

Resonance 131

Chapter 0131: To Each Their Own

At the same time that Li Luo finished choosing his mentor, in another part of the woods.

Lu Qing'er's fair skin was heavily splotched with toxins now. They had run amok within her body, and she was in excruciating pain. Still, she grimly held on quietly.

Opposite her, Wang Hejiu's frozen arms were beginning to thaw out under his own resonant power.

"Friend Qing'er, it seems like your Glacial Prison's limit is here. It's quite an impressive move. If you had just a bit more resonant power, I'd be held here by you for the whole day." Wang Hejiu congratulated her.

"You've successfully delayed me, but do you think that Li Luo can fend off the others?"

Lu Qing'er did not reply. Her consciousness was fuzzy.

But before she faded into blackness, purple light blazed in the sky. Two columns of violet light appeared before Lu Qing'er and Wang Hejiu.

Within them, two violet talismans.

One floated gently down on Lu Qing'er's head. Its light neutralized the poisons in her body, making wisps of poisonous, green energy rise from her head and dissipate.

Wang Hejiu looked at the violet talisman before him and bowed courteously before reaching out for it.

He was not surprised. Given his talent, he was not worried about being chosen by a Violet Vibrance mentor.

Lu Qing'er receiving one was a surprise. After all, strictly speaking, she had not held her own at all in this battle with Wang Hejiu. She had simply held him there for a while with her Glacial Prison.

Although surprised, Lu Qing'er was still grateful. "Thank you, Mentor," she said softly as she took it.

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In another small forest.

Zhao Kuo and the other three were lying on the ground, too tired to move. They had been trounced soundly by Bai Doudou, and they were still aching and stinging all over.

"I wonder if Yu Lang was beaten to death," Zhao Kuo said with some sympathy.

Still, they knew that that, at least, would not come true. After all, the mentors were watching over the Choosing, and they would not allow the students to die.

Pain, however... was absolutely on the menu. One look at Bai Doudou and you knew she was no gentle spirit. Plus, Yu Lang was the kind that was just begging to be beaten up. They winced just imagining the combination.

Suddenly, a golden light appeared in the air.

Zhao Kuo looked up in wonder. "Am I hallucinating? I thought I saw a gold talisman."

The other three were staring up at the sky silently as well. A few beats later, they leaped to their feet, pain forgotten. They rushed like mad men towards the golden light.

The four snatched gleefully. Each held a gold talisman, their faces lit up with unbridled joy.

"We've been graced with gold talismans?" Zhao Kuo whooped.

Zong Fu nodded vigorously. "They're really gold. Was our work really acknowledged by some mentor?!" They were ecstatic. After all, it was difficult for those of their strength level to get gold talismans. Especially Zhao Kuo, who was especially lacking in both strength and potential. Therefore, he had set his sights on a Silver Spark mentor from the beginning. But now he had gold?

This was beyond their wildest dreams.

All four whooped and cheered, over the moon at their gold talismans.

Getting beaten up was worth it!

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Far away in the forest.

Bai Doudou looked up instinctively. A ray of purple light was before her. She stretched out and took the violet talisman with great pleasure.

"Many thanks, Mentor," she said respectfully.

Although she had also been expecting one, having the talisman in hand was still a relief.

She opened it to see a "Mi" on it.

"Mentor Mi Er?" She naturally knew about this Violet Vibrance mentor. Mentor Mi Er was the mentor she wanted the most because they both had wind resonances.

If she could train under this mentor, she would definitely grow very quickly.

Still lost in the glow of pleasure, Bai Doudou was startled by a second flash of purple light.

"Who else is there?" And then her eyes fell on the unconscious Yu Lang.

"This guy?!"

Bai Doudou was absolutely aghast. This good-for-nothing was shameless and useless, not to mention he was rather weak. He? Win a Violet Vibrance mentor's favor?

Surely this was some sort of joke?!

The purple light did indeed land on the unconscious Yu Lang. In the light, his injuries rapidly healed, and his eyes flew open.

The first thing he saw was the violet talisman.

Yu Lang hesitated for a few seconds, then he pounced on it, pinning it to the ground under his body. "This one's mine! I got it! It's mine!" he yelled. He looked up warily at Bai Doudou. "It's mine, I say!" he repeated.

She was speechless. "What are you so worried about? It came for you. No one can take it away."

"For me?" Yu Lang said in sheer disbelief. "A Violet Vibrance mentor chose me?"

"Maybe they made a mistake," she said huffily.

"No way!" Yu Lang objected furiously. "It's here already! It's mine! Even if it's a mistake, I'm gonna stick to this Violet Vibrance mentor! He has to take responsibility for me!" Bai Doudou facepalmed. There was no end to this guy's shamelessness.

Yu Lang pulled out the squashed violet talisman and then bowed deeply to it. "Hey, Mentor, I've already done the thing. I've called you 'Mentor' now, you know? We can't change things anymore."

Satisfied, he held it up for a close look. "Who's this Mentor Mi anyway?"

Bai Doudou blanched. "What?" She choked. "Mentor Mi Er as well?!" She ran forward and snatched his violet talisman. True enough, the character "Mi" was carved on it. She took out her own. The two were exactly the same.

Her face turned grey.

How could this be?

This shameless scumbag had the same mentor as her?

"Hey, you too? Does it mean we have the same mentor?" Yu Lang peered over and was surprised.

She threw one of them back to him, stomping over to a rock and sitting down.

She was seized with a sudden urge to change mentors.

Yu Lang carefully stowed his own and then sidled up to her with a grin. "Friend Bai Doudou, I hear each Violet Vibrance mentor only takes three students. We'll be companions in the future. Please take good care of me.

"As for my character, I think you already have some understanding of it. I'm the kind of guy who would stick knives in my armpits for a friend. We might have had some misunderstandings in the past, but it's okay. We'll have plenty of time to get to know each other.

"But I'm thinking that after you get to know me, is there just the teeniest, tiniest possibility that you could, you know... introduce me... to Bai Mengmeng....?"

She kneaded her temples. "One more word and I might just kill you," she said softly.

Yu Lang fell silent, sitting down ruefully at the side. He pulled out his violet talisman, rubbing it and examining it, his face still pleased as could be.

She let her head fall into her hands and groaned inwardly. This mouthy, shameless bastard? One of her companions?

Blasphemy.

Chapter 0132: Chosen Ones

Now that the Choosing of the Mentors had proceeded thus, Li Luo waited about an hour or so more before he saw a circle of light appear under his feet.

The space around him blurred, and he vanished before he could react properly. When things stopped spinning, he was already back at Newcomers' Hall.

The roar of voices was deafening but comforting.

The newcomers were all reeling from their experiences and still discussing them.

Vice Principal Su Xin gave them a moment to compose themselves. She warmly said to them, "The Choosing of the Mentors is over. Congratulations, one and all. From today onwards, you are officially students of the Astral Sage College.

"Here, you will grow stronger. At the same time, you will start to learn the realities of our world.

"Those with silver and gold talismans, you will each take a list with the mentors' names and information. You may choose freely and then report to them accordingly.

"Usually, each Silver Spark mentor takes about 50 students, while Gold Gleam mentors take about 20. If the mentor you choose is already full, then you will have to choose another."

Su Xin continued, "I would also like to congratulate the 15 students here who have won the approval of our Violet Vibrance mentors and become their students."

The board lit up with the names of those chosen, as well as their Violet Vibrance mentors.

The excitement rose as all eyes were drawn to the board, carefully checking the names.

Li Luo was curious as well.

Mentor Cao Sheng: Qin Zhulu, Lu Qing'er, Yin Yue.

Mentor Shen Jinxiao: Wang Hejiu, Duze Beixuan, Qi Luozi.

Mentor Chi Chan: Li Luo, Xin Fu, Bai Mengmeng.

Mentor Mi Er: Bai Doudou, Qiu Luo, Yu Lang.

Mentor Chu Zi: Yi Lisha, Qian Ye, Si Qiuying.

There were many interesting things to point out, which the crowd discussed with great relish.

Li Luo was surprised to find that Bai Mengmeng had the same mentor as he did. He had a vague impression of the Xin Fu person. They were ranked seventh in Yu Lang's book, with a special shadow resonance.

Of course, even more shocking for him was seeing Yu Lang's name.

"How did that guy pull it off?" As hyped as Li Luo was, he was just as confused. It wasn't that he felt like Yu Lang was undeserving. Still, compared to the other names up there, his strength was not at all comparable.

Besides, his resonance was only a sixth-grade, which was pretty average among the new students.

Yet he had won the approval of a Violet Vibrance mentor. It made one itch with curiosity.

While Li Luo was still pondering this, Yu Lang was looking at the list too. He let out a strange shriek of anger and sadness. "Damn, that bastard Li Luo. How did he manage to get into the same group as Bai Mengmeng?!" Damn, when she got used to Li Luo's dazzling looks, he wouldn't stand half a chance.

Lu Qing'er was a little disappointed to see that she was not under the same mentor as Li Luo. When she spotted Bai Mengmeng's name, she bit her lip in frustration, sensing danger.

Bai Mengmeng was very pretty. That soft, adorable look was a killer for many guys.

While she was sulking silently to herself, Qin Zhulu was staring at his two companions' names.

Lu Qing'er, Yin Yue.

Those were obviously the names of girls.

Qin Zhulu's dark face became stiff. What sort of arrangement was this? Why would they give him two girls as partners? Was he supposed to cultivate and do missions with girls?

Qin Zhulu felt like he had been targeted in this one. He could only rail inwardly. "Why must they challenge me like that!?!!" Among the newcomers, Si Qiuying was staring agog at Li Luo's name. Evidently, she was surprised that he had been chosen by a Violet Vibrance mentor.

"What on earth did Li Luo do in the Choosing? How did he get chosen by Mentor Chi Chan?" she stammered.

All of the students were looking at the newly chosen top 15 with envy.

"Of these five groups, the strongest overall should be mentor Shen Jinxiao's group. On the newcomers' rankings, Wang Hejiu ranks second, Duze Beixuan fourth, and Qi Luozi 15th. That's the best group overall."

"Mm. Qin Zhulu might be strong, but both Lu Qing'er and Yin Yue are ranked outside of the top 15. They'll probably drag the group down."

"Who's Yu Lang? Never heard of him."

"Mentor Chu Zi's group seems pretty strong too. Yi Lisha is fifth, Qian Ye sixth, and Si Qiuying 13th. No slackers on that front."

"..."

"Li Luo's been chosen by Mentor Chi Chan," Yan Lingqing said happily. Jiang Qing'e inclined her head with barely suppressed relief.

The problem of Li Luo's Choosing had been resolved. From the start, Jiang Qing'e had thought Mentor Chi Chan was the best choice. Firstly because she was a water resonance cultivator too, and also because she didn't like Shen Jinxiao very much. Li Luo successfully becoming her student meant that the threat of Shen Jinxiao was significantly mitigated.

However, she would not have chosen him if his performance hadn't truly been outstanding.

Fortunately, his fight with Duzé Beixuan had won him four options, and also the acknowledgment of Mentor Chi Chan.

"Everyone, although only 15 have been chosen by Violet Vibrance mentors, do not be discouraged. In the future, if you can demonstrate your own brilliance, it is possible that the Violet Vibrance mentors will extend an additional slot. Here at the Astral Sage College, we let no pearls fall by the road."

Vice Principal Su Xin's warm voice gave them some final encouragement.

The heated excitement in Newcomers' Hall finally subsided.

That's right, there was still a long road ahead of them. As long as they continued to work hard, they might still win the favor of the Violet Vibrance mentors. After all, there were a lot of new students, and there were plenty of hidden talents just lurking in their midst.

In past cohorts, there had been cases where Gold Gleam students ended up bucking the trend and surpassing Violet Vibrance students.

Although the chosen 15 were indeed strong, this was just the beginning. The future was yet to be written.

Many things could change.

Those final words of hope from Vice Principal Su Xin brought the Choosing of the Mentors to a formal close.

And their lives at the Astral Sage College to a formal opening.

Chapter 0133: Gong Shenjun

After the Choosing of the Mentors came to a close, Vice Principal Su Xin turned to the little emperor, the First Princess, and the Regent with a big smile. "You have graced us with your presence at the Choosing."

"Vice Principal, you are too kind. Besides, I'm still a student here." The First Princess laughed.

"It's boring at the palace. The Astral Sage College looks fun. Can I come here and cultivate sometime?"

"The Astral Sage College's doors are open to all with strength, and blind to any status," Su Xin answered brightly. "And given His Majesty's abilities, it should not be difficult to get into the Astral Sage College.

"But at that time, you will probably have to hide your identity."

The boy practically glowed with eagerness.

The First Princess patted him on the head. "But his body is frail." She sighed. "He needs medicine regularly. For many years, we've searched high and low through the Xia Kingdom, but no one has managed to heal him."

"I understand a bit about the condition," Su Xin said sympathetically. "His Majesty has an inborn frailty. It's hard to heal by normal means and needs the healing resonances of light, water, and wood. Moreover, it needs not just a singular element, but a Duke-level mastery of two of them."

"It's easy enough to find a Duke expert with water, light, or wood resonance, but for a water resonance cultivator who has also awakened light or wood... that's much rarer."

"Besides, even such a person might not be able to cure this natural frailty. Perhaps not even... a King cultivator with all three mastered."

A brief look of despair flashed on the First Princess' face. A King expert... That was incredibly rare within the domain of the Xia Kingdom. And to find one with water, light, and wood resonances? It was basically impossible.

"Do not fret." The Regent sighed. "We'll definitely find someone."

The little emperor tugged on her sleeve. "It's alright, Sis. I'm used to it anyway."

"Hey, isn't Li Luo's second resonance a wood resonance?" He piped up. "Does that mean that when he becomes a Duke and opens one more resonant palace, there's a chance?"

Even Vice Principal Su Xin was shocked by the realization. "Logically, yes. But Li Luo is only a first-tier Resonant Master. Who knows how long it will take him to reach the Duke Stage. Besides, resonance affinities are up to fate. There's no guarantee that he will have a light resonance."

"But there's still a chance," the First Princess said with shining eyes.

"Yes, let's keep an eye out," the Regent said. "But just an eye," he warned. "It wouldn't do to hope too much and be disappointed later."

She nodded. It was the rational thing to do.

They chatted briefly and then prepared to leave.

The First Princess rose gracefully, the little emperor in hand. Her eyes briefly paused in Li Luo's direction.

The Regent, Gong Yuan, followed them, an impressive figure of power, quiet and confident. He also took a brief look at Li Luo on his way out.

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The crowd in Newcomers' Hall was dispersing, and Li Luo was trying to look for Yu Lang and the others. But things were so confusing that he gave up on the idea, instead heading to where Jiang Qing'e and Yan Lingqing were.

He was definitely a closely-watched figure now, and there were many passing looks and open stares as he weaved his way through the crowd.

If he was a hot topic because of Jiang Qing'e before, then now he had won his own credit here in the Choosing of the Mentors.

"Congratulations, Li Luo. You've knocked off all the socks now," Yan Lingqing said, looking at him proudly over her silver-rimmed spectacles.

"I don't want to be so popular." Li Luo sighed. "I might have won, but at what cost? Duzhe Beixuan took a fall to force me to stand out. What a cunning man."

"Alright, enough." Yan Lingqing snorted.

Jiang Qing'e looked at him, amusement clear in her golden eyes. "Not bad. Becoming Mentor Chi Chan's student is a rather good result. Don't get big-headed now. He might not stop at that."

Li Luo nodded slightly. He knew that she was referring to Shen Jinxiao. He was a Violet Vibrance mentor and a Duke expert after all. He held an eminent position in the Astral Sage College, and getting in his bad books was nothing good.

Fortunately, even Duke experts had to follow the rules in the Astral Sage College. As long as he was careful and did a whole lot of sticking close to Mentor Chi Chan, there was probably little that Shen Jinxiao could do to him.

Li Luo suddenly felt a disturbance behind him. He turned around to see a line of people file in.

They all looked young, but they bore themselves with uncommon gravitas. They were dressed in the Astral Sage College's uniform, but there were four stars emblazoned on their uniforms.

These were all Four Star Hall students.

No wonder they walked with a carelessness in their stride. It was born not of recklessness, but an over-familiarity with every part of school.

Compared to them, the new students had to be much more careful about every aspect of their school lives.

Leading the line of Four Star Hall students was a handsome guy with a well-chiseled face and bright, intelligent eyes. His good looks were as reassuring as a cool, spring breeze, but his eyes made you sit up straight and respect him.

He also had a head of blond hair that was very recognizable.

He was leading the Four Star Hall students like smaller stars gravitating around the sun. The newcomers hurried to get out of his way, sizing him up with trepidation.

Some of them greeted and smiled back at their acquaintances, who swelled with pride at being acknowledged. They looked at the curious newcomers. "You guys don't know who this is, right?" they said, their comments purposely directed at the pretty girls.

The enthusiastic young girls shook their heads. "That is Gong Shenjun, the Regent's son. He's the same age as the First Princess."

"He's also one of the Seven Astral Pillars. Do you know why they're called that? It's the highest honor for students at the Astral Sage College. It is the highest rank that students can reach."

"Even among the Seven Astral Pillars, Gong Shenjun might just be the strongest. Which means he can be considered the strongest student in the Astral Sage College."

Many of the newcomers gasped upon hearing this. The son of the Regent? This person was royalty too. Outside of school, they would have to call him "Your Highness."

Of course, outside was outside. As new students, they were much more impressed by him being the strongest student.

Being able to rise to the top of the Astral Sage College, this illustrious school—just how awesome was that?

They immediately took a closer look.

The center of admiration and surprise, Gong Shenjun, walked through Newcomers' Hall towards Li Luo.

Li Luo inhaled sharply. He calmed himself down. Gong Shenjun did not know him. He could not be here for him.

He had to be here for his plump swan.

Yan Lingqing whispered in his ear.

"You guessed right, Li Luo. Your greatest rival is here."

Chapter 0134: The Second Step of the Promise

Paying no attention to the eyes on him, Gong Shenjun led the procession over to where Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e were. He smiled in a friendly manner.

"Junior Jiang, I was lost in cultivation and missed the Choosing today. But I heard that Junior Li Luo performed superbly and was chosen by Mentor Chi Chan."

He then turned to Li Luo. "My sincere congratulations on your splendid performance, Junior Li Luo," he said in a refreshing voice.

Li Luo thought about what his reply would be for a few brief moments. If it were too cold, he would be seen as petty and defensive. He returned the friendliness. "Senior Gong is too kind. It was nothing too splendid, just a bit of luck that Mentor Chi Chan took a liking to me."

Jiang Qing'e's face was neutral. "It was just the newcomers' choosing. Senior Gong praises him too highly."

"Haha! Junior Jiang, your standards are too high. Not everyone is a natural ninth-grade resonance cultivator like yourself. Even before you began your choosing, the Violet Vibrance mentors were fighting over you. We haven't seen that in Astral Sage College in a hundred years."

Gong Shenjun had a compelling charisma to him, made even more seductive by his charming manners. It was hard to bear him any ill will. Even though Jiang Qing'e might know his true thoughts, she could not call him out on it openly.

"Senior Gong, don't underestimate Jiang Qing'e's fiance. He might hide himself well, but dual resonances are just as rare as ninth-grade resonances." An unfriendly voice cut in. Duze Honglian.

She stalked over, tall and sultry. Her fiery-red lips featured in many of the guys' dreams.

"Duze Honglian." Jiang Qing'e acknowledged her mildly. "I seem to recall your performance was not as good as your brother's.

"Didn't you meet your first opponent, me, and then... lost?"

Duze Honglian looked ready to commit murder.

Gong Shenjun cut her off preemptively. "Honglian, the newcomers have just arrived today. Do us a favor and don't start anything here," he said with a bite of impatience.

Duze Honglian bit back her words. She looked at Gong Shenjun with softness in her eyes. He was indeed a wonderful guy in all aspects.

Jiang Qing'e had no interest in lingering here. After saying a quick farewell to Gong Shenjun, she led Yan Lingqing and Li Luo away.

Duze Honglian sniffed and stomped away. Today had been infuriating. She had failed to cause trouble for Li Luo, getting the tables turned on her instead. Moreover, her brother had lost to Li Luo in the Choosing.

Gong Shenjun watched the two girls leave, then finally let a glimmer of emotion show on his face.

"Dual resonances... This House Luolan young lord is not as common as the rumors have made him out to be," he thought to himself.

"Your Highness, you're too reserved in your courting of Jiang Qing'e. Your greatness is definitely deserving of her," one of his followers said softly.

"Li Luo might have an engagement, but surely Your Highness has many ways of voiding it."

Gong Shenjun shook his head wryly. "You're too short-sighted. Someone like Jiang Qing'e would not be bound by just an engagement. Those that can see clearly know that the engagement has no actual meaning.

"What I want is Jiang Qing'e's heart. Someone like her cannot be rushed. I can only bide my time and wait for my chance.

"As for Li Luo..."

"There's no need to target him. If I want to win Jiang Qing'e's heart, the more I attack him, the more she will hate me.

"So if I can, I will be on his side. Others do not see that getting close to Li Luo is truly the best way of getting close to Jiang Qing'e."

He smiled darkly. "It will be difficult to stomach, for sure. But until my goal is complete, some subterfuge is necessary."

"Victory belongs to he who lasts."

"As for my eligibility, I also believe that Jiang Qing'e will come around in time."

He waved a hand to close the topic.

"Let's go."

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"Gong Shenjun seems a real pain," Li Luo said to Jiang Qing'e after checking behind him.

Gong Shenjun was clearly interested in Jiang Qing'e, but he played a flawless game and caused no offense. No verbal threats, no moves against their engagement.

There was nothing for them to dig into.

"He's an expert in the game, kid. You're no match," Yan Lingqing said with feeling.

Gong Shenjun was royalty, and his father, Gong Yuan, was the Regent, the most powerful man in the Xia Kingdom for now. Gong Shenjun himself had exceptional talent, as one would expect of the foremost of the Seven Astral Pillars. He was even rumored to be the strongest student. In all ways, Li Luo could not compare.

Li Luo nodded. "Still, as exalted as he is, his goal is merely my starting point."

Yan Lingqing gave a surprised and thoughtful nod. Indeed, Gong Shenjun was doing all he could to secure an engagement to Jiang Qing'e. But Li Luo had already achieved this while he was still a kid playing in the mud.

"You're quite good at consoling yourself, I must say," Yan Lingqing said roughly.

Li Luo threw his hands up. "What else can I do? That guy's really awesome."

Jiang Qing'e suddenly stopped walking. She turned her head to him. "No need to be too humble. Gong Shenjun is high-born, but what does that matter? Royalty bows its head alike to King experts. Nor does the royal family dare to cross the Astral Sage College."

"So in the end, strength is still king. He might be one of the Seven Astral Pillars, but that's only because he's a year older than us. You have dual resonances. In a few years, who's to say you won't overtake him?"

"In my heart, Li Luo, you are inferior to no one."

The evening sun rouged her lovely features. Behind her, the grand architecture of the Astral Sage College. Above, the umbrella of the Tree of Resonant Power's canopy stretched over.

Even Yan Lingqing was struck by how beautiful Jiang Qing'e truly was at this moment.

Plus, Jiang Qing'e was so kind to Li Luo. After knowing Jiang Qing'e for so long, she had never seen her encourage and console a guy like this.

What was this tight feeling in her chest?

If she was feeling like this, imagine Li Luo. He put a hand on his own chest, trying to calm his overly excited heartbeat. "The greatest of furies are dedicated to the beautiful," he quoted.

"So, Sister Qing'e, what is it that you're actually trying to say?" he asked curiously.

Jiang Qing'e smiled at him. "Remember your promise to me? You completed the first step, getting into the Astral Sage College.

"The second step, I want you to become the strongest newcomer in the Astral Sage College.

"Gong Shenjun might be powerful, but I want everyone to know that his only advantage over you is age, and nothing else.

"So what if he's the son of the Regent? My House Luolan's young lord will not lose to him."

Li Luo was taken aback. "Er, strongest newcomer? Surely there's no need?" he protested. He had already shown his trump card, his second resonance, when he beat Duze Beixuan. And Duze Beixuan was only ranked fourth. The three ahead of Duze Beixuan were no slouches either. In fact, they were positively terrifying.

Moreover, he was pretty comfortable where he was. Strongest newcomer? The spotlights on that were a little too glaring. Not at all to his liking.

Jiang Qing'e's sweet smile was still in place. "If you complete this, I'll give you a reward, you know."

"What reward?" Li Luo's interest was piqued.

She cocked her head at him.

"I'll reward you by pretending I didn't see you and Lu Qing'er making eyes at each other?"

Li Luo almost spat blood.

Jiang Qing'e, don't think you can slander others just because you're pretty!

Chapter 0135: Mentor Chi Chan

After setting the second mini goal for Li Luo, Jiang Qing'e left with Yan Lingqing, leaving a spluttering Li Luo to fume by himself.

"That's too much."

Li Luo grumbled. But in the end, he moved past it, knowing that Jiang Qing'e was just trying to spur him on so he wouldn't rest on his laurels after getting into the Astral Sage College.

As if he would.

House Luolan was in shambles and his parents were missing. Although he had gotten into the Astral Sage College, it had come at the cost of a new Duke enemy. And there was Gong Shenjun, a smiling man with a grim plan to be his love rival.

If only he could just raise one tier a day. Five days to Duke, ten to King. He would kill Shen Jinxiao with one kick and then punch out Gong Shenjun's teeth from his sunny smile. "IF ONLY!!" He sighed.

There was no time to slack off.

"Ah, I guess I'll go see my new guardian."

He checked the information sheet that he had received. Mentor Chi Chan's address was clearly written on it, and so he checked his bearings and pushed off immediately.

Along the way, he passed many other young students all dressed in the Astral Sage College's star-speckled uniform. The number of stars indicated which hall they belonged to.

The pretty senior girls were all in short skirts, showing off plenty of leg as their skirts swished in a tantalizing manner. The Astral Sage College was indeed a place of temptation.

Enjoying the sights along the way, Li Luo eventually reached Mentor Chi Chan's place.

It was a quiet, little building with a small garden in front. Little spots of light were scattered across the ground.

Li Luo spotted a cute, little figure already there. Her hourglass figure was a marvel, and her long hair was pinned at the top with a butterfly ornament.

The gentle breeze tugged playfully at the corner of her skirt, coaxing out just a few more inches of fair leg from beneath.

Her face was extremely beautiful as well, with large, lucid eyes that spoke volumes, and a dainty, little nose and mouth.

Bai Mengmeng.

Li Luo walked up and greeted her with a smile. "Hello, Bai Mengmeng."

His sudden call made her jump, and she quickly looked up at him. Her face reddened when she looked at his face. "...Hello," she said meekly.

And then she was looking down at the ground again, her fingers tightly crossed against each other.

Wow, this was some extreme shyness. So this was what Yu Lang liked? Too bad the heavens had been deaf to his wishes. He had teamed up with Bai Doudou instead.

Bai Doudou seemed to repel all softness. Yu Lang might well be beaten up every day.

"Is this Mentor Chi Chan's place? Why didn't you go in?" Li Luo asked.

"Mentor Chi Chan said that we should go in once we're all here," Bai Mengmeng replied earnestly.

He looked around. "There's one more person, right? Called Xin Fu? He sure lacks punctuality, that loafer."

Bai Mengmeng was quiet for a beat, then she pointed to a shadow leaning against a tree. "He's there. He was here much earlier. We're waiting for you, actually."

Li Luo started. Looking closely, he saw a dark figure in the shade, dressed completely in black. The guy was even wearing a hood that covered half his face.

His eyes flitted up to meet Li Luo's own, then flicked away.

A.w.k.w.a.r.d.

Happily, the doors swung open by their own accord, and the three looked around before shuffling in.

They took the cobblestone path through the flower bushes and saw a spacious pavilion in the middle of the greenery. A bamboo curtain hung down on all sides, and windchimes adorned each corner. The breeze made them tinkle gently, a sound that soothed them.

"Come in."

A steady voice called out.

The three obediently filed in past the bamboo curtain. It was clean and neat inside, with only three futons placed in the center before a short table. A woman was sitting cross-legged behind the table, clad in mentor robes.

Purple stars glittered on her robes, enigmatic and awe-inspiring.

They were the mark of a Duke expert.

All three were trying to size up Mentor Chi Chan on the sly, awestruck by seeing this Violet Vibrance mentor up close. Her hair was tied up neatly behind her with a blue silk ribbon, but they could not see her face clearly. She had covered most of it with a black veil that only left those icy eyes exposed.

Her slightly baggy robes definitely hid some curves underneath. She had an aloof appeal that was as much cutting intelligence as it was physical.

"Greetings, Mentor." All three immediately offered her their respects.

"Sit." She indicated the three futons.

They sat.

"From today onwards, you will be my students. According to the rules of the Astral Sage College, I will guide your cultivation and see you as far as I can," she said clinically. They got the feeling that she was not too interested in them. Or in anything at all.

"Thank you, Mentor," they replied dutifully.

"No need. This is my duty. The better you perform, the higher my evaluation score from the school, and the greater my rewards. What? You think we Dukes stay in school to teach out of love?" Her blunt answer was a shocker, and the three gave sheepish smiles.

Damn teacher, if you're so blunt, how are we to cultivate that soppy teacher-student relationship?

"In school, I will get you enough resources. Of course, you have to work hard also. You can't blame it on your mentor's reputation if the outstanding Gold Gleam students steal all your resources.

"All you need to do is focus on cultivation. Ignore everything else. If there are any dirty attacks, I'll block everything that's against the rules."

Li Luo could feel her eyes on him while she said this. She was clearly referring to Shen Jinxiao.

He was touched. If he wasn't worried about his first impression being ruined, he would jump on her and hug her leg and beg for protection.

"Each of you have your own advantages.

"Li Luo has dual resonances. Xin Fu has a rare shadow resonance. Bai Mengmeng might be the weakest out of the three of you, but her Nightmarish Water Butterfly resonance is special. It's one of the rare few water beast resonances that can refine spirit liquids and purifying lights. She might not be as strong as you, but she's a genius in researching spirit liquids. The Resonance Artificers Hall has been trying to secure her entry for a long time," Mentor Chi Chan continued.

Bai Mengmeng dipped her head shyly at being praised. She suddenly felt a burning gaze and peeked up shyly to see Li Luo staring at her hungrily. He swallowed some saliva.

As though he was ready to swallow her too.

She trembled in fear.

This guy was handsome enough, but he was scary.

"Let me give you some important news next. But before that, each of you can ask me one question." Mentor Chi Chan had a neutral way of speaking that was rather reassuring.

Li Luo snuck a peek at the other two. Xin Fu was as mute as a melon. In fact, he hadn't spoken a single word. Bai Mengmeng was just super shy, so he hesitated a little, but he eventually raised his hand. "Speak."

Li Luo's eyes were rather serious, but there was no hesitation in his question.

"Mentor, what is the Noble's War?"

When he asked, it almost seemed like the windchimes quietened and the wind died. A sudden blanket of silence fell on them, caused by the change in mood of the Duke expert before them.

Chapter 0136: The Truths of the World

Within the pavilion, the subsiding of wind and chimes made the silence pronounced.

Li Luo looked straight at Mentor Chi Chan. Her composure seemed to slip a little, and she sealed off all sound by manipulating the worldly natural energy around them.

Evidently, the Noble's War was an important term even for a Duke expert like her.

Xin Fu and Bai Mengmeng were looking at him sideways as well. This guy's question seemed to have managed to unsettle even their mentor.

They had vaguely heard of the Noble's War before, but they were equally clueless about it. After all, it was so far removed from their lives.

The silence continued for a while.

"Because of your parents?" Mentor Chi Chan broke the silence herself.

Li Luo nodded solemnly.

"Your question," she said slowly, "actually touches on the heart of what I was about to tell you next.

"About the truth of this world."

The three of them were puzzled. "The truth of this world?"

"First, I need to explain this world... You all know of the Xia Kingdom. You also know that there are other kingdoms besides Xia. But what about beyond that?" she asked.

The three struggled to process this. To them, the Xia Kingdom was huge enough, vast beyond any hopes of conquering. It was hard to even think of life outside of Xia when it concerned them so little.

"The Xia Kingdom is located in the East Divine Continent, where there are factions as plentiful as the stars. The Xia Kingdom is counted among one of the strongest powers here, but we are not without our enemies. There are three others here just as strong as the Xia Kingdom. They are the Golden Lion Court, the Iron Sand Empire, and the Holy Sun Dynasty.

"Outside of the East Divine Continent, there are nine other divine continents. The ten divine continents make up the foundation of all humankind."

This information was mind-bending. The sheer scale of the world was something that was hard to process immediately.

The Xia Kingdom that had always been their world... how small it actually was.

"In these three nations, there are also sage colleges that are comparable in strength to the Astral Sage College."

She looked at her three students. "Do you know why these schools exist? Why they were built?" The three shook their heads dumbly.

"Because of the Academic Federation." There was a mark of respect in her eyes when she spoke these words.

"Academic Federation?"

She nodded. "The Academic Federation is one of the most powerful entities in this world. All the elite schools across all 10 divine continents are its members. The Astral Sage College is one of them."

They inhaled sharply. Such an incredibly powerful body. They shuddered at the thought. The Astral Sage College was already an unfathomable power to them. But now Mentor Chi Chan was telling them that

similar powers were dispersed all over, and the Astral Sage College was but a member of this greater Academic Federation?

How freaking powerful could the federation be?

It was truly hard to comprehend.

Li Luo was thinking about something else: what was the reason for something of such power to exist? To rule the 10 divine continents?

"You might be thinking why such an entity like the Academic Federation exists," she continued, as if reading their minds. "The Academic Federation exists because Others exist."

She emphasized the word, speaking it with uncharacteristic hatred.

The three felt a chill. For some reason, their instincts were telling them to be very afraid.

"What is that?" Li Luo finally pressed.

"It's said that countless years ago, human civilization reached a golden era. In those days, countless technologies were born. The strength of humankind was incredible. We prospered, and as a result, we violated nature itself. A devastating change happened. A reflection of our world appeared.

"That reflected world is known as the shadow world."

Li Luo hung on to her every word, as incredible as it sounded.

Another world?

How strong was it? How strong was humankind back then? Was the average person a Duke or something?

"The reflected world was not too great a problem when it first appeared. But we did not know that it could gather the evil thoughts of the entire human race. At some point, from evil intention, the Others were born. They inherited human powers and grew strong very quickly.

"Others are unknowable, untouchable. They are extremely dangerous and hard to destroy. Moreover, they can eat away at our minds with their corrupting influence. These Others are like a plague, a virus. When they appeared in this world, they caused untold damage, killing and creating chaos.

"Others were born of humankind's evil, and they toppled us from our glory.

"After innumerable years of war and purging, we humans finally managed to gather the tremendous energy needed to sever the two worlds, stopping the corruption of the reflected world. But not completely. The Nobles' Battlefields are the places where our world joins the shadow realm.

"The killing has never stopped since.

"The Academic Federation's existence is to eradicate and repel the Others. It exists for the Others. You could even say that it safeguards the survival of all humankind."

Li Luo's mouth was a little dry. "So the Kings and Dukes enter the Nobles' Battlefield to fight the Others and stop them from invading our world?"

Chi Chan was silent for a while. "Yes," she finally said. "The Nobles' Battlefield is brutal, far more than you can ever imagine. This is also why only Kings and Dukes can enter. Only they stand a chance of surviving.

"When Dukes go to the Noble's War, not even one in ten make it out alive."

Li Luo felt cold then, a cold despair that chilled every last inch of his body. His parents had gone to great danger.

"Why must they go?" Li Luo asked, trembling.

"Because if the Kings and Dukes do not go, then the Others will enter our world. The devastation and killing they would bring is unimaginable."

"Why my parents?" Li Luo pleaded.

If the Nobles' Battlefield was such a dreadful place, one where even Duke experts could not protect themselves, why had Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan cast him and Jiang Qing'e behind and gone ahead? Other Duke experts treated it as warily as a hungry tiger. But they had gone ahead?

"I understand your thinking. Not every Duke expert has the courage to enter the Nobles' Battlefield, because the death rate is too high.

"Humans once tried not entering the Nobles' Battlefield. But in the end, it resulted in outbreaks of Others. They rampaged across the divine continents, wreaking havoc beyond imagination.

"Through long years of experimentation, we found that once the number of Kings and Dukes falls below a certain level, an outbreak of Others is triggered. We would have no choice but to send in reinforcements. Of course, most of them will be Dukes..." she said softly.

The three were rigid with fear now. These Others seemed to be forcing humans to sacrifice a never-ending stream of Kings and Dukes as cannon fodder.

"The Nobles' Battlefield is too dangerous, and so eventually we all resorted to a lottery to choose the next candidates.

"It is known as the death lottery, divided into white and black slips. White means life, black means death. Those who draw black are sent to the Nobles' Battlefield."

Chi Chan looked at Li Luo. "Both your parents drew black slips. They went to the Nobles' Battlefield.

"They did not want to leave you, but they had to. No one can defy the death lottery. Those who do..." Her face grew very serious.

"...have no place to be throughout the 10 divine continents."

Chapter 0137: I'll Be Leader

Silence greeted Chi Chan's remarks.

The three students were still reeling from the magnitude of the information they had just received. No one had told them about the cruel reality of their world before.

They understood, however. Such news would cause widespread panic. It was best kept classified.

"The Nobles' Battlefield is special. Although death and danger are everywhere, they come hand in hand with opportunities. According to some rough statistics, there are far more Dukes who rise to King on the Nobles' Battlefield compared to their counterparts outside.

"There are also many brave Dukes who volunteer to go and train themselves.

"But whether volunteers or conscripts, everyone who goes to the Nobles' Battlefield deserves our respect," she said softly while looking at Li Luo. "Because they have gone, those of us who remain can cultivate in peace and improve ourselves.

"They are heroes."

Li Luo was silent. Heroes? He felt a little sick. Given the choice, which parent would willingly abandon their child for that place of death?

"Although the Nobles' Battlefield is the main channel through which Others enter our world, it is not the only one. The Others are constantly opening new pathways, which we call Other Nestportals.

"Other Nestportals are unpredictable. Each unpredicted appearance causes countless deaths. Entire nations have even been wiped out before, with no one left alive within a 10,000 mile radius.

"Other Nestportals are the grim objective of the Academic Federation. Once one appears, all schools must immediately send their best to exterminate it.

"The various nations are constantly locked in endless conflict, and even the schools are always competing. But against the Others, all differences are put aside."

She spoke gently, knowing the impact of what she had just dropped on these children. In a few short moments, their peaceful bubbles had been shattered. Now they were faced with a greater reality, and their stress was compounded.

"There is no need to worry too much about this. The Others are a common threat to all of humanity, but that's not something you kids should worry about. If the sky falls, taller people will hold it up," she quipped wittily.

They forced smiles. Such news needed time to digest. But she was indeed right—such information was meant to broaden their horizons. Given their current strength, they had neither the ability nor the position to worry about the Others. It was a distant problem.

But now Li Luo understood why Jiang Qing'e had been so reticent on the topic. It would only have added to his worries needlessly.

He couldn't very well go charging to the Nobles' Battlefield where his parents were, no matter how worried he was.

He felt anew just how important it was to be powerful.

The Others had to be put aside. He had to worry about conquering the Astral Sage College first. No matter how scary they were, they couldn't be any scarier than him being dead in five years, could they?

How was he supposed to be scared of anything if he was dead?

This seemed to ease the tightness in his chest a little.

As they each dealt with the information in their own ways, the atmosphere of tension slowly ebbed.

Mentor Chi Chan did not speak further on the Others or the Nobles' Battlefield. "From now on, you three will live in the adjacent building. There are three floors, one for each of you.

"I will individually instruct you each day during cultivation, and also apply for cultivation resources for you."

Li Luo's eyes lit up. "Can we get spirit liquids and purifying lights?" he asked eagerly. "I just need sixth-grade ones. Not too many, even ten a month would be good."

She shot him a look. "You think the Astral Sage College is a charity?" she demanded. "Who's going to pay for ten sixth-grade spirit liquids a month!?"

"What about five?!" Li Luo argued.

"None! The Astral Sage College doesn't hand out spirit liquids like door gifts!" she snapped at him.

"But if you really need spirit liquids and purifying lights, I can help you speak to the Resonance Artificers Hall. They produce some, but you will have to pay. Since you're a student of the school, they might give you a ten percent discount."

Pay?

That sucked.

Li Luo sighed. He had thought things would go a little more smoothly.

"Mentor, can I ask another question?" he tried again.

She stared at him, then at Bai Mengmeng and Xin Fu, who were quiet. This Li Luo was an unruly one.

"Speak."

"Please," he asked seriously, "would you tell me how to get Royal Sap?"

"Royal Sap?" she repeated. "You're really not one to aim low, are you?" she said with some dry humor in her voice. "Royal Sap is a precious resource in the school. If you contribute to the school, you might be rewarded with some."

"What counts as contribution?" he asked curiously.

"For example, winning glory for the school and what not... Didn't I just get through telling you that the Astral Sage College is not without its rivals? Even in the East Divine Continent, there's endless competition. Powers as numerous as the stars, and sage colleges are not rare. They're our rivals for sure. Who doesn't want to become the strongest school in the East Divine Continent?"

"You should know that the strongest school in the East Divine Continent is richly supported with resources from the Academic Federation. The entire school benefits. The competition to win that title is intense.

"And of course, the competition cannot be between the mentors or principals. That would be unbecoming. It has to be in competitions between students.

"If you do well in those competitions, the school would be happy to provide you all the Royal Sap you wish."

Li Luo's face fell. This smacked strongly of the same process as Southwind Academy. Wasn't Southwind just as obsessed with being the best school in the Tianshu Province? The Astral Sage College was just as shallow! Just what kind of irony was this?

More importantly, he was just a One Star Hall student. Where was he going to get resources to fight for the Astral Sage College? Clearly, that was for stronger students in the Four Star Hall, or those like Jiang Qing'e, right?

"Besides interschool competitions, if you can earn 5,000 points in school, you may also redeem a Royal Sap," Chi Chan added.

"School points? 5,000?" All three looked curious.

"There's nothing strange about it. Your daily performance and missions will earn you points. Each month's exams, school missions—there are countless ways to earn points. The school point system is meant to encourage the students' cultivation. It is a time-tested method.

"Do not underestimate these points. They can not only get you many special cultivation resources that only the school has, they can even get you Duke energy cultivation arts. They have many uses, and they will follow you through your entire school life. It's best to accumulate those points diligently," she advised them.

"Monthly exams?" Li Luo repeated doubtfully. These school points seemed hard to get.

Perhaps he could buy them off others with skygold?

All sorts of clever thoughts were springing forth in his head. He was the young lord of House Luolan after all. He still had some sort of backing.

Mentor Chi Chan seemed to read his mind. "Points must be earned individually. They cannot be traded, and the school severely punishes such actions. Each student must respect this well."

Li Luo blushed inwardly, but he showed nothing at all outside. He turned to Bai Mengmeng and Xin Fu. "Heard that, guys? Remember the mentor's teachings, and don't sully our group's name."

Bai Mengmeng blinked back at him innocently. Xin Fu just looked at him.

"Also, you three are a group from now on. If there are any missions, you three will probably move together. It's best that you choose a group leader among yourselves. Someone to sort out internal troubles when they pop up," she continued, ignoring his rubbish.

"Leader?"

Li Luo recoiled inwardly. No privileges and all responsibility. Definitely a euphemism for scapegoat. No thanks.

Only an unlucky child would be saddled with such a role.

Li Luo entered a state of great mindfulness. With his eyes, he observed his nose. With his nose, he took in the smells of his being. He was peaceful, he was invisible. The moment one of the other two made a sound, he would jump behind them, full support, no questions asked.

"Xin Fu is moving... Youngsters, they just can't sit still."

Li Luo could sense a disturbance by his side. He smiled in victory.

Xin Fu raised his hand. A bare whisper came from under the hood. "I... forfeit."

Bai Mengmeng looked at the floor. "Me... me too," she said in a small voice.

Mentor Chi Chan nodded, then turned to Li Luo. "They've forfeited. That means Li Luo's the leader," she said decisively.

His smile froze on his face. He swore inwardly.

Damn! He had let his guard down. These clowns were even weaker than he had imagined.

"I was still observing you guys! Yet you quit on me?!"

What kind of fighting spirit was that?!

Chapter 0138: Group Dynamics

In another building, while Li Luo was being sabotaged into becoming the leader by default.

Yu Lang was sitting docilely on his futon, with Bai Doudou and another youth called Qiu Luo to his left and right.

In front of them was a scrappy-haired guy who just looked really dowdy overall. He stretched out lazily. This was the Violet Vibrance mentor called Mi Er.

"Well, I've told y'all all y'all need to know. Anyways, work hard, eh," Mi Er said, getting to his feet.

"Anything else to ask?"

Yu Lang and Bai Doudou shook their heads, but Qiu Luo shot Yu Lang a haughty look. "Teacher, I want to know why we have such a weak teammate.

"Put bluntly, he will only drag us down. He might even affect our team's evaluation score."

Yu Lang's eyelid twitched, but his smile remained in place. He stayed silent.

Bai Doudou frowned slightly.

Mentor Mi Er smiled back. "Why must you slight your teammate so?"

"I'm not slighting him. That's just the level he's on. I don't like carrying deadweight around. Sixth-grade resonance, Ninth Seal cultivation? He is not fit to be my teammate."

Mentor Mi Er stroked his chin. "Well, I had a sixth-grade wind resonance myself back when I became a Duke."

Qiu Luo was shocked. "But still, not every sixth-grade resonance cultivator can mirror Mentor's achievements," he argued.

Mentor Mi Er smiled. "Yu Lang might not be as naturally gifted as you are, but he will be a good teammate. Trust me."

He turned and left.

Qiu Luo shook his head in frustration. "I have no idea how you fumbled your way into a violet talisman, but if you force your way into a class above your own, the only one who will suffer is yourself."

"You will see that even the Gold Gleam students will overtake you," he said as a parting shot.

Yu Lang frowned slightly as he watched Qiu Luo go.

"Taunts are just hot air. If you believe in yourself, work hard and chase him," Bai Doudou said neutrally.

"The only thing scorn does is fuel my motivation!" Yu Lang vowed. "Qiu Luo, eh..."

Bai Doudou nodded to herself. Yu Lang might seem wayward, but he was quite a passionate guy. Perhaps some provocation from Qiu Luo would turn out to be constructive.

"I'll get my good brother Li Luo to beat him up!" Yu Lang finished with vindictive triumph.

Bai Doudou almost bit her tongue. She clutched her chest. How naive had she been? Had she really believed in this guy for a moment?

She shot him a glare of disgust and turned away as well.

Yu Lang watched her leave. He gave a bitter chuckle and then sighed.

It seemed being a Violet Vibrance student wasn't going to be a walk in the park...

...

"You guys drink?"

Lu Qing'er looked at the burly middle-aged man grinning as he clutched a wine jar. He spoke to them with a companionable air, as though ready to pour for them if they indicated.

Lu Qing'er was a little troubled.

This was her Violet Vibrance mentor, Cao Sheng?

He didn't look reliable at all.

She sighed inwardly. Beside her, Yin Yue was shaking her head as well. She looked to be quite the cultured lady. It seemed like the two of them were the only sane ones in the room.

Which brought her to the last person. Qin Zhulu stood impassively in a corner, leaving a healthy and reasonable distance of 800 meters between him and the girls. If not for the limits of the room, Lu Qing'er was quite sure he wouldn't even be in sight.

"Is he that scared of women..."

Lu Qing'er shook her head, sharing an exasperated look with Yin Yue.

"Why wasn't I in the same group as Li Luo..." Lu Qing'er gritted her teeth. She had hoped so hard for it.

"Keke, I say, Qing'er." Mentor Cao Sheng hiccuped warmly at her.

Lu Qing'er forced an uncomfortable smile. "Mentor."

"How is your mother?" he suddenly asked roughly.

A look of surprise flitted across her face. Yin Yue was looking over, curiosity clear on her face. Even Qin Zhulu had looked up.

"Mentor you... know my mother?" Lu Qing'er asked with uncertainty.

"Oh yes, old friends," Cao Sheng said with a soft sigh that hinted at a deep story.

"I can't help but remember her once I see you..."

"You didn't choose me because of that, did you Mentor?" she asked sharply.

"Oh no, no. Your potential qualifies you to be a Violet Vibrance student, Qing'er. Don't sell yourself short," he hurriedly clarified.

"..." She clenched her fist suspiciously. He was looking very guilty.

She would have to ask her mother properly on her next trip home.

.....

"I only have one command for the three of you. Become the strongest group among the newcomers," Shen Jinxiao said, cold eyes regarding Wang Hejiu, Duze Beixuan, and Qi Luozi. Beneath his calm tone, there was an implicit demand of absolute submission, and a threat of what would happen otherwise.

All three nodded seriously.

"Beixuan, you lost to Li Luo in the Choosing, but there is no need to be discouraged. You were simply caught off guard by his dual resonances. Li Luo's second resonance is of a low grade. His potential is limited."

His chilling gaze lingered on Duze Beixuan. "I hope you can redeem yourself next time you face him. Students of Shen Jinxiao do not lose to the same person twice. Isn't that so?"

Duze Beixuan was sweating from the pressure. "Do not worry, Mentor. I will cultivate as hard as I can to wash this shame away!"

Shen Jinxiao's eyes flicked down. "Lose again, and I will have to get Wang Hejiu to win back your pride."

Wang Hejiu opened his jade fan, smiling as he tapped it against his palm.

Li Luo?

Lu Qing'er had sacrificed herself against him, all for this guy.

If given the chance, he would love to test the power of the young Luolan lord's dual resonances. If the young lord lost, perhaps Lu Qing'er would give him a chance.

The image of her unblemished, porcelain hands still remained fresh in his memory. He was a perfectionist, and he cherished the flawless. Those slim, jade-like hands were perfect works of art. If he could just clasp them to his breast, that would be the greatest pleasure in life.

"If you need something, just say the word." He smiled at Duzhe Beixuan

Duzhe Beixuan looked back at him emotionlessly. He then bowed to Shen Jinxiao and left.

Chapter 0139: My Team

The next morning.

Li Luo had risen and washed up. He was standing on the balcony on the third floor, looking out at the grounds. Across the carefully gardened greenery, he could see groups of students wearing heavy, specialized suits of armor and running in cadence, sweat pouring down their backs.

This heavy armor was able to suppress one's resonant power. Therefore, the wearer had to constantly expend resonant power to counter its weight, or be crushed under it. Privately, the students gave it the nickname of troll armor.

This was life at the Astral Sage College.

Full of hope and light.

Li Luo stretched lazily. He patted his groaning stomach and then headed downstairs.

On the second floor, he saw an easel set up, and a black-robed figure hunched over it, moving his brush with great concentration.

Li Luo sauntered over. "Morning, Xin Fu," he greeted.

Xin Fu glanced at him from under his hood and gave him a barely perceptible nod.

After a day together, Li Luo already knew that he was as reticent as could be. He was like a living shadow. If you did not look out for him, you would totally forget he was there.

Still, Li Luo was the leader, so he felt like he should show some concern for his fellow teammates.

He stood beside Xin Fu and looked at his easel. He scratched his chin and appreciated his work. "Your chicken drawing has great charm, I say."

Xin Fu's brush stopped. A few seconds later, he quietly said, "I'm drawing a phoenix."

Li Luo almost fell over backwards. He looked at the little chicken, er, phoenix, on the canvas suspiciously... The thing was a few grains of rice away from a chicken drawing, damn it.

A phoenix? Just how underfed are your phoenixes, for goodness' sake! They're scrawny!

"Did you just start painting? It's not a bad hobby. Helps to regulate the emotions and all that," Li Luo finally said after some long thought.

Xin Fu's brush started its unsteady journey across the white paper again. "I've been painting for ten years now," he finally said after an even longer pause.

Li Luo almost added a spray of blood across the painting. His mind couldn't take much more. Ten years? And he was still this bad? I could draw better with my feet!

Forget it, a strange teammate. Let it be.

He quietly headed downstairs.

On the first floor, Li Luo was just contemplating what to do for the morning meal when Bai Mengmeng appeared in a short skirt-apron in the living room. She carefully placed breakfast on the table.

Looking up at Li Luo with large, liquid eyes, her face broke out in an endearing smile. "Good morning, Leader. I've made breakfast, no need to go to the school canteen." Looking at this adorable, little angel, Li Luo's heart lightened. Luckily, he had one normal teammate.

Considerably cheered up, he said thanks and sat down. The first mouthful of food stopped right behind his teeth, as if frozen in time.

He stared at the food, appalled. It looked like it had been prepared with great care, but it tasted like pig feed. He could not imagine how she had done it.

Careless, he was.

A normal teammate, he thought he had.

Just kill me now, I'm tired of it all.

"Leader, what's wrong? Is it... not good?" Bai Mengmeng asked anxiously, seeing his odd reaction.

Li Luo looked at her anxious face. So pure. So cute. He swallowed, both the food and his real thoughts. "Delicious," he said with a smile.

She gave him a happy and relieved smile.

He spotted Xin Fu coming down the stairs. "Brother Xin Fu, come quickly!" he called out heartily. "Mengmeng has made breakfast!" Xin Fu stared at the very pleased Li Luo suspiciously, but he ended up walking over. Bai Mengmeng quickly offered him up a serving of breakfast too. He said an awkward thank you and took it.

The first mouthful of food stopped right behind his teeth, as if frozen in time. He looked up at a beaming Li Luo with a complex expression. He swallowed, then reached for another big bite. "Leader," he mumbled, "Mengmeng's hard work was all for us. We will finish the food."

"Damn, this guy doesn't hold back," Li Luo thought. Under the earnest and hopeful gaze of Bai Mengmeng, he began to shovel it down too.

Bai Mengmeng's eyes crinkled happily. She hummed as she served herself and then began eating with enjoyment.

Looking at how happy she was, Li Luo and Xin Fu stared at each other, confirming confusion in the other's eyes. Did she actually like the food? The Bai family was an ancient family from the Gusu Province. They held great power in the Xia Kingdom. Surely their food could not be this bad, right?

Li Luo shook his head in sympathy for Bai Mengmeng.

The door was pushed open, and Chi Chan strode in. She waved to indicate they need not rise.

"Today, we will begin the first lesson. Later, you will go with me to the underground training room," she said. **noVe-Lb-In**

"Mentor, when can we go to the Tree of Resonant Power?" Li Luo asked.

Bai Mengmeng and Xin Fu looked up as well, interested. It was perhaps what all newcomers looked forward to the most. The Tree of Resonant Power, whose canopy shaded the school. It was the symbol that everyone recognized.

"The worldly natural energy near the Tree of Resonant Power is too overwhelming. New students can only go there once every three days as it is too much for you," she explained. "So you can only go tomorrow."

They nodded, impressed. The Trees of Resonant Power in their previous schools were daily visits. Here, they could only go once every three days because of how powerful it was...?

What a luxurious reason.

After breakfast, the three eagerly followed Chi Chan to the underground room.

Guidance from a Duke Stage expert!

First up was Li Luo, while Bai Mengmeng and Xin Fu sat cross-legged at the side to observe.

"Give me your hand."

She reached out with her own.

Li Luo hesitated a moment, but eventually he stretched his hand out.

He knew that she wanted to examine the dual resonances within him more clearly, to better guide him.

He hesitated because of his third resonant palace.

At this stage, he did not want to reveal it yet. Dual resonances were enough to make his enemies sit up and notice the young lord, but things were still under control. But if his third resonant palace were exposed, he would be public enemy number one.

House Luolan's enemies would not wait until he continued maturing. They might strike immediately, and perhaps not even a Violet Vibrance mentor would be able to protect him from them. The Astral Sage College might be a strong deterrence, but why even put himself in such a situation?

Still, there was no reason to refuse here. His third resonant palace had yet to be opened; it was currently hidden deep in his body. If she did not go too deep, it would be hard to discover.

Calming himself, he stretched out his hand, allowing her to grasp his wrist.

Chapter 0140: First Lesson

Mentor Chi Chan closed her eyes and felt out Li Luo's body. He stared back at her black-veiled face intensely.

"Hmm?"

She mused.

His heart almost stopped. "You have a water resonance and a wood resonance, right? Your water resonance feels like a sixth-grade, but the purity... strange. It's comparable to an upper seventh... Your wood resonance is much weaker, only a fourth-grade, but it has the same strange purity."

She looked at him curiously. "Did you use some special treasure? Your resonant power is quite high quality."

"Perhaps." Li Luo shrugged vaguely.

She was intrigued, but not too surprised. Li Luo was the young lord of House Luolan after all. His parents were Duke experts, and it was not surprising that they would leave him treasures to improve his resonant power purity.

"Li Luo, your second resonance grade might not be high, but having dual resonances is your greatest advantage. It's a power not usually unlocked before the Duke Stage.

"Although you cannot possibly master both fully, even skimming the top is enough for you to enjoy a unique advantage.

"Use your dual resonances."

Li Luo complied, calling forth blue and green in a splendid color display around him.

Bai Mengmeng and Xin Fu watched with interest. It was their first time seeing someone with dual resonances before the Duke Stage.

"Your resonant power... you have two resonances, but not a dual resonance. You cannot even combine them in a simple manner." She shook her head. "A true dual resonance is perfectly melded; a single resonant power with two distinct properties. The resulting power is far stronger than ordinary resonant power.

"In your current state, you would have to channel water resonant power to use a water resonance technique and then switch to wood resonant power to use a wood resonance technique. It's too complicated and tricky. Your opponent will easily break through the gaps."

Li Luo thought this over. Indeed, his two resonant powers were very clearly separated. They could be used in a way that did not interfere with each other, but they were not combined.

He was just not strong enough.

"Want to see a real dual resonance?" she asked with a proud smile.

Li Luo nodded eagerly.

She lifted her palm and called forth a roaring wave of resonant power. The sound of water filled the training room.

And then he saw the gushing water resonant power coalesce before Mentor Chi Chan, forming a blue tiger that stood ten feet tall at the shoulders.

It was deep blue in color, but it had a sparkle like jade. Its roar was an earsplitting roar of both tiger and ocean.

Li Luo trembled as he looked at it. The blue tiger looked so real.

"My first resonance, as you should be able to tell, is a water resonance.

"Do you know my second?" Chi Chan asked.

Li Luo took a closer look at the blue tiger. "A beast resonance?" he ventured.

She inclined her head. "Indeed, my second resonance is an upper seventh-grade jade tiger resonance."

Li Luo was awed all over again. No wonder she was an ambivalent character of calm and fierceness. Her second resonance was... a mother tiger.

This time, she could not glean Li Luo's train of thought from the look on his face. "This blue jadewater tiger is the amalgamation of both my resonances. It has the supine power of my water resonance, and also the ferocity of my jade tiger..."

"It is very strong. Ordinary Heavenly Dipper Generals cannot even take a single swipe from its paw."

Li Luo was impressed. This was what a Duke's dual resonance could achieve? Heavenly Dipper Generals were already quite a force to be reckoned with in his book. But they would be smacked into oblivion by this blue tiger. He was made keenly aware of just how strong a Duke expert was.

Compared to this, the two separate powers within him were as unmerged as could be.

He wasn't discouraged. Although dual resonances were hard to cultivate, he was already one leg in. Others weren't even qualified to start this journey.

And he was pleased with the power that was promised, on display before him.

"Cultivating dual resonances comes in three steps. First, a minor merging. Second, two becoming one. Thirdly, sentience. For those at the Duke Stage, they normally do not need any special cultivation, and the third step comes naturally for them. Of course, that's for Duke cultivators. Don't try jumping the gun.

"If you can reach the first step, you'll be able to combine the two powers for a short while. That alone will allow you to fight like a fish in water at the Resonant Master Stage.

"Next, I will force your two resonant powers to merge through external power every day. You need to get the feeling of two powers merging, and try to get them to interact.

"Don't expect to get there any time soon. You're not at the Duke level. Take it slowly," she counseled.

Li Luo nodded eagerly. "Thank you, Mentor," he said gratefully.

Only a true Duke expert could guide him to experience dual resonance cultivation properly. If he were to experiment it alone, who knew how much effort and time he would take?

"Also, you're learning the refining arts?"

"I have some understanding of the refining arts. I'm a passable seventh-grade resonance artificer, and also hold a post at the Resonance Artificers Hall... You can ask me if you have questions about that aspect as well," she mentioned off-handedly.

Li Luo blinked. "Great Mentor, Madam, I would very much like to stick to you like a wart. May I?"

That was what he would really love to say to her now.

A seventh-grade resonance artificer was considered top-class in the Xia Kingdom.

If one wanted to bring their villa to the top ten level, a seventh-grade resonance artificer was an anchor of top-class reputation.

Having one guide him in the refining arts... This wasn't a mentor, this was an angel!

He realized just how much of a leg up it was to secure a Violet Vibrance mentor.

She gave him a few more pointers, then she turned to Xin Fu and Bai Mengmeng. Before they knew it, most of the day had passed.

"We'll stop here for today. Our future lessons will be conducted similarly. I have no strict demands of you, but there is a ranking battle in the Astral Sage College at the end of every month. They are team battles, not individual ones. Those that place well will win school points. They are one of the numerous ways available to accumulate points.

"Also, if a Violet Vibrance team is overtaken by a Gold Gleam team three times consecutively, then the weakest of that team might be eliminated. Of course, exceptions can be made, such as for excellent refining researchers like Mengmeng..." she said to them.

They nodded seriously.

It looked like Violet Vibrance students couldn't let their guard down one bit.

After enjoying the perks of a Violet Vibrance mentor, none of them were willing to let them go. Li Luo was feeling this acutely now.

However, kicking him down to 30th place was quite out of the question.

Although... that Yu Lang punk might be in danger.

Li Luo frowned, worried.

Hopefully, the wastrel would buck up...