

Chapter 3941: Crown Prince

Long Chen truly jumped in shock. Because Yu Qingxuan possessed a top ten Heavenly Flame, the ninth rank Heavenly Rainbow Flame, she was incredibly powerful. With it, even against the likes of Shi Yang, Ji Wuming, the Nine Underworld Luocha, and others, she could hold her ground.

However, in the Vermilion Bird Empire—no, not even within the entire Vermilion Bird Empire, but merely among the princes and princesses, she only ranked ninth. This revelation was truly astonishing.

As if enjoying Long Chen's expression, Xiao Yong laughed. "Are you shocked?"

"I truly am. I have a great understanding of Princess Qingxuan's power. As I am not even a match for her, it seems I can only look up to those top nine ranks," said Long Chen humbly.

This humbleness actually made Xiao Yong feel a bit bad. He thought that Long Chen had received a blow to his confidence, so he hastily said, "Brother Long San, don't undervalue yourself. For you to be able to challenge an entire city's experts on your own and make the seventeenth prince of the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire beg for mercy, you are definitely a dragon amongst men, a one in ten thousand existence."

However, when it came to the top nine and what powerful abilities they had, Xiao Yong didn't say a word. It seemed that he still had some misgivings toward Long Chen.

After chatting a bit more, Long Chen got up and Xiao Yong personally sent him off. He even gave Long Chen a travel permit jade token as his ticket in. In the future, Long Chen wouldn't have to deal with so many questions at the city gate.

Once Long Chen left, Xiao Yong immediately summoned his personal assistant and gave him orders to report Long Chen's image to the higher-ups. After all, he needed to alert the higher-ups when a strong expert entered the empire.

If Long Chen had bad intentions, then he would have to take the consequences for letting him through. But by reporting it, he wouldn't take all the blame.

As Long Chen left the city, he looked at the jade token in his hand with a smile. "This Xiao Yong really is interesting. This jade has a tracking rune inside of it. Is he looking down on me?"

Long Chen directly tossed the jade token away. Although there was nothing wrong with Xiao Yong's actions, it did make Long Chen feel unpleasant.

As a result, Long Chen didn't even consider using the transportation formation. He directly summoned his Kunpeng wings and shot away.

As Long Chen soared through the air with monstrous speed, the twisting and warping void created a sensation as if he was using a spacetime channel. Also, long periods of continuous flight had let him become accustomed to this new speed of his.

Over time, the rumbling of his wings and the astral winds they generated gradually subsided. As the resistance lessened, Long Chen's speed steadily increased, allowing him to propel forward with even greater velocity.

It was precisely because Long Chen had been focused on gaining greater control over his wings that the distraction caused him to charge into the Heavenly Ruler Seal Empire by accident.

Long Chen was now flying steadily and quickly, no longer subjected to the harsh astral winds that once lashed against his face, making it impossible for him to even open his eyes. Also, he no longer needed to use his dragon blood to protect his body anymore. In the beginning, he had been so unused to his speed, resulting in him crashing into several mountains. Such a high-speed impact wasn't something that he could endure without the protection of his dragon blood.

As he was accustomed to his speed, his divine sense could now be spread around him, allowing him to see everything in his surroundings. He was no longer flying blind.

"This is just the basic speed of the Kunpeng Void Breaker, still quite a distance away from passing through the void silently. The Kunpeng race's divine abilities truly are amazing." Looking at the twisting space as his body rapidly passed through, Long Chen couldn't help praising the Kunpeng race.

Long Chen quickly arrived at a city. Originally, he had not been planning on stopping, but when his divine sense swept through, he sensed a Huayun auction house inside the city. Hence, he immediately took a break there.

When he revealed his status plate in the auction house, he was immediately given a warm welcome. Long Chen then asked the Huayun Trading Company about the Vermilion Bird Empire's current situation.

After listening for a bit, he learned that the Vermilion Bird Empire was shockingly powerful. The emperor and his two empresses were actually Earth Venerates that had condensed three flowers.

Also, the Vermilion Bird Empire's populace was thriving, with countless experts rising each year. The royal family alone had eighteen Double Supreme heavenly geniuses, and every single one of them was a terrifying monster.

This time, when various treasure lands opened throughout the nine heavens, each royal descendant of the Vermilion Bird Empire took charge of leading a group of disciples into the secret realms. Among them, the Pill Fairy led her group into the three thousand worlds. However, as she was not a Double Supreme, the group that she led was comparatively a bit weaker.

It was said that this time, every group had profited immensely from the treasure lands. The royal descendants, in particular, had not only managed to merge the powers of both Supremes but also acquired plenty of priceless treasures. After undergoing a great transformation, these heavenly geniuses skyrocketed in power.

Although Yu Qingxuan was ranked ninth among the royal princes and princesses, the ranking was determined before the treasure lands opened. Also, it was rumored that when the princes and princesses exchanged pointers, the emperor showed favoritism toward Yu Qingxuan. Otherwise, with Yu Qingxuan's power, it would have been very difficult for her to secure a spot within the top ten.

Yu Qingxuan had been separated from her father and mother since her birth, and the circumstances surrounding their separation remained shrouded in mystery. But upon her return, she was very obedient and didn't even blame her parents at all, which actually made them feel even guiltier. Thus, they intentionally gave her favorable treatment, allowing her to secure a place within the top ten with relative ease.

Even so, while Yu Qingxuan's power wasn't great amongst the royal descendants, they had tested her blood and found that she possessed the purest Jiuli bloodline among them. From this, they knew that her potential was limitless.

Within the Vermilion Bird Empire, the competition between the princes and princesses was extremely intense. They had to constantly display their power and intelligence to prove that they deserved the position of emperor.

On the other hand, Yu Qingxuan had no interest in acquiring this position and preferred a peaceful life. But because she was favored, quite a few princes and princesses were wary of her. In fact, none of the princes and princesses had a good relationship with her.

After hearing that, Long Chen sneered disdainfully, "As expected, royal families are always emotionless. They birth a group of children and then raise them like poison insects, having them fight each other until only one king remains."

Long Chen very much detested this style of education. Whether it was the Phoenix Cry Empire, the Grand Xia Nation, or even after ascending to the immortal world, all the royal families that he had encountered were the same. There were no familial ties to speak of.

"I have to bring Qingxuan away. Leaving her in this broken family won't let her feel any warmth," decided Long Chen firmly. Thinking of how obedient and reserved Yu Qingxuan was, she was definitely being bullied in this place.

After coming to this conclusion, Long Chen directly said goodbye to the Huayun Trading Company's people. But before leaving, he received a status plate from the Huayun Trading Company. With it, he could freely use the empire's transportation formations.

Long Chen couldn't be bothered to ask any more questions after learning about this. After all, he didn't care about the Vermilion Bird Empire and only wanted to bring Yu Qingxuan away from this quarrelsome place.

With the Huayun Trading Company's status plate, everything was easier. The Huayun Trading Company had a high status in the Vermilion Bird Empire, so no one questioned Long Chen. He didn't even have to line up for the transportation formation and was allowed priority usage.

As the transportation formation lit up, Long Chen appeared right outside the capital, Vermilion Bird City. However, he barely had a chance to take in the sight of the majestic ancient city before an irritating noise reached his ears, interrupting his momentary peace.

"The crown prince is coming! Idlers, get out of the way!"

Following that, someone rudely pushed Long Chen back, causing him to frown. However, as he didn't want to cause trouble, he retreated to avoid that person's hand.

“Scram further!”

Long Chen swiftly dodged his hand, but it seemed that this person didn't feel like Long Chen had retreated far enough. Without hesitation, he extended his hand once again, making another forceful attempt to push Long Chen.

Upon seeing this, Long Chen's anger instantly flared, and he slapped that person in the face.

Chapter 3942: Philosopher?

Long Chen sent that person flying through the air. Fortunately, the current him had enough control over his power. Otherwise, this slap would have blown that person apart.

Even so, this slap still caused a lot of people to gasp. Dozens of experts were opening a path, making a ruckus, so everyone's attention was drawn to this scene.

“Courting death!”

Those dozens of experts furiously surrounded Long Chen, seeming like they were going to beat him up.

“Stop!”

Suddenly, a golden-robed man with a crown on his head appeared, looking to be in his late twenties. His countenance was graced with neatly trimmed facial hair, and his piercing eyes emitted a captivating electric gleam, as if possessing the ability to peer into the depths of one's soul. He appeared unquestionably dignified.

When this man showed up, those experts around Long Chen immediately stood at attention, moving to the side.

At this moment, Long Chen could see a group of experts in silver robes standing beside this man. There were men and women among them, and all of them had powerful auras surpassing most Supremes. They were definitely true experts.

When they looked at Long Chen, they couldn't help but show a trace of shock on their faces, seeming to be able to sense Long Chen's powerful Blood Qi fluctuations.

Long Chen had been refining the ancestral dragon essence blood for quite some time now, so its power was mostly under his control. Yet, despite his progress, he had not reached absolute control over every trace of it. Thus, some of its aura still leaked out.

Perhaps ordinary experts were unable to sense that trace, but these Supreme heavenly geniuses instantly sensed it. Seeing a new face here, they were all startled.

At this moment, that dignified man walked over to Long Chen. His aura was fully reserved, without a trace of it leaking, a sign that his power had been condensed to the pinnacle. Upon sensing this, Long Chen's heart shook. This person possessed extraordinary power, exuding a pressure that rivaled that of Long Aotian or Kun Tu.

Long Chen hadn't expected to encounter such an expert as soon as he reached the capital. So, Long Chen carefully examined him, feeling that this expert's true age was around forty to fifty years old. His cultivation base was so solid that it was most likely the result of constantly suppressing it.

Despite also being in the Immortal King realm, his aura had reached the realm of going from solid to empty. Without the sharp senses from the Nine Star Hegemon Body Art, Long Chen might have misjudged his power.

The dignified man also looked at Long Chen with a trace of astonishment. He coldly said, "Is this your first time in the Vermilion Bird Empire?"

Long Chen frowned. Although this man's words couldn't count as rude, he gave off such a haughty feeling that this simple question sounded like an interrogation.

"Is there a problem?" demanded Long Chen.

"Brazen!" One of the Supreme experts beside the dignified man shouted, "Blind fellow, do you know who this person is?!"

"As long as he isn't the current emperor of the Vermilion Bird Empire, he isn't qualified to act big in front of me. Other than that, my temper isn't good, so don't provoke me," responded Long Chen coldly.

"Shameful! You dare to mention the emperor-"

Pow!

Long Chen directly slapped this person in the midst of his response, causing him to let out a grunt as half of his face was turned to pulp.

The moment Long Chen attacked, the dignified man also reached out to grab Long Chen's wrist. However, he didn't get to grasp anything. Long Chen had swiftly slapped that man and pulled his hand back.

Now, the dignified man's expression sank. Long Chen had actually slapped his subordinate right in front of him, and he hadn't been able to stop him. That was a huge provocation to him.

"Report your name!" he shouted furiously. It was quite clear that after Long Chen said his name, this man would immediately challenge Long Chen to a fight.

The surrounding people instantly tensed, staring in shock at Long Chen. They didn't know where this black-robed man got the guts to dare to cause trouble here.

Long Chen shook his head. Just what was going on? He was only looking for one person, but he hadn't even entered the city and some trouble already found him.

Long Chen was about to say his name when the sound of stone wheels rolling across the ground drew everyone's attention. After that, a donkey pulling a worn-out carriage slowly came over.

The one driving the carriage was a boy in his early teens. What was curious though was that this boy didn't even look at the surrounding people. He just directly had the donkey drive right through.

When the crowd saw that carriage, they actually parted before it, not daring to stop it.

As for the young boy, he didn't cultivate at all. He was just an ordinary person.

Upon seeing this carriage, the dignified man's expression grew slightly ugly. After a moment of hesitation, he also moved out of the way.

As a result, that donkey pulled the carriage right past that dignified man and Long Chen.

"Martial artists really are competitive. They'll fight for fame and profit without even knowing why they're fighting. Even as blood dyes the land, as your bones fill the wilderness, you still fight delightedly without getting tired. Such a thing is the pinnacle of foolishness, the peak of idiocy!"

When the carriage passed by the two of them, a contemptuous old voice rang out from it, as if the speaker had absolute disdain for all the cultivators here.

That old voice was lacking any power, a sign that he was just an ordinary person. Yet, he dared to criticize all the experts here.

To Long Chen's surprise, the dignified man didn't reply to this criticism. However, although he didn't say anything, his expression was dark with fury.

"A toad at the bottom of a well cannot speak of the ocean. A summer bug cannot speak of winter." On the other hand, Long Chen directly retorted.

His reply caused countless experts to gasp. Within their shock was also a touch of admiration.

It had to be known that the elder inside the carriage had a shocking status, and not a single person here dared to argue with him.

All of a sudden, the boy pulled on the reins, causing the donkey to stop in the street. He then glared at Long Chen furiously.

"Foolish brute! A vulgar person who only knows how to use brute force to solve problems dares to argue with a philosopher?"

A philosopher? What kind of trash is that?

Long Chen had never heard of this title before. But seeing a young boy dare to look down on him, he was immediately pissed.

He disdainfully said, "Foolish brute? The road is for all people. Just because a dumb beast comes over, why do others have to open the way for it?"

The dumb beast was naturally the donkey, but there was also an implicit curse toward the schoolboy and the elder in the carriage.

"You...!"

"What you? Don't you know manners? If you do, why would you stop your carriage in the middle of the road and block the pedestrians? Now, you even have the nerve to criticize others? That's like someone covered in fur saying others look like monkeys. Can you have some shame?"

"How brazen! You dare to be rude to a philosopher?! Capture him!"

Chapter 3943: Meeting an Old Friend in a Foreign Land

However, no one even moved after the boy shouted. The dignified man and the others didn't pay him any attention. In fact, none of the surrounding experts even looked at the boy.

In an instant, the boy's expression grew ugly with embarrassment. He was enraged, but he was unable to direct the surrounding experts.

"Xiu-er, that's enough. Don't lower yourself to the level of vulgar people. We still have to see the emperor. After all, stone-heads won't change their minds; rotting wood cannot be carved," said the elder inside the carriage.

After the elder said that, the boy pointed at Long Chen. "The world is filled with opportunities for learning and encompasses a wide array of paths, not limited solely to the martial arts. Only ignorant people like you would lack respect toward others in their hearts."

The boy then urged the donkey on, leaving Long Chen feeling enraged. However, seeing that it was just a child, Long Chen held himself back. Otherwise, he'd have long since slapped this boy and taught him what respect was.

"I'll leave today's matter as it is. But next time, I, Zhu Yunwen, will personally experience your skills to see what makes you dare to be so arrogant," said the dignified man coldly.

"I am arrogant? Hahaha, interesting! Were you raised by that old thing? Even when covered in fur, do you see others as monkeys? Who could be more arrogant than you? What? You need others to clear the way for you just to walk through the streets? Do you refuse to walk in a crowded street? Why must people get out of the way so you can show off your grandeur? I heard that you are some crown prince, huh? Hehe, someone with your conduct, there's no way you can ever be a decent crown prince in your lifetime," said Long Chen indifferently.

"Just who are you?!" raged Zhu Yunwen.

"Who I am isn't important. You will learn who I am very soon. Don't worry, I won't be leaving the Vermilion Bird Empire in the short term. I trust that it won't be long before we meet again." Long Chen ignored the crown prince and walked deeper into the city.

While Long Chen displayed indifference on the surface, he was actually grumbling angrily inside. However, he was also a bit confused. This crown prince was not surnamed Yu, not having the same surname as Yu Qingxuan. Just what was going on?

Entering the city normally required registration. However, after this disturbance, no one dared to stop Long Chen, afraid that he would also slap them. Thus, they just let him through.

"Crown prince, should I send someone to follow him and investigate his background?" asked one of the Supreme experts by Zhu Yunwen's side.

Zhu Yunwen shook his head. "No need. This guy seems like an expert that disdains to lie the most. If he says that we'll be meeting again soon, we definitely will. Everything will become clear next time."

“True, he really has the guts to publicly criticize Philosopher Sun. Hehe, that was satisfying. I almost cheered him on,” laughed a female expert.

“He isn’t from the Vermilion Bird Empire and so doesn’t understand the philosopher’s status. Just like the saying ‘a newborn calf isn’t afraid of a tiger’, he just doesn’t know how big of a calamity he just provoked,” said another expert.

“The Philosopher Institute really is loathsome. All they know how to do is fight using their tongues. They just argue and argue. It’s annoying.”

“The most hateful thing about them is their attitudes. They all act better than us. They don’t even have much learning, yet their arrogance has ascended beyond the heavens.”

“Even though they will all drop dead with a single slap, we have to endure them. Peh!”

When the Philosopher Institute was mentioned, they all started to complain because they disliked the Philosopher Institute. However, they were also powerless to do anything to them.

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As Long Chen entered the capital, he found that Vermilion Bird City was even larger than he had imagined. The city itself had five lakes, four mountains, nine creeks, and eighteen mountain streams. Moreover, although the buildings looked disordered, in truth, they were built according to a special formation.

From the sky, Vermilion Bird City looked just like a giant seal, and at the heart of the seal was a divine bird mark with flame-like designs around it. This divine bird was naturally the Vermilion Bird.

The buildings themselves were very old. However, they gave off a lively feeling, as if full of youthful energy, akin to a bird spreading its wings and about to leap into flight.

“This formation is amazing. Furthermore, I’m only seeing the surface. Who knows what is hidden underground? If Xia Chen was here, he would definitely be interested.” Long Chen eyed the buildings. Even as an amateur who only knew a bit about formations, he could see that Vermilion Bird City was a terrifying grand formation. Its power would be unimaginable if it was activated.

Inside the city, Long Chen found that the general atmosphere was very refined. There were many scholars walking around. Curiously, they had cold indifference toward the cultivators despite not being one. The contemptuous glint in their eyes suggested a profound disdain for those on the path of cultivation.

Long Chen was very curious about that. The immortal world was one where martial might was respected, so why would the Vermilion Bird Empire care more about learning?

He saw groups of three to five scholars all around, pointing at the rivers and mountains, discussing facts, having discussions, reciting poetry, or even singing. They seemed very carefree.

They were in the teahouses and wine shops. Thus, Long Chen was particularly conspicuous as he walked through the streets in his black robes with a giant saber on his back. Some of those scholars even pointed at him behind his back with disdainful expressions.

Long Chen smiled faintly, not feeling angry. Who didn't know how to talk about people behind their backs? Also, who has never been talked about like this? Long Chen never cared about such a thing.

On the other hand, he was quite interested in the Vermilion Bird Empire's history. He noticed that this place was filled with culture, and the roads were steeped in history.

Even the small stores on the roads looked as if they had immense history behind them. The stores on the main path actually had nothing to do with cultivation, contrary to most cities. Here, it was like he was back in the mortal world's Phoenix Cry Empire, and this feeling actually made him feel sentimental.

"Sorry, people with weapons can't enter here." Long Chen was about to walk into a calligraphy store when he was stopped by the shopkeeper.

The shopkeeper looked at him disdainfully, which made Long Chen's expression turn odd. The Vermilion Bird Empire was truly interesting. A little shopkeeper actually dared to stop him.

Long Chen smiled and didn't enter. From outside, he saw that while the shop was small, it actually had quite a few impressive wares. Artistically, they were very profound.

Long Chen wanted to buy a few, but with the shopkeeper's attitude, he couldn't be bothered to. Anyway, there were plenty of other stores.

Of course, there were some with better attitudes. When Long Chen saw some ornaments with beautiful craftsmanship, he wanted to buy some. But then, he learned that buying things in the Vermilion Bird Empire required him to use the empire's currency. As a result, Long Chen was left dumbfounded.

It was no wonder so many shopkeepers had directly driven him away. It seemed that they could tell that he had no money and couldn't be bothered to waste time on him.

Suddenly, the sound of a zither rang out and Long Chen heard someone crying out. "It's starting, it's starting! The Zither Sect's fairies are starting to play music!"

In an instant, a sea of people charged toward the end of the street. Long Chen was then carried by the flow of the crowd and arrived at a giant plaza.

The heart of the plaza was a mountain, with spring water flowing down from the peak. The babbling brooks caused a dense mist to flow down and cover the plaza in an air of mystery.

In front of the mountain was a platform with eighteen beautiful women in white dresses. They were sitting and playing their zithers.

"Liao Yuhuang?"

When Long Chen saw one of them in particular, he was startled. He hadn't expected to meet someone he knew here.

Chapter 3944: Invitation

Eighteen women were seated atop the stage, looking as graceful as fairies. In this enchanting moment, their graceful thin fingers danced across their zithers, conjuring melodies that possessed the power to immerse one's very soul.

This beautiful scene cleansed the eyes, ears, and soul. In the distance, Long Chen's vexations were forgotten, wiped away without a trace, and his soul entered a peaceful state. It was an indescribable contentment.

The plaza was packed with people, as the crowd eagerly gathered to witness the spectacle. Separated from them, designated seats were arranged in front of the stage, reserved exclusively for a certain group of experts. Long Chen's discerning gaze then fell upon the mark of the Vermilion Bird on their sleeves. Having seen such marks on Zhu Yunwen's robes, he knew that it must be the mark of the royal family.

Beside the imperial disciples, there were also a group of young scholarly individuals seated nearby. Although they were not cultivators themselves, they occupied the same area as the imperial disciples. However, a clear division was evident, as neither group chose to intermingle or sit together. Each faction maintained its distinct space, separate from the other.

Other than the thousands of seats at the front, the others could only watch from a distance. At this moment, the plaza already had hundreds of thousands of people packed inside of it, but not a single person made any noise. They all silently appreciated the beautiful zither music.

Within the crowd, Long Chen wasn't so tall that he stood out. However, his large saber always drew some attention.

Those scholars then looked at Long Chen disdainfully, as if his equipment displeased them. But they also didn't say anything.

Ignoring those gazes, Long Chen was appreciating the performance while observing the imperial disciples. He neither saw the crown prince nor the figure that he had been hoping to see.

However, he sensed several powerful auras among them, akin to a calm sea concealing an ancient deep-sea monster. Long Chen couldn't help sighing emotionally. The Vermilion Bird Empire was truly a den of crouching tigers and hidden dragons.

Long Chen's attention then turned to Liao Yuhuang, who was also a powerful expert. Today, she was playing music with so many others, and they had to be from the same sect as her. In other words, they were all from one of the four immemorial sects, the Zither Sect.

Suddenly, a yellow-robed woman stepped forward, and a burst of flute music appeared over the zither music, causing the pitch of the music to gradually rise.

When the melody reached a fever-pitch, it suddenly came to a stop. The zither music, the flute music, they all stopped. However, their echoes remained, causing the people's souls to feel like they had been lifted beyond the clouds. The feeling of floating didn't fade for a long time.

It was only after a long pause that the applause started. Once it began, it was thunderous. Everyone was amazed as they had never heard such a beautiful yet soul-shaking song.

The final high note seemed to bring people above the dome of the heavens. That impact and explosiveness gave them a rich aftertaste, causing them to feel like they had seen an unprecedented world.

Whether it was the cultivators or the ordinary people, they formed a resonance with the music. Hence, all of them clapped as if their lives were on the line.

After that, the yellow-robed woman and the zither players stood and bowed to everyone. When Liao Yuhuang's gaze swept over the crowd, her eyes suddenly brightened as she saw Long Chen within the crowd.

Long Chen nodded toward her. Although they didn't have much of a relationship, Liao Yuhuang had helped Long Chen in the Nine Prefecture Convention, and Long Chen had always remembered this favor.

Liao Yuhuan suddenly whispered into the ear of the yellow-robed woman, who then looked at Long Chen a bit oddly and nodded.

Liao Yuhuang gracefully ran down the stage, lifting her robe to keep her from stepping over it. Her actions instantly drew everyone's attention.

Furthermore, seeing the yellow-robed woman and the other women looking at Long Chen as if waiting for something, everyone stared at him. They found that no one recognized this black-robed man.

"Fairy Yuhuang, it's been a long time. You are as beautiful as ever, and your Music Dao has once more advanced. Congratulations," Long Chen greeted Liao Yuhuang first.

"Brother Long is too courteous. In just a year, your Blood Qi has reached an astonishing height. You are soaring through the martial path. That is what's really worth congratulating." Liao Yuhuang returned his greeting with a smile. She seemed very happy to see him. "If brother Long doesn't mind, you can come sit with us."

This invitation shocked countless people. The Zither Sect's disciples were all fairies, revered as sacred symbols. They were so transcendent that it compelled others to maintain a great distance from them.

Normal people could enjoy the music of the Zither Sect's disciples, but not many of them dared to even speak to the fairies. Even the ones sitting at the front with special statuses did not dare to rashly open their mouths for fear of being rude.

Consequently, Liao Yuhuang's enthusiastic invitation for Long Chen to join them left people astonished and filled with envy. Quite a few people began to whisper, guessing Long Chen's origins.

"No need. I was just in the vicinity and drawn over by your wondrous music. I'm glad I got to hear it, but I have to leave. Fairy Yuhuang, you don't need to waste your time on me." Seeing so many people staring at him, Long Chen instantly felt uncomfortable. He did not want to make a scene here.

In particular, when those scholars glared at him with hostile gazes, Long Chen feared that his temper might erupt and he would end up killing them with a single slap.

"Brother Long, can you not do me the honor of your pointers? In the Nine Prefecture Convention, I didn't get a chance to ask for your advice on the Music Dao. This time, I cannot miss the chance again."

Liao Yuhuang actually grabbed Long Chen's hand and dragged him over to the stage, not giving him a chance to refuse.

Long Chen was embarrassed as this gesture seemed excessively intimate. However, when he looked into Liao Yuhuang's eyes, he realized that her intentions were pure. This action was devoid of any romantic implications; it was purely to keep him here.

Hence, Long Chen couldn't bring himself to be so rude as to throw her hand away. That would appear far too crude.

Helplessly, he thickened his face and walked to the front. When he was in front of the stage, he found that all the seats were taken, and all of the people there stared at him frostily. The scholars in particular looked at him arrogantly, with no intention of giving up their spots.

"Brothers, if you don't mind, why don't we squeeze together a bit?" Just as Liao Yuhuang was about to speak, a young man in the third row waved to Long Chen warmly.

This young man seemed to be in his early twenties, and his face still had a trace of immaturity on it, giving him the air of a grown-up boy.

However, this young man was a terrifying Supreme expert with a powerful aura. But even such a powerful existence still gave off a pure and innocent feeling, as if he would never harm anyone.

"Then many thanks."

Long Chen cupped his fists and sat beside that person, sharing his seat. Liao Yuhuang was originally planning on having Long Chen sit in the front row as an expression of respect, but he didn't give her the chance.

"You are Long Chen?"

Suddenly, from the first row, a woman turned back and looked at Long Chen coldly, her voice full of hostility.

Chapter 3945: Yu Qianxue

This woman sitting in front of him was not at all shorter than the men. Once she stood up, she would probably be rather tall. Her beauty possessed a natural allure, yet it was accompanied by an icy arrogance reflected in her high nose and thin lips. From Long Chen's experience, this woman must be a thorny rose. He doubted that they would get along.

On her forehead was the mark of a six-petal plum blossom, which seemed to contain boundless flame energy. The moment their eyes locked, it felt like that flower was also looking at Long Chen. After that, the plum blossom's flame energy swirled, as if it might lock onto Long Chen at any moment.

This woman was a terrifying expert, one of the ones that Long Chen sensed at the very start when he arrived. She gave him a sense of heavy pressure.

Long Chen didn't know what she wanted, so he indifferently said, "Did you have any advice?"

The woman icily said, "No advice. I heard about you in the Jiuli immortal realm. I encountered a group of powerful wood cultivators inside and invited them to join me. But they said that they belonged to the Dragonblood Legion and couldn't join any other power. They were only loyal to their boss. So, I asked them who their boss was, and they told me that it was Long Chen and even showed me an image of you to ask me if I knew you."

Long Chen's heart pounded hard. A group of powerful wood cultivators that belonged to the Dragonblood Legion? Was that not the healing warriors of the Dragonblood Legion?"

Long Chen hastily asked, "Where are they now?"

"They were hunted down by the Violet Thunderclap Empire's Weng Tianhui in the Jiuli immortal realm. I saved them and forced Weng Tianhui away..."

"Then many thanks." Long Chen immediately cupped his fists to her in gratitude.

"You don't need to thank me. They were a group of eighteen people, and three of them were heavily injured by Weng Tianhui. I invited them to join the Vermilion Bird Empire, but they refused, so there was no need for me to use a secret art to heal them. From how I saw it, the three of them didn't have much chance of survival," said the woman emotionlessly.

Hearing that they were severely injured, Long Chen was enraged. He hadn't expected the Violet Thunderclap Empire to be causing trouble in other places as well.

"You can say that I am contemptible. Whether it was Weng Tianhui or myself, we only cared about their precious wood attribute talent. Weng Tianhui was using force, while I was softer. But while the methods were different, our goals were no different." The woman stared at Long Chen.

Long Chen shook his head. "No matter how you put it, you helped save my sisters. I will remember this favor. If I have a chance, I will repay you."

Although this woman hadn't healed them, Long Chen didn't blame her. The healing warriors all had powerful self-recovery abilities. If they were so seriously injured, then for this woman to heal them would definitely come at a price.

In a secret realm, there were countless dangers and opportunities. If they refused to join her side, then this woman naturally had no responsibility to take such risks for them.

"To tell the truth, I really don't like you. If it weren't for you, I would have a group of powerful wood cultivators under my wing. That would strengthen my side and give me a trump card in the fight for supremacy. This failure is your fault." The woman eyed Long Chen with a hint of anger.

"What kind of logic is that?" Long Chen was dumbfounded. Whose line of thought would end up like that? Wasn't that completely unreasonable?

"This is my logic. Those wood cultivators were incredibly important to me. Something that I, Yu Qianxue, have set my sights on won't be renounced so easily. So..."

"What do you want? You want to hit me?" Long Chen's guard instantly went up when he saw this woman's unfriendly expression.

"We will gamble on the martial stage. One fight to determine victory and defeat. If you lose, you and your Dragonblood Legion will fall under my camp," said Yu Qianxue.

"Damn, what an appetite!"

Long Chen stared at her in disbelief. This beautiful and arrogant woman was quite greedy. He had so many brothers and sisters. If he lost, would they all have to listen to her in the future?

Long Chen shook his head. Although this woman was powerful, she was definitely crazy. The way she viewed things and her way of thinking was completely ridiculous. She was beautiful, but it was a pity that she was an idiot.

Long Chen was about to reply when the man who had given up his seat for Long Chen asked with great curiosity, "What about if you lose?"

"I won't lose."

Yu Qianxue spoke confidently with great decisiveness.

"You can't say anything for sure. What if you do lose?" asked the man with a chortle.

Yu Qianxue coldly snorted. "If I lose, I'll marry him and everything I have will be his."

This reply stunned everyone present. That was crazy, wasn't it? Was this a fight for marriage?

It had to be known that this icy beauty was a princess of the Vermilion Bird Empire. Just how grand was her status? How could this one sentence decide her marriage?

People then looked from Yu Qianxue to this handsome man in black robes, curiously guessing what background he had. Why had they never heard of such a person before?

Furthermore, from Yu Qianxue's words, she had never seen Long Chen either. She had only ever heard of him, not having much understanding of him. Wasn't it too crazy for her to gamble like this?

The other imperial disciples were shocked by Yu Qianxue's words and stared at her in disbelief. It had to be known that based on their understanding of her, she was incredibly arrogant. Even other princes and princesses were usually ignored by her. Thus, they were dumbfounded that she would suddenly act like this today.

Were those eighteen wood cultivators really such amazing geniuses? Could they make princess Yu Qianxue not care about the face of the imperial family and gamble with Long Chen?

"You are a princess?" asked Long Chen.

"Yes. You are speaking to the genuine princess Qianxue of the Vermilion Bird Empire," said the man beside Long Chen. He seemed excited just like a child and patted Long Chen's shoulder with encouragement. "Hehe, brother, your chance has come. Gamble, and a small knife can become a battle-ax, a small spoon can become a giant wok!"

Only then did Long Chen come to realize that even the people in the third row must have extraordinary statuses. To dare say such a thing to a princess, perhaps they were all on the same level as princes and princesses.

"This is fair, no? You lose, and everything you have is mine. I lose, and everything I have is yours. Do you dare to fight?" Yu Qianxue looked at Long Chen.

As for Liao Yuhuang and the others on the stage, they were originally going to keep playing, but they stopped because of Yu Qianxue, seeming very interested in their gamble.

What kind of dramatic nonsense was this? Long Chen was speechless. He had come to marry a princess, yes, but it wasn't this madwoman.

"Sorry, I'm not interested in this gamble. I feel like I shouldn't be sitting here, so I won't disturb you all any longer." Long Chen rose to leave.

"Brother Long, please wait."

Just then, the yellow-robed woman with the flute spoke.

Chapter 3946: Even a Tiger Does Not Eat Their Cub

"Junior apprentice-sister Yuhuang says that brother Long is skilled in music, so I sincerely wish brother Long would give me some pointers. I have been at a bottleneck for several months without the slightest progress. Please help me, brother Long." The yellow-robed woman respectfully bowed to Long Chen.

Her words shocked the experts present, and they stared at Long Chen in disbelief. This person was skilled in music?

"Fairy is joking. My skill in music is only superficial. How could I dare to be so arrogant as to give you pointers? I would make a fool of myself, and in the worst case, it would even cause you to go on the wrong path," said Long Chen with a bitter smile.

Although he had read some books on music theory and had some understanding of music, which was enough to con amateurs, his skill was just on that level. Moreover, this yellow-robed woman came from the Zither Sect, the highest institute of learning for the Music Dao. For Long Chen to give musical pointers to such an existence was a joke.

"Hmph, a martial fighter only knows how to swing their blade, and their hands are soaked in blood. What do they know about the profundity of music?" At this moment, a pale-faced scholar in the front row snorted rudely.

Long Chen looked over and saw a man in his twenties. The man had a fair, smooth complexion, devoid of facial hair, and his cheeks carried a slight plumpness. However, what stood out the most was the unmistakable aura of arrogance emanating from him. When Long Chen looked at him, he didn't even look back at Long Chen. Instead, he casually took a sip of his tea, seemingly disdaining to even look at Long Chen.

"A martial fighter? Without fighters, you would have no soldiers guarding and protecting the people. Then could you still eat until your cheeks became so fat?" asked Long Chen disdainfully.

Countless people almost laughed at that description. It was truly apt.

“Hmph, what a joke. If there was love in this world, there would be no borders. If there was righteousness, there would be no boundaries. If everyone could give up fighting and focus on learning, discussing things with reason, etiquette, and laws, everything would follow the natural Dao. Then why would we need soldiers to fight? Without the calamity that soldiers and blades bring, why establish territories? With no territories, there would be no fighting. People would not die to senseless violence. You say soldiers guard the people, but are they not really there to invade other nations, an excuse to constantly expand one’s territory?” sneered the scholar.

“Brother, listen to my advice. Don’t bother with people like him. Those people don’t have any skills other than talking. In that regard, we aren’t a match for them,” warned the imperial disciple beside Long Chen kindly.

He was profoundly aware of just how sharp these scholars’ tongues were. Furthermore, the Vermilion Bird Empire’s ancestral teachings had explicit rules that the Vermilion Bird Empire had to maintain a thriving culture of both learning and martial power. As a result, even though these scholars weren’t powerful, their statuses were very high. Even imperial disciples didn’t dare to be rude to them.

They couldn’t hit the scholars and were incapable of beating them verbally. Thus, all the Vermilion Bird Empire’s cultivators detested these scholars, but there was nothing that they could do. They did not dare to break the laws of the Vermilion Bird Empire.

Surprisingly, this young man was quite kind to advise Long Chen to ignore them. He didn’t want Long Chen to embarrass himself.

These scholars would take a bite out of people if they were ignored, but if they weren’t ignored, they would not let their opponents off. After all, ‘talking reason’ was their strong suit. They often crossed verbal swords amongst themselves, training themselves in this regard.

In this case, arguing with them was like using one’s weak point against someone’s strong point. In fact, throughout history, who knew just how many cultivators had been enraged to death by their quibbling?

“A bunch of brainless trolls. Why would I be afraid of them? I refuse to believe that just with their mouths, they can erase all the merit and contributions that the soldiers on the border of the Vermilion Bird Empire have done. They are brave warriors who are not afraid of sacrificing themselves in order to protect their families and the commoners. They are the iron wall that protects the people of the Vermilion Bird Empire from the storm. While you sit here enjoying music and drinking tea, being so bored that you have nothing better to do than curse others, they are hanging heads on their belts, prepared to enter a bloody battle against enemies at any moment, and ready to spill their own blood for their beloved. Such fearless heroes, the protectors of the empire, are turned into worthless brutes by your mouth? It seems that I do not have enough learning. Please clear up this confusion for me,” said Long Chen disdainfully at those arrogant scholars.

Although his words were that of someone asking for advice, his expression was clearly telling them that if they wanted a debate, he would give them one.

Long Chen’s words received a thunderous cheer as he was speaking up for all the cultivators in the Vermilion Bird Empire. On the other hand, the scholars were frosty-faced.

Even so, that slightly pudgy-faced scholar wasn't bothered by all the clapping. He fearlessly sneered, "You only know how to use fists, not reason. In the end, martial power is unable to solve problems. Violence only brings about more violence and even more hatred in a never-ending cycle. Is history not clear enough? Only by resolving the hatred between both sides can a war end. Without war, people will not need to bleed and sacrifice themselves. But cultivators are all fond of war, delighting in stripping away other people's lives for personal gain. The Heavenly Daos dislike such things, but you aren't even aware of it yourselves. It is the pinnacle of foolishness."

"The pinnacle of foolishness? Are you talking about yourself? You might be able to talk reason with a person, but what about a wild beast? If there was a tiger in front of you, would you talk reason with it? Would it talk reason with you?" asked Long Chen disdainfully.

"Why would a person talk reason with an animal? I naturally have my own ways to deal with wild animals," said the scholar coldly, but he didn't say what those methods were. All the experts here could tell that he had no better argument against Long Chen's point.

For Long Chen to be able to make one of the sharp-tongued scholars powerless to counterattack, this achievement startled the experts present. This man did have some skill in this regard.

"You have ways? What ways could you possibly have? Wouldn't you just directly kneel and cry out daddy?" asked Long Chen.

The scholar furiously retorted, "You are making personal attacks. Debate should be about the actual subject matter. To resort to personal attacks is the lowest kind of conduct."

Long Chen shook his head. "No, we are talking reason here. This isn't a personal attack. Have you not heard of the expression, 'Even a tiger doesn't eat their own cub?'"

"You...!"

The scholar was enraged. While Long Chen's words were a bit vulgar, they were somewhat reasonable, causing the scholar to not be able to grasp a point to counterattack.

However, after thinking about it, the scholar suddenly felt that something was wrong. If he knelt and called out daddy, wouldn't he be saying that he was a wild beast? Long Chen was clearly cursing him in a roundabout manner. Wasn't that precisely a personal attack?

Quite a few smart cultivators had long since heard the other meaning in Long Chen's words. The Zither Sect's disciples in particular were hiding their smiles.

"Who do you think you are to dare to challenge me, a Hanlin degree-holder, to a debate?!"

Chapter 3947: Helping a Dog Eat Crap

The Vermilion Bird Empire boasted the Philosopher Institute as its highest institute of learning, serving as a pinnacle of intellect pursuit. Within the institute, the disciples were categorized into different ranks based on their academic achievement and dedication.

The initial two ranks were attainable through completing some examinations. However, formal scholars needed to seek out and establish a mentor-disciple relationship with a master from within the institute.

Only by gaining the trust and willingness of a master would they be considered official members of the Philosopher Institute.

It was a bit similar to the inheritances of the martial path, but not quite the same. Within the Philosopher Institute, every master had their own specialties. After formally accepting a master, there were three degrees to gain through one's studies, and each degree came with its own rank. But above these three degrees was the highest level of learning, the Hanlin degree. Those who passed the Hanlin exams were considered Hanlin scholars.

Hanlin scholars were of such high status that they were seated on the same level as princes and princesses. As for the actual Philosophers of the Philosopher Institute, their status was even higher. When meeting the emperor, they didn't even need to kowtow.

A Hanlin scholar possessed such learning that countless students looked up to them, and this pudgy scholar before Long Chen was exactly a new Hanlin scholar that was just promoted this year.

He was barely thirty years old but had gained such a noble academic degree. Thus, it could be said that he had reached the peak of his life, having a limitless future before him.

Wherever he went, he would be followed by a crowd, being the center of attention. He really liked this feeling. It was as if this was his essence of existence.

However, today, he felt very unnatural. As the Zither Sect's disciples were playing, he was seated with many others and could no longer find that feeling of being a crane amongst birds.

In fact, from the start, he hadn't even had a chance to show off at all. The Zither Sect's beautiful women didn't even look at him.

The Zither Sect's disciples were all like heavenly fairies. Most importantly, they possessed a grand air about them. They were rather aloof, but that wasn't targeted toward him, so while he wasn't happy about it, he could accept it.

However, when Liao Yuhuang grabbed Long Chen's hand in front of so many people, that set countless hearts ablaze with jealousy. For someone as arrogant as this scholar, it was unbearable.

He was looking down on cultivators, viewing them as coarse people who could only use their fists, with mouths dumber than feet. But unexpectedly, Long Chen was able to infuriate him with just a few words.

With his fury set ablaze, his head was no longer so nimble, so he was unable to find words to counterattack. The more he tried to think of something, the more blank his head became.

In his panic, he directly stood and pointed at Long Chen, shouting, "Who do you think you are?! What qualifications do you have to debate with a Hanlin scholar like myself?!"

This furious display caused countless people to look at him oddly. Was this really a Hanlin scholar? Why was he cursing like an uncouth fellow then?

Long Chen's lips curled. He shook his head. "I wonder, was your Hanlin degree obtained through some certain means that cannot see the light of day? How are you so lacking? Seeing myself stand out and discuss music theory with the fairies of the Zither Sect, you are so jealous that you wish to discuss how crude martial arts are. Then when I want to discuss that with you, you instead switch to wanting to talk

reason. Then when I try to talk reason with you, you talk about status and position. What? Does talking require qualifications?"

After cursing, the scholar's turbulent mind gradually cleared, and he realized the folly of his outburst. It was only due to his jealousy that he had said such an incoherent thing. However, regretting it was useless now. Since he had said it, he couldn't take it back.

He thickened his face and said, "Of course. The Vermilion Bird Empire's emperor is a noble existence. Can any random person be qualified to speak to his majesty?"

Now that he had gotten here, if he were to admit that he had misspoken, that would be a slap in his own face. Hence, he naturally refused to admit he had made a mistake. Other than that, he also wanted to test Long Chen's foundation. If he had a chance, he would turn things around.

"That really is interesting. Didn't you say that martial force was unable to resolve problems, and that people needed to talk reason? Now, you throw out something about status. In other words, if my status was lower than yours, I wouldn't even be qualified to speak to you. Then how would we talk reason?" asked Long Chen lightly.

"I..." The scholar was instantly dumbfounded. He had dug a hole and then jumped into it himself.

"Thus, talking reason is something limited. It can only be done when there are binding forces between sides that are equally matched in power. For example, you are only able to act so arrogantly under the protection of the Vermilion Bird Empire's imperial laws. If you were to leave the empire, then considering your lack of power and arrogance, I guarantee that you wouldn't live for longer than a day," continued Long Chen.

What kind of dogshit was this Hanlin scholar? He lacked any ability and still dared to act like a big shot. Could it be that he was a fake?

"You are spouting nonsense! Your reasoning is completely fallacious! Within the laws of heaven and earth, within the Dao of all things, when all spirits respect each other, there would no longer be differences between weaker or stronger!" raged the scholar.

Long Chen slowly extended his hand and lazily said, "I can't be bothered to move. Can you bring your face here and hit it against my hand? Thank you for your cooperation!"

As a result, a burst of booming laughter rang out. One reason was because Long Chen's way of speaking was interesting, but the other reason was because the scholar had truly slapped himself in the face.

After Long Chen had grasped the opening in his words, this scholar should have never continued sticking to that argument. The more he did, the more holes appeared in his argument. This person was truly foolish.

Long Chen could no longer be bothered to even argue with him. After grabbing the opening the scholar revealed, he was completely crushed.

Everyone's laughter instantly made the scholar realize that he had slapped himself in the face once again. Now, there was nothing he could do to get out of this predicament. His face twitched with fury, but he didn't know what to do, causing him to sweat a lot.

That miserable appearance of his was extremely satisfactory to the cultivators. Thus, they felt great admiration for Long Chen. His words didn't have anything sophisticated to them, but he was able to leave the other side speechless and unable to retaliate.

"A frog at the bottom of a well cannot speak of the sea. A summer bug cannot speak of winter. Your hands are soaked in blood, and it's unknown just how many lifeforms you've killed. What qualifications do you have to talk reason with us?" Another scholar stood up and challenged Long Chen.

This person was helping the first scholar out of his predicament. After all, which cultivator could avoid killing others? This person's words were sharp and struck right at the source of the problem.

"Oh, so someone's coming out to help the dog eat crap. Do you want to argue? Alright, then Boss Long San will have a nice chat with you today."

At this moment, Long Chen threw caution to the wind, no longer planning on being low-key in the Vermilion Bird Empire. So, they wanted to play? He would gladly accompany them.

As a result, Long Chen directly jumped onto the stage and took out the chair of a grandmaster, making a show of sitting on it arrogantly. Looking down at the scholars below the stage, he said, "I can see now. I'm not suited to being low-key. Fine, I won't make any plans for my marriage. I'll just charge in with my eyes closed. Let's see who's afraid of who later!"

Chapter 3948: Wear Mourning Clothes

Long Chen was extremely irritated by these mouth-sprayers. He had wanted to be low-key, first seeing the situation in the Vermilion Bird Empire before thinking of how he was going to propose. He had thought that he had to know the other side first before he could be sure of victory.

However, now that he was being targeted by these brainless scholars, his fury instantly surged. As a result, he no longer cared about being low-key and whatnot. He directly sat on the stage and challenged those fellows.

"A frog at the bottom of a well cannot speak of the sea, a summer bug cannot speak of winter? You say that my hands are soaked in blood? Then what about the chickens, ducks, and fish that you eat? Are you not soaked in blood as well?"

"Sorry, but I'm a vegetarian. I don't touch meat or fish," sneered the scholar, seemingly prepared for such an argument.

"So a vegetarian doesn't kill? Why don't you look at the bottom of your shoe?" retorted Long Chen.

That person was startled. Seeing everyone look at him, he sneered, "I don't know what you're talking about."

However, he still lifted his foot. This shoe was completely clean, the bottom so glossy without the slightest imperfection. The Vermilion Bird City was so clean to the point of being untouched by dust.

"And? Did you want to buy my shoe? Sorry, but these shoes are for scholars only. You'll never wear them in this lifetime," mocked the scholar.

"Idiot, is a pair of shoes enough to make you ascend to the heavens? I was talking about your other shoe," said Long Chen indifferently.

The scholar then raised his other foot. The bottom of this shoe was as glossy as the last, but there were some black spots on it. Looking more closely, everyone saw that the black spots were tiny ants that had been stepped to death. Their corpses were stuck to the bottom of his shoe.

"So, tell me, are you soaked in blood now?" asked Long Chen.

"You...! This was only an accident!" raged the scholar.

"An accident? Oh, so you can take lives if it's an accident! Didn't that other fellow say that when all lifeforms are equal, we can talk reason? Well, ants are also lifeforms, and they also have families. They have aunts and uncles, and perhaps those with high status and wealth even have multiple wives! Perhaps if they work hard, they can even have a hundred children, a thousand grandchildren! As for you, you killed one with your foot and waved it off as an accident? Do you know how much pain you've caused their father, their mother, and their children? If you really want to talk reason, you should take responsibility. A life for a life. Atone for your sins with your death in front of everyone! Otherwise, where is the justice? If you don't even follow your own principles, who would listen to you talk reason?" demanded Long Chen.

"You...!" The scholar was ashen with rage. He had only stepped on some ants, but this guy wanted him to repay it with his life? Was this guy mentally ill?

"What you? Do you want to talk reason or not? I'm talking reason with you from the viewpoint of the ants. So why aren't you talking?" demanded Long Chen.

The cultivators all smiled, feeling Long Chen to be quite interesting. It was rare for a cultivator to have such a slippery mouth. Seeing the scholars looking sour, they felt as refreshed as if they were drinking iced mead on a hot summer day.

"An ant can't talk, so why talk reason to it?" shouted another scholar.

"What did you say?" Long Chen pretended not to hear.

"An ant can't talk, so why talk reason to it?" said the scholar more loudly.

"What did you say?"

"An ant can't talk, so why talk reason to it?!" This time, the scholar roared it.

"What did you say?"

"I said that an ant can't talk, so why..." The scholar shouted as loudly as he could. But because he wasn't a cultivator, he lost his voice midway.

"I can't hear what you're saying, so that means that I don't need to talk reason with you, right? You didn't hear the screams of the ants before their death, so you don't have to talk reason to the ants. Since you say that you can't hear the ants, I can just say that I can't hear you. The principle is the same. To put it frankly, it's just a matter of covering your ears and seeing who is more shameless. Don't act so superior. Looking at your arrogant expressions makes me want to slap you in the face, if for nothing else

than to feel good.” Long Chen shrugged indifferently. His appearance was even more arrogant than the scholars.

Long Chen’s words were a bit rascally, but the logic was there. Just like that, Long Chen continued to con them. Without getting past this con, they didn’t even need to think about talking reason.

“Having me pay with my life is completely illogical. You’ve killed so many lifeforms, so what right do you have to criticize me?!” raged the scholar.

“I’m not the one criticizing you. These are your own criticisms. I’ve killed lifeforms, and you’ve killed lifeforms. Although the quantity is vastly different, talking philosophically, there is no difference. Are you not a pot calling the kettle black?” asked Long Chen.

All the scholars present had ugly expressions. Long Chen was too sinister. Without resolving this matter, he refused to further debate anything. Now, all the scholars had lost face.

“Then according to you, how can such matters be resolved?” demanded the scholar who had stepped on the ants, throwing the problem back at Long Chen.

Long Chen smiled. “I’m also someone who likes talking reason. Paying with your life really does seem a bit overboard. However, if you were to put away its corpse properly and kowtow three times, then wear mourning clothes beside the coffin for seven seven-day periods, it should be about right! If you agree, we can set this matter aside and keep debating.”

“You!” The scholar was enraged. According to the empire’s standards, only when close family passed away would someone wear mourning clothes beside the coffin. Furthermore, most family would only be watched over for seven days. Watching over it for forty-nine days was a treatment fit only for your own father or mother. After the forty-nine days were over, the children would observe mourning for three years.

Although Long Chen didn’t request for him to observe mourning for three years, to stand by the ants’ coffin for forty-nine days was equivalent to treating the ants as solemnly as his own father and mother. That was no different than an insult.

“You brought disgrace upon yourself. You stepped on it, so you must pay for it. You scoffed and looked down on a certain person, attacking them not to talk reason, but to embarrass them and make yourselves appear learned and superior. Since you want to trample someone else to elevate yourselves, you have to be prepared to fall and kneel in dogshit. I’m not someone who accommodates other people’s faults. If someone respects me, I respect them more. If someone takes a bite out of me, I’ll devour them whole. Since you don’t care about your face, I won’t leave you any. If you agree, let’s continue. If you don’t agree, then this debate ends here. It’s all up to you.” Long Chen looked at the scholars indifferently.

Long Chen could see the fury in their eyes, but he didn’t care. If they wanted him in a bad mood, he’d have them in a bad mood. It would only be fair once everyone was pissed off.

“Fine, I agree!”

In front of everyone’s shocked gazes, that scholar peeled off the ants from the bottom of his shoe and kowtowed to them three times.

Everyone was shocked and then looked at the smiling Long Chen. Now, this fellow had fully offended the Philosopher Institute.

Chapter 3949: War of Tongues

The scholar finished kowtowing to the ants three times and then put them inside his sleeve.

He had kowtowed extremely hard, causing his forehead to bleed. But he didn't mind. He only glared at Long Chen with rancor.

"What? Did you kowtow so hard to get sympathy? Do you want to make yourself seem like the victim? I looked down on you before, but now I look down on you even more. Do you think you're so great that only you are allowed to trample over others?" Long Chen looked at him disdainfully.

"Shut up! You are challenging all the scholars of the Vermilion Bird Empire to war! Do you think you're so clever?! Then let's make sure to compete properly today!" raged the scholar.

"Are you stupid? It has always been the case that there can be no number one in learning and no number two in martial arts. In martial arts, it's possible to determine who is first. But in terms of learning and culture, who can say that they are number one? In martial arts, someone could claim to be number one because that person truly could be standing at that height. But in terms of learning, anyone who dared to claim themselves as number one would either be a madman or an idiot. Other than that, I came to talk reason with you, remember? I'm not here to compete. If you want to compete, why compete with me, a martial artist? Just how inferior do you feel to make such a challenge?" scoffed Long Chen.

"All paths lead to the same end! At the highest realm, there are naturally standards that can be used to judge! You say that there can be no number one in learning because you haven't reached that height! Do you dare to accept the challenge?" demanded one person.

He was a thin scholar who had tried to interject himself several times but failed. But now, he finally had a chance.

"Then have you reached that highest realm?" asked Long Chen.

That person was left speechless. He was not even a Hanlin scholar. How could he dare to say that he had reached that height?

"Even without reaching that height, there are ways to determine who is superior. Perhaps we aren't enough to evaluate others, but when it comes to evaluating you... Hmph, it's clearly more than enough." Someone else immediately spoke up to help that person out of his predicament.

"Can you have some face? Second-rates such as yourselves don't even have standards for judging. Who can say whose logic is right and whose is wrong? Oh, I know, you'll use numbers to shout that the person you like is right and the person you dislike is wrong, right? You wish to be the judge and the competitor at the same time? Haha, in all my years of fighting, from the mortal world to the immortal world, I've never seen anyone as shameless as you lot. Fine, when it comes to shamelessness, I am willing to accept you as number one," praised Long Chen.

They wanted to compete with him with no standards at all, and the winner would be determined by whatever they said—such shamelessness. Long Chen’s eyes had been opened to the world.

“Nonsense! Every single person here is a hardworking nobleman with immense learning and wisdom. Don’t judge them as petty little plebeians like yourself!” raged that scholar.

“Your jealousy gave rise to resentment, and then you all started attacking me. You did so because you all thought that you were superior to me. You say that you are a nobleman? How come I can’t see any sign of nobility from you all?” said Long Chen.

“Naturally, it depends on who the nobleman is talking to. To fellow noblemen, one’s words are like jade. For little plebeians, can noble words even be heard? Can such words even enter their hearts?”

“If you were a nobleman, you would know that you can always learn from someone, no matter who it is. All things in this world have their own principles, their own inner essence. Even plebeians have their own strong points, their own code for survival. They don’t steal from you and simply rely on themselves to survive. However, you keep talking down to them, calling them petty little people in order to make yourself look bigger. Who gave you the confidence to look down on others?” demanded Long Chen.

Long Chen’s words were sharp and struck right on target, startling the cultivators present. If they couldn’t sense the raging Blood Qi from his body, they might even think that he was another scholar.

“Most plebeians are dogs, thieves, trash that will harm others for the slightest profit! Their nature is ugly, and as they reproduce, they inherit that inferiority! Even if they get food and shelter, they refuse to improve themselves. They refuse to read or learn and would rather be degenerates that roll in filth! They will always live in poverty. In their entire lifetime, they will never enjoy status or wealth!” argued another scholar.

“A nobleman cultivates the body through calm behavior, cultivates morality through frugality, and lives a simple life to demonstrate nobility. But you are using wealth to decide morality, to decide who is inferior and who is superior. Such a thing is even worse than a plebeian, so how can you enter the ranks of noblemen? Does putting on airs allow you to look down on other people’s broken clothes? Does decking yourself in luxury allow you to laugh at other people’s poverty? If your inner heart is so broken, how can you even talk about learning? The only reason you can stand here isn’t because you are so amazing or because you worked so hard. It is only because your father and mother have the power to provide for your learning,” said Long Chen disdainfully.

This person definitely had a problem. His inner heart was so dark. But fortunately, he chose to be a scholar. If he was a cultivator, who knew what kind of calamity he would bring about on the poor? Using his logic, poor people simply deserved death.

Thankfully, he was just a troll who liked to talk big. If he was a powerful cultivator instead, Long Chen would make sure that he wouldn’t live to see tomorrow’s sun.

“The Dao of the Heavens is the survival of the fittest. Man follows the earth, the earth follows the heavens, the heavens follow the Dao, and the Dao follows the natural path. Even the heavens wish the strong to thrive while the weak are eliminated. That means that the Heavenly Daos are displeased by the weak. This brother’s words were not wrong, so why are you speaking about his heart? If you wish to

condemn someone, there's no need to come up with such excuses," said one of the previous scholar's friends.

"If the Dao follows the natural path, that means that the laws are flowing smoothly. If there is heaven, there is earth. Because there is Yin, there is Yang. There are high and low, rich and poor. Tell me, without the earth, where are the heavens? Without Yin, where is Yang? Without a high, how can there be a low? Without the poor, how could there be the wealthy? Heaven and earth face each other, Yin and Yang support each other, high and low need each other, and the poor and rich establish each other, a manifestation of the differences within all things. This is the natural Dao. What is this nonsense about the Heavenly Daos being displeased? Next!" snorted Long Chen.

"Only those with no desires can achieve the Dao. What qualifications do you have to speak of the Dao?!" shouted one person.

"Only those with no desires can achieve the Dao? You can't even control your own tongue, yet you speak of the Dao? Just keep your mouth shut. Next!" Long Chen couldn't even be bothered to explain such a thing.

An intense verbal sparring ensued. Unlike before, rather than debating them, Long Chen directly raised some problems from the actual questions, stifling them.

"Next!"

"Next!"

...

Dozens of people were all shut up. In the end, no one dared to ask another question as they were all dumbfounded.

Long Chen's knowledge was so wide that it didn't matter what they asked, he was able to get straight to the essence of the question and then grasp some openings to counterattack, leaving them with no words to retort.

In the end, no one amongst the scholars dared to speak again. On his own, Long Chen had managed to leave them speechless, causing all the cultivators to feel like prostrating themselves toward him in admiration.

"No one else? Then I'm leaving. I still have important matters to deal with." Seeing those furious gazes from the scholars, Long Chen patted his butt and prepared to leave.

"Brother Long, that was a marvelous debate. Junior sister has experienced what it means to be erudite and wise. May I ask brother Long to give junior sister some pointers as well? If you could pick out the flaws in my music, I would be endlessly grateful." Just as Long Chen was about to leave, the yellow-robed woman stopped him with a sincere expression.

"Do you really want me to give you criticism? You just heard what kind of critique I am. I'm not subtle or polite. I might offend you."

Long Chen looked at this yellow-robed woman with a touch of severity. For some reason, Long Chen detected some aura from her that made him feel uncomfortable.

The aura seemed to come from her herself, yet also as if it came from her cultivation technique. This uncomfortable feeling stemmed from the Nine Star Hegemon Body Art. Thus, Long Chen very much wished to know what was going on.

Chapter 3950: A Faulty Note

The yellow-robed woman was beautiful and carried herself with a graceful demeanor. Every move of hers seemed to radiate a noble aura, yet it was neither overwhelming nor overbearing. Her innate charm made her seem likable and respectable.

Although none of them knew her name, it could be seen that amongst these disciples of the Zither Sect, her position was the highest.

Just now, her flute had added to the beautiful music, pushing the entire song to an even greater height. She had brought them into the clouds, a testament to just how skillful she was. She was a perfect mix of beauty and power.

Even so, such a powerful Zither Sect disciple was actually so insistent on gaining Long Chen's pointers. In the beginning, people were simply jealous of Long Chen. But after that verbal sparring and his display of knowledge, they now looked at him in a new light and no longer dared to underestimate him.

Think about it, just how high was her status? For her to lower herself to ask for Long Chen's pointers, she must think that his judgment exceeded everyone else's present.

"There are people who call themselves master of one of the ten thousand Daos, but on the path of music, you are always an apprentice!" said the yellow-robed woman with a slight smile.

When she said this, countless cultivators looked at the scholars disdainfully. The meaning behind the look was to contrast themselves with this fairy of the Zither Sect. Her status was higher than theirs and her understanding of musical theory was deeper than theirs, yet she was so humble. As for them? With just the slightest learning and ability, they managed to swagger all the way to the heavens. They really deserved to be slapped in the face.

In front of those disdainful looks, the scholars' expressions grew ugly. The people that they deemed inferior were now looking down on them, causing them to feel enraged but they were powerless to do anything about it.

"Alright, then I'll just say what I have to say. The zither music beforehand was flawless. That was an ancient song called Thousand Mountains Reflecting the Snow. The third part, in particular, which is also the climax was majestic, a perfect mix of soft and powerful. It is said that this song was created by an almighty expert of the Music Dao, Guang Ningzi. In his youth, he roamed through mountains of ice. Seeing the snow at the top of the mountains looking like clouds, he had a spark of inspiration and thus this song was born..."

Seeing Long Chen speak of the origin of the song that had just been played, both the cultivators and the scholars present were shocked. Did Long Chen really have skill in this regard?

During his time in the High Firmament Academy, Long Chen had spent days experiencing his soul being almost torn apart just to obtain more knowledge. In the end, he forcibly packed all those ancient tomes into his brain.

Since Zi Yan was a music cultivator, Long Chen spent some more time studying that aspect. Thus, he did have quite some knowledge of the Music Dao. And unexpectedly, it ended up coming in handy today.

“This song was created in Guang Ningzi’s early years, so it has a powerful Yang Qi to it that suits his youth. As that ambition to soar into the heavens in one leap is displayed in this song, the final note is a rarely seen high note. Also, to play this high note requires one’s control to reach a certain peak, a level that countless music cultivators will never be able to reach,” said Long Chen with a bit of praise.

“Brother Long overpraises me. This junior sister cannot accept. Brother Long, can you please tell me where I was lacking?” the yellow-robed woman once more asked humbly.

“Then I won’t stand on courtesy. Your final high note was a faulty note. It was too prominent, and it seems that there was an intent to show off with it. It doesn’t fit with the rest of the zither music. Although it sounds right, it is actually wrong. It is out of place,” said Long Chen.

As soon as he said this, everyone’s expression changed. These words were a bit too hurtful and tactless. It was even more ruthless than when he spoke to the scholars.

The yellow-robed woman’s expression also changed a bit. As for Liao Yuhuang and the others, they were astonished. Wasn’t this evaluation too ruthless? It was practically a complete rejection of her skills.

“Do you even understand musical theory?! You call such a beautiful thing out of place?! If it was out of place, why was it so beautiful? You’re just making up profound-sounding nonsense!” shouted the pale, pudgy scholar that had been silent for a long time.

Unexpectedly, Long Chen smiled and clapped. “I didn’t expect that you could also talk normally. How rare! You got right to the point. However, we can discuss this question later. Let us first talk about this fairy’s performance.”

Curiously, Long Chen actually praised the scholar this time even though the praise wasn’t very good.

“Brother Long, please enlighten me!” said the yellow-robed woman. Her voice was still calm and humble, but she was clearly a bit thrown off.

Long Chen looked at her and smiled slightly. “Perhaps what I’m saying is hard to hear, but since you so sincerely insisted, I can only tell the truth. It’s hard to accept criticism, but this pain is unavoidable. When it comes to the Music Dao, because I am not a music cultivator, I can only judge from the viewpoint of a spectator. The previous zither music was flawless. When you joined in, although the timing, rhythm, and first note were also perfect, in the end, you were someone who came in later, not from the start. As soon as you came in, you took the lead, leading everyone into the clouds in the sky. Although it gave a strong impact, after that impact, it gave off a sense of disharmony.”

“Brother Long is saying that I should not use the flute to guide the climax?” asked the yellow-robed woman.

Long Chen shook his head. "You still don't understand what I'm saying. A giant tree starts as a sprout, a tall tower starts with the foundation, and a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. You did not participate in the building of the foundation, so how can you suddenly jump from the peak of the tower? The work of everyone, the fruit that everyone worked for, was plucked by you alone? To have no start and only the end is a defiance of the natural order."

"Are you saying that I took other people's harvest for myself?" The yellow-robed woman's expression suddenly changed. At this moment, there was finally a touch of anger in her eyes.

Long Chen looked at her and didn't reply, and the woman also looked at him coldly. She finally said, "An army needs a commander, and the ten thousand spirits need a leader. If a guide is not at the front, are they supposed to be at the rear?"

Everyone felt that Long Chen's words were going too far, accusing her of only pretending to be noble and virtuous, stealing other people's thunder.

"Why aren't you saying anything?"

Seeing him just stare at her without saying anything, she couldn't help pressing him.

"You're not even going to call me brother Long anymore?" Long Chen smiled helplessly.

"Then brother Long, please continue giving me guidance," said the yellow-robed woman coldly.

"You are angry," said Long Chen profoundly.

Upon hearing those words, a tremor coursed through the yellow-robed woman's heart. As a practitioner of the Music Dao, intense emotional fluctuations were a taboo. It was because cultivating music meant cultivating one's innermost being, and her anger revealed a deficiency in her mastery, suggesting that her skills were still too shallow.

What made her angry was Long Chen's hurtful words. But the reason they hurt her was because deep in her heart, or perhaps deep in her soul, something was causing mischief.

If she didn't have certain feelings inside of her, his words would only cause confusion, not any emotional ripples. Thus, just by saying that she was angry, Long Chen had enlightened her about the major issues.

"Brother Long, please teach me!"

The yellow-robed woman suddenly handed her flute to Long Chen, leaving him dumbfounded. When it came to bragging, he was decent. But playing the flute?