

Immortal 111

Chapter 111: Too Popular

Zu An was surprised to see the ignorant Chu Huanzhao actually knowing so much about all of these intricate politics. In a sense, it showed how horrible of a situation the Chu clan was in.

The fact that they were appearing together meant that they weren't afraid of the Chu clan finding out about their ties. It could even be viewed as a message to the rest of the world to urge them to choose a side.

Sang Hong looked like a shriveled old man with a bit of a goatee. His appearance was far older than his actual age. Based on the rumors, he was quite a competent official in the royal court, being able to deal with ten times more documents than an ordinary person could.

Despite his old appearance, his eyes had a spirited glimmer in them. There was an air of imposingness shrouding him.

Seeing this, however, Zu An couldn't help but shake his head. Wow, he really reminds me of all of those overworked programmers I have seen in my previous life. As I thought, 996 is really toxic. [1]

In comparison, his son, Sang Qian, looked more normal. While Sang Qian wasn't as eye-catching as Xie Xiu and Shi Kun, he had an air of militaristic valiance around him that brought about quite a few excited shrieks from the fangirls in the crowd.

It was just that the attention of these women soon shifted over to Shi Kun.

"Big brother Shi, big brother Shi~"

"Big brother Shi, I love you~"

"Waaa, so handsome. My gosh, I'm going to faint..."

...

Zu An rolled his eyes in disdain. He really is like an ape. Wherever he goes, people just gape at him.

He tapped on Pei Mianman's shoulders and asked, "Hey, tell me the truth. Is that fellow really that handsome? I don't think he's as good-looking as I am."

"You want to hear the truth or the lie?" Pei Mianman's lips curled up.

"Do you even need to ask? Of course it's the lie!" replied Zu An vehemently.

Pei Mianman burst into laughter. "You sure are an interesting fellow."

Meanwhile, Chu Huanzhao suspiciously eyed the two of them intently. Why does it seem like something is up between the two of them?

All of a sudden, Zu An's face stiffened. He just received an incredibly terrifying notification in his system.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for +99 +99 +99 +99...

He leaped in shock right away. What's going on? Is Snow nearby?

Just thinking about those vicious eyes filled with killing intent directed toward him made him search the area intently.

At the same time, he was also perplexed as to what Snow was doing here. One must know that there were many experts gathered here. Putting aside all the fifth rank cultivators present, there were also eighth rank cultivators like Chu Zhongtian and Governor Sang Hong too. According to the rumors, Jiang Luofu was an eighth rank cultivator too.

Wasn't it foolish for a fifth rank cultivator spy like her to sneak in here?

Even though Sang Hong and the Chu clan were on bad terms, they still had their own images to keep up. For a matter as serious as a traitor coming out of the Chu clan, the Sang clan would be obliged to help them too under public pressure.

However, no matter how he searched around, he was unable to find Snow anywhere. It was then that a thought came to his mind. He turned to Shi Kun's side, and indeed, there was a fair-complexioned lad in his entourage staring at him.

"Wearing a mask, huh?"

The inflow of Rage points and that familiar eyes were more than enough evidence for Zu An to verify her to be Snow. Of course, unlike some of those dumber historical dramas where a female lead tried to fool everyone into thinking that she was a man just by changing her hairdo and wearing male clothes, Snow was far more thorough. Her entire face was different from before, which probably meant that she was wearing some sort of mask.

That being said, the mask was actually quite amazingly made. If not for the keyboard's identification feature, it was unlikely that he would have recognized Snow.

With such thoughts in mind, she turned to Pei Mianman and asked nervously, "Young miss Pei, is there a way to disguise your face entirely in this world?"

"Disguise your face?" Pei Mianman was surprised by the abrupt question, but she still answered it properly, "There is. Formidable runemasters have the ability to create masks that changes a person's face completely."

"Doesn't that mean that it's extremely easy to impersonate another person?" asked Zu An anxiously.

"Based on what I know, it isn't that easy," replied Pei Mianman with a shake of her head. "Cultivators are exceptionally discerning when it comes to such stuff due to their sharpened senses, making it hard to fool them. If you try to disguise yourself as someone whom everyone knows, the chances are that you'll end up getting seen through. But of course, given how huge the world is, there might just be someone who is able to pull it off impeccably."

"I see. That's a relief," Zu An heaved a sigh of relief.

"Why are you suddenly asking about this?" asked Pei Mianman curiously.

Zu An casually answered, "I'm just thinking that it would be horrible if someone uses my charming face to fool young misses out there. That would really ruin my reputation!"

"..." Pei Mianman.

"..." Chu Huanzhao.

Snow seemed to have noticed that Zu An was looking in her direction, so she quickly averted her gaze to avoid his notice.

Zu An was also in no rush to expose her either. He turned to look at Shi Kun and sneered coldly under his breath. So, the mastermind of it all is you. Looks like my guess is spot-on. Well, let's have a good game then!

All along, Shi Kun had been pulling strings from the shadows to deal with him, leaving him in a fluster to protect himself. However, the tables were turned now. Zu An knew who the true mastermind was whereas Shi Kun still thought that he was in the shadows. It was time to shake things up a little.

You have successfully trolled Wu Qing for +33 Rage points.

Yet another wave of Rage points came flowing in, delighting Zu An. I didn't think that it was so popular. These people sure are in a hurry to send gifts my way.

Wu Qing was standing behind a middle-aged man, glaring at him discreetly. Zu An couldn't be bothered to waste his time with the tantrum of a haughty little 'princess', so he chose to focus his attention on the middle-aged man walking with her instead. Judging by his disposition, he should be the neighboring Sunspring Duke, Wu Wei.

Seeing how he and Chu Zhongtian were chatting with beaming smiles on their faces, making it look almost as if they were old friends, Zu An couldn't help but marvel at how wily these old foxes were.

While Wu Wei and Chu Zhongtian were chatting with one another, Sang Hong made his way over to the Zheng clan, where Zheng Yutang and Zheng Dan had long stood up to welcome him.

"Good, good~" Sang Hong assessed his future daughter-in-law for a moment before nodding his head in satisfaction. Be it Zheng Dan's looks, etiquette, or disposition, there were no flaws he could pick out from her. It was a pity that her background was a little lacking, but the Sang clan was already plenty influential as it was already.

On the other hand, Zheng Dan's cheeks flushed red upon hearing her future father-in-law's compliment, making her look even more feminine and dignified.

Soon, everyone settled down into their seats. Sang Hong took the center seat, and beside him were City Lord Xie Yi and Principal Jiang Luofu. They were the judges of the tournament, so it was only normal for them to take the most esteemed positions.

Chu Zhongtian and Wu Wei sat opposite to one another. From their positions, it was made clear that they were both cognizant who their true opponents were in the upcoming tournament.

Following that were the patriarchs of the Yuan clan, Zheng clan, and Wang clan. Shi Kun, despite being a junior, was also seated in their midst, which was testimony to his esteemed position.

"I heard you offended the Sixth Young Master of the Shi clan?" Pei Mianman looked on the stage as she transmitted her voice over to Zu An with a smile. It looked like she had been keeping an eye out for the events in the academy too.

Toward that question, Zu An harrumphed coldly and said, "What do you mean by I offended him? He's the one who offended me?"

"You can put it however you want to." Pei Mianman rolled her eyes. "Still, as your alliance mate, I should warn you that the Shi clan is not to be trifled with. Take that old man behind him, Shi Lezhi, for example. He's Shi Kun's protector, but he's an eighth rank cultivator. He could destroy as easily as it would be to stomp on an ant."

"Eighth rank?" Zu An was shocked. "Are eighth rank cultivators that common nowadays? I thought eighth rank cultivators are strong enough to be bestowed with the position of a duke or marquess. I mean, even a governor like Sang Hong is also at eighth rank as well. Why would that old man content himself with being a bodyguard for a young brat?"

"You're right to say that most governors are eighth rank cultivators, though they're still a bit too weak to be bestowed with the position of a marquess or duke. There are indeed some official positions that only eighth rank cultivators can take on, but it doesn't mean that they are available to any eighth rank cultivator out there. There are only that few official positions, and there are many people eyeing them intently. Whether you can get it or not depends on your ability, luck, and background.

"There are plenty of experts who work hard their entire life, only to be unable to obtain the official position they want. All in all, the younger you manage to reach a certain height, the more likely you are to be chosen for an official position over the rest of your competitors. For someone like Shi Lezhi, who barely managed to reach the eighth rank in his silver years, has no more potential left in him anymore. Due to that, he's unable to obtain a good official position in the royal court. In comparison, he would be treated much better in his clan instead.

"But while I said that he has no potential, that's only in comparison to the other eighth rank cultivators. Against low-rank cultivators like you, he's still a behemoth whom you don't stand a chance against."

Zu An nodded in response, having roughly grasped what was going on.

Basically, being an eighth rank cultivator was like obtaining a degree. Theoretically, you could get a job with this degree, but there were plenty of other people with degrees vying for the top jobs too. Due to the rife competition, there were some who were unable to get an official position till their death.

However, if the degree you received was no ordinary degree, for example, a first-class honors degree, you would be viewed to have greater potential. Naturally, you would be more likely to land a job too.

It would appear that Shi Lezhi was of average aptitude compared to his fellow degree holders, which resulted in his elimination in the competition. However, it should be noted that this was only relative to his fellow eighth rank cultivators. Compared to most other cultivators out there, he was more than worthy of being labeled a prodigy.

For the first time, Zu An was getting a glimpse into just how competitive the world of cultivation was. To think that even someone who had managed to reach the eighth rank would be considered as a failure...

Wait a moment, why am I feeling bad for that old man? He's an eighth rank cultivator, even if he's barely stepped into the rank. All it takes is a finger from him to squeeze me to death!

It was then that someone came over to shout for him. It seemed like those participating in the tournament had to wait at a demarcated area in advance.

"Good luck. I believe that you'll be able to win," said Pei Mianman with a smile.

The two of them had sparred with one another that other night, and she had seen with her own eyes that this young man wasn't as useless as others think him out to be. Perhaps, he might just surprise everyone today.

"You have good eyes," complimented Zu An.

"..." Pei Mianman.

Chu Huanzhao couldn't take it anymore. She pouted unhappily and said, "Big sister Pei, I'm participating in the tournament too! Why aren't you rooting for me?"

Toward that, Pei Mianman smiled gently and said, "Little sister Huanzhao, isn't your victory already assured?"

Chu Huanzhao could sense that Pei Mianman's words were insincere, so she continued sulking unhappily.

She can't be trying to seduce my brother-in-law, is she? Hmph! Just you wait, I'll surely tell my big sister about this!

However, when she thought about her big sister's attitude toward Zheng Dan, she suddenly starting hesitating. She felt that her big sister was acting too nonchalantly toward her brother-in-law, as if it didn't matter to her at all.

Forget it, I'll just have to be the doorkeeper then!"

The two of them headed to the waiting area, where the other fighters from the Chu clan were already gathered. At the far opposite were Yuan Wendong and the other fighters from the Yuan clan. Out of fear that Yuan Wendong would back down on their duel, Zu An made sure to shout loudly, "Hey, Yuan Wendong! I'll be magnanimous and tell you face on that I'll be the last one to go up later on. You better not back out, or else I'll curse your balls to drop off!"

"..." Yuan Wendong.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +666 Rage!

Yuan Wendong's face turned incredibly red. Putting aside how intense the rivalry between the two clans was, they would at least still maintain some level of etiquette in public. It was beyond his imagination that someone would actually hurl insults at him in such a manner as if a hoodlum.

However, with so many prominent figures watching him, as furious as he was, he dared not to return the insult. Instead, he remarked coldly, "Very well. I'll look forward to trying out Brother Zu's skills!"

Hmph! If I don't cripple him later on, I shall renounce my surname!

Chapter 112: Does Your Face Hurt?

It wasn't just him. Quite a few people in the Yuan clan also kindly contributed a substantial amount of Rage points to Zu An. In fact, even some of the bystanders were getting affected by the remarks too.

Even Ji Dengtu had stopped ogling at all of the married women around him to look at Zu An.

This fellow sure is asking for a beating. I must get my daughter to keep away from this fellow, or else it's only a matter of time before she gets implicated in his shenanigans.

But again, that fellow gave me quite a nice book though. I wonder how many more of such books he has. If he gets beaten to a state of near-death by Yuan Wendong, should I step in and save him in view of the book he gave me?

On the stage, Snow harrumphed softly, "That man is as hateful as ever."

In front of her, Shi Kun surprisingly nodded in agreement. He could relate deeply to those words.

"He's a hoodlum through and through. He'll never come to do great things," sneered Sang Qian.

Sang Hong, who was sitting in front of him, however, reminded him through ki transmission, "The fact that he's able to earn 7,500,000 silver taels from the Silverhook Casino and become an arithmetic teacher in the academy shows that he's no ordinary individual. Don't be fooled by his exterior. I've told you many times that you shouldn't just look at the superficial. You should peer deeper into the crux of matters."

"I understand," replied Sang Qian, though he actually thought nothing of what his father said.

Meanwhile, Xie Yi secretly sent a ki transmission to asked Xie Xiu, "Is that the man you spoke of?"

"Indeed. He's Zu An," replied Xie Xiu.

His older sister, Xie Daoyun, remarked with a frown, "This man is incredibly crude. I don't like him."

Xie Xiu was just about to explain the matter when he recalled the Legend of the Moochlord in the academy. He seemed to recall Zu An asking him about his older sister once, and all of a sudden, he felt that he should keep his older sister safely away from that dangerous man.

The Sunspring Duke, Wu Wei, guffawed, saying, "So this is the drafted son-in-law of the Brightmoon Duke? Looks like the Chu clan is bound to fall into decline!"

Wu Qing was overjoyed to hear her father putting down Zu An. Hah, we aren't in the academy today. I'll watch how you embarrass yourself through and through, Zu An!

The only one on the stage who really knew about Zu An's background was Jiang Luofu. She looked at the young man who was calmly bearing the criticisms of the crowd, and she couldn't help but fall into deep thoughts.

Just what is it that compelled him to lie low all this while? Is he planning to strike his name out through the tournament today?

Sang Hong cleared his throat and announced, "The Clans Tournament between the Chu clan and the Yuan clan is about to begin. First and foremost, allow me to reiterate the rules. Both sides are to confirm the sequence of which their fighters are going to enter the dueling ring and submit it upward. The sequence cannot be changed anymore afterward. Whichever side wins more battles will be granted 80% of the Linchuan Commandery's arms market whereas the losing side will be left with the remaining 20%. In the course of the battle, you are forbidden from intentionally executing fatal blows that could potentially lead to deaths, or else your rights as a fighter will be revoked. Have I made myself clear?"

"Yes!"

The fighters on both sides replied in unison.

However, Zu An had much to refute about the rules. In name, they were restricted from killing one another, but the use of the term 'intentionally' opened room for contention. A person could just claim that he was too heated up in the duel and failed to hold back in the critical moment. As long as he didn't do it too obviously, no one could say for sure whether he was doing it on purpose or not.

"Now, submit the sequence paper. An incense's time from now, the tournament will officially commence!"

After making the announcement, Sang Hong returned back to his seat. For previous tournaments, they had only invited the city lord as the judge, but the nature of the tournament this time around was different. It wasn't just a fight between the Chu clan and the Yuan clan anymore. Instead, it was the Chu clan against the Wu clan. Naturally, they would need someone with more authority here.

The two clans had already decided the sequence at which they would enter the dueling ring in advance. Chu Chuyan walked up to submit the sequence paper. It was also about this time that Hong Xingying passed by Zu An. He was the first fighter that the Chu clan was sending up.

On the surface, it looked like he was earnestly making preparations for the fight, but in truth, he was speaking in a voice so low that only the two of them could hear. "Are you feeling gleeful over how you acted earlier on?"

"What?" Zu An was baffled. Is this fellow trying to provoke me right before his fight?

Hong Xingying harrumphed. "I don't know what's going through your mind, but did you think that it was glorious for you to shout insults around like a common hoodlum? Didn't you notice how everyone was mocking you? No, they weren't just mocking you. They were mocking all of us from the Chu clan!

"Someone like you will only become the source of the Chu clan's humiliation. The Chu clan has already become a laughingstock for taking you in as its son-in-law, and yet, you still continue to add on to it."

Zu An was amused. "Have you forgotten how badly you got beaten up the last time around?"

Those words subconsciously brought Hong Xingying's eyes toward Pei Mianman, and he gulped. However, he quickly snapped out of it and harrumphed coldly. "You think you're all incredible hiding behind the back of a woman! Hah, you won't be able to get their help on the dueling ring today. Everyone will see you as the trash you are!"

“What makes you so certain that I’ll lose?” Zu An felt that he should make use of this chance to make a bet with Hong Xingying, or else it would be a huge waste of this godsent opportunity.

“You can’t be thinking that you’re able to win the duel, are you?” sneered Hong Xingying. “Your job today is just to lose and leave everything else to us. Only a person like me can bring glory to the Chu clan. All someone like you can do is to enjoy the glory the rest of us earned through our blood, sweat, and tears!”

Zu An wanted to refute those words, but the referee had already declared the start of the first round. So, Hong Xingying tidied up his clothes, raised his head, and began walking onto the dueling ring.

“How exhilarating! I’ve finally managed to vent all of my stress out today. That trash was put down by me to the point where he can’t even refute anymore. Ahhh, this really feels good!”

Hong Xingying had never felt so soothed before.

Hmph, just watch as I bring the first victory into the hands of the Chu clan! On the other hand, that fellow will be beaten up by the Yuan clan before this huge crowd we have here. By then, both Master and Madam will know who is more suited for the first miss!

Not only must I win today, but I must win with an overwhelming advantage! Only this way can I raise my head in the Chu clan and catch the attention of Principal Jiang. I’ll let her know of my talents, and perhaps, she might take care of me in the future. Then, I’ll obtain an official position and return here to marry the first miss!

Meanwhile, by the side of the dueling ring, Qin Wanru leaned toward her husband and whispered with a frown, “What’s with that person on the other side? Why haven’t I seen him before?”

Chu Zhongtian shook his head and said, “I don’t know either. He probably isn’t from the Yuan clan but the Wu clan. However, is there really a person like him amongst the experts of the Wu clan?”

“Do you think that Xingying can win the battle?”

Qin Wanru had a good opinion of Hong Xingying. He was an extremely competent man, and his father had been loyal to the Chu clan all these years too. In fact, she had favored Hong Xingying over all other candidates back then, but it was a pity that her daughter chose Zu An instead.

Just thinking about it left her fuming, and she shot a sharp glare in Zu An’s direction.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for +111 Rage!

Zu An was feeling stifled. Please, it was Hong Xingying who messed with me earlier, and I didn’t even get a chance to report back. What are you getting angry at me for? Is it your menopause?

Unaware of his wife’s thoughts, Chu Zhongtian casually replied, “Xingying is quite talented, and our Chu clan has held him back over the years. Nevertheless, he still managed to reach the pinnacle of the third rank. He might not be particularly powerful, but he’s definitely not weak either. The person on the other side appears to be of the same rank as well. I think Xingying should be able to fare well against him.”

Hearing her husband’s words, Qin Wanru was finally able to set her heart at ease.

On the dueling ring, Hong Xingying drew his sword and brandished it elegantly. He gazed at his opponent haughtily and said, "Name yourself! I don't cut down nameless souls with my blade!"

"Ooh, I never thought that there would be someone like that in the Chu clan! He's so cool!"

"Well, anyone would look good compared to their drafted son-in-law."

...

Hong Xingying's cool words and suave face stirred a small commotion amongst the girls. However, his attitude brought a frown onto Chu Zhongtian's forehead. This child shows off a little too much.

In return, the other party laughed softly and said, "I am the Yuan clan's Chen Lei."

Then, he fell silent.

Be it in terms of appearance or disposition, Chen Lei was indeed far beneath that of Hong Xingying. It didn't take long for the crowd to side with Hong Xingying.

On the other hand, Hong Xingying frowned. He had never heard of this person before. However, the fact that this person wasn't one of the targets of the Chu clan's investigation showed that he wasn't considered to be a threat.

Alright, this Chen Lei guy shall be my stepping stone to rising to new heights! I'll make sure to win beautifully so that those important figures around will notice me!

With such thoughts in mind, his fighting spirit began to surge. "Pardon me!"

Without any hesitation, he swung his sword and charged toward Chen Lei.

Chu Zhongtian nodded in approval. He thought that Hong Xingying was taking a conceited attitude toward the duel, but fortunately, he didn't let his arrogance turn into complacency. The latter chose to take on a moderate offensive position in order to pressure his enemy.

On the other hand, Chen Lei bellowed furiously as he whipped out his saber and dashed forward too. The two men clashed with one another through their weapons, causing sparks to fly.

The recoil from their clash caused both of them to retreat five steps simultaneously, but Hong Xingying was alarmed by the prowess of his enemy. He never thought the nameless Chen Lei would actually harness such great power.

"Again!"

Not daring to get careless, Hong Xingying abandoned his initial idea of flaunting his skills and chose a more stable fighting style.

It didn't take long for the two of them to start trading blows with one another. Even from beneath the dueling ring, the spectators could feel the chilling air coming from the clash of the two cold weapons.

"I've never heard of the two of them before, but they're stronger than I expected. Do all major clans have such powerful cultivators amidst them?"

“That Hong Xingying seems to be a student from Brightmoon Academy’s Sky class, but I’ve never heard of this Chen Lei before.”

...

The two of them were equally matched with one another. Sometimes, Hong Xingying would appear to be on the upper hand, only for Chen Lei to suddenly suppress him with a series of offensive strikes. The crowd felt their blood racing from the intense battle. They couldn’t help but imagine how awe-inspiring it would have been if they had been in the dueling ring instead.

Battles were usually only fun to watch if both parties were equally matched. One-sided battles simply lacked tension and hype arising from an unpredictable outcome. The crowd didn’t think that the first match would be so intense, such that many of them found themselves rising to their feet to take a closer look.

It was then that both Hong Xingying and Chen Lei clashed furiously once more before parting from one another. The two of them gasped for air as they tried to regulate the chaotic ki inside their bodies.

The webbing between Hong Xingying’s fingers had torn open a little, but he didn’t pay it any heed. With so high stakes on the line in this battle, he couldn’t afford to lose here. He had to win this battle to prove his worth to the Master, Madam, all of the prominent figures seated around, and most importantly of all, Zu An!

Huh? Why did I think of that fellow at a moment like this? Tsk, how inauspicious!

“Intermediate Swordplay!”

Hong Xingying had been desperately learning everything the academy had to offer ever since he enrolled in it. Intermediate Swordplay was a sword art taught only to the more talented students in the academy. Despite its lackluster name, its prowess was incredible, and it had very few openings too. It was at least three times more powerful than the sword art he was using previously.

He had been practicing it diligently day and night so as to reveal it to everyone, especially Principal Jiang, at this critical moment!

A metallic reverberation sounded as the sword in his hand blurred to form multiple silhouettes that pierced straight toward Chen Lei’s vitals.

Seeing this, Jiang Luofu gave a slight nod of approval. This student has a fairly high aptitude. Despite having joined the academy not too long ago, he has managed to grasp this swordsmanship to a decent level.

With a loud ‘puchi’, the sword pierced right into Chen Lei’s body.

I won!

Hong Xingying was just about to heave a sigh of relief when he noticed a sinister curl on the enemy’s lips. He quickly tried to retract his blade, only for his enemy to grab onto his sword before abruptly hacking his saber down.

Tempestuous Saber Art!

Chen Lei suddenly struck with a terrifying momentum as a hint of frenzy emerged on his forehead. His saber hacked down with terrifying might onto Hong Xingying.

The ki armor Hong Xingying had manifested around him immediately cracked in the face of the Tempestuous Saber Art, causing him to spurt a mouthful of blood. As if a deflated sandbag, he collapsed to the bottom of the dueling ring.

Chu Zhongtian immediately rushed forward to catch Hong Xingying. He quickly sealed off several of Hong Xingying's acupoints to curb his blood loss before proceeding on to neutralize the saber force still raging within the latter's body.

"The victor is the Yuan clan's Chen Lei!"

The official from the City Lord Estate declared to the crowd.

With an ashamed look on his face, Hong Xingying muttered, "Master, Madam, I..."

It was then that a mocking voice sounded, "Who was the one who declared proudly that he would bring the Chu clan honor whereas someone else could only bring about humiliation? Does your face hurt at all?"

Chapter 113: I Want to Mooch Too

"I..." Hong Xingying's face reddened. I actually got mocked by this fellow!

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for +999 Rage!

However, he found himself unable to refute Zu An's words at all. He had simply bragged too much earlier. However, he quickly snapped out of it and argued back, "You'll only suffer a more grievous loss than me! At least I was able to fight squarely against my opponent and only lost by the final strike..."

Zu An clicked his tongue and grumbled in response, "A loss is a loss. Besides, who said that I'd definitely lose my battle? I'll show what a true expert looks like later on!"

"Enough!" Before Hong Xingying could respond, Qin Wanru had already come to the limit of her patience. She glared at Zu An frostily and said, "Are you still a member of the Chu clan or not? Instead of motivating your own teammates, you still came here to ridicule him!"

Zu An shrugged casually as he said, "He's already lost his match, so what's the use of motivating him? Is he going to go on stage and fight again?"

"Shut your mouth!" Qin Wanru snapped coldly. "Anyone who gives his all on the dueling ring is worthy of the entire Chu clan's respect. Be it whether he wins or loses, he's indubitably a member of our Chu clan. If we're just going to mock anyone who loses, wouldn't it chill the hearts of everyone else? If you don't know how to watch your mouth, just keep it shut!"

Chu Zhongtian also interjected too, "Zu An, your actions are indeed inappropriate. Win and loss are perfectly normal. Our Chu clan is not so narrow-minded and ungrateful as to put down our own people over a loss."

Zu An frowned. Then didn't any of you step up for me when Hong Xingying mocked me earlier?

He was just about to argue back when Chu Chuyan tugged on his sleeves. She spoke to him through ki transmission, "Don't anger my mother anymore. You should return to your area and sit back down. We still need to discuss our battle plans for later on."

She was too concerned with the sequencing of their fighters earlier that she didn't notice Hong Xingying's earlier action of mocking Zu An, so she felt that he was acting out of line too.

It was one thing if it was just Hong Xingying, but his actions would chill the hearts of the rest of their fighters too. After all, no one could guarantee their win here. If they had to suffer such humiliation from their own people for losing, they would surely feel deeply disappointed in the Chu clan.

After all, Zu An was still a member of the Chu clan despite being the drafted son-in-law. His attitude could be easily interpreted as the Chu clan's attitude.

Zu An sighed deeply and returned back to his own seat.

Meanwhile, the commotion over at the Chu clan didn't escape the notice of the others. Watching as Zu An was berated by Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru, quite a few people couldn't help but mock gleefully, "See, I knew that a drafted son-in-law couldn't possibly have any standing in the household at all!"

"How could it be that easy to mooch off your wife? Look at how he was criticized. I reckon even a dog in the Chu clan is treated better than him!"

"That's why I always say that youngsters like you all shouldn't think of taking shortcuts. You're bound to lose more than you gain!"

"But look at how beautiful the Chu First Miss is! I would be willing to suffer injustice as long as I can wake up to her pretty face every morning!"

"Tsk, you're a hopeless case... Alright fine, count me in too."

...

By the side of the dueling ring, Shi Kun leaned back leisurely on his chair as a satisfied smile crept onto his lips. "Just as you've said, Snow, that fellow really has no place in the Chu clan at all. Looks like my worries were unfounded."

Snow was also delighted to see Zu An being put down. "Of course! The young miss has never allowed him into her room before, so young master, you don't have to worry about him taking advantage of the young miss!"

Meanwhile, Yuan Wendong frowned a little.

Given that Zu An didn't have any standing in the Chu clan, did I make a mistake by choosing him as my opponent? It would only lower my standing to fight someone far beneath me.

However, as soon as the thought surfaced in his mind, it was swiftly quelled once Zu An's hateful face surfaced in his mind. He reaffirmed his own decision once more. Later on, I'll make sure to cripple him for good so that he learns what's the price of running his mouth!

Meanwhile, amongst the Zheng clan, Zheng Dan had a hint of a smile on her lips. Looks like Zu An isn't as close to Chu Chuyan as I thought. I should exploit this opportunity to get to Zu An. As long as I play my cards well, I should be able to find the 7,500,000 silver taels debt note easily enough.

But again, it was another question whether Zu An could survive to the end of the day or not. Even if he did manage to survive, it was likely that he would be crippled at the very least. If I show him some concern at a time like this, I should be able to win his sympathy easily, right?

Meanwhile, Pei Mianman was looking upon the situation with an enigmatic smile. The more Zu An struggles in the Chu clan, the more beneficial it is for me. He'll soon find himself left with no choice but to seek my help, and by then, I can get him to search for the accounting booklet on my behalf.

"Excuse me, this beautiful woman over here..."

All of a sudden, a man approached her with a smile which he himself thought was charming.

In truth, Pei Mianman had been catching the attention of the men around the area for quite a while now. After all, her figure was simply too alluring, such that men would find it hard to tear their eyes away from her. On top of that, she was sitting all by herself, which made it seem as if she didn't belong to any clan. So, it was inevitable that some would try to get a shot with her.

"Scram!"

Without bothering to look at the man, Pei Mianman raised her hand, revealing a vague flicker of black flame.

"Y-yes!"

Upon realizing that the woman before him was not someone he could trifle with, the man backed off fearfully without the slightest hesitation. At the same time, those who were assessing the situation in search of an opportunity to approach Pei Mianman also hurriedly quelled any intentions they had in mind.

Meanwhile, in the Chu clan's resting area, Chu Huanzhao noticed that Zu An had an awful look on his face and passed a cup of tea over to him. "Brother-in-law, don't get angry. Come, drink a cup of tea and cool down a little. Actually, I also don't like that Hong Xingying fellow either. My father and mother have always been like this. They always treat us strictly, only to be amicable to outsiders. I really can't stand this at all. Sometimes, I wonder if I am really their child."

"Yeah, I do doubt that as well." Zu An burst into laughter as he eyed her chest area, which was unlike her well-endowed mother and older sister.

"..." Chu Huanzhao.

You have successfully trolled Chu Huanzhao for +404 Rage!

"Where's my whip!" Chu Huanzhao bellowed furiously as she fumbled for her Wailing Whip.

Zu An quickly retracted his smile and said earnestly, "Huanzhao, thank you."

Hearing the unprecedented sincerity in his voice, Chu Huanzhao suddenly began fidgeting uncomfortably. “D-don’t sweat it! We’re comrades-in-arms working hard to earn money together after all!”

Zu An’s face darkened. He knew that she was referring to the time where they extorted money from Plum Blossom Thirteen. Really, does she have a misconception as to what it means to ‘earn money’?

Soon, the second round began. It was the Chu clan’s Deng Zhaoke versus the Yuan clan’s Zhu Qing!

However, there was a huge disparity in the strength of the two fighters this time around. Deng Zhaoke could barely hold on for a moment before losing to Zhu Qing. With this, the Chu clan had lost two consecutive rounds!

Everyone began muttering amongst themselves as they noticed that something was amiss. In the past tournaments, the Chu clan was always at an advantage against the Yuan clan, sometimes sealing the conclusion by the fifth or sixth round. Yet, the Chu clan ended up losing the first two matches. Did this mean that a new era was about to descend upon Brightmoon City?

Some of the smarter ones thought deeper into it. Be it in terms of standing or accumulation, the Yuan clan was no match for the Chu clan. It was bizarre how they were suddenly able to dispatch two little-known subordinates to subdue the experts of the Chu clan.

Both Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru had a tight knit on their foreheads. They hadn’t thought that they would lose two rounds simultaneously just like that. It seemed like things were going to get troublesome for them today.

Chu Chuyan also had a frosty look on her face. She turned to look at her little sister and Zu An, who were chatting with one another at the back. Seeing how relaxed they were made her heart clench tightly. She had arranged them at the very back in hopes that the conclusion would already be determined by the time it came to them, but given the current situation, they might just have to fight as well.

This won’t do. I can’t allow this to happen!

Zu An was completely helpless, and her little sister had barely reached the third rank. They could be said to be the weakest ones on this dueling ring. On top of that, her little sister was a very playful person, such that she hadn’t put in the effort to properly learn combat skills. In a real fight, she stood no hope at all.

Qin Wanru couldn’t help but ask, “Hubby, what if we lose the next match too?”

“Impossible,” replied Chu Zhongtian. “Yue Shan is up next.”

Upon hearing that it was Yue Shen up next, Qin Wanru heaved a sigh of relief. Yue Shan was the captain of the Chu Estate’s guards, and he was in charge of the Red Cloak Army. Most importantly of all, his cultivation had already reached pinnacle fifth rank. With his standing, he usually wouldn’t attend this sort of Clans Tournament-kind of events, but it was different if the Wu clan had gotten involved as well.

It was for additional insurance that they added him to the name list. Thinking back, it was fortunate that they did so, or else the Chu clan would have been in trouble this time around.

Yue Shan's opponent was one of the offspring of the Yuan clan. Needless to say, he easily clinched the victory, bringing loud cheers to the Chu clan's side.

However, Chu Chuyan's eyebrows remained furrowed. The best-case scenario for them was for Yue Shan to clear off one of the top experts of the Yuan clan. This would lighten the pressure on the remaining fighters. Yet, his opponent turned out to be weaker than the fighters sent out by the Yuan clan the previous two rounds. Somehow, it felt like the Yuan clan had read their sequencing.

In the fourth round, the Chu clan's Chu Yucheng was faced against the Yuan clan's Yuan Bao.

Despite Chu Yucheng's adorably chubby appearance, he was a fearsome monster in the dueling ring. Like a mini tank, he rammed all around the place, and it didn't take him long to knock his opponent down the ring.

In the fifth round, the Chu clan's Chu Hongcai was faced with the Yuan clan's Yuan Ya.

Chu Hongcai's swordsmanship was sharp and decisive. He swiftly overpowered Yuan Ya, forcing the latter to surrender.

Three consecutive wins from the Chu clan made the crowd nod in agreement, as if it ought to be the case. Indeed, the Chu clan is still the dominant power in Brightmoon City!

Only Chu Chuyan's frown was growing tighter and tighter. The victories scored by the Chu clan were against the weaker offspring of the Yuan clan, who were forced to join the battle due to the rule stating that every junior in the main branch had to participate in the Clans Tournament. Due to that, the Yuan clan was unable to substitute them with someone else from the Wu clan.

It was obviously a pairing of putting the weakest against the strongest... Is this a coincidence or what...

As expected, the most worrying situation had happened. In the sixth round, the Chu clan suffered a loss.

With this, the score was tied at 3:3!

For the seventh round, Chu Chuyan specially gave the Chu clan's fighter, Lan Likang, a pep talk to motivate him. If he were to lose the match, even if Chu Chuyan were to win her match, it would still fall onto her little sister and Zu An to determine the winning round. If so, the Chu clan would be doomed.

Chu Chuyan carried fairly high prestige within the Chu clan. Almost all of the juniors viewed her as their goddess. Having received her personal pep talk, Lan Likang was all pumped up. His fighting prowess immediately soared to 120%!

Unfortunately, the cultivator sent by the Yuan clan was a step stronger than him, causing him to be overpowered in every single clash. In hopes of meeting up to Chu Chuyan's expectations, he gritted his teeth and summoned his inner cosmos to grind down his enemy even at the expense of getting injured himself. In the end, both he and his opponent tumbled down the dueling ring together.

It was a draw!

Shocked gasps sounded from the crowd. It had never cut so close for the two clans before, especially for the seventh round. It was truly a bloody battle with both sides going all out against one another. The crowd was completely overwhelmed by the tenacity of the fighters.

Even the powerhouses present could sense the tension in the air. They perked up their attention to pay greater focus to the dueling ring. Otherwise, if a casualty occurred under their watch, it would be a blow to their reputation.

At this very moment, Chu Zhongtian, accompanied by one of the Chu Estate's physicians, was performing emergency treatment on the severely injured Lan Likang. Despite his wounded state, Lan Likang had tears in his eyes as he looked at Chu Chuyan with an ashamed look on his face. "I'm sorry, first miss. I've let you down. I wasn't able to win the match."

Chu Chuyan replied gently, "His cultivation was higher than you. You have already done well fighting him to a draw. Just focus on your recuperation and don't think about anything else. Leave the rest to us."

It was time for her to get on the field now. Her enemy was the Yuan clan's Di Wu, a young man with a ghastly pale complexion.

Chapter 114: You're a Horrible Person

"Elder Wu, be careful. Chu Chuyan is dubbed the number one prodigy of the younger generation, a genius among geniuses. You mustn't get careless," reminded Yuan Wendong.

He had set Wu Di against Chu Chuyan because the latter had always been the Chu clan's pride, a symbol of the Chu clan's strength. If they could defeat her in public, they could deal a huge blow to the Chu clan's reputation, and further the subsequent rise of the Yuan clan.

"Rest assured, I'm a rank stronger than her. It'll be a walk in the park for me to defeat her," said Wu Di calmly.

Right now, all he was worried about was how he should win the battle without revealing his cultivation. He studied the spectators who had turned up for the duel. Governor Sang Hong won't be a problem, but it'll be hard to pull wool over the eyes of Chu Zhongtian or Principal Jiang. If they notice something, it could spell trouble.

In the opposite corner, Yue Shan was also advising Chu Chuyan. "First miss, your opponent is someone we have never heard of before. Given the circumstances, it's safe to assume that he'll be a tough opponent. You must be careful."

Chu Chuyan nodded calmly in response.

Yue Shan couldn't help but chuckle softly. I guess I'm worrying too much. How could the first miss possibly lose against a fellow junior?

As the fighters were preparing, Qin Wanru was deep in discussion with her husband about the current state of affairs. "Hubby, even if Chuyan wins this match, we'll only be leading by 4:3, with two matches to go. Are we really going to lose just like that?"

She had confidence in her older daughter, but the same couldn't be said about their two remaining fighters.

Chu Zhongtian could not hide his concern.

"The Yuan clan has already fielded all of their experts, so Huanzhao's opponent shouldn't be too strong. Given the special attributes of the Wailing Whip, she still stands a chance at winning," he said, but his tone was uncertain and devoid of confidence. He knew that his second daughter was a wilful girl who spent little time on her cultivation.

As for Zu An's duel, he had already dismissed it as a hopeless match.

Honestly, he found the situation incredibly bizarre. Even with the Wu clan's help, the Yuan clan should still have been no match for the Chu clan. How could they have so many experts hidden away? This was truly puzzling.

...

As they fretted, Chu Chuyan descended gracefully into the dueling ring, her footsteps light and soft. Her dress fluttered lightly as she stood serenely before the crowd, her elegant presence drawing enthusiastic cheers.

"Young miss Chu, you have our support!"

"Young miss Chu sure is gorgeous. How lucky Zu An is to have her as his wife!"

"What's wrong with the guys? Why are they all acting like adolescent boys meeting a girl for the first time?"

...

Shi Kun smiled upon hearing the cheers ringing from all corners of the arena. As expected of a woman I have set my eyes on. Her popularity truly knows no bounds. Only I am worthy of a woman as perfect as her!

The unwelcome image of Zu An rudely interrupted his thoughts. His smile slipped, his face wrinkling in disgust. He felt like he had just eaten a fly.

Zu An, who had intended to watch the show quietly, was suddenly surprised by a huge wave of Rage points. Once again, Chu Chuyan's beauty had managed to stoke the envy of the men, leading them to direct their indignance toward him.

"Ahhh, this must be what it means to be outstanding! Even when I'm not doing anything at all, the cash just continues to roll in!" exclaimed Zu An.

Chu Huanzhao's interest piqued instantly. "Cash? Roll in? What cash?" She tugged at Zu An's sleeves, her voice full of excitement.

Zu An gave her a silent glance before shaking his head. Looks like this lass has gotten hooked after the easy money she earned the last time.

"Nah, you heard wrongly." In order to distract her, he quickly changed the topic, "What's your older sister's cultivation rank?"

"She should be at pinnacle fifth rank, I think. I'm not too sure about the details," replied Chu Huanzhao.

Zu An was amused. "She's your older sister though. You don't know her cultivation rank?"

Indignantly, Chu Huanzhao harrumphed, "Why would I care about that?"

The Yuan clan's fighter chose this moment to step into the dueling ring.

Zu An resolved to watch this duel carefully. He had never seen his wife in action before, and he was curious to know how far behind he was from the most talented cultivator in his age group.

"My name is Di Wu. I'm looking forward to having a taste of young miss Chu's Snowflower Sword!" As he made his way forward, Wu Di marveled at the beauty of the white-dressed woman before him.

Her eyes were as beautiful as the stars in the night sky, and her facial features looked as if they had been carefully painted on by a master painter. Wu Di felt flames stirring in the depths of his long-dormant heart.

Despair followed swiftly, crushing him. If he was still young and had just reached the sixth rank, he would have surely done everything he could to pursue her. But he was well into his middle years, and had no potential left to develop. There was no way he would stand a chance with her anymore.

I wonder just what kind of man in the world would be worthy of a woman as perfect as she is!

He thought about the intelligence he had received which detailed how Chu First Miss had chosen a renowned wastrel in Brightmoon City as her husband, and envy immediately gripped him. This is unfair! How can that kind of fellow be worthy of her? If I'm not qualified to pursue her, how could a man like him be wedded to this fairylike woman before me?!

You have successfully trolled Wu Di for +999 Rage!

Zu An had been calmly watching the show from the rest area when a sudden inflow of Rage points shocked him. Huh, what's wrong with this Wu Di?

He quickly scanned the surroundings and caught the Yuan clan's fighter in the dueling ring glaring at him intently. He pondered for a moment. Wu Di, Di Wu... Hm, interesting.

Just then, the official from the City Lord Estate declared the start of the duel. Wu Di immediately turned his attention back to the beautiful woman before him, his mind made up. Even if you'll never be mine, I'll make you remember me for life. I shall make you suffer a tragic defeat today!

He drew his saber, and it was immediately sheathed in red flames. Behind him, the vague avatar of a ferocious tiger could be seen. Waves of heat rippled out into the surroundings, drawing wide-eyed astonishment from the crowd.

"He's actually a fifth rank cultivator! How did the Yuan clan find so many experts?"

"On top of that, his elemental attribute is fire, which happens to be at odds with Chu First Miss' ice element!"

"I wonder who would curb who."

"Fire can curb ice, but ice can curb fire too. In the end, it boils down to who is stronger."

...

Chu Chuyan calmly drew her sword, revealing a transparent blade tinged in light blue, trailing white mist as it moved - a result of the blade's extreme cold condensing the water vapor surrounding it.

Zu An snorted to himself.

It's no wonder why my wife's personality is so cold - even her weapon is a block of ice!

Hmm... Her personality is cold, she practices an ice-style cultivation technique, and she brings that chunk of ice everywhere around with her... Wouldn't the coldness result in painful menstrual cramps?

He started to turn towards Chu Huanzhao, that very question on his lips, but he immediately changed his mind. Wouldn't I be treated as a pervert if I ask her such a question?

With a furious roar, Wu Di raised his saber and charged forth with the momentum of a ferocious tiger.

Zu An was awed by the sight. Woah, his attacks actually come with special effects! I guess he's not just a sidekick after all. I wonder if my wife will be able to withstand his offense.

In response, Chu Chuyan slowly raised her sword. With a simple flick of her wrist, she sent her sword piercing straight forth toward her enemy.

The tip of Chu Chuyan's sword struck Wu Di's blade with the sound of a high-pitched bell, shrill and loud enough to set ears ringing. The ferocious tiger avatar behind Wu Di immediately vanished without a trace, and a terrifying shockwave rippled forth from the two of them.

Half of the spectators were blasted by a wave of intense heat, while the other half shivered as if naked in the coldest winter.

The combatants only clashed for an instant before swiftly retreating, creating some distance between them to recover. Wu Di stared at the beautiful figure several meters away in astonishment. He could tell that her ability to manipulate ki was above his. Is this the difference between me and a true genius?

But no matter how prodigious you might be, you can't erase away the twenty years of experience I have more than you! You're bound to lose this battle!

Across from him, Chu Chuyan frowned. Her enemy's ki reserves turned out to be greater than she had expected. It looks like he's the strongest fighter from the Yuan clan, joining this tournament to specifically deal with me.

Neither let their thoughts affect their intensity. After the barest of breaks, they swiftly engaged each other again. Their speed of movement blurred their bodies into mere silhouettes. Chu Chuyan's attacks were elegant but deadly whereas Wu Di's offense was forceful and direct.

It was a surprisingly even contest.

"That man is actually able to keep up with young miss Chu!"

"Does the Yuan clan have an expert of this caliber?"

...

Qin Wanru watched her daughter worriedly as she listened to the whisperings of the crowd. “Hubby, what is that man’s background?”

Chu Zhongtian frowned deeply. “I don’t know, but something isn’t right about him. Chuyan’s Snowflower Sword is embedded with a chilling aura that affects the movement of her enemies, gradually slowing them down and tilting the battle in her favor. Yet, Di Wu seems unfazed by her chilling aura. This is truly weird.”

“Could it be that his fire cultivation technique is offsetting Chuyan’s chilling aura?” asked Qin Wanru.

“It could be,” replied Chu Zhongtian as he continued assessing the situation.

In the dueling ring, Wu Di and Chu Chuyan had again parted from one another as they tried to regulate the agitated ki in their body.

Wu Di’s hands were cloaked in a layer of ice, but he dispelled it with a surge of flame. His lips wore a fawning smile., “I’ve long heard of the amazing prowess of Chu First Miss’ Snowflower Sword. It seems the rumors aren’t exaggerated at all. It looks like I’ll have to get serious then.”

Beneath the dueling ring, Yuan Wendong frowned. Why is Elder Wu Di speaking so much today? He’s usually proud and reticent; this is unlike him.

Zu An, however, had an answer to that question. “Hmph! That fellow must have found my wife pretty, so he’s doing all sorts of things to capture her attention. Tsk, that attention whore!”

Fortunately, Chu Chuyan was unfazed. True to the cold beauty she was, she stood there quietly, her eyes perfectly composed.

Wu Di felt his heart racing yet again as he met her pristine gaze. What a pity that fate has denied me such a fine woman! With a deep sigh, he channeled his regrets into the duel.

Inferno Edge!

Wu Di leaped into the air, his saber pointed skyward. The flames cloaking the saber intensified, forming asword of solid flame ten meters long.

“Holy shit! Even Jiumozhi’s Flame Blade isn’t as dashing as this!” Zu An straightened upward, impressed by the spectacle. “If I could learn such a cool technique in the future, I could easily win the fancy of any girl!” [1]

“I don’t see anyone falling for Di Wu even after he executed the technique though,” replied Chu Huanzhao.

Zu An kindly explained, “That’s because he is fundamentally unappealing. You need someone as good-looking as me to execute the technique in order for it to work.”

Despite his off-hand tone, he was very worried for Chu Chuyan. He wasn’t certain if she could cope with this technique. It would be a huge loss if she were to even lose a few strands of her hair to this Wu Di!

In the ring, Chu Chuyan calmly swung her sword, and snowflakes began to appear, growing more and more numerous. They encircled her in a swirling column several meters wide, creating the image of a goddess summoning a ferocious snowstorm.

The spectators were awestruck.

“Woah, that’s beautiful!”

“Beneath that beauty lies great danger. Just a single snowflake could turn you into an ice pop.”

“Say, if young miss Chu is that cold, wouldn’t her husband freeze to death just by hugging her?”

“What do you know? She might be cold on the surface, but I bet that she’s steamy hot on the inside.”

“You’re such a horrible person.”

...

Chapter 115: Wu Di, Your Mum Is Calling You Back For Dinner!

Unlike normal snowflakes, those drifting around Chu Chuyan didn’t fall to the ground and melt. Instead, they congregated together to form an ice lotus that embraced her body,

Seeing this, Sang Hong nodded his head slightly and said, “I’ve long heard of young miss Chu’s reputation as a prodigious cultivator, and it looks like she’s as formidable as the rumors put her out to be. It’s incredible that she’s able to manipulate her ki to such a degree.”

Behind him, Sang Qian was staring at Chu Chuyan with heated eyes. Zheng Dan might be pretty too, but she’s still lacking compared to Chu Chuyan. If I could have such a woman, I would wake up laughing even in the midst of my sleep!

In the past, he dared not to even dream about it. However, ever since he found out that Chu Chuyan had chosen Zu An, who was inferior to him in every way, as her husband, he suddenly felt that the fairy wasn’t as far away as he initially thought.

His thoughts were further affirmed after learning of his father’s plans. Once the Chu clan fell apart, she would no longer be the lofty daughter of a duke anymore. Perhaps, he might just stand a chance.

The only troublesome part was that Shi Kun seemed to be interested in her too...

Sang Hong currently had no idea what his son was thinking of. He turned to Jiang Luofu and began chatting with her, “It must be thanks to Principal Jiang’s guidance that young miss Chu is able to achieve such great accomplishments at her young age.”

While he was trying his best to keep himself in check, he still couldn’t stop his eyes from drifting off to her legs. Her legs were exquisitely long and shapely, such that he wouldn’t harbor any doubts if someone were to tell him it was the work of heaven. On top of that, she was wearing a pair of stockings that vaguely veiled her legs, bringing about a feeling of secrecy.

This woman is truly a succubus!

Jiang Luofu smiled in response, "Chu Chuyan's achievements are mainly built upon her high aptitude and intelligence. All we've done is just to guide her a little."

"Principal Jiang is too humble." Sang Hong didn't think that he was a lustful man, but the woman beside him was simply too beautiful. Even with his level of self-control, he couldn't stop himself from sneaking glances at her.

Back onto the dueling ring, Wu Di had finished charging up his attack. With the ten meters long inferno blade in his hands, he pulled it down with incredible momentum, smashing heavily down upon the ice lotus.

Fire and ice were nemeses to one another. Upon encounter, the outermost flower petals immediately melted before the flames, creating a pathway for the inferno blade to strike all the way toward the center of the lotus, where Chu Chuyan stood.

"Young miss Chu, be careful!"

"Fairy Chu, be careful!"

...

Chu Chuyan was simply too pretty that even though the crowd knew that they had no business in the duel, they still couldn't help but shout out warnings when they saw that she was in danger.

Zu An got angry at how they were butting into his wife's business. Hey, even I am not shouting here, so what are all of you panicking for?

It was displeasing to him to know that so many men were fantasizing about his wife, and whenever he was displeased, he was determined to make others displeased as well. So, he stood up and began shouting, "Go, honey! Go, honey! Go, honey!"

He was shouting so loud that it almost seemed as if he was afraid that others wouldn't know that the woman on the stage was his wife.

And just as he had expected, as soon as he started shouting, countless murderous gazes turned his way.

"Is that man Chu First Miss' husband? Hah, he looks nothing special at all!"

"Nothing special? He's a renowned wastrel in the city!"

"How can the world be so unfair as to have a man like him marry my goddess? This is ridiculous!"

"Shit! My good mood is gone just by seeing his face!"

...

By the sides of the dueling ring, Shi Kun clenched his hands so tightly together that he broke the handle of his chair. He had already thought of Chu Chuyan as his private possession, so he couldn't stand seeing another man calling her 'honey'. It left him feeling as if he was being cuckolded.

"Shameless! He's way too shameless!"

Ji Dengtu, who was fidgeting amidst the crowd to take advantage of those married women around him, shook his head.

"I need to find an opportunity to ask him about the continuation of the story. Did that Wang character change in the end? Huh? Why am I so into that Wang character? Did I accidentally put myself in his shoes? Pui pui pui!"

...

Looking at the huge wave of Rage points coming into his system, Zu An was overjoyed. I never knew having a beautiful wife is something so happy. Aiyoo, it's a happiness that none of you will ever be able to experience. Hahahaha!

Chu Chuyan hadn't shown the slightest fluctuation in emotions despite having fought Wu Di for so long, but Zu An's shouting actually caused her fair cheeks to flush for a brief moment.

Noticing the coy look on her face, Wu Di flew into a state of rage. You didn't react to anything I said earlier, but your face is reddening right now to him? On top of that, you dare to be distracted in the midst of a battle with me?!

His overflowing anger caused the already massive inferno blade to grow even larger, causing it to push even deeper down on the ice lotus, threatening to sever it into two.

The crowd gasped at the sight, thinking that Chu Chuyan was in a dire position.

However, Wu Di was starting to frown. He realized that his inferno blade was swiftly slowing down.

Chu Chuyan stood at the center of the ice lotus, gazing at the inferno blade above her head without a sliver of emotions in her eyes. Snowflakes were still drifting around her. Just like that, the clash between the two of them came to a standstill.

"Look!" Someone sharply noticed an anomaly and exclaimed.

The crowd quickly turned their eyes over, and they saw that the flames on the inferno blade had stopped flickering. Instead, a layer of white mist had started forming on the surface of the saber.

The inferno saber was turning into ice at a visible pace, and soon, even Wu Di would be turned into an ice sculpture too.

Zu An gulped at the sight. My wife is actually this formidable... What if she decides to get violent with me one day? Wouldn't I be totally helpless before her? No, this won't do. I need to quickly grow stronger, or else she might just turn me into an ice sculpture one day!

"Even his ki is being frozen?" Some of the juniors spectating the match were stunned, though it was understandable as even the powerhouses gathered around were fazed by what they were witnessing.

"As expected of a woman I've chosen!" A triumphant smile emerged on Shi Kun's face, as if Chu Chuyan's feat had brought him honor.

On the other hand, both the complexions of those from the Wu clan and Yuan clan darkened. The presence of such a talented cultivator in the Chu clan didn't bode well for them.

City Lord Xie Yi sighed deeply, thinking that it was a pity that rejected a marriage of alliance from King Qi's faction back then.

Meanwhile, a glint flashed across Sang Hong's eyes. It's fortunate that Chu Chuyan is a woman. Otherwise, if Chu Zhongtian had such a formidable son, my plans would surely fall into shambles.

Everyone was certain that Chu Chuyan would emerge victorious in this duel at this point. Even Chu Chuyan herself had spoken up to say, "It's over.. Hm?"

She was planning to retract her ki to free her opponent, but she suddenly sensed that something was amiss. The ice sculpture above her suddenly began cracking before dissipated amidst white mist. Wu Di fell back down to the ground with a shimmering layer of light around him like a barrier.

"Sixth rank!"

Everyone present was stunned. Elemental barrier was an ability that only cultivators that reached the sixth rank could utilize. It could guard against most lower-level elemental attacks.

"How could they possibly have a sixth rank cultivator?" Qin Wanru stood up with a look of disbelief on her face.

Chu Zhongtian also shot a sharp look at the Wu clan and said, "Sunspring Duke, what do you mean by this?"

Naturally, he was aware that the Yuan clan definitely didn't have the resources or any offspring talented enough to reach the sixth rank, so the person on the field right now had to come from the Wu clan.

"Brightmoon Duke, I'm afraid I don't understand what you're saying. It's a duel between the Chu clan and Yuan clan, why are you asking me about it?" asked Wu Wei with a smile.

Chu Zhongtian harrumphed coldly. "Both of us know very well what's going on here."

"Isn't it just a sixth rank cultivator? What are you making such a big fuss about? You're making it sound like no sixth rank cultivator is allowed in the Clans Tournament. Lord Governor, is there anything wrong with what I've said?"

"Indeed, there isn't such a rule." Sang Hong nodded

Chu Zhongtian frowned.

There indeed isn't such a rule, but this is a tournament between the juniors of both clans. Even our talented Chuyan is only at the fifth rank, so how could the Yuan clan have any sixth rank cultivator!

Wu Wei burst into laughter. "Brightmoon Duke, your daughter isn't the only prodigy in the world. The circumstances are already very clear now. Why don't you have your young miss admit defeat? It would be horrible if she got hurt in the midst of the battle, no?"

It was a common agreement amongst cultivators that there was a huge gap between fifth rank and sixth rank cultivators. After all, the most prized elemental ability of fifth rank cultivators could be easily averted by the elemental barrier of sixth rank cultivators. There was no way Chu Chuyan could stand a chance against Di Wu like that.

Chu Zhongtian looked at his daughter hesitantly for a moment before opening his mouth to say something. However, before he could speak up, Chu Chuyan's cold voice suddenly sounded from the dueling ring, "The fight isn't over yet."

Even Shi Kun couldn't help but speak up, "Young miss Chu, it's common knowledge that there's a huge gap between fifth rank and sixth rank cultivators. Please don't force yourself to fight on. Even if you admit defeat here, it won't sully your reputation."

He was worried that scars would be left on Chu Chuyan's perfect body if she were to force herself to fight against a more powerful cultivator. He wouldn't be able to accept it if she were to get disfigured due to this.

However, Chu Chuyan simply replied nonchalantly, "Thank you for your concern, young master Shi, but I know what I'm doing."

The patriarch of the Yuan clan, Yuan Zhengchu, burst into laughter, saying, "Since that's the case, Di Wu, you should continue the fight with young miss Chu. Make sure not to harm her, alright?"

Wu Di smiled in response. "That's a given."

Hearing that his daughter was intending to continue the duel, Chu Zhongtian worriedly sent a ki transmission to her, saying, "Just admit defeat if you find anything amiss. Don't put your life at stake for this."

Chu Chuyan nodded in response before eyeing Wu Di calmly.

Wu Di chuckled softly and said, "Young miss Chu, you're indeed a prodigy, but there's a rank of difference between the two of us. Your Snowflower Sword poses no threat to me at all. It doesn't serve any purpose for you to continue the fight."

For the first time since the start of the battle, Chu Chuyan finally responded to his words, "There's nothing absolute in the world."

Right after saying those words, her body suddenly blurred as a cold glint flashed from the sword in her hands. She swiftly directed a barrage of attacks toward him from all angles.

Wu Di immediately understood her intentions.

She knows that she can't hurt me with elemental attacks, so she decided to use her swordsmanship to defeat me. However, that's too naive. Have you forgotten that I'm still able to use my elemental ability here?

He stomped his foot on the ground, and two fire shackles materialized on the ground. Like agile snakes, the shackles darted straight for Chu Chuyan's legs. However, just as the shackles were about to lock onto their target, he suddenly hesitated.

Wouldn't it be a huge waste if I leave a burn scar on the legs of a fairy?

However, his face immediately warped in horror right after. He realized that his shackles had only locked down on a mere silhouette, and he hurriedly took on a defensive position. As expected, Chu Chuyan appeared behind him in the next instant.

The two of them ended up trading several blows with one another.

Wu Di wiped off the cold sweat from his forehead. Is this the difference between me and a true prodigy? Despite her being an entire rank weaker than me, I'm still having difficulties trying to cope against her. If we were of the same rank, wouldn't I have already lost by now?

At this point, he knew he couldn't afford to hold back anymore. He immediately gathered his full attention to deal with Chu Chuyan.

As a result, the pressure on Chu Chuyan suddenly increased greatly. She had to deal with his saber and flames simultaneously, such that she ended up having many close shaves.

Shi Kun straightened his back as he glared at Wu Di cold. If you dare leave behind any scars on my woman, I'll make you suffer a fate worse than death!

"Game's over, young miss Chu!"

Afraid that any complications would occur if the battle dragged on, Wu Di knew he had to end the battle as soon as possible. He found a perfect opening to morph the saber in his hand into a thirty meters long sword of inferno to hack down on Chu Chuyan. Be it in terms of size or momentum, it was far stronger than the earlier attack he launched. Without a doubt, this was a prowess far beyond what a fifth rank cultivator could cope with.

Even Chu Zhongtian stood up at this moment, ready to step in to save his daughter if it was required. Needless to say, the safety of his daughter took precedence over a duel.

It was then that a teasing voice suddenly sounded, "Wu Di, your mum is calling you back for dinner!"

Chapter 116: Why Does No One Believe Me?

The crowd was baffled by the sudden shout, unable to comprehend what was going on.

On the dueling ring, however, Wu Di's body shuddered. What's going on? Why does someone know my real name?

One must know that a middle-aged man like him wasn't qualified to participate in this Clans Tournament. For that reason, he wore the mask made by a runemaster to disguise himself as a youth.

There were so many eyes looking at him right now. If his identity were to be revealed right here, not even Governor Sang Hong or the Sunspring Duke would be able to cover him. There was no way the Brightmoon Duke would let this matter go easily. On top of that, for foiling the plans of the Wu clan and Yuan clan, he would surely be punished harshly when he returned.

Did something happen to my mask? Wu Di subconsciously reached out to touch his face.

This brief moment of hesitation caused his attacks to pause for a brief moment. Chu Chuyan's body was already cloaked in a layer of blue snow, enhancing her movement speed greatly. Her body blurred into a silhouette and pierced right through Wu Di's sword of inferno, only to stop right before his throat.

"You've lost!" Chu Chuyan looked at Wu Di with clear eyes as she said calmly.

Wu Di was astonished. While his concentration did wander for an instant, it should have been impossible for Chu Chuyan to pierce through his sword of inferno and ki armor. Yet, all of his defenses were shredded in the blink of an eye.

What's going on? Is her cultivation not only at the fifth rank? But how could that be possible?!

At this moment, Chu Chuyan's face had started to turn unnaturally red. In order to gather sufficient burst power to pierce through Wu Di's defenses, she had to utilize a forbidden art, resulting in her sustaining severe internal injuries.

She glanced down the stage, only to see Zu An looking at her with a smile. If not for his shout distracting Di Wu earlier, I might have already... Was it calculated, or was it just a coincidence?

The official from the City Lord Estate declared, "The victor of the seventh round is Chu Chuyan!"

"Objection!" After seeking affirmation from Wu Wei and his father, Yuan Wendong leaped onto the dueling ring, pointed at Zu An, and said, "The Chu clan has cheated in the fight. Zu An's sudden shout affected the performance of our fighter!"

How could the Wu clan and Yuan clan not be furious? One must know that Wu Di was their greatest trump card in this Clans Tournament! They had even bore the risk of disguising him so as to have him defeat the pride of the Chu clan, crushing their morale once and for all. Yet, it was all foiled due to the interference of a brat.

The powerhouses spectating the duel had slight frowns on their foreheads. They were busy contemplating the situation that they weren't able to give their judgment right away.

So, Zu An made use of this opportunity to speak up, "Oh? I'm afraid I'm having difficulties understanding what you're driving at. I simply exclaimed aloud because I'm hungry, and yet it affected your fighter's performance? I must say, is this the level of concentration a sixth rank cultivator has?"

Loud cheerings echde from the spectators. Clearly, most of the crowd was more supportive of the beautiful Chu Chuyan. They felt that the reasons the Yuan clan came up with were too forced.

Zu An's argument agitated Yuan Wendong as he argued furiously, "You weren't just exclaiming casually. You clearly shouted Wu Di..."

The moment those words poured out of his mouth, Yuan Wendong's heart skipped a beat. He knew he had screwed up.

Zu An didn't hesitate to capitalize on Yuan Wendong's mistake."Yes, I'm pretty sure I shouted 'Wu Di, your mum is calling you back for dinner', not 'Di Wu'. I don't understand why he would react to those words. Or does this mean to say that his true name isn't Di Wu but Wu Di?"

"A load of rubbish!" The flustered Yuan Wendong roared in rebuttal. How could Zu An know Wu Di's true identity? This doesn't make sense!

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +868 Rage!

Di Wu? Wu Di?

Chu Zhongtian silently mumbled those words under his breath when a thought flashed across his mind. "I heard that there's a member of the Wu clan named Wu Di, and he's a sixth rank cultivator too. It just so happens that he cultivates a flame element cultivation technique too."

Chu Chuyan immediately caught his drift. She immediately reached for Wu Di's face, ready to claw out any mask he had on.

It was then that Wu Wei moved and landed right on the dueling ring. Chu Chuyan felt a powerful force rushing up her sword, forcing her back. Fortunately, Chu Zhongtian appeared at this moment and neutralized the force jolting her before exchanging palm strokes with Wu Wei.

Bam!

A powerful force ravaged the surroundings, leaving the spectating crowd tumbling to the ground. A huge cloud of dust was stirred into the air.

When the dust finally settled down once more, the dueling ring was already completely cracked, looking as if it was on the verge of crumbling at any moment.

Zu An was alarmed to see this. It's said that eighth rank cultivators are able to tap into the natural energy of the world. Is this the prowess they wield?

He was still feeling triumphant that he had turned into a little superman, but compared to the prowess of these top-level experts, his strength seemed nothing much in comparison.

"Stinky brother-in-law! You took advantage of me again!" Chu Huanzhao shoved the man crushing down on her body away before glaring at him angrily.

Zu An turned over with a look of indignance on his face. "I only stood in front of you because I was afraid that you would get injured. How can that be considered as taking advantage of you?"

Chu Huanzhao harrumphed in response. "I'm already a third rank cultivator, what about you? Why would I possibly need a weakling like you to shield me? You're obviously taking advantage of me here!"

Zu An laughed awkwardly in response. He misjudged the level of threat from the earlier shockwave. Somehow, he thought that Chu Huanzhao was far weaker than he was, so he tried to shield her under his body. However, it would be hard for him to explain this to her at the moment.

Chu Huanzhao's face reddened as she compromised, "Alright alright, I know that you're doing this for me. However, you shouldn't be so reckless in the future. I'm the one who should be protecting you!"

Seeing that Chu Huanzhao was no longer angry anymore, Zu An laughed it off and said, "I would love nothing more than that. Oh? I see some dust on your chest area. Come, let me pat it off for you."

"Scram!" Chu Huanzhao spat at him.

Meanwhile, on the dueling ring, Chu Zhongtian glared at the opposite Wu Wei with livid eyes as he questioned, "Wu Wei, what do you mean by this?"

“Since the victor has been decided, why bother pushing this matter on?” Wu Wei shielded Wu Di behind him as he spoke calmly. That Yuan Wendong sure is a brainless dolt! He nearly gave Wu Di’s identity away earlier on!

Sang Hong also stepped onto the dueling ring to stand between the two of them. “Indeed. Since the victor has been decided, there’s no reason to sully the harmony here. It would only reflect badly on the royal court if two dukes of our dynasty fight it out in public like this.”

Chu Zhongtian’s face darkened further. He could tell that Sang Hong was protecting the Wu clan here.

It was then that City Lord Xie Yi interjected too. “Yuan Zhengchu, do you all admit defeat for this match?”

Yuan Zhengchu knew better than to argue over the win and loss of this match at a time like this. He quickly nodded and said, “Yes, we admit defeat for this match.”

Even though they were currently lagging behind 3:4, the remaining two matches were sure wins for them. There was no need for them to fuss too much about it over here.

Xie Yi nodded with a smile and said, “That’s good. Let’s move on to the next round then. Principal Jiang, what are your thoughts?”

As someone from King Qi’s faction, he was more than happy to see the royal court cornering the Chu clan. It would be best if the Chu clan was utterly cornered and left with no choice but to join their faction.

Hmph, you wish to steer clear of everything and survive till the end? How could there be something that convenient?

Jiang Luofu hesitated for a brief moment before nodding in agreement, “I have no objections here.”

With her wits, she could easily see the schemes that were being played by the Wu clan and Yuan clan. However, the academy had never gotten itself involved in political strife, and strictly speaking, they were also a subsidiary of the royal court too. It made no sense for her to oppose Sang Hong publicly.

Hearing her words, Wu Wei said with a smile, “Brightmoon Duke, are you going to question the verdict of our three judges?”

Chu Zhongtian was reluctant to let this matter rest, but he felt utterly helpless here. It was as if everyone here was down to get them. For the first time, he started wondering if he had erred in his decision. However, the Chu clan had survived throughout the generations by maintaining a neutral stance. With this in mind, he decided to grit his teeth and persevere.

“Fine, let’s move on to the next round then!”

It was a huge loss for the Chu clan to lose the arms market, but it was not a crippling blow to them. The Chu clan was more reliant on the salt trade in the end.

Furthermore, they had a lot of connections and supply routes that they had built up over the years. It was not something that the Yuan clan could hope to subvert within a short period of time.

“Father, don’t be too pessimistic. It’s not certain that Huanzhao might lose. Even if she fights to a draw, we’ll still stand a chance.”

Chu Chuyan forced herself to maintain her poise despite feeling a surge of blood gushing up her throat. Taking a deep breath, she consoled her father silently.

Currently, the Chu clan was leading by 4:3. The best-case scenario was for Chu Huanzhao to win the battle, but even if she fought it down to a draw, the Chu clan would still stand a chance. If the eventual result was a tie, they would determine the final winner through having each side elect a fighter onto the dueling ring. If it came down to that, it would be the Chu clan’s victory.

Of course, both Chu Chuyan and Chu Zhongtian were treating Zu An’s match to already be a loss.

“You’re right!” Chu Zhongtian perked up his spirit. He walked over to Chu Huanzhao’s side and began giving her some pointers, hoping that this last minute cramming could do some good.

Chu Huanzhao was still in a daze at the moment. She never thought that she would carry the fate of the Chu clan on her shoulders. Feeling deeply unconfident, she said, “I think my opponent is likely to have a higher cultivation rank than me.”

“He’s stronger than you, but it’s a gap that can be bridged. As long as you use the ability of your Wailing Whip well, you would still stand a good chance.”

Zu An also nodded in agreement. He had tasted the prowess of Chu Huanzhao’s whip himself. The electrifying sensation as the whip struck down on my body... Ah, it’s an experience never to be forgotten.

Chu Huanzhao was still panicking. “But... what if I fail to hit the enemy? Big sister, you also know the limitations of my strength! Even though I’ve been abusing my strength to bully Zu An, still, to fight on a dueling ring is...”

She was starting to regret just how she had idled her time away. She should have paid more focus to her training.

On the other hand, Zu An was left utterly speechless as well. Why do arrows still fly my way even when I’m not doing or saying anything at all?

Qin Wanru grabbed her hand and said grimly, “Huanzhao, this battle concerns the future of the Chu clan. No matter what, you must try your best!”

Due to how serious the matter was, her voice was also much sterner than usual.

Chu Huanzhao vehemently nodded her head. Her tenacity had been spurred by those words. She bit her lips a little anxiously as she replied firmly, “Yes, I’ll definitely win the match. I won’t let father or mother down.”

Zu An was a little shocked to see the determined look on Chu Huanzhao’s face. Wait a moment, will this lass try to desperately hold on during the fight later on? This matter concerns the Chu clan’s future, so Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru won’t intervene until the very final moment. What if she gets afflicted with some irrecoverable injuries or traumas?

Seeing the humongous amount of pressure being heaped on Chu Huanzhao, Zu An stepped forward and said, "Huanzhao, don't feel too pressured here. If you feel like things are going awry, just admit defeat. Don't worry, I'm here."

"No one will think of you as mute if you don't speak!" Qin Wanru raged at Zu An. It wasn't easy for her to spur her younger daughter's motivation, but this fellow was actually trying to undo her efforts!

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for +404 Rage!

Chu Zhongtian also frowned as well. "Zu An, it's a good thing for you if Huanzhao wins too. You don't stand much of a chance against Yuan Wendong."

Zu An was utterly frustrated by the lack of trust in him. "But I really do think that I can win the match."

Chapter 117: Childhood Trauma

"I've told you many times that you have to kick off your bad habit of boasting!" Qin Wanru was already feeling stressed from worrying about the future of the Chu clan, and Zu An's words seemed to be further fueling her fury. Were it not for the fact that they were in public, she would have really lashed out at him. "Now isn't the time for you to be running your mouth. I'll deal with you once we get back!"

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for +999 Rage!

After saying her piece, she pulled Chu Huanzhao away. Chu Zhongtian also looked a little displeased too, but he chose not to say anything. Instead, he left with Qin Wanru to finish up the last minute cramming.

Zu An stared at them with an incredulous look on his face.

Wow, what's wrong with this world? Everyone doesn't hesitate to believe my lies, but when I speak of the truth, everyone starts doubting me. What a tough life I lead!

Also, father-in-law, you aren't doing your part here. Look at how fiery-tempered Qin Wanru is. You have to work harder to vent her inner flames at night, or else the one to suffer is me!

It was then that Chu Chuyan's voice sounded in his ears. "I know that you're dissatisfied with your current circumstances, and you wish to do something to prove yourself before my father and mother. However, you really need not do this. It's wiser to work within your limits instead. What you're doing now will only have adverse effects."

Chu Chuyan's words were subtle, but the meaning behind what she was driving at was pretty clear. She also thought that Zu An was boasting over here.

"Orh." Zu An couldn't be bothered to explain anymore. It was not as if anyone would believe him anyway.

"How did you know that person is called Wu Di?" asked Chu Chuyan.

"I guessed," replied Zu An with a shrug.

"Guessed?" Chu Chuyan frowned, unsatisfied with the answer Zu An was providing.

"Yeap. I thought that the name 'Di Wu' sounds pretty weird, and considering the fact that the Wu clan is backing the Yuan clan, I wondered if his real name might just be Wu Di. So, I gave it a try, and it was unexpectedly a hit." Zu An couldn't possibly reveal his system to her, so he could only come up with an excuse.

To his surprise, Chu Chuyan nodded in response. "I see. It was a coincidence, but you really did me and the Chu clan a huge favor this time around."

Zu An already had no inner energy left to retort anymore. See! You believed my lies so easily, yet you keep doubting me when I'm saying the truth.

"Cough cough~" Chu Chuyan suddenly began coughing, and she quickly took out a handkerchief to cover her mouth.

Zu An sharply noticed a red patch on her handkerchief, and he froze in place. "You're injured?"

Chu Chuyan grabbed his arm to stop him from speaking on. "I'm fine. It's just a minor injury, so don't say anything about it."

Zu An noticed that Chu Chuyan's face was three shades paler than usual, which was a clear indication that her injuries were not as light as she was putting it out to be. In a fit of rage, he cursed, "How dare the Yuan clan and Wu clan bully my wife? Tsk! I'll teach them a lesson later on!"

"..." Chu Chuyan.

At this juncture, she already didn't know what she could say to Zu An anymore. So, she decided to turn her attention toward the stage to see how her younger sister was faring.

Chu Huanzhao's opponent was Yuan Wenji, Yuan Wendong's cousin. While his cultivation was beneath that of Yuan Wendong, he was still around mid third rank. Theoretically speaking, Chu Huanzhao didn't stand much of a chance in this battle, but her possession of the Wailing Whip and Chu Zhongtian's pointers evened things out a little. As long as she played her cards well, there was a fair chance she could defeat her enemy.

On the opposite side, things looked a little tense over at the Yuan clan too. They thought that they could clinch a decisive advantage in the first eight matches, so even if they lost this match, it still shouldn't have affected the conclusion.

Yet, who could have thought that a mishap would occur on Wu Di's side? Despite being a sixth rank cultivator, he actually lost to a mere fifth rank cultivator. He really should change his name to Useless instead!

Due to Wu Di's loss, the Yuan clan was currently lagging behind 3:4, which made this match of critical importance. They had to win this round in order to be able to proceed on to the next round.

Yuan Wendong took a look at Zu An and sneered coldly. You have been hiding their true prowess for so long, likely in hopes of proving your worth in this tournament. But what a pity, you bumped into me instead! Later on, I'd show everyone that you're nothing more than a good-for-nothing. You'll regret provoking me time and time again!

Looking at the two fighters on the dueling ring, the crowd began discussing amongst themselves.

“Woah, I didn’t expect Chu Second Miss to be this pretty.”

“Of course! Given how pretty the older sister is, how could the younger sister fare too badly?”

“I heard that Chu Second Miss is in the ninth place of Brightmoon Academy’s Sweetheart Ranking!”

“I think she’s just lagging behind due to her young age. Give it a few years, and she’ll surely blossom like a beautiful flower.”

“I think she’s fine as she is at the moment. It would be better if she could be younger.”

“... Get away from us. We don’t hang out with fiends like you!”

...

Hearing the discussions coming from the crowd, Yuan Wenji shook his head and sneered coldly. Only he knew best just what kind of terrifying demon was concealed behind her beautiful exterior.

His thoughts drifted back to the times when he was bullied by her, be it having his pocket money snatched, getting beaten up by her, having his pants pulled down right before the entire class... He could still remember how she stood proudly before him, laughing evilly like a true demon. That had made him jolt awake from his nightmares far more than once.

In the past, he dared not to exact vengeance on her out of fear of her position as the daughter of a duke, but with the Wu clan’s backing now, he no longer had any fear. He could make full use of his dueling ring to return everything he had suffered in the past to her.

“Chu Second Miss, we meet one another again,” said Yuan Wenji with a gleeful smile.

He had intentionally hidden from Chu Huanzhao all these years while enduring arduous training in hopes of exacting vengeance one day. It was just a pity that his limited aptitude had decreed a cap on his future accomplishments. Nevertheless, the fruits of his labor should be more than enough to deal with her.

“Who are you?” asked Chu Huanzhao.

Yuan Wenji choked on his breath for a moment there before turning red in anger. This woman actually doesn’t remember me anymore! After bullying so much when I was younger, she actually forgot all about me!

He wanted to speak it out and make her remember, but his logical mind eventually persuaded him otherwise. He was going to exact vengeance later on anyway, and it would be dangerous if others were to catch him in the act.

To be honest, nothing would happen even if he revealed it. Chu Huanzhao had bullied far too many people when she was younger that she could hardly count them anymore...

Perplexed by the lack of response, Chu Huanzhao was going to probe on when her father’s voice sounded in her ears. She took a deep breath and calmed herself down. Holding the Wailing Whip tightly in her hands, as soon as the official announced the commencement of the duel, she flicked her wrist to strike down on Yuan Wenji’s body.

Seeing this, Chu Chuyan nodded in approval. Her younger sister might be lacking in cultivation, but her skills with the Wailing Whip was the real deal... She had been using it well bullying others over the years, after all.

However, Yuan Wenji was prepared for her attack. He dodged the whip with a sideward row before quickly charging forward. Against a long-ranged weapon like the whip, the wisest decision was for him to engage her in a close-range battle.

Chu Zhongtian had already warned her about this in advance, so she slowly retreated to maintain the distance between them while flicking her whip to force Yuan Wenji to remain at bay.

On the other hand, Yuan Wenji tried his best to approach her while dodging the whips. However, he eventually slipped up and got struck on his arm.

“ARGH!”

The sheer pain had Yuan Wendong jolting in horror. It was really not something a human could endure. It felt as if someone had taken a screwdriver to hammer his bones.

The crowd amidst the Chu clan was delighted to see that the Wailing Whip was working its wonders. As long as she could get a few more hits in, the sheer amount of pain should be enough to make Yuan Wenji pass out.

At her father’s reminder, Chu Huanzhao continued to flick her wrist to pressure Yuan Wenji.

“Did you think that I’m unprepared?” However, Yuan Wenji suddenly retrieved a shield from behind his back. It wasn’t too big initially, but for some reason, it suddenly expanded to become big enough to shield his entire body.

Chu Zhongtian immediately straightened his back. “It’s no wonder why the arms produced by the Yuan clan suddenly improved so drastically. They have indeed managed to find a formidable runemaster to back them up!”

The shield was indubitably the work of a runemaster, wielding the ability to expand and contract at will.

In an instant, the tables were turned on Chu Huanzhao. Her whip was formidable, but Yuan Wenji was able to easily guard himself with the shield. Step by step, he slowly shortened the gap between them, rendering him helpless.

Qin Wanru clutched her husband’s arm and said, “He seems to be prepared in advance.”

Chu Zhongtian nodded with an awful look on his face. “Indeed. There’s no doubt that there’s a spy in our Chu clan now. They revealed our sequencing to the enemy; that’s why they are able to curb us to this degree. They even thought of how to deal with Huanzhao’s Wailing Whip in advance.”

“Who in the world is it?!” Qin Wanru turned to look at their own people, but with doubt lingering in her eyes, everyone looked like a possible spy to her.

“We’ll slowly look into it once we get back.” Chu Zhongtian closed his eyes and sighed deeply. “We’re doomed today. However, this works fine too. At least we know the threats lurking by our side, so we can guard against them in the future.”

“But we’re paying too great a price for that!” Qin Wanru knew just how important the arms market was, as well as the implication of losing it. “Should we get Huanzhao to hold on a little longer? There might just be some hope.”

Chu Zhongtian hesitated for a moment, but in the end, he decided to go along with his wife’s wishes. He didn’t want to lose the arms market which the Chu clan had dominated for centuries either.

Meanwhile, on the dueling ring, Yuan Wenji had already pulled close to Chu Huanzhao. A glint flashed across his eyes as he suddenly rolled forward and swiftly got into extremely close range to Chu Huanzhao.

Chu Huanzhao was horrified. She quickly hurled her fist forward in retaliation, but her cultivation was beneath that of Yuan Wenji, and her other hand was still holding onto the Wailing Whip. Given such disadvantages, how could she hold her own against him?

Yuan Wenji grabbed her left hand and dislocated her wrist, leaving Chu Huanzhao crying in horror.

Alarmed, Chu Zhongtian immediately stood up and declared, “We admit defeat this round!”

However, even while he was saying those words, Yuan Wenji gathered his strength toward his fist, and channeling his accumulation of rage over the years, he struck heavily on her abdomen.

Pu!

With a spurt of blood, Chu Huanzhao was sent flying.

Chu Zhongtian quickly rushed forward to catch his daughter before hurriedly dealing with her injuries. He had no spare attention to care about anything more given the circumstances.

Those from the Chu clan quickly crowded around Chu Huanzhao, leaving Zu An no space to squeeze in. So, he turned around to glare at Yuan Wenji coldly, saying, “We’ve already admitted defeat, so why did you still deal such a vicious blow?”

Under his guilty conscience, Yuan Wenji was overwhelmed by Zu An’s imposing disposition for a brief moment and ended up stuttering.

It was then that Yuan Wendong stood forward to speak up, “How could an ordinary human like you know about the battles between cultivators? There’s only a fine line between victory and loss in a fight, and Wenji has witnessed Chu First Miss’ glorious splendor in defeating a sixth rank cultivator earlier. Who knows? Chu Second Miss might just have other means to exert in the situation back then. Who could have known that Chu Second Miss turns out to be so lacking instead? Haa, she really should learn more from her older sister and practice more.”

Yuan Wenji also quickly snapped out of it and said, “Indeed! I was simply too immersed in the fight earlier that I didn’t hear the Brightmoon Duke’s words!”

“You didn’t hear my words?” Chu Zhongtian suddenly bellowed furiously. He had already confirmed that his younger daughter was in no danger, so he raised his head to look at the man still standing on the dueling ring. “Are you saying that the words spoken by an eighth rank cultivator are too soft for the likes of you to hear?”

A terrifying aura suddenly weighed down on the dueling ring, leaving Yuan Wenji gulping in horror. His body began shuddering uncontrollably as he took a step back.

"Is being an eighth rank cultivator that big of a deal to you?" Wu Wei suddenly appeared right in front of Yuan Wenji to shield him. "This is a conflict between the juniors. What's an adult like you stepping into this and bullying the juniors for?"

Chapter 118: I've Never Heard Such a Request In My Entire Life

"Wu Wei, it looks like you're really asking for a fight here!" Chu Zhongtian took in a deep breath as he clenched his fists tightly together.

"The two of you should calm down." Sang Hong also rushed down to stand between the two of them. "The focus today should be the Clans Tournament, so the two of you should stop taking the limelight here. Brightmoon Duke, allow me to say some words of fairness here. Yuan Wenji has already held back earlier, or else your daughter would have really been in danger."

"Been in danger?" Chu Zhongtian sneered furiously. "He dares?"

Sang Hong could only brush off what Chu Zhongtian had said and continued on, "Patriarch Yuan, even though Yuan Wenji didn't intend for this, he did go too far this time around. Why don't we have the Yuan clan fork out Chu Second Miss' medical fees as compensation?"

Needless to say, Yuan Zhengchu went along with Sang Hong's suggestion happily. "Of course, that's only to be expected. I'm willing to fork out 10,000 silver taels for Chu Second Miss' safe recovery."

"There's no need for that. Our Chu clan can at least pay for our own people's medical fees!" With a cold harrumph, Chu Zhongtian brought his younger daughter back to the Chu clan's resting area.

With Sang Hong siding with the Yuan clan, Principal Jiang taking on a neutral position, and City Lord Xie opting for an ambiguous stance, it couldn't be helped that Chu Zhongtian was in a disadvantageous position when a conflict broke out.

Amidst the crowd, Ji Dengtu shook his head and said, "Dumb Chu, you're simply too tolerant. Even in the eyes of an outsider, you look nothing more than a coward. Why did Qin Wanru choose you of all people back then? Wouldn't it be great if she chose me instead? She would have been able to live a carefree life right now."

Wu Wei, and the patriarchs of the Yuan clan and Zheng clan traded gleeful glances. It looks like the Chu clan's era has come to an end!

Shi Kun also had a smile on his face. Taking away the arms market is the first step to unraveling the Chu clan. Before long, Chu Chuyan will fall into my embrace.

Unable to stand the situation, Xie Xiu whispered softly, "Father, are we really not going to back the Chu clan up?"

"Of course we're going to help them," said Xie Yi. "But when we should do so is a question worth pondering over."

Jiang Luofu was not interested in the factional wars occurring before her eyes. Right now, she was just curious to see what Zu An would do next. He had transcendent class aptitude, but that only symbolized his potential. He had wasted far too much time in his younger years, resulting in him being only at the third rank at the moment. He stood no chance at all against the fifth rank Yuan Wendong.

While she had advised him to stop concealing his abilities and reveal his own worth, this situation was clearly not suitable for him to do so. He was simply too outclassed here to prove himself.

With a livid face, Chu Zhongtian was just about to lead the Chu clan away with him when Yuan Zhengchu's voice suddenly sounded, "Brightmoon Duke, we haven't finished the tournament yet. Why are you leaving?"

Yuan Zhengchu would have never dared to speak to Chu Zhongtian in such a manner in the past, but with the backing of the Sunspring Duke and Governor Sang Hong, as well as the imminent victory right before him, he was feeling more confident than ever.

"What is there to compete?" replied Chu Zhongtian lividly.

All that was left in the Chu clan was a wastrel, yet the Zheng clan was insisting for the fight to go on. Wasn't this obviously an attempt to further put down the Chu clan?

Was I too tolerant over the years that even these small fries dare to climb all over me?

Wu Wei chuckled softly and said, "The tournament has to go on. Right now, the score between the two clans is 4:4, so we need the final match to decide the allocation of the arms market."

Sang Hong also nodded in agreement. "Indeed. It's still a tie at the moment. Since we have been invited here to referee the match, it goes without saying that we must ensure fairness in the proceedings. If the Chu clan leaves in advance, I'm afraid that it'll make it hard for us to decide on the allocation of the arms market."

He was worried that if the Chu clan walked away without competing in the final round, it would create room for contention over the results of the tournament. The Chu clan might choose to disregard the results, arguing that the tournament hadn't been completed back then. At the same time, he was also quite curious about the renowned drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan. Based on the reports he had received recently, while Zu An tended to act in a bizarre manner, he didn't seem to be as inept as his reputation suggested.

Even Jiang Luofu also spoke up in agreement. "Indeed. No matter what the situation is, we should still hold the final duel to conclude the tournament properly."

She was curious as to what Zu An would choose to do here. Would he continue to keep a low profile, or would he attempt to rise up and awe the crowd?

It was just unfortunate that his opponent had to be Yuan Wendong, so it would be hard for him to do anything.

While she was speaking, she uncrossed her legs and crossed them again the other way around. Her legs that were veiled in stockings were once again put into the center of attention, drawing the eyes of

almost all of the men present. Of course, it was just a pair of legs, one might say, but it didn't hinder these men from developing further on it through their vivid imagination.

With the other two making their stance, Xie Yi also nodded in agreement. "Since this is the Clans Tournament, we should see it to the end. Even if you wish to admit defeat, we should go by the proper procedures here."

Xie Yi was a little alarmed to see Jiang Luofu's sudden show of support for Sang Hong, so he subtly hinted to Chu Zhongtian that they could admit defeat and end things here.

Shi Kun immediately got anxious. If the Chu clan were to admit defeat just like that, wouldn't his planning be all in vain? So, he quickly joined in the conversation too, "Based on what I know, young master Zu of the Chu clan has already agreed to fight it out with young master Yuan in order to settle their conflict. Furthermore, it looks like they have made such an agreement more than once?"

Wu Qing also made use of this opportunity to gloat at Zu An too. "Indeed, I can bear testimony to that. Zu An has challenged Yuan Wendong multiple times in the academy, saying that he would teach the latter a lesson in the Clans Tournament. I have been looking forward to it for some time now."

Zu An immediately shot a glance at Wu Qing. You must be dying to fail my arithmetic class, huh? He was indeed intending to fight it out with Yuan Wendong, but Wu Qing obviously harbored malicious intentions in mind for saying those words.

Yuan Wendong also spoke up as well, "Indeed. Brother Zu, you have challenged me multiple times, and I was looking forward to trying out your skills too. Since we have time now, I hope that you won't let me down."

Those from the Wu clan and Yuan clan quickly chirped in as well. "Everyone should have heard how Zu An challenged Yuan Wendong earlier before the commencement of the tournament too. How could he possibly back down now, right?"

"Fight, fight!"

The crowd was always in for a commotion, and they were still harboring grudges toward Zu An for flaunting his wife earlier on too. It went without saying who they were going to side with here.

Chu Zhongtian frowned upon seeing this sight. He felt sorry for Zu An. They had intentionally told Zu An to provoke Yuan Wendong with the intention of having him tie down the strongest expert of the Yuan clan, but unfortunately, the crowd didn't know of it, and they weren't in a good position to explain it either. As a result, they could only have Zu An face the backlash on his own.

Still, we can't really put Zu An in danger just like that.

With a deep sigh, Chu Zhongtian chose to surrender. "We'll be admitting..."

But before he could finish his words, Zu An quickly cut him short. "Father-in-law, there's no need to admit defeat. Allow me to fight this round."

Chu Zhongtian was stunned. He didn't expect Zu An to want to fight despite the current circumstances. Beside him, Qin Wanru's fiery temper was ticked off once more. She glared at Zu an and said harshly,

“What do you mean allow you to fight this round? Shouldn’t you know your own capability the best? Look at what occasion this is? This is not the time for you to boast!”

Chu Zhongtian agreed with his wife’s words too, “Indeed. Yuan Wendong hates you down to the core. It’ll be too dangerous for you to fight him on the dueling ring.”

Chu Chuyan walked over to Zu An’s side and advised, “I know that you hope to contribute to the Chu clan, but this is not the time for you to get reckless. Yuan Wendong is obviously seeking to exact vengeance on you on the dueling ring. You’ll just be falling for his ploy if you head up right now! You need not care about how others view you. At the very least, all of us know that you’re doing this for the Chu clan.”

“Indeed, brother-in-law. It’s too dangerous for you to head up right now!” Even Chu Huanzhao opened her eyes and uttered feebly to dissuade him.

Zu An squatted down by Chu Huanzhao’s side and said, “I was initially fine with backing down here, but the Yuan clan has gone too far. They viciously dealt such a severe injury to you. It wouldn’t do not to teach them a lesson!”

By the side, Hong Xingying rolled his eyes. What is going on in that fellow’s head? Even at a time like this, he’s still running his mouth. However, with the earlier precedence, he dared not to speak his thoughts out loud for fear of getting humiliated once again.

Chu Huanzhao’s face reddened upon hearing those words. She snuck a peek at her mother before hurriedly saying, “I know that you care about me, but you can’t even defeat me. You’ll just suffer a tragic defeat up there.”

Zu An replied with a smile, “Have you forgotten how I endured seven strikes of your Wailing Whip the other day? I’m not as weak as you think.”

Qin Wanru couldn’t stand it anymore. She quickly interjected, “Enough, enough! A man shouldn’t make promises that he’s unable to fulfill!”

There’s no way I’m going to let you seduce my younger daughter too! I already warned Huanzhao the other time, but she still continues to get close to him!

Without bothering to look at Qin Wanru, he looked at Chu Zhongtian directly and said, “Father-in-law, let me give it a try. Even if I don’t go up, the Chu clan is doomed to lose today anyway.”

Chu Zhongtian frowned. “I’m not worried about losing. I’m worried that you would be in danger.”

Zu An shook his head and said, “That Yuan Wendong wouldn’t dare to kill me in public. At most, he’ll just try to sever my hands or legs. If that’s the case, it would give our Chu clan an excuse to pressure them and renegotiate the distribution of the market shares.”

Chu Zhongtian was stunned. He didn’t think that there would be such a way out of it. If the Yuan clan really tried to hurt Zu An, considering Huanzhao’s previous injuries too, the Chu clan would indeed have a claim to state that the Yuan clan was undermining the supposedly amicable Clans Tournament and argue for its invalidation. By then, everything would be open for negotiation.

Qin Wanru was equally taken aback too. All along, she had viewed Zu An to just be an incompetent braggart. She honestly didn't like him from the bottom of her heart. However, when she saw him insisting on going onto the dueling ring so as to fight for renegotiation rights for the Chu clan, she suddenly found herself regretting her actions. Have I been undermining him thus far?

The Chu clan's Yue Shan and the others were also impressed by Zu An's wits and bravery too, and their impression of him improved greatly. Despite knowing that it was nigh impossible, he still charged his way through in hopes of paving an impossible path. This was what true courage meant.

Only Hong Xingying sneered coldly in response. That guy has no capabilities at all; all he has is that sharp mouth of his. That's such a forced reason.

Despite the reason Zu An came up with, Chu Chuyan still insistently shook her head, saying, "We could have considered the move if it had been on any other occasion, but Yuan Wendong hates you to the core right now. He won't just try to severely injure you. It's likely that he's aiming to cripple you for good."

Zu An shrugged with a bitter smile, "I'm already as crippled as I can get. What else can he do?"

Chu Chuyan was taken aback by that remark. There's indeed nothing much to cripple Zu An for since he isn't a cultivator. Besides, his down there is also... Recalling the incident that night, her fair complexion was swiftly tinged in redness.

"Have you all come to a decision yet or not? Zu An, are you a man? Are you planning to back down on the last moment? If you want to, sure. All you have to do is to admit that you aren't a man and apologize to me publicly. I'll magnanimously forgive you for your offense toward me then!" said Yuan Wendong with an arrogant voice.

"If you're so desperate to get face-slapped by me, it's only right that I give you what you want, right?" Taking use of the opportunity brought about by the Chu clan while they were in a daze, Zu An leaped onto the dueling ring.

"Looks like you still have some guts!" Yuan Wendong's eyes lit up. Fearing that Zu An would back down, he quickly leaped onto the dueling ring. His movements were much cooler than Zu An's. "You want to slap me? Come on then! Try your best to slap me then..."

While he was speaking, there was suddenly a crisp 'pah' sound, and his ears began ringing. It all happened so quickly that he found himself unable to process what just happened.

Zu An looked at his own hands before shaking his head lamentably. "I've never heard of a request as depraved as that in my entire life. However, since you're earnestly pleading with me, I guess I have no choice but to give you what you want."

Chapter 119: No One Can Defeat Me In My BGM

What just happened?

The crowd was still cheering a moment ago when everything suddenly plunged into silence. Everyone's eyes were widened in disbelief.

Sang Hong, Jiang Luofu, Xie Yi, and the other powerhouses were chatting merrily with one another. Those from the Wu clan, Zheng clan, and Yuan clan were looking gleefully at Chu Zhongtian, waiting for him to be embarrassed. Shi Kun was feeling reassured after seeing Zu An had gotten onto the dueling ring, and he was just about to take a sip of water...

All of them were frozen in place at this very moment.

It could be my eyes playing tricks on me, but did Zu An just slap Yuan Wendong? How could that be possible?!

Everyone's first reaction was that they were seeing things. Yuan Wendong was a renowned fifth rank cultivator where Zu An was a renowned good-for-nothing who was even weaker than a normal human.

Everyone rubbed their eyes in confusion before double checking with the companions beside them. In the end, they could only conclude that they weren't seeing things, and a huge uproar broke out.

How did he do it?!

Those from the Chu clan, upon seeing Zu An leap onto the dueling ring, prepared to rush in to stop him. However, the sight that occurred left all of them stunned too. Chu Zhongtian traded gazes with Qin Wanru, and Chu Chuyan's body shuddered. Their eyes were filled with incomprehension.

Only the person on the stretcher, Chu Huanzhao, began clapping delightfully. "Good job, brother-in-law! Aiyo~"

Her movements accidentally tugged on her injuries, causing her to groan in pain.

Yuan Wendong was completely dumbfounded. His head was still dazed from the impact of the strike. If not for the stinging pain on his cheeks, he would still be trying to figure out what had just happened.

"I got struck by that trash?"

Rage immediately gushed into his head.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +1024 Rage!

He had imagined countless scenarios as to how he should best torture Zu An so as to vent his anger without revealing his killing intent. He had also thought about how he should react if those from the Chu clan were to intervene and stop him. However, this was a scenario that had never crossed his mind, not even once!

He was actually slapped in the face by a trash, right before all of the notable figures in the city!

"I'm going to kill you!"

Yuan Wendong's relatively suave face immediately distorted from anger as he began charging toward Zu An.

"Wait!" Zu An raised his hand to stop him.

"It's too late to beg for mercy now!" spat Yuan Wendong angrily.

Despite his words, he still came to a halt. He was thinking about how he could regain his pride. I should get this fellow to kneel before me, begging desperate for mercy with tears in his eyes. No, that still won't be enough.

Zu An combed his hand through his hair and swiped it backward. "I was in too much of a hurry to come onto the ring that I forgot to play my specially prepared entrance music."

As he said those words, he took out a seashell from his robe, and a passionate melody began playing on the dueling ring.

"..." Yuan Wendong.

"..." Shi Kun.

"..." Wu Qing.

"..." Chu Chuyan.

All of the students from the Sky class immediately knew what was going on, having witnessed it themselves not too long ago during their arithmetic class. However, the rest of the crowd was confused by this turn of events, which led to fervent discussions.

"What's with this melody? Why does my heart start pumping just by listening to it?"

"I feel passion rushing through my veins. Where are the villains?! I'm going to kill them all and save the world!"

...

Xie Daoyun had been sitting quietly in her seat for a long time now. She wasn't too fond of fighting, so the duels that had happened only made her feel drowsy. However, as soon as the melody was played, her body immediately jerked upright. Wonderment filled her eyes.

"Gong, Shang, Jiao, Wei, Yu[1]... Hm? This note doesn't fit the music scale. There are so many notes which I've never heard before! How did he manage to do it?"

"That fellow is always such a show-off." Xie Xiu was awed too, though there was no way he would say it aloud. All of a sudden, a thought surfaced in his mind, and he turned to Xie Daoyun and asked, "Big sis, you're good at music too, right? Why don't you make an entrance music for me too?"

Xie Daoyun shook her head and replied, "There's something odd about this melody. I reckon that it was produced by a top-notch master musician in the world. I'm afraid that I'm unable to produce melodies of the same level as this."

Xie Xiu was stunned. "Is Zu An that talented in music?"

He regretted saying those words right away, for he saw Xie Daoyun's eyes lighting up. "This is a melody composed by Zu An?"

"I think so. Zu An had played it once in the classroom, and I've never heard it anywhere else before." Xie Xiu hesitated for a while before deciding to come clean. There were many people in Brightmoon

Academy who knew about this, so if Xie Daoyun really wanted to look into it, there was no way he would be able to hide it from her.

"This fellow seems to be an interesting one." Xie Daoyun looked at the silhouette on the dueling ring with curiosity in her eyes.

Jiang Luofu was also looking at Zu An too, but her eyes were more focused on the seashell in his hand. That seems to be Shang Liuyu's personal possession. She actually gave her own possession to him? Hmph! And you dare claim that the two of you are unrelated to one another?

"What's the point of putting on such a show? Don't you feel embarrassed?"

Meanwhile, Yuan Wendong's face had turned as dark as charcoal. He didn't think that Zu An was asking him to stop in order to do this.

"What do you know? This is a ritual!" Zu An opened his hands slightly, reminiscent of the Buddha embracing the masses. "In my BGM, I am undefeatable."

"You'll soon know that all of these antics of yours are completely useless. All it does is make you look like a clown!" Yuan Wendong tried his best to mock Zu An so as to regain some of his honor, but somehow, he felt that his skills in this aspect were lacking in comparison to the latter. Somehow, he had a feeling that he was still being one-upped, and that only made him even more infuriated.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +400 Rage!

Zu An sighed deeply and said, "I really don't know where you find the courage to say these words even after getting slapped by me. Don't you feel embarrassed?"

Yuan Wendong nearly choked. He looked at Zu An and raged, "I was only careless earlier! I didn't think that you would attack me just like that! Now that my guard is up, there's no way you stand a chance against me anymore!"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +511 Rage!

Those words spurred a series of boos from the crowd. For a fifth rank cultivator to be struck by a good-for-nothing, surely something like this cannot be reasoned with just carelessness anymore, right?

Yuan Wendong simply turned a blind eye to the reaction of the crowd. Snow had told him that even though Zu An was a third rank cultivator, his fighting prowess was higher than it looked. So, he wasn't too surprised that Zu An actually managed to strike him in a surprise assault.

However, things were different now. He had picked up his attention to guard against Zu An, so how could the latter hurt him anymore? Hmph! Just wait till I get my hands on him. I'll first snap his hands then...

Barely as these thoughts surfaced in his mind, another loud 'pah' sounded.

Yuan Wendong staggered weakly, nearly tumbling over. Yet another stinging pain assaulted his cheeks.

What just happened?

Yuan Wendong was confused. All he saw was a blur earlier. There was just a split moment where he lost sight of Zu An, and at the next moment, he was struck once again on his cheeks.

How is this possible?

Yuan Wendong wasn't the only one doubting the matter. The crowd was equally baffled as well.

Sang Hong narrowed his eyes. Unlike the others, he saw everything clearly with the sharp eyes he had as an eighth rank cultivator. Zu An had used a bizarre movement skill to get close to Yuan Wendong. His movements were simply too quick that the latter didn't get a chance to react at all.

Shi Kun also frowned deeply too. He turned to direct a stern glare at Snow as he asked, "What's going on? There's nothing in your reports that states that he has a movement skill of this caliber!"

Snow was equally bewildered too. "I don't know about it either! He didn't use it the last time I clashed with him!"

"Useless!" Shi Kun cursed coldly before turning his gaze back to the dueling ring.

Snow's eyes reddened as she bit down on her lips. As indignant and aggrieved as she was, she held her tongue because she knew that she wasn't in a position to say anything more.

Jiang Luofu also smiled approvingly. If I knew that he had such a trump card, I wouldn't have worried so much for nothing.

However, the ones who were the most shocked of all were no other than those from the Chu clan. Qin Wanru tugged her husband's hand as she asked, "Hubby, are my eyes playing tricks on me?"

Chu Zhongtian was no less shocked than her. He replied with a bitter smile, "How could both of our eyes be failing at the same time?"

Judging from Zu An's ki pulsation, it would appear that he was a third rank cultivator. However, how could a third rank cultivator move so quickly?

As it turned out, Zu An had been concealing his true abilities all this while. Who could have thought that he had managed to silently cultivate to this level?

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but ask, "Father, what is that movement skill he's using? Why haven't I seen it before?"

Chu Zhongtian shook his head and replied, "I've never seen it before either."

The one who was the happiest about the current turn of events was no other than Chu Huanzhao. She looked at the figure on the dueling in excitement. My brother-in-law is actually this formidable! Hmph, he actually lied to me for so long. I'll slowly settle the scores with you later on!

"Is this the standard of the Sky class students of Brightmoon Academy? Tsk!"

"What fifth rank and prodigy? Even a normal person can slap him so easily. I think even I am stronger than him!"

"Are the two of them working with one another to put on a show before us?"

...

Most of those in the crowd didn't have eyes that were as sharp, so they were unable to see through the crux of Zu An's movements. They simply thought that Yuan Wendong, despite being a fifth rank cultivator, was not pulling his weight and was getting slapped by his opponent in a ridiculous manner.

Hearing the discussions from the crowd, Yuan Wendong's eyes reddened.

This bastard! How dare he humiliate me in such a manner?!

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +1024 Rage!

He was feeling both angry and embarrassed, but more than that, he was shocked too. He hadn't seen how Zu An moved earlier, and his inability to understand what had happened was interfering with his ability to think straight.

"You fool! Is your elemental ability just for show?! There's something weird about Zu An's movement skill, so don't fight him face-on!" Wu Wei's voice sounded in his ears.

Yuan Wendong's eyes lit up. He never thought of using his elemental ability as he assumed that a fifth rank cultivator like him would be able to curb a third rank cultivator easily. On top of that, he was worried that he would accidentally end the battle too quickly by leaving Zu An severely injured. So, he subconsciously thought that he had to fight slowly with Zu An so as to torture him.

However, after having gotten slapped twice, he couldn't care less about it anymore. He felt that he had to shred Zu An into pieces in order to vent his rage.

"You have thoroughly enraged me!" Yuan Wendong spat as he began to back away to the corner of the dueling ring, slowly creating distance between the two of them. Then, he slowly raised his hands as he embarked on the standard villainous monologue, "I must admit, your movement skill is more formidable than I've thought. However, before absolute power, that's all meaningless!"

As he spoke, the swords and sabers of the crowd near the dueling ring began to tremble, as if some sort of force was summoning them. Shocked, the crowd quickly held their weapons tightly to keep it from flying away.

Only those from the Yuan clan were prepared and allowed their swords to be taken to the dueling ring. The swords swiftly gathered around Yuan Wendong, floating before him. Their tips were all pointed in one direction, toward Zu An.

"Is this the prowess of a fifth rank cultivator?"

"Woah! This army of flying swords is simply too awesome!"

"See! How could a fifth rank cultivator like Yuan Wendong possibly lose to that wastrel from the Chu clan?"

...

Qin Wanru was incredibly agitated. "Why didn't Zu An use his movement skill properly to get close to Yuan Wendong and curb him? All of the things he could do, he waited silently for Yuan Wendong to

create some distance between them! What's he going to do now then? No matter how fast his movement skill is, how can he dodge all of them?"

The more she thought about it, the angrier she felt. "He's showing off for nothing!"

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for +567 Rage!

Chapter 120: Milord, The Era Has Changed!

Chu Zhongtian consoled, "I guess Zu An is just lacking in battle experience, so don't be too harsh on him. His earlier performance is already an unexpected surprise to us."

Qin Wanru still couldn't help but remark, "It's true that I didn't bear any hopes for him at the start, but I didn't expect him to have such a formidable movement skill either. If he has such capability, it's not entirely impossible for him to achieve victory. Yet, he used it just to humiliate Yuan Wendong. He even had the spare effort to play that bee gee em or something. In the time he wasted, Yuan Wendong finally got serious in the duel. How can I possibly not get angry at this?"

In her view, if Zu An had used his movement skill to catch Yuan Wendong off guard and strike his vitals, perhaps, he might have already won by now. Yet, all he did was just to slap the latter twice. While it had indeed undermined the Yuan clan's prestige, his actions had also riled Yuan Wendong up. Once a fifth rank cultivator got serious, it was impossible to bridge the difference with just a movement skill.

This tournament was of great significance to the Chu clan. If Zu An had admitted defeat right from the start, she wouldn't have felt so frustrated. Yet, she was shown a ray of hope here before being forced to watch the ray of hope slipping them by. The feeling of being so close yet so far was more than enough to make her go on a frenzy.

Chu Zhongtian sighed deeply and said, "He's still young. He'll learn after this incident. Right now, we should be prepared to step in, or else he might just die under Yuan Wendong's blade."

Chu Huanzhao couldn't help but speak up, "Father, mother, why do the two of you lack confidence in brother-in-law? I believe that he'll be able to do it."

It was then that Hong Xingying finally found the perfect opportunity to make his piece known. "Second miss, every rank of difference represents a huge gap between cultivators. If a fifth rank cultivator could be defeated that easily, Yuan Wendong wouldn't have been considered as a prodigy and an expert in our Brightmoon City."

He thought that he was loyal to the Chu clan, but between seeing the Chu clan losing the tournament and Zu An earning the winning point, he would rather see the former happen. He couldn't stand the idea of Zu An making a name for himself, and to make things worse, he lost the first match too. On top of that, he had even mocked Zu An greatly earlier, putting him down as useless.

In the entire world, there would be no one who could stand such a grave face-slapping.

Chu Huanzhao's smile stiffened. She might not be fond of cultivating, but how could she possibly not know such basic knowledge? "Hmph! My brother-in-law will definitely be able to do it! Isn't that right, big sister?"

Her voice sounded less confident, such that she had to turn to her older sister to affirm her belief.

"Maybe," Chu Chuyan answered casually as she stared intently at the figure on the dueling ring contemplatively.

Currently, on the dueling, Yuan Wendong was surrounded by swords and sabers, and that brought him a huge boost of confidence. "Zu An, I have to admit that your movement skill did surprise me. If you had struck me with all you had right from the start, you might have just stood a chance. However, you didn't grasp your opportunity well, and this is where it all comes down."

Now that he had additional reassurance, Yuan Wendong was not that anxious to end the battle anymore. He wanted to play a cat-and-mouse chasing game, hoping to see Zu An's remorseful and despaired look.

Zu An looked at him in intrigue as he remarked, "I would be going easy on you if I defeat you right away. If I don't return what you did to Huanzhao earlier on, how can I vent her anger?"

Beneath the dueling ring, Chu Huanzhao was overjoyed. She tugged on her parents' clothes and said, "See, see! I knew brother-in-law had his own reasons for doing that."

But Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru frowned. They felt that Zu An was taking everything too lightly here. But again, given that he was standing up for their daughter, they weren't in a position to say anything either.

"Who does he think he is?" Hong Xingying thought that Zu An was going for the second miss too despite already having married the first miss, and it made his envy go out of control. "If he can defeat a fifth rank cultivator, I'll eat this table over here!"

Chu Huanzhao didn't even bother reacting to Hong Xingying.

Back to the dueling ring, Yuan Wendong was enraged by what he had just heard. "Hahaha! So, you were going easy on me because you want to exact vengeance for your sister-in-law? Hahaha! This is the funniest joke I have heard in all of these years!"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +666 Rage!

"Even a joke of such caliber is already considered as the funniest to you?" remarked Zu An in surprise. "It looks like young master Yuan's worldly experience is truly shallow."

"..." Yuan Wendong.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +250 Rage!

He really couldn't understand what was running through Zu An's mind to be able to joke at a time like this. He was worried that he might just be angered to the point of spurting blood if he were to continue listening to the Zu An's words, so he got straight to the point. "I can't be bothered to talk nonsense with you. I'll show you the prowess of a fifth rank cultivator, as well as the difference between both of us!"

With a wave of his hands, the floating swords and sabers immediately rained down toward Zu An. There was a look of frenzy and hatred in Yuan Wendong's eyes as he said, "It hurts, doesn't it? Cry all you want now, for you're going to die next!"

It was true that Zu An's movement skill was unexpectedly powerful, being able to catch him off guard. However, the entire dueling ring was filled with swords and sabers right now, allowing Yuan Wendong to launch an omnidirectional attack on Zu An. No matter where Zu An dodged, he would still get struck in the end.

"Brother-in-law, careful!" Shocked, Chu Huanzhao's body sprung right up, but the pain had her slowly wincing back down onto the stretcher.

Chu Zhongtian and Chu Chuyan also had grave looks on their faces. They were ready to leap in and save Zu An at any time.

Shi Kun, however, frowned at the sight. Isn't Yuan Wendong hurrying things too much here? It was obvious that Chu Zhongtian would leap in and save Zu An if he were to go this far. If so, they might not be able to hurt Zu An as they had initially planned.

On the dueling ring, Zu An unhurriedly shouted, "Little Pingping~"

Cheng Shouping had been waiting by the side of the dueling ring all this time. He threw a weirdly shaped shield over.

Watching as Zu An planted the shield in front of him, Yuan Wendong sneered. I was still wondering what trump cards you have, but all you have is a shield in front of you? What about your sides and back then?

My ability is to control all metal! I can easily get those flying swords to circumvent your shield to strike you!

However, this was fine as well. With this, the Chu clan would be less inclined to make a move.

With a cold sneer, he diverted his attention amongst the swords and separated them into numerous waves; two to strike from the sides, one to strike from the back, and one to strike from the top.

However, it was then that he noticed Zu An retrieving a piece of metal from the middle of the shield, emptying it out. As a result, the shield took on a U shape.

The hell is that shield?! You're just making fun of me!

Yuan Wendong thought that Zu An was either fooling around or was reminding the Chu clan to intervene and save him. So, he quickly hastened the speed of his swords.

Ah? What's going on? Why are my swords not heeding my commands anymore?

Yuan Wendong was shocked. He tried to will the swords and sabers to move, but they were all shuddering in midair as another force attempted to wrestle control over his weapons.

Then, all of a sudden, the swords and sabers all flew in a common direction—toward Zu An's shield. They stuck tightly toward it, and no matter how Yuan Wendong tried to control them, they wouldn't move at all.

T-this... How could this be possible?

The crowd was shocked by the turn of events.

Yuan Wendong was horrified. He stared at Zu An, whose head was finally peeking from the shield now, and asked in disbelief, “H-how did you manage to do it?”

Zu An shook his head and sighed deeply. “Milord, the era has changed.”

Ever since he saw Yuan Wendong’s ability to control swords back at the academy, he had been thinking of a way to deal with this move. After all, it wasn’t an easy feat to dodge multiple swords at once, and he didn’t have Pei Mianman’s destructive black flames too.

Besides, even if he could dodge it, he wouldn’t go for it either. Yuan Wendong would be coolly maneuvering the swords against him while he was frantically running around like a rat! He wouldn’t stand for that!

I don’t need my skills to work; I just need them to be cool!

Zu An’s first thought was to use magnets, but the magnetism of natural magnets was too weak. It would be hard for him to overpower the control of a metal element cultivator, or else all metal element cultivators would have been rendered irrelevant by now.

However, it was fortunate that Zu An was standing on the shoulders of a giant. He had inherited the thousands of years of knowledge of mankind, which brought his attention to electromagnets. Electromagnets had the potential to become incredibly powerful, as witnessed by how they were able to raise cars and the sort in industrial usage.

The principles were also quite simple, and it wasn’t hard to put it into practice. All Zu An had to do was to contact one of the runemasters in the Chu clan, and he was able to easily make it out.

What posed a larger problem was the flow of electricity as this world didn’t have generators. But in exchange, there was something else that this world had—lightning element cultivators. Using a special formation, it wasn’t too tough to deposit electricity into something for a short period of time.

Zu An had plenty of money anyway, so he was able to easily get all of these done. The work was quite simple, not requiring much skill at all, so the runemaster was able to complete it easily. In fact, he thought that it was so trivial that he didn’t even bother reporting it to Chu Zhongtian.

He thought that Zu An was simply making a toy to fiddle with. He had no idea what an electromagnet was, as well as the incredible magnetic force field it could create when activated.

It was then that those in the crowd finally recovered from their daze. They tried to take a closer look at the bizarrely shaped shield in Zu An’s shield to figure out what it is.

“Is that a secret weapon the Chu clan came up with?”

“Well, that’s to be expected. The Chu clan has hundreds of years of history in smithing, so how could the Yuan clan possibly compete with them?”

“Chu Zhongtian sure is an old wily fox. He was still acting as if the destruction of the spirit creek would cause the quality of his weapons to fall beneath the Yuan clan, but it looks like he was planning to prove their superiority against the Yuan clan during the Clans Tournament!”

...

Seeing the deep looks Sang Hong and the others directed toward him, Chu Zhongtian was dumbstruck. What's that in Zu An's hands? I've no idea either!

Back onto the dueling ring, Yuan Wendong really felt like fainting. Everything that had happened today had surpassed his understanding. Looking at the smiling face in front of him, he suddenly felt a chill on his back.

Just how many more trump cards have that fellow prepared to deal with me?!

Sensing the withering of Yuan Wendong's courage, the patriarchs of the Wu clan and Yuan clan quickly sent him a ki transmission to advise him.

"You fool! That weapon created by the Chu clan might be able to deal with your flying swords, but its bulky size made it impossible to use it in close-quarter combat!"

"Just stop controlling your flying swords and fight with him face-on. Protect yourself with your sword ki. No matter how powerful Zu An's movement skill is, there's still a huge disparity between the two of you in terms of strength. He can't possibly hurt you!"

Having listened to the pointers from the two of them, Yuan Wendong's fighting spirit swiftly returned to him. Indeed! Zu An might have prepared all sorts of toys here, but the disparity between our cultivation is not something he can bridge that easily. Even if I don't use my elemental ability, my cultivation itself would be enough to crush him!

Yuan Wendong immediately calmed down after having thought things out. He looked at Zu An and said coldly, "Zu An, your mysterious weapon did catch me off guard. However, that's the foundation of the Chu clan, not you. Just like I told you the last time, there's a limit to how far you can go tapping into the strength of others. In the end, what that matters the most is your own strength!"

Having been outdone time and time again on this dueling ring, he was desperate to reverse his crumbling reputation.

He drew a sword from his waist and swung it casually. Its surface was swiftly imbued with a semi-transparent layer of sword ki. This sight amazed the crowd present in the area. As expected of a fifth rank cultivator. His control over sword ki is incredible!

This, in turn, brought credibility to what Yuan Wendong said. It was true that the toy Zu An brought out was eye-catching, but it wasn't enough to win the battle. Once Yuan Wendong recovered from the initial impact, the battle would still be his to take.