that expression off your face. What right do you have? You're just a woman whose engagement was broken off and can only seek a hasty marriage. What right do you have to say anything?" Shen Ningyu retorted angrily.

Gu Chaoyan simply shrugged. "Then don't look at me."

This response irked Shen Ningyu even more.

Who did Gu Chaoyan think she was to judge Qian Ziang in this manner? Did she honestly believe her future would be any better?

Shen Ningyu's eyes gleamed with ruthlessness as she ascended the stage, effortlessly dispatching her opponents with just two moves.

With Elder Miss dominating the stage, there was no need for further competition.

Helplessly, the other participants ascended one by one, only to be swiftly defeated.

Ultimately, no one remained except for Shen Ningyu. The elders of the Shen family clan were about to step forward to announce her victory when Shen Ningyu intervened, her expression filled with anticipation. She provocatively remarked, "If my memory serves me right, there's still one person who hasn't taken the stage, right? Shen Lianxue, you were so insistent on participating.

Then come up and compete. What's the point of hiding there?"

For instance, she could have easily defeated Shen Lianxue with a single move.

However, since Shen Lianxue had provoked her, it wasn't enough for Gu Chaoyan to just win; she wanted to humiliate her as well. It was the only way she could save face.

Shen Ningyu thought to herself, determined to prove her superiority.

At this moment, all eyes were fixed on Gu Chaoyan.

She had no intention of staying in the shadows. The reason for her delayed entrance was straightforward: she had no desire to expend unnecessary energy, so she planned to appear last.

Now that Shen Ningyu had singled her out, Gu Chaoyan walked up to the stage with a leisurely gait.

"It's my turn," she declared calmly.

Shen Ningyu had no interest in small talk. She launched her attack immediately, and Gu Chaoyan instinctively evaded.

After evading, Shen Ningyu frowned slightly. Logically, Gu Chaoyan shouldn't have been able to dodge her attack. She hadn't anticipated her luck being so favorable.

Having her attack dodged made Shen Ningyu somewhat irate, and she launched another attack without restraint.

Gu Chaoyan, keen to end the confrontation swiftly, countered Shen Ningyu with the spiritual power of a warrior.

Just as Shen Ningyu firmly believed that Shen Lianxue would either stumble or fall flat on her face, becoming the object of ridicule, something unexpected occurred. She felt her body being lifted, followed by a sudden and intense pain, especially on her face.

The entire scene fell into an eerie silence.

Shen Ningyu had always been the brightest star among the younger generation of the Shen family, consistently outperforming her peers.

Now...

Now, she was directly defeated by that trash Shen Lianxue? Moreover, she was defeated in one move.

And...

She was beaten up very badly..

Chapter 2285 Mission 16

Shen Ningyu tumbled to the ground.

Among the younger generation of the Shen family, not a word was uttered.

After a moment, Shen Ningyu realized her predicament. She had been knocked out of the arena, and the pain on her face stemmed from her face's contact with the ground.

Meanwhile, Shen Lianxue remained composed and still stood on the stage.

"It's impossible!" Shen Ningyu refused to concede defeat and wished to continue the competition.

The elders of the Shen family didn't intervene because they, too, found the situation improbable. The winner of this competition would represent the Shen family in the palace. If Shen Lianxue had only won through luck and couldn't replicate that success in the palace, it would be a significant embarrassment for the Shen family.

Furthermore, there was the matter of discussing the marriage between Qian Ziang, the young master of the Qian family, and Ningyu in the palace.

Gu Chaoyan furrowed her brow slightly.

Her impression of the Shen family clan had significantly soured.

Logically, in a competition like this, once an opponent was knocked out of the stage, they should be declared the loser. However, the elders of the Shen family clan were not adhering to the rules and were allowing Shen Ningyu to return to the stage. Gu Chaoyan couldn't help but wonder what was going on.

Without affording Shen Ningyu any courtesy, Gu Chaoyan activated her spiritual energy and promptly kicked Shen Ningyu out of the arena.

It had happened once, and perhaps one could argue it was luck. But achieving the same feat twice demonstrated genuine strength. The elders of the Shen family clan acknowledged it and even saw it as a positive development.

However, Shen Ningyu remained unconvinced. She made repeated attempts to reenter the arena.

The elders of the Shen family clan finally stepped in to stop her, recognizing that Shen Lianxue had evolved into a warrior, making any further competition futile. They firmly admonished her, "Shen Lianxue has attained warrior status. You cannot compete with her any longer."

"Martial Warrior Realm?! How? Why?!" Shen Ningyu teetered on the brink of emotional breakdown, her cries echoing in disbelief. Wasn't she supposed to be a complete failure, incapable of cultivating at all? How could she suddenly attain the Martial Warrior Realm?

She vehemently rejected this reality.

"Because I've made a breakthrough, and I've reached the Martial Warrior Realm. There's no need for further explanation," Gu Chaoyan stated matter-of-factly.

Shen Ningyu struggled to accept it, continuing to scream in distress.

Madam Shen turned to Shen Chengwang, seeking answers. "What is happening here?"

Shen Chengwang was equally baffled. How could he explain it? Both Shen Lianxue and Lady You possessed physiques that were deemed untrainable. This was a well-known fact. Yet, Shen Lianxue had suddenly attained the level of a warrior. The exact reasons behind this development were beyond his understanding.

Nevertheless...

Regardless of the circumstances, Shen Lianxue was still his daughter, and this was a positive development. There was no reason to be unhappy about it.

Achieving the status of a warrior held significant advantages.

"If nothing else, this is a positive development. Go and console Ningyu. I'll visit Lady You," Shen Chengwang said with evident joy.

Madam Shen's expression darkened immediately.

In the past, even when Lady You was favored, her life had not been pleasant at all. It had been many years since then, and she had not anticipated that things would remain the same. How could Madam Shen willingly accept this?

She approached Shen Ningyu in frustration. "Stop crying. Your tears will ruin your face. Let's go back and discuss the next steps."

Shen Ningyu continued to sob loudly, but Madam Shen led her away.

Meanwhile, Shen Chengwang walked over to Lady You with a contented smile.

“Lianxue’s performance is commendable,” Shen Chengwang remarked as he stood next to Lady You, his tone filled with approval. “Even though you don’t focus on cultivating your physique, I never anticipated that Lianxue would achieve a breakthrough at her age. Now that she’s reached the Martial Warrior Realm, it would be wonderful if she could continue advancing to the Martial King Realm in the future.”

“But there’s no need to rush. Take your time. Her performance this time is very impressive,” Shen Chengwang continued.

Lady You, who would have been deeply touched by such words in the past, now found them insincere and even slightly irritating. Lianxue had just finished her competition, and she wanted to go to her, but here he was, discussing clan’s contest.

In the past, everything had revolved around Shen Ningyu. Why was he bothering them now?

“It’s satisfactory,” Lady You responded calmly.

Hearing her reply, Shen Chengwang became even more enthusiastic and continued, “The place you’re currently residing in seems a bit small. It’s not suitable for Lianxue’s cultivation. We should have the housekeeper select a more suitable residence for you two to move into. This way, Lianxue’s cultivation conditions will be enhanced.”

“With her cultivation, she should accompany clan’s event into the palace. When she returns, she should remember that, as our juniors, only through their growth can the Shen family ascend,” Shen Chengwang said, his words growing more numerous as he spoke.

Lady You was growing impatient.

Back then, when Shen Ningyu had strong cultivation potential, why hadn’t he arranged for her to cultivate? He had shown no inclination to include her, apart from allowing her to be bullied. Now, it was Lianxue’s turn, and she was expected to bear the responsibility.

Lady You did not offer a direct response. Instead, she simply stated, “I will go and check on Lianxue.”

Then, she left.

With Lianxue's current level of cultivation, she no longer needed to depend on others for her survival. Given this, she had no intention of mistreating Lianxue in any way.

Whether or not Lianxue was willing to provide guidance would be entirely her own decision.

"Lianxue, are you feeling tired? Let's return and get some rest," Lady You inquired with genuine concern.

Lianxue wasn't fatigued.

In truth, she wasn't tired at all after executing just a few moves.

But Gu Chaoyan felt content that someone cared so deeply about her well-being.

"What did Father say to you just now?" Gu Chaoyan inquired.

To some extent, he was worried that Lady You might soften her stance and agree to something she didn't want. After all, he had been too lenient in the past, and that had resulted in his suffering. Lady You had changed, but Gu Chaoyan didn't anticipate such a swift transformation.

"He mentioned that he wanted us to find a more suitable place to live. Additionally, he expressed his desire for you to provide guidance to Ningyu and the others. While I'm fine with relocating to a different residence for increased comfort, I will not consent to guiding Ningyu. No one guided you in the past, so why should you guide them now? I neither accepted nor declined. Although it goes against my wishes, the final decision rests with you," Lady You declared indignantly.

Gu Chaoyan couldn't help but chuckle.

Lady You had surpassed her expectations. Not only did she defend her rights, but she also respected her choices.

It seemed that in the past, she had no one to rely on, which was why she had been mistreated. However, she wasn't innately a pushover.

In that case, once she fulfilled her mission and departed, she could do so with peace of mind, knowing she had Lady You's support.

"Mother, I agree with your stance. We can change our residence, but I won't provide guidance," Gu Chaoyan affirmed..

Chapter 2287 - 2287: Mission 18

Lady You smiled, finding this decision appropriate.

"Let's return quickly and get some well-deserved rest. We still have to enter the palace with the clan later," Lady You instructed.

"Alright."

Meanwhile, at the Qian Family's residence.

Although Qian Ziang hadn't paid particular attention to the Shen family's competition, he was, after all, engaged to Shen Ningyu. So, he couldn't help but inquire about the outcome.

In his opinion, it was just a formality, and he assumed that Shen Ningyu must have emerged victorious.

"Tell me, was it Ningyu?" Qian Ziang confidently asked. He didn't expect to expend much effort on this matter, as he believed the answer wouldn't be any different.

The servant, a bit apprehensive, replied with a trembling voice, "Young Master, no, it was Shen Lianxue."

"I knew it..." Qian Ziang muttered unconsciously. However, after giving it some thought, he stared blankly at the servant and asked, "Is something wrong with your head? That useless Shen Lianxue won?"

Qian Ziang was utterly perplexed by the news.

“She won. Furthermore, her cultivation has already reached the Martial Warrior level. Lady Ningyu is no match for her at all. With a single move, she can almost send Lady Ningyu flying,” the servant replied truthfully, taking the risk of some punishment for his honesty.

“What!! A warrior?!” Qian Ziang exclaimed in shock.

Even he was only at the Sixth Heaven of the Martial Master Realm. Shen Ningyu was slightly ahead of him, at the Seventh Heaven of the Martial Master Realm.

Their marriage was supposed to solidify his standing within the Qian Family.

However...

If Shen Lianxue possessed the cultivation of a warrior...

Certain matters needed to be reconsidered.

For instance, the original plan to enter the palace and request marriage would have to be put on hold. They would wait and observe.

If Shen Lianxue could perform even better, then perhaps he would indeed marry her.

With his decision made, Qian Ziang instructed his servants to inform his parents, understanding the importance of reaching a mutual understanding on this matter.

Shen Lianxue and Shen Ningyu remained oblivious to Qian Ziang's choice.

Shen Lianxue merely wished that things would progress more swiftly; otherwise, it would be a waste of time here.

She had already been on this mission for several days.

Gu Chaoyan finally breathed a sigh of relief upon arriving at the clan.

Lady You couldn't accompany them into the palace; instead, she had to follow the clan elders.

In retrospect, it was fortunate that Lady You didn't accompany them. This way, she could have more time to cultivate—something that Lady You desperately needed at this point.

As soon as Gu Chaoyan arrived at the clan, she spotted Shen Ningyu, who was already there.

She wondered why Shen Ningyu was present.

The clan's elder emerged and explained, "Lianxue, since this is your first time in the palace, there may be many things you're unfamiliar with. Therefore, you must bring Ningyu with you this time so that she can guide you. Besides, the Qian Family is seeking Ningyu's hand in marriage, so she has to go to the palace. You are all sisters from the same branch, so I trust you won't mind."

The clan elder had clarified everything.

Gu Chaoyan did mind, but there was little she could do about it.

If she had to go, then so be it.

This time, after entering the palace, it wouldn't be easy for anyone to claim her as their master.

Furthermore, Gu Chaoyan had already ruled out the Shen Family, so she had no intention of supporting them.

Shen Ningyu had lost face in the competition, yet she still insisted, "So what if you won? Brother Ziang still wishes to marry me.."

Shen Ningyu wore a confident and proud expression on her face.

Gu Chaoyan couldn't help but think that this woman was beyond hope. She acted as if being married to Qian Ziang was the greatest joy in the world. She seemed to have completely disregarded what Shen Lianxue had said earlier and didn't care that Shen Lianxue wanted nothing to do with a greedy person like Qian Ziang.

Gu Chaoyan shook her head slightly.

Dealing with such a brainless person was not worth her time.

So, Gu Chaoyan waited quietly.

Once the clan elders were ready, they all set off for the palace together.

In the carriage, Gu Chaoyan and Shen Ningyu shared the same space, while the elders of the Shen Family each had their own carriage.

To her credit, Shen Ningyu didn't throw a tantrum about the arrangement. It was clear that there was a great deal of formality and etiquette in the interactions between the elders and juniors of the Shen family.

Gu Chaoyan had no objections either way.

She simply got into the carriage.

However, the moment Shen Ningyu entered, she immediately began to look at Gu Chaoyan with disdain. She prattled on about how familiar she was with court affairs, warning Gu Chaoyan not to cause any trouble in the palace and proudly mentioning her connection with Qian Ziang.

Gu Chaoyan couldn't fathom what she was so proud of.

Fortunately, their arrival at the palace was imminent.

Otherwise, she might have been driven to annoyance.

Shen Ningyu, as an elder miss who had been pampered for a long time, had a good-natured temperament and was incredibly self-centered.

Once they disembarked from the carriage, Gu Chaoyan purposefully kept her distance from Shen Ningyu.

Shen Ningyu didn't continue her nagging. Instead, she adopted the demeanor of Elder Miss Shen, radiating an air of pride as she walked with her head held high.

Gu Chaoyan obediently followed the clan elders.

As they approached the palace's entrance, there was still quite a distance to cover. The two clan elders walked side by side, and it was natural for them to engage in conversation.

"Recently, the Emperor has been allowing these young members of our family into the palace quite frequently. Could it be that Chengqi Country is becoming restless again? Is there too much friction at the border?" one elder speculated.

"It's possible. Otherwise, why would they be sending our young members into the palace so often? We all know that if Southern Mist and Chengqi come to blows, relying solely on burly soldiers and commoners won't be enough. We'll still need these young ones with cultivation. Any family that can produce juniors with high cultivation is likely to be given important positions. With just Lianxue and Ningyu, the Shen family should certainly be in a favorable position," the other elder replied.

"That's a good thing," the first elder remarked.

The two elders shared a similar smile and appeared to be in good spirits.

They were the clan's elders, and regardless of which branch's junior succeeded, it would ultimately benefit the entire clan.

The Shen family had been in a difficult situation, and they hadn't anticipated that the stalemate would be resolved so swiftly. Now that Ningyu was engaged to the Qian family's young master, it was indeed a cause for celebration among the clan's elders.

The elders of the Shen family clan were in high spirits.

As Gu Chaoyan carefully listened to their conversation, she seemed to be contemplating something.

Indeed, in this continent where spiritual energy was scarce, most people lacked the innate talent to cultivate. However, these noble families possessed cultivation because they had access to resources. These resources naturally enabled the young members of the family to cultivate.

Ordinary people didn't have access to such resources, which is why they lacked the ability to cultivate.

This was precisely why everyone sought to maintain their status within the Southern Mist Kingdom and secure favor with the Emperor.

Well...

A clan competition was imminent, and it was considered a fair opportunity for the juniors..

Chapter 2289 - 2289: Mission 20

Shen Lianxue had never been particularly favored in the residence, but as long as her cultivation remained strong, the clan's elders would consider bringing her into the palace. Shen Ningyu, on the other hand, appeared unfazed by the situation, seemingly understanding that those with advanced cultivation were recognized subconsciously.

Her return from the palace signaled the near completion of her mission. As for Lady You, she had already devised an exit strategy for her.

Gu Chaoyan strolled in with an air of relaxation.

Within the court...

The Shen family, like the other noble families, waited in the palace, maintaining a near-silent vigil. Occasionally, the clan's elders exchanged a few words, but mostly, silence prevailed.

As Gu Chaoyan stood there quietly, numerous eyes fell upon her, likely due to her being a newcomer.

Qian Ziang shot a few glances her way, but Gu Chaoyan ignored his gaze, acting as if she hadn't noticed.

Before long, the Emperor arrived, his face bearing a warm smile. After exchanging pleasantries, he gazed at the young individuals before him and said, "Impressive, very impressive. You are all outstanding young talents from my Southern Mist."

He added that having individuals with strong aptitude was even more reassuring to him as the Emperor.

"Thank you, Your Majesty," they responded in unison.

Following a brief bow, the Emperor personally descended, while a eunuch behind him held the Spirit Stones to test their spiritual energy.

As was customary, the Emperor ordered their cultivation levels to be tested.

"Second Heaven of the Martial Master Realm. Impressive. If my memory serves me right, you were at the First Heaven of the Martial Master Realm the last time we met. It's commendable that you've made such swift progress. The younger generation of the Zhang Family is truly remarkable," the Emperor praised.

However...

The Emperor did not offer such praise to everyone. If he encountered someone whose cultivation hadn't improved, he remained composed.

Upon reaching Qian Zi'ang, the Emperor displayed a contented smile. "You've already reached the Eighth Heaven of the Martial Master Realm. Well done. At your age, you are the most exceptional."

Having said that, the Emperor turned his gaze towards Qian Ziang, his expression turning more serious.

Qian Ziang couldn't hide his elation.

The Emperor's demeanor changed as he moved on to the next individual. This time, he did not approach with the same enthusiasm.

Unfortunately, this individual's cultivation had not improved either.

As he continued to assess more individuals, the Emperor's expression gradually soured. It became apparent that many had not made any progress.

It took a considerable amount of time for the Emperor to reach Shen Ningyu.

After the assessment, the Emperor smiled once more. "Seventh Heaven of the

Martial Master Realm. Well done. Considering you're a young lady, you're the first in Nanlan. The Shen family has reason to be proud."

The Emperor's praise for Shen Ningyu was heartfelt.

Interestingly, his previous compliments had not included any mention of the family clans, but he specifically praised the Shen family this time. It was evident that the Emperor was genuinely pleased. Shen Ningyu couldn't help but wear a smug smile.

She had anticipated this outcome.

The next in line was Shen Lianxue.

Shen Lianxue seemed somewhat unfamiliar to the Emperor, prompting him to cast a few extra glances at her. However, he didn't dwell on it. Among the younger generation of the Shen family, the male members had not fared well. Shen Ningyu's family was the exception, and since no one else could bring Shen Lianxue along this time, the Emperor didn't pay her much mind.

He did not even look at the results of the Spirit Stones test.

It was the eunuch in charge of the test who reminded him, "Your Majesty."

The emperor of Southern Mist turned around and almost thought that he had seen wrongly..
"What!"

Chapter 2290 - 2290: Mission 21

She never anticipated the emergence of such a remarkably talented individual within the Shen family.

"Fifth Heaven of the Martial Warrior Realm," sighed the Emperor of Southern Mist, his tone filled with amazement. "How many individuals spend their entire lives stuck at the Ninth Heaven of the Martial Master Realm? Even the heads of many Shen family branches never surpass the Ninth Heaven of the Martial Master Realm in their lifetimes. Yet here you are, at such a young age, already at the Ninth Heaven of the Martial Warrior Realm. You stand alone in all of Southern Mist!"

Beyond the considerations of strategy and politics, Emperor Southern Mist was genuinely taken aback.

"Why wasn't the Shen family aware of your talents before? What happened?" Emperor Southern Mist inquired, puzzled. Previously, it was widely known that she hadn't even achieved the level of a Martial Master. Why, then, hadn't the Shen family brought her to the palace earlier? Her sudden breakthrough was a mystery.

The Emperor of Southern Mist was intensely curious and found the situation almost unbelievable.

Gu Chaoyan had no reason to conceal the truth.

She explained, “I originally possessed limited aptitude for cultivation, which kept my cultivation level quite low. However, fate intervened a few days ago when I encountered an expert from another continent. This expert offered guidance and provided me with some remarkable pills. After taking these pills, my progress skyrocketed. The expert even took me as a disciple briefly, but had to depart abruptly for urgent matters. Before leaving, the expert taught my mother the art of pill refinement.”

“I had intended to introduce her to Your Majesty, but alas, the opportunity was missed,” Gu Chaoyan lamented.

Upon hearing her explanation, the Emperor of Southern Mist’s initial frustration began to dissipate.

Considering that the expert hailed from another continent, it was only natural for them to move on eventually.

Nevertheless, the pills and their expertise could prove highly valuable to Southern Mist.

As she spoke...

Gu Chaoyan took out the pills. “Apart from what the master told me to eat, the pills he left behind before he left are all here. I am not willing to use them anymore.”

“This is the cultivation bead that my mother entrusted me to present to Your Majesty. It is used in conjunction with medicinal pills and has an exceptionally potent effect,” Gu Chaoyan explained.

Emperor Southern Mist’s face lit up with a warm smile.

She had a keen sense of what was expected of her.

She understood the importance of offering valuable gifts to the palace.

“Excellent, excellent,” Emperor Southern Mist accepted the bead without hesitation. Regardless of whether he personally used it, there were numerous princes within the palace. It would undoubtedly prove to be a valuable asset. Naturally, he coveted such a remarkable item, hoping it could elevate the princes to the rank of Martial Warriors, which would bring him immense relief.

Curiosity piqued, Emperor Southern Mist inquired, “Why did your master choose to teach your mother how to refine pills instead of doing it personally?” “Ah, indeed,” he continued, contemplating the potential benefits.

After all, having someone within the palace skilled in pill refinement could offer substantial advantages, and Emperor Southern Mist was contemplating how to leverage this newfound resource.

Gu Chaoyan responded, “My master believed that I lacked the necessary qualifications, and he mentioned that he had never encountered anyone with the aptitude to refine pills except for my mother. It appears that my mother’s background played a significant role.”

Naturally, she had fabricated this entire scenario herself.

It was for no other reason.

Her ultimate goal was to ensure that Lady You remained the sole practitioner of cultivation and alchemy in all of Southern Mist. By achieving this, she could secure the royal family’s protection for Lady You in the future, making her untouchable by anyone else.

Once her mission was completed, she could peacefully retire. Emperor Southern Mist let out a regretful sigh. “I see.”

“Yes,” she confirmed.

Though his original plan had failed, upon reflection, this outcome was indeed favorable.

With the aid of the pill, Southern Mist would no longer need to fear Chengqi Country. This development was undeniably advantageous..