

M. Slaying 153

Chapter 153: The Ji Family Doesn't Have A Thirteenth Young Lady?

There were old aristocratic families in the immortal-cultivation world.

Under the current era of the Yu Dynasty, the Xia Family was the imperial family. They were eminent and far removed from the masses as well as rich and powerful, of course. The Jiang Family, on the other hand, had been wiped out, and any possible survivors had all vanished without a trace. Lastly, the Ji Family had always remained mysterious and formidable.

If someone were to take a close look at the histories of these families, they would discover that the Ji Family had been the first to emerge into the public eye. In the early years, people often said that the Ji Family was the strongest of the three major aristocratic families. Some continued to hold this view even after the Xia Family took over as the ruling imperial family.

Ultimately, it was simply because the Ji Family was too mysterious. They remained hidden in the Great Emperor Valley, with only a few members of the family venturing out into the world, and they rarely got into conflicts with other forces. Thus, the Ji Family gained prominence for keeping a low profile.

However, the major immortal sects ranked in the Divine Nine and Terrestrial Ten knew more about the Ji family than the public. Their deepest impression of the Ji Family was not that they kept a low profile but that they were arrogant, and that arrogance was passed down through the generations at a fundamental level!

The Ji Family had little contact with the outside world. Yet, rather than saying it was because they were unsociable, it was more accurate to say that they held everyone else in disdain.

Of course, that wasn't of much significance to Chu Liang; he was just delivering a letter.

Chu Liang looked into the distance at the Emperor's Great Valley and saw a place that was known as the Xuan Yuan[1] Mountain Manor. There was a veil of fog shrouding the manor, concealing a seemingly unending strip of towering buildings. This manor was clearly more like a small city hidden in the mountains.

Is the scale of this manor something that can be achieved by just one family?

Chu Liang couldn't help but feel a little surprised. After all, this was his first time coming here and witnessing just how majestic and dignified this old aristocratic family was.

He had the Golden-Furred Hou descend to the ground a long way before reaching the manor. This was because all major forces saw the act of flying in their airspace as a provocation. If a hot-tempered person were to see him flying in their airspace, they would be able to just shoot him down, and no one could say it was unjustified.

Chu Liang walked up to the entrance gates of the manor. There were two lofty white marble pillars, with a stone suspended between them. The stone had the words "Xuan Yuan Mountain Manor" engraved on it in gold, appearing imposing and majestic.

Chu Liang and the Golden-Furred Hou stopped politely in front of the entrance gates to speak with the gatekeeper, who had emerged to greet Chu Liang the moment he saw Chu Liang approach.

Chu Liang stepped forward and bowed in greeting. "I'm Chu Liang, a disciple of the Mount Shu Sect. I was entrusted to deliver a letter to Miss Ji Lianhua, the thirteenth young lady of the Ji Family."

The Ji family gatekeeper gave a slight bow in return and then said, "My family doesn't have a thirteenth daughter. Young hero, might you perhaps be mistaken about the person you're looking for?"

Chu Liang was confused. "What?"

That scholar had so earnestly requested Chu Liang to deliver the letter to the thirteenth young lady of the Ji Family. It couldn't possibly just be for his amusement.

What's the mistake here?

Chu Liang asked, "Could it be a relative? It's very important that I deliver this letter. Please, could you kindly think about it a little more?"

The gatekeeper frowned and pondered for a while.

Then he answered, "We do have many relatives of the main family living here, but we don't have that many young ladies to even get to thirteen... Why don't you tell me who sent the letter? Leave it with me for now, and I'll ask the manager of the household."

"Umm... I'm not at liberty to say who it was, but this matter is indeed important..." Chu Liang said. He hesitated for a moment before asking, "Is it possible for me to meet the manager in person and ask him about it myself?"

The gatekeeper nodded. "Sure. That's probably better."

With that, he led Chu Liang behind the entrance gates to a pavilion that was used for receiving visitors. The vast manor, which resembled a small city, was divided into inner and outer sectors. This area that the gatekeeper and Chu Liang were in was the outermost sector of the manor, so the Ji Family wasn't afraid to let outsiders enter it.

After a while, a middle-aged man dressed in embroidered silk robes walked into the pavilion.

He said to Chu Liang, "Are you the young hero from the Mount Shu Sect?"

"Greetings, sir. I'm Chu Liang." Chu Liang stood up to greet him. "I apologize for the disturbance."

"Haha, it's no bother," the middle-aged man replied and waved his hand, gesturing for Chu Liang to sit down. "I heard that you're looking for Miss Ji Lianhua, but we don't have any young lady in our family who goes by that name. Could you tell me more about who you're looking for?"

"Alas, I don't know much about her," Chu Liang answered helplessly. "I was entrusted with a task. I have to personally deliver this letter to the thirteenth young lady so that I can rest easy knowing that I've completed the task as requested."

"Since you can't leave the letter with us or reveal on whose behalf you're delivering the letter, that makes it very difficult for us to find out who it is you're looking for," the middle-aged man stated. "All I can do is ask around to see if anyone has been traveling the world under the alias of 'Ji Lianhua.'"

"Thank you."

Chu Liang couldn't meet the person in question or leave the letter behind, so he had no choice but to get up to leave.

The Ji Family might have been unable to find the person in question, but that didn't necessarily mean that Chu Liang hadn't completed the request. The root of what lay behind this mystery was probably only known to the scholar himself.

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Once Chu Liang stepped out of the manor's gates, he mounted the Golden-Furred Hou again, intending to return home before dark.

Then someone suddenly called out from behind him, "Hey, the one riding the Hou!"

Chu Liang looked around. "Hm?"

The only one riding a Hou in this area was a handsome young man... and that man was Chu Liang.

So, he dismounted and noticed someone hiding behind a tree in the forest a distance away from the manor's gates. The person, who was clad in an emerald green coat, was waving at him.

Chu Liang felt that was rather odd, so he walked over to take a look. He found a young woman in a white gauze skirt crouching there. The evening sunlight fell on her in patches, making her fair skin glow and shimmer like a gem. She had a delicate and attractive figure and bright and limpid eyes, which surprisingly had golden irises.

It was a well-known fact that having irises of an unusual color was an indication of belonging to the Ji Family's divine bloodline—the Xuan Yuan Eyes. This young woman was undoubtedly a core member of the Ji Family.

"Miss, did you call for me?" Chu Liang asked.

"That's right. Aren't you the one who came to deliver a letter to the thirteenth young lady?" the young woman replied.

Chu Liang nodded. "Yes."

The young woman extended an open hand. "Give it to me, then. I am her."

Chu Liang gazed at the young woman's face, pondering for a moment.

Then he suddenly smiled. "Please don't joke around, Miss! You're not her! I must deliver it to the real thirteenth young lady."

"Huh?" The young woman looked puzzled. "How did you figure out that I'm not the real one?"

"Heheh," Chu Liang chuckled. "I didn't at first, but I just said it anyway to see what would happen. Now that you've admitted it, I know for certain you're not her."

"Goodness!" The young woman scrunched up her nose. "You're so crafty!"

"This is a task someone has entrusted to me, so I dare not be careless with it. Please forgive me, Miss."

This young woman was not the person to whom Chu Liang was supposed to deliver the letter, but her Xuan Yuan Eyes indicated she was undeniably an important member of the Ji Family. Chu Liang didn't want to offend her, so he just smiled and turned to leave.

However, he heard the young woman say, "I know who you're looking for!"

"Oh?" Chu Liang stopped in his tracks and turned back to the young woman. "You do?"

The look in his eyes carried a very clear message... Tell me.

"I'm Ji Lingyu, the ninth young lady of the Ji Family," the girl introduced herself. "I just passed by the Visitors Pavilion and heard that someone was looking for the thirteenth young lady, so I hurried out here to find you."

"Is Ji Lianhua your younger sister?" Chu Liang asked.

"No." Ji Lingyu shook her head. "She's my aunt."

Chu Liang furrowed his brows. "Eh?"

Then he thought, Perhaps, could this be why the Ji Family's manager and gatekeeper had claimed there was no such person? Could it be that the thirteenth young lady was from the previous generation?

However, that didn't make sense. Chu Liang had come searching for her by name. Shouldn't they know her name?

Ji Lingyu continued, "You came to find Ji Lianhua, but the manager and gatekeeper are relatives who joined the manor much later, so they don't know about her. My aunt cut ties with the Ji Family thirty years ago."

"Why is that?" Chu Liang asked.

He crouched behind the big tree too, adopting an attitude that beckoned for Ji Lingyu to tell him everything in detail. It seemed that there was much more to this story.

"Mm," Ji Lingyu said, "this was something I heard from my elders in private. Back then, my thirteenth aunt was the most favored daughter in the family. She was extremely talented and intelligent, with a bright future ahead of her.

"Then one year, she ventured out into the world to gain some experience. But unfortunately, when she returned, she said she had fallen in love with a mediocre cultivator who wasn't from a sect or a conventional school of thought."

Chu Liang thought, It's not hard to guess how the rest of this story plays out.

Under the discerning eye of the Ji Family elders, it's obvious that an unconventional cultivator couldn't have been accepted as a suitable partner for one of the young ladies of the family.

This plot is quite melodramatic.

Ji Linyu continued, "The elders didn't approve of my thirteenth aunt marrying that person, but she declared that he was the only one she would marry. This led to a lot of arguments and tension within the family.

"In the midst of the conflict, that mediocre cultivator actually came to the manor and said he wanted to challenge the best of his peers in the Ji Family. He hoped that if he won, the Ji Family elders would not oppose his marriage with my aunt.

"That day, he challenged seven members of the Ji Family, the best of his peers, and surprisingly won against all of them. However, it appeared that he'd used some dishonorable methods during those fights. So, even though he won all of the fights, the elders still did not approve of him marrying my aunt. In the end, they said that he could only marry her if he became a seventh-realm Eminent One."

"That person then made a bold declaration that he would reach the Dao Attainment Realm within three years and return to marry my thirteenth aunt!" Ji Lingyu said, her eyes lighting up.

"For thirty years, the Yellow River flows to the east, and for the next thirty years, it flows to the west. Do not treat the youth with disdain just because he's poor, for times are ever-changing, and you never know what the future holds...[2]" Chu Liang recited aloud unconsciously.

"Huh? How did you know what he said back then?" Ji Lingyu asked in astonishment.

"Ah..." Chu Liang smiled sheepishly. "Isn't that how everyone proposes three-year agreements... It's fine. Just continue with the story."

"Unfortunately, the ending to this story isn't a good one. After making that three-year agreement, he has never returned here even once in the last thirty years," Ji Lingyu said with a note of sadness in her voice. "I heard he went to the Southern Bastion Mountain in search of an opportunity to help advance his cultivation level, but that place is fraught with dangers, and countless people are buried there every year..."

"Haaa..." Chu Liang silently let out a sigh.

In reality, there weren't that many people who could change their fates.

"On the day that the three-year agreement was about to expire, my thirteenth aunt snuck into our family's ancestral shrine, stole the family register, and took it out of the shrine. Then she crossed her name off the register in front of everyone," Ji Lingyu continued. "She said... 'If Gu Qingyuan doesn't come marry me, then I'll leave the Ji Family on my own and never again return here in this life.'"

"Ever since that day, my thirteenth aunt's name, Ji Lianhua, became a taboo. The elders forbade anyone from mentioning her and removed her name from the family register. That's why the younger generations and the relatives who joined the manor later don't know about her.

"I've never met her, but after hearing about her, I've come to admire her greatly. She's my role model!"

"She is indeed worthy of admiration," Chu Liang agreed. "Do you know where your thirteenth aunt is now?"

"I don't," Ji Lingyu replied. "If I knew, I would definitely have gone to find her ages ago. But my guess is that she must have gone to find Gu Qingyuan! A woman like her would never be able to forget the one she loves!"

"I see..."

Chu Liang felt rather helpless.

Could the scholar who asked me to deliver the letter be Gu Qingyuan?

After crouching for quite a while, Chu Liang's legs were getting a little numb.

He then asked, "Miss Ji, why did you have to hide here while telling me all this?"

"I'm afraid they'll find me..." Ji Lingyu answered. Then she stated with bright eyes, "I'm running away from home!"