

Resonance 141

Chapter 0141: Hidden Enemy

Li Luo sprang out of bed the next morning, eager to visit the Tree of Resonant Power.

He washed up and then headed downstairs.

On the second floor, Xin Fu's black hood was closely bent over a canvas. This time, Li Luo kept his concern to himself and headed downstairs.

On the first floor, Bai Mengmeng was busy in the kitchen, carefully preparing breakfast.

Looking at the beautiful girl, Li Luo sighed. They said beauty stimulated hunger, but he couldn't very well eat like that forever.

Suddenly, there was a knock on the door. He opened it to a familiar and gorgeous face.

"Sister Qing'e?" Li Luo exclaimed with a delighted smile.

Her elegant figure was framed beautifully in the door, legs demurely put together from under her battle skirt.

She was glowing in the morning light.

Hanging on her finger was a little bag, which she handed over to Li Luo with a smile.

"This is the most famous red glutinous cake from the Astral Sage College's canteen. It's the best breakfast."

"You're a savior!" he cried, hot tears of gratitude almost leaking from his eyes.

"Any later, and I would be tortured again." He gestured ominously inside.

She looked past him to the cute figure of Bai Mengmeng bobbing around the kitchen. "Benefiting from the situation and STILL playing coy? Hmph!"

"You have to eat it yourself to know," Li Luo said morosely.

She ignored that. "Walk with me."

Clearly, she had something on her mind. He informed Bai Mengmeng and followed her out.

There was a lake nearby, its mirror-like surface unrippled as a light, morning mist protectively hovered above it.

Huffing and puffing students in troll armor occasionally jogged past them. They could not resist throwing intensely jealous looks at Li Luo, who had the privilege of taking a morning stroll by Jiang Qing'e's side.

After all, she was a Three Star Hall student and was famous throughout school. She was just about as popular as the Four Star Hall First Princess.

Li Luo had grown immune to those looks a long time ago. "So," he said through a big bite of red glutinous cake, "what's up?"

She regarded him for a moment with her golden eyes. "About the Nobles' Battlefield. Has your mentor told you about it?"

His hand paused midway to the bag of cake.

He nodded heavily. "No wonder you didn't tell me earlier," he said quietly.

"It would have been unnecessary stress."

"Well, I'm too weak to do anything about it," he said regretfully.

"Me too," she said softly. "There's no need to beat yourself up over it. A goal is not a bad thing."

He nodded. The pounding feet of morning joggers in step filled the silence. "I wonder how my parents are..."

"They're surely fine. We shouldn't worry ourselves needlessly. Rather than worry about their safety at the Nobles' Battlefield, we would do well to be more careful here," she warned.

He frowned. "What do you mean?"

She walked beneath a willow tree and looked down into the water. Li Luo sensed a hardness about her.

"You know how people are chosen for the Nobles' Battlefield?"

"Death lottery," he said.

"There aren't too many Duke experts in the Xia Kingdom, roughly a few dozen... Both the Master and Mistress drawing the black at the same time seems... too coincidental."

Her quiet voice barely carried across to his ear. He shivered in the rapidly-warming morning sun and felt some blood drain from his face.

"You mean... they were sabotaged?" Li Luo whispered.

She reached out to catch a falling leaf. "I have no evidence. Just a guess, an instinct."

"But manipulating the death lottery is beyond the average person. Who could be that powerful?"

She toyed absently with the leaf. "If I had to guess, only three factions in the Xia Kingdom possess that power."

"The Astral Sage College, the royal court, and the Golden Dragon Bank."

Li Luo swallowed a lump in his throat. Indeed, these three were the strongest factions in the Xia Kingdom. But what could be their motive? Was there really one?

"I know this guess sounds far-fetched, so I haven't voiced it yet. But now you are in Xia City, and also at the Astral Sage College. You're starting to move into the radar of various powers, so I thought you better be warned. Perhaps I'm merely seeing things in the shadows. But it's always better to be careful."

He nodded. "It all comes back to not being strong enough."

She nodded with deep feeling. If only she was a Duke already. She could pursue her suspicions freely then, with no fear of recourse.

They suddenly heard footsteps nearby, and both turned to face their source.

"Keke, Senior Jiang, I thought I recognized your back profile. It's really you." A cheerful voice called out. Li Luo saw that it belonged to a strapping youth.

He was reasonably handsome, with piercing eyes and a noble brow. He wore his troll armor easily, his expression untroubled. He was clearly quite a strong cultivator.

There were two stars on his uniform, marking him as a Two Star Hall student, which was one higher than Li Luo.

The stranger met his gaze with an affable smile. "You're Junior Li Luo? I've heard of you. I'm Ye Qiuding, a Two Star Hall student."

"Hello, Senior Ye," Li Luo replied back.

"You need something?" Jiang Qing'e asked mildly.

Ye Qiuding hurriedly waved. "We have just finished training and have picked this as our rest spot. I happened to spot Senior Jiang here and thought to come say hi. Did I interrupt something?"

Li Luo saw a big group of a few dozen resting nearby. They were all dressed in troll armor, panting and sweating heavily.

All of them were Two Star Hall students.

Some of the resting students were looking at Ye Qiuding talk to Jiang Qing'e, knowing smiles and sniggers on their faces.

Jiang Qing'e shook her head. "I just bought Li Luo breakfast."

Ye Qiuding looked at the red glutinous cake in Li Luo's hand enviously. "That's the first time I've seen Senior Jiang deliver anyone breakfast. Junior Li Luo, you're a lucky man."

"Keke, I won't intrude any further. Senior Jiang, please feel free to find me if you need me for any more missions in the future. I will definitely do my best."

He smiled cutely at her and waved as he left.

Li Luo sighed irritably as he left, then he pointed accusingly at Jiang Qing'e with the red glutinous cake in hand.

"Tell me, just what is going on here?"

"From the moment I stepped into the Astral Sage College, it's been old lions and mean wolves salivating over you. And now this rambunctious puppy... My goodness, the variety is endless. Jiang Qing'e, are you asking to be punished by the House?"

Chapter 0142: Resonant Luminescence

Lakeside.

Jiang Qing'e looked at Li Luo's "stern" stance in amusement. She then looked back out at the still lake, Ye Qiuding already forgotten.

She knew he was kidding.

"Have you forgotten how the House settles disputes? Shall we adjourn to the sparring room?" she asked with a trace of relish.

Li Luo hurriedly pulled his accusing finger back. "I'm trying to have a civil conversation here. How barbaric of you. My mother really raised a bad girl."

She laughed. "That guy's reputation in the Two Star Hall is pretty good. He's probably ranked in the top three."

"We had a mission where we needed a new student. He was quite good, so we asked him. That's how I know him. That's all."

"Cai Wei and Lingqing told me that I would understand what unstoppable charm looked like when I got into the Astral Sage College. I guess this is it."

Jiang Qing'e shook her head. She couldn't be bothered answering that tired topic.

"All I want right now is to get to the Duke Stage as quickly as possible. To protect you, to protect House Luolan, and also investigate the death lottery for my mentors."

"Anything or anyone else..."

"I would be happy if they fell off the edge of the world," she said indifferently.

Scary.

She looked back at him and smiled, stretching out a hand to ruffle his head out of habit.

This time, he intercepted her, catching her little hand within his own.

She was surprised but didn't flinch, only looking at him in amusement.

"Look, Qing'e," Li Luo grumbled. "If you could be a bit more appropriately demure at a time like this, I think the mood would be great."

Jiang Qing'e thought about it. "Demure?"

Her amusement showed even more.

"I want to fulfill your wish, Li Luo, but it's impossible before you defeat me."

He was crying inside. Life was hard when your fiance was too outstanding.

Meanwhile, Ye Qiuding had walked back to his group, his bubbly demeanor all but gone.

"Brother Ye, is that kid the young lord of House Luolan? The one engaged to Senior Qing'e?" someone asked.

Ye Qiuding nodded tersely.

"The lower floor of the tower gets the moonlight first, but only because it is closer to the pond," his friend quoted. "I heard that his parents agreed to it because she owes them everything."

Ye Qiuding waved him off. "Rumors like that can't be trusted. Those two are Duke experts. They might dote on their son, but they wouldn't do something like that."

Still, the thought lingered on his mind.

"Brother Ye, you're better than Li Luo in every way. You should press your suit. Someone of Senior Qing'e's caliber doesn't come around often."

"Yeah, Brother Ye. If you can get her... hehe. All the guys here at the Two Star Hall will be able to hold our heads high. Do you know how many suitors she has in the Three and Four Star Halls?"

"I think she quite likes your type, Brother Ye. Otherwise, why would she have invited you to that mission?"

Ye Qiuding scolded them in good humor. "Get back to training, you louts. Want to get in trouble again?"

As he herded them on, he turned back to take a look at the lake. He saw Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e laughing together. She was looking at him with a soft tenderness that he had never seen elsewhere.

His eyes hardened. Then he turned away and left.

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After bidding Jiang Qing'e goodbye, Li Luo returned to the house.

The moment he entered, he saw Xin Fu sitting at the table, glumly choking down Bai Mengmeng's breakfast. From under his hood, his eyes betrayed nothing, but under his table, his legs were quaking badly.

Li Luo suppressed his smile and walked over.

"Breakfast, Leader?" She turned her large eyes on him.

He gestured to the half-eaten red glutinous cake in his hand. "Not today. Someone got me breakfast, and I couldn't refuse."

Xin Fu looked up angrily.

"Is that from Senior Qing'e?" Bai Mengmeng asked enviously. "I saw her just now. She's really beautiful."

Li Luo nodded and smiled.

Mentor Chi Chan walked in the door. "I'll take you to the Tree of Resonant Power after breakfast," she said.

All three perked up immediately.

She handed out three purple jade tablets to them. "There are four types of leaves on the Astral Sage College's Tree of Resonant Power. No change to the three types that you have seen before: bronze, silver, and gold leaves. The fourth type is unique to the Astral Sage College—we call them violet jade leaves.

"Violet jade leaves are only for Violet Vibrance students to use. Those are your plaques, and your violet jade leaf numbers are written on them."

The three took them carefully. Li Luo carefully looked at his. It was smooth to the touch, and there were words etched on it.

One Star Hall | North Zone | Branch 97 | Number 5.

"The Tree of Resonant Power is vast. Each hall is assigned a different zone. Generally, the higher the star hall, the greater the confluence of energies in the area assigned. As one grows stronger, more of the worldly natural energies' density can be utilized properly.

"Also, during your first visit to the Tree of Resonant Power, if you're lucky or talented, you might trigger a resonant luminescence. No need to panic. The Tree of Resonant Power is simply giving you an additional gift."

"Resonant luminescence?" the three of them asked, puzzled.

"Put simply, when you visit a place with such dense worldly natural energy for the first time, your cultivation might resonate with the Tree of Resonant Power to fill your body with worldly natural energy.

"The filling process is a little like a baptism. Those who are blessed by it will feel their resonant power improve by a leap. Each year, it happens when the newcomers visit the tree for the first time. It is not too rare, and it's definitely a good thing if you receive it.

"Violet jade leaves also increase the chances of resonant luminescence happening."

They tightly clutched their violet jade tablets in wonder. Just how far did the privileges of Violet Vibrance students extend? They had truly been given a wonderful head start.

"Resonant luminescence also varies in strength from person to person. It depends on the brightness and duration."

Chi Chan glanced at Li Luo with a half-smile. "In the last century, the strongest resonant luminescence was gifted to Jiang Qing'e. The brightness was said to have been spotted from some places in Xia City."

Xin Fu and Bai Mengmeng also stared at him. Senior Qing'e was truly a legend everywhere.

Li Luo kept his face neutral. So the plump swan had kept this one quiet from him too, huh...

Still, it seemed like he would have many people comparing themselves to him when he went to the tree. Nothing new...

Truly, the pressure of having such an excellent person as his fiance was quite heavy.

Could anyone understand his pain?

Chapter 0143: Under the Tree of Resonant Power

After breakfast, Li Luo and his team eagerly followed their mentor, Chi Chan, out of the building, heading for the Tree of Resonant Power.

They saw a slow convergence of people all headed the same way, a majestic exodus drawn to the locus of power.

Clearly, all the students were headed for the tree, although it was big enough that everyone was headed for separate zones.

Finally, they reached the One Star Hall designated climbing area after 20 minutes.

Here, they could feel the overpowering immensity of the tree. The main trunk's girth was astounding, a pillar of wood that reached up into the heavens.

The branches were so thick that light barely filtered through in specks.

Underneath it, humans were as insignificant as ants.

Most impressive of all was the worldly natural energy. Even before they climbed the tree, they could sense it overflowing, buzzing, pulsing. It was everywhere.

It was a bonanza of energy beyond what they had ever experienced before.

Many other mentors had led their new students here as well, and the place was lively with chatter.

Li Luo spotted a familiar figure. There was a dirty energy that he could detect a mile away.

The dirty man himself, Yu Lang.

Yu Lang's eyes lit up when he spotted him in turn, hurrying towards him through the crowd.

Li Luo watched his hasty approach. Why the eagerness? Was this the power of friendship? Had the absence of a few days made his heart this fond?

Li Luo was just about to greet him when Yu Lang's rough hands shoved him aside. Yu Lang's passionate eyes were firmly locked on Bai Mengmeng. He started forwards.

"What. Are. You. Doing?"

A cold voice rang out behind him.

Yu Lang froze, almost creaking as he turned around, terrified. Bai Doudou was glaring at him.

Yu Lang grinned broadly. "Why, of course I'm here to see my good brother," he said casually, clapping Li Luo on the shoulder and giving him a brotherly shake.

Li Luo played along to a performance that fooled nobody. "How's the canteen food?"

"Er, passable. Haven't you gone?" Yu Lang asked, puzzled.

"Bai Mengmeng has been making breakfast for us, so I haven't gone," Li Luo replied.

Yu Lang's jaw dropped. Damn, this was the paradise he could only dream of. Why couldn't he get Bai Mengmeng's breakfast of love? Why was it Bai Doudou's daily whippings?

Bai Doudou blanched and looked at Li Luo apprehensively. "Mengmeng has been making breakfast?" n.-
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Li Luo saw some pity in her eyes.

"Did you eat it all? Did you say anything?" she quickly asked. Li Luo knew what she meant.

"Well, of course we ate it all. She made it so kindly..."

Bai Doudou looked relieved. This made her towards him soften.

"But what's with her?" Li Luo asked. How could she eat something so bad so calmly? Did she not know it was off?

Bai Doudou hesitated. "Mengmeng was hit with a rare poison when she was young," she said in a low voice. "She lost her sense of taste..."

Li Luo's face tightened.

No sense of taste. Everything that passed through her lips was tasteless. Such a cute, adorable girl, stricken with such a flaw. His heart went out to her.

Yu Lang was a little teary-eyed as well. "What an angel of a child."

He rounded on Li Luo. "You ungrateful brats. Mengmeng making breakfast! Even if it were SHIT, I would eat three large bowls!"

His agitation made the last part of his declaration carry a little further than he had intended. Those nearby paused their conversations and looked over in disgust.

This guy could eat three large bowls of shit? Was that something to be proud of?

Li Luo backed away silently, and Bai Doudou buried her face in her hands. "Can you shut! Up!" she hissed at him.

Yu Lang coughed twice, then quailed under her fury, obediently shutting up.

Li Luo laughed to himself. It looked like Yu Lang had been well-trained by Bai Doudou in just a few days.

"One word to my sister, and I will skin you," she said, then she brushed past Li Luo with a smile for her sister. The two sisters clung to each other happily.

Yu Lang watched them sourly. "Li Luo, have you ever known the tragic pain of having your blissful marital home wrecked before? Why must misfortune befall me so? I mourn my loss."

"Don't worry, you're just a toad squatting on the riverbank, drooling at the swans in the pond. You should still be eons away from knowing that sort of tragedy. In fact, you probably won't live that long," Li Luo said to console him.

"Besides, I think Bai Doudou might be more your type."

Yu Lang stared at him. "We know each other, right? Must you be that vile?"

"Bai Doudou..."

He took one look at her. "She's a mother shark, all savagery and no feelings. Me and her?" he whispered in fright. "Impossible. No way. I'd rather die. I'll say it now: if there were only two living women left in the world, I wouldn't be with Bai Doudou!"

Li Luo grinned. "Think you're a great catch, do you?"

"Bai Doudou has a lower eighth-grade resonance, her potential is immense. Her family is powerful, and she looks really good, she's just not as charming as her sister. You would rather die? As if anyone's forcing you."

Yu Lang was stung, but he shook his head firmly. "No way. I still think the pure and sweet type like Bai Mengmeng is more my thing."

Li Luo shook his head.

"Oh, yes..." Yu Lang suddenly said. "Have you heard about Qing'er?"

"What's wrong?" Li Luo asked, frowning. Time had passed in a blur in his first two days. There were so many things to tend to, and he couldn't afford to slack in his cultivation. He had barely stepped out the front door.

"Wang Hejiu keeps chasing her," Yu Lang said.

"Qing'er held him back for you during the Choosing of the Mentors. She fought the guy and took a big loss. He was interested in her already, and he has been going over to her place frequently these past few days. Tongues have already begun to wag among the new students."

Li Luo stiffened. He had heard about how Yu Lang, Zhao Kuo, Lu Qing'er, and the others had helped him by absorbing some of the pressure. Of course, he was very touched. He had chosen his friends well.

Yu Lang and Zhao Kuo's group had been swept by Bai Doudou, but she had clearly gone easy on them. There was no way they could hold her, not even with all the prayer in the world. Li Luo didn't really take it too seriously.

But Wang Hejiu. He must have caused Lu Qing'er a lot of pain.

That was a debt he owed her. As a man, he had to pay it back.

And now this guy dared to harass Lu Qing'er...

She was his good friend and comrade in battle. As if he would let this little poison birdie bully her!

If you fly into a bad place, birdie, you have no one to blame if you can't get away later.

Chapter 0144: Li Luo's Suggestion

Li Luo made a mental note to teach Wang Hejiu a lesson, but with thousands of new students milling around, he couldn't really wade around in search of Lu Qing'er. That would have to wait.

Dong!

A booming gong sounded from the top of the Tree of Resonant Power. **nOVe/lB(1n**

The mentors below were on hand to maintain order. "Students, you may climb now. Remember the leaf number you're holding, don't go to the wrong place."

The eager students swarmed up the meandering path on the trunk, shepherded by their mentors.

Li Luo and the others followed the flow of people up. They pattered up the wooden ladder, listening to the whispering rustle of leaves around them. A few minutes of climbing later, the Astral Sage College was but a tiny dot below them. The vertigo was dizzying.

Along the way, many branches broke away from the main trunk. They shimmered bronze, with a generous smattering of silver and a more modest splash of gold, marking the concentration of resonant power within.

Each of these leaves were twice as wide as the leaves on Southwind Academy's own Tree of Resonant Power. Even from a distance, Li Luo could sense the power concentrated on each leaf.

"It's incredible."

Li Luo marveled in wonder. Its existence was a miracle. Just how deep did the Astral Sage College's power run? And the Astral Sage College, with all its might, was just another member of the Academic Federation. Even now, he was still wrestling with the scale of it all.

No wonder it was the greatest power in mankind.

While Li Luo was gaping like a fish, he spotted a familiar figure up ahead in the crowd. Lu Qing'er herself.

Lu Qing'er's leggy figure was clad in her usual, short skirt and white lace socks. But today, she had sensibly taken off her extra top layer and wrapped it around her waist for modesty.

It gave her an even more girl-next-door feel, and many students were sneaking glances as they climbed.

Her figure-hugging, short-sleeved top showed off her alabaster skin to full effect, and her long limbs and sleek figure were all on display. She seemed to grow even more alluring with each passing day.

Li Luo quickly caught up to her. "Well, well. Isn't this the golden flower of Southwind Academy?"

The sudden call startled her, but she very quickly recognized his voice, turning around with an expectant smile.

"Oh? It looks like the Young Lord still remembers me. I thought you would have forgotten your old friends, now that you have a new compatriot."

As for who the new compatriot was, it went without saying.

"Rubbish. Can our special relationship be compared to that of shallow acquaintances?" Li Luo objected.

Her look softened. "And what exactly do we have between us?" She bit her lip.

"Comrades in battle, just like Yu Lang and Zhao Kuo. I have an idea. The four of us should form a team as the Four Heroes of Southwind. No one will dare cross us."

She glared at him like he was the biggest idiot in the world, then continued on ahead at a brisk pace.

"My spot, " she said abruptly, then she turned away towards her violet jade leaf.

"Li Luo, you moron!" she screamed inwardly.

"Four Heroes of Southwind? You three can go ahead and be the Three Idiots of Southwind!"

"Eh..."

Li Luo watched her huffy departure, nonplussed. He hadn't even gotten the chance to ask her about the little poison birdie. What was her hurry?

"Was there something wrong with the Four Heroes of Southwind?" He frowned. It was an excellent plan. If anyone messed with Lu Qing'er then, they could have a reason to jump in.

"Maybe she wasn't feeling well. I'll properly explain the idea to her next time..."

He shook his head as he continued up the wooden ladder. A few minutes later, he reached the place where he should turn off.

His eyes trailed upwards, round with amazement.

Violet mist clung to the leaf, which was about a few square feet in area. It glowed like a piece of purple jade.

Worldly natural energy was gathering rapidly, dense enough that the naked eye could see it.

This mist was actually worldly natural energy in a potent density.

It was indeed much denser compared to the gold leaves that he had seen earlier.

Li Luo was almost drooling. He could not wait to test out the effects of this violet jade leaf.

When he started forward, a figure loomed before him.

A dark-skinned terror that Li Luo needed not face to recognize.

Qin Zhulu.

Li Luo coughed once, and Qin Zhulu turned around impassively.

"Although I don't know why you're standing here, if I had to summon all my intellect and make a guess, you're lost and cannot find your violet jade leaf," Li Luo said apprehensively.

The quiet rustling of leaves was the only response he got. Qin Zhulu stuck out his violet jade tablet.

"I'm not trading!" Li Luo hastily said.

Qin Zhulu scratched his head. "Help me find where it is, then."

Li Luo gave in. He checked the number and took note of their location. "You just head along this way for eight more turns, then go right and take the third branch, then another left. You'll see your leaf there."

Qin Zhulu was quiet for a few seconds. "Take me there?"

Li Luo was dumbfounded. "That was clear enough! Damn, is there nothing but fighting in that head of yours? How about some orientation, huh?"

Qin Zhulu took his jade tablet back and moved on, head hung.

Li Luo's heart went out to him. "Hurry up, then. Let's not waste time."

He brushed past Qin Zhulu, setting a quick pace.

Qin Zhulu hurried after him.

A few minutes later, Li Luo had led him to his leaf.

"Here it is." Li Luo pointed and turned to leave.

"Thanks." Qin Zhulu hesitated. "Hey, your dual resonances are cool. Wanna fight me some time?"

Li Luo was speechless. Was your idea of thanks to beat people up?!

"There's something wrong with your brain!"

"Alright, I, Li Luo, am officially scared of you now. I'll definitely avoid this muscle-brained fool from now on!"

"Well, thanks for that," Li Luo said churlishly. He quickly retraced his steps back to his own violet jade leaf.

The faint mist that swirled around him was refreshing. It felt like the flow of resonant power in his body was growing quicker.

There was a wooden, lotus-shaped seat in the middle of the violet jade leaf.

Li Luo sat down and felt his heartbeat slow. With his eyes half-closed, he excitedly began his first cultivation here at the Tree of Resonant Power.

Chapter 0145: First Tree Visit

Another melodious bell rang, a rich sound that settled over them peacefully.

A breeze picked up, and the entire tree began to sway ever so slightly. There was a responding surge of worldly natural energy.

The energy swelled forth, shooting through to the branches, creating little vortexes of energy on the leaves.

At the center of each vortex, a student.

Everyone sank down into their cultivation.

At a wooden platform near the new student zone. Five people were lounging there, either silent or speaking softly. They were the five Violet Vibrance mentors.

Shen Jinxiao was sitting in front of a short table, kettle in hand as he poured himself cup after cup. His gaze strayed in the direction of a certain violet jade leaf, eyes staring into the mist.

"Mentor Chi Chan, are you satisfied with guiding Li Luo and his dual resonances?" he suddenly asked, turning cheerfully to the slim woman sitting some distance away, her face carefully veiled in her usual black.

Her eyes were unflinching, as if she had not even heard him.

He was not discouraged, continuing as if to himself, "Li Luo's second resonance's grade is not high. A fourth-grade? Fifth? If he can't master true duality, then all he has is a slightly more substantial resonant power reserve. A low-grade dual resonance cultivator might not even beat a lower eighth-grade single resonance user. He only beat Duze Beixuan due to the latter's carelessness."

"As meddlesome as a dog catching mice. A pity, Shen Jinxiao, when you could spend your time learning to be a better person instead," Chi Chan commented mildly.

"Pfft!"

Mentor Cao Sheng spluttered over the wine jar he was nursing. He wiped his mouth, looking at the spray of wine on the floor with regret.

Shen Jinxiao gave her a greasy smile. "I was just concerned for Mentor Chi Chan. After all, you're quite young yourself, and you haven't raised many heavy-duty hitters in these past few years. And in another year or two, perhaps the Academic Federation will open the Mirror of Heaven Pagoda again. If Mentor Chi Chan is still as ordinary as ever, you might well lose your chance again this time."

"It's a pity you couldn't keep a student like Jiang Qing'e. Or your own chance would be secured," she nonchalantly sniped back.

His eyes narrowed with an ominous rumble of worldly natural energy at that snarky comment.

Mentor Chi Chan met his gaze coolly, and the temperature seemed to drop.

"Ahem..."

Mentor Mi Er cleared his throat to break them up. "Who do you think will get the brightest resonant luminescence this time?"

"Probably Qin Zhulu, if everything goes according to calculation," a gaunt, scholarly Violet Vibrance mentor replied cheerfully. "He possesses an upper eighth-grade resonance and a soul that lives for battle. His potential is remarkable."

This was the fifth Violet Vibrance mentor, Chu Zi.

"Wang Hejiu, Bai Doudou, Duze Beixuan, and Yi Lisha have lower eighth-grade resonances too. With luck, they stand a chance," Mentor Cao Sheng said with interest, setting aside his jar.

"Still, resonant luminescence is not just about resonance grade. It also depends on one's faith... An inner mettle and belief in oneself, a dedication to cultivation... That is just as important as resonance grade."

"We've seen Gold Gleam and Silver Spark students trigger resonant luminescence before, and brighter ones than Violet Vibrance students too. It's all conviction."

The others nodded. As Duke experts, they understood this concept well. Still, inner mettle and belief? It was a power that less mature cultivators like these students might not understand.

A strange blast of resonant power interrupted their conversation. They looked over to see a light glowing on one of the violet jade leaves. It slowly began to spread.

"So fast?"

The five mentors were all surprised. They could see through the light that it was Qin Zhulu.

The light flowed through his body, shining very brightly.

"This one's light is quite intense. I haven't seen one like this in the last two years." The others agreed, admiring it.

Still, no one was surprised by Qin Zhulu's resonant luminescence. After all, his resonance grade and self-conviction were both stronger than his peers'.

Not long after, other glows of resonant luminescence began to pop up here and there.

These were definitely the elites among the new students.

The many luminous glows all across the tree made for a magical moment.

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While light glows were spreading outside, Li Luo's attention was firmly within, on the two resonant palaces in his body. They were currently absorbing huge quantities of worldly natural energy, and he was using his energy cultivation arts to maximize the process as best as he could.

Within his two resonant palaces, his resonance seeds absorbed the energy as quickly as a dry sponge with water.

He could see that faint specks of resonant power were appearing on the surface of his resonance seeds.

As his resonance seeds continued to thirstily absorb the energy, they also grew bigger.

He was pleased with the development. The Astral Sage College's Tree of Resonant Power was indeed special. This first cultivation session had yielded much better results than he had expected.

As more energy began to flood in, the two resonance seeds began to quiver slightly.

Li Luo could feel a curious disturbance in the energy. He smiled to himself.

He knew that his resonance seeds were responding to the worldly natural energy outside.

His resonant luminescence was here.

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At the same time, on another violet jade leaf.

Yu Lang closed his eyes, absorbing the worldly natural energy from all around him. His cultivation was going well, but no resonant luminescence.

Clearly, his sixth-grade resonance was a little too low.

Yu Lang felt a prickle of impatience and anxiety, which he quickly quashed.

"I'll have to pull out my ultimate move, I guess."

He told himself. "I AM YU LANG!" he shouted in his mind. "I HAVE AN EIGHTH-GRADE RESONANCE, AND I WILL BECOME THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE!"

"I AM YU LANG! I HAVE AN EIGHTH-GRADE RESONANCE, AND I WILL BECOME THE FASTEST MAN ALIVE!"

He repeated this phrase over and over again, until there was no other thought in his mind.

He continued to shout within his mind, and a stern look crept across his face.

If someone could peek into Yu Lang's mind, they would be amazed at the gall of the guy trying to hypnotize himself.

And he wasn't even hypnotizing someone else. He was trying it on himself...

Layer after layer, until he truly believed that he had an eighth-grade resonance, and that he would become the fastest man alive.

By all logic, such hypnotism shouldn't work, but... only with a guy like Yu Lang.

At this moment, in his mind, he truly had an eighth-grade resonance.

A roar of worldly natural energy erupted on his violet jade leaf, and his resonant luminescence emerged!

Chapter 0146: Li Luo's Perseverance

On the platform, the five Violet Vibrance mentors watched the beams of light shoot forth. They had seen this many times before.

It was not hard for cultivators to trigger resonant luminescence during their first cultivation session on the Astral Sage College's Tree of Resonant Power. Of course, it was not extremely common either. Each year, there were probably about 20 to 30 who were skilled enough.

Usually, most of the Violet Vibrance students would succeed. After all, those who could qualify as Violet Vibrance students came from stronger positions, compounded by the advantages of violet jade leaves. It was actually rare for Violet Vibrance students to not experience it.

Shen Jinxiao drank by himself, his eyes still locked on Li Luo's position.

There had been no resonant luminescence from his leaf yet. Still, Shen Jinxiao did not think he was incapable. Li Luo's ability was undeniable. As low grade as his resonances might be, two were better than one. Combined, he was equal to an eighth-grade.

Shen Jinxiao was not wondering about the if, but about the how. How bright would it be...

But before Li Luo's resonant luminescence appeared, Mentor Mi Er yelled in surprise. The others looked over to see a light from Yu Lang's violet jade leaf.

The light was comparable to the likes of Duze Beixuan and Bai Doudou's.

"I recall that Yu Lang has a sixth-grade wind resonance. I thought he would be one of those unable to trigger it. Well, well," Mentor Chu Zi said with good humor.

Mentor Cao Sheng put down his jar and squinted over at Yu Lang's position. "His light looks quite ethereal, y'know? Means he's triggered it through belief, not resonance power. Not bad. It might just make up for his average talent."

The other mentors nodded approvingly. Yu Lang was definitely the weakest among this batch of Violet Vibrance students. He would have to work doubly hard to catch up to the others. And that required an inextinguishable belief in himself.

If he could not even do that, then he stood no chance at all.

Conversely, if his will was unwavering enough, he might even turn some impossibilities to possibilities.

Resonance grade only made one's cultivation journey smoother, and granted a deeper potential. But one's faith was critical to how far one could realize that potential.

While the mentors were distracted by Yu Lang's success, Chi Chan's eyes flicked back to Li Luo's position.

Energy was starting to bloom from his body, creating an energy vortex that glowed with resonant luminescence.

First, a blue resonant luminescence. A wave-like swirl of light that played across the surface of Li Luo's skin.

When it faded, a second resonant luminescence appeared, this time a brilliant green.

"Li Luo actually got two resonant luminescences." Cao Sheng hiccuped. "Rare sight," he hooted.

"Two, but the brilliance is dimmer compared to Qin Zhulu's, let alone Jiang Qing'e's," Shen Jinxiao said dismissively.

Cao Sheng and the others nodded in agreement. Indeed, Li Luo's two resonant luminescences were lukewarm compared to Jiang Qing'e's sun-like brilliance.

Still, it was rather normal. Her ninth-grade light resonance was exceptional. No one in the Astral Sage College had come close in a hundred years.

Perhaps if Li Luo's dual resonances were both eighth-grade, he would stand a chance.

Chi Chan did not comment. Li Luo should not be compared to Jiang Qing'e. He had done well enough so far, and Shen Jinxiao was just nitpicking without much basis.

Shen Jinxiao lost interest after Li Luo's resonant luminescences passed without a spectacle. Dual resonances might put Li Luo on par with Duzhe Beixuan and the other eighth-grade resonance cultivators, but that was a loss that he could stomach.

There were also occasional bursts of resonant luminescence from the Gold Gleam students, but they were much dimmer than the Violet Vibrance side.

Ultimately, few could overcome the gap in talent.

Those who were favored with resonant power were envied by the others. They felt the rush of worldly natural energy fill them, and their resonant power got a solid boost.

The resonant luminescences continued for about ten minutes.

That was the average time, with Jiang Qing'e's lasting about 20 minutes.

Bai Doudou opened her eyes, pleased with how much her resonant power had grown. It was about as much as a month of hard cultivation.

She looked over to Yu Lang's seat, where the resonant luminescence was starting to fade away as well.

"This guy... he managed it?" She knew that he had a sixth-grade wind resonance, the weakest among the Violet Vibrance students. She had thought it unlikely for him, but clearly she had underestimated him.

"You're not so bad," she mumbled.

Yu Lang's eyes opened blearily, then they shot wide open. "Damn, I'm at the Tenth Seal now?"

The resonant luminescence had actually helped him break through. With a little more accumulation, he could gun for the Resonant Master Stage!

He felt like jumping up and whooping. Success came to those who were prepared. Although he himself had zero clue how on earth he had prepared...

More and more resonant luminescences were fading away, until finally only one remained steadily alight.

Li Luo.

Still, it should be over soon, right?

They waited and waited. Another eight minutes passed, but still the resonant luminescence remained.

The Violet Vibrance mentors' eyes were growing rounder by the minute.

"18 minutes? He's about to match Jiang Qing'e!" Cao Sheng exclaimed.

Shen Jinxiao's face was as dark as Chi Chan's face was radiant. All eyes were on Li Luo now.

The other mentors shared a look. Li Luo might not have the brightest light, but damn did he have the longest.

Chapter 0147: Flowering Seed

New student zone, Tree of Resonant Power.

Many students were finishing up their first cultivation session. The ones that were done were staring in shock at a particular violet jade leaf. There was still a two-colored resonant luminescence going on.

Even the elite students like Qin Zhulu and Bai Doudou were surprised. Their own resonant luminescences had only lasted for about ten minutes, which was rather decent. Even the legendary Jiang Qing'e had only managed 20. n()0V eLbIn

Even so, 20 had already broken the record.

But Li Luo had already managed 18 minutes.

Was he going to surpass Jiang Qing'e?

Those last two minutes ticked by quickly enough. At the 20-minute mark, the light from Li Luo's body still did not cease.

“Hua!”

Students all over the tree were shouting.

Li Luo had actually surpassed Jiang Qing'e in duration!

She had a ninth-grade light resonance, for crying out loud!

"Li Luo!" Duze Beixuan hissed with jealousy. Why was Li Luo there every time he turned around?

"Li Luo is lasting so long..." Si Qiuying murmured in surprise, looking at the two spheres of overlapping blue and green light.

She had not expected that. He had not made an impression at all during their first meeting.

Which made her recall Jiang Qing'e's words.

That Li Luo might one day top the newcomers at the Astral Sage College.

Si Qiuying had not dared to retort to Jiang Qing'e openly then, but she hadn't thought much of it. Jiang Qing'e was just defending Li Luo.

But now...

She bit her lip. No way. Li Luo had indeed taken an unusual win over Duze Beixuan, but top newcomer? He still had a ways to go. Qin Zhulu, Wang Hejiu, Bai Doudou... none of them were going to be lying down.

Lu Qing'er smiled when she looked over, seeing a whole crowd of students gawking over Li Luo's light.

Back at Southwind Academy, he had developed a meekness in his personality, a defensive mechanism in response to his blank palaces.

It wasn't a bad thing, but her heart went out to him sometimes. He was brilliant, and he didn't lose to anyone... not even Jiang Qing'e.

Someone with his skills should be popular as well.

Therefore, she watched his rise in the Astral Sage College with quiet enjoyment. He had started to make waves left and right.

"Damn, Brother Luo's owning it."

Yu Lang whistled. "I guess he's going to be known as the man who can last the longest in the Astral Sage College."

He nodded proudly. He would talk it over with Zhao Kuo and the others. Maybe they could make a signboard with "Longest Lasting Man" on it or something. Hang it at Li Luo's place and let all of the Astral Sage College know.

The five Violet Vibrance mentors were silent as the new students went wild, but on the inside, their minds were equally blown. They stared in utter silence.

All of them wanted to know just how long he would last.

Time ticked on.

Another 10 minutes.

And still his resonant luminescence was going strong. Only after another 10 minutes did it start to dim, before fading away.

A total of 40 minutes.

Twice as long as Jiang Qing'e!

The sound of the students' collective exhales of amazement was heard all across the zone. Some were sniffling.

40 minutes was ridiculous.

Another record at the Astral Sage College, and this one left second place in the dust. It seemed like this record might never be broken.

There was a stunned silence among the five mentors.

Chi Chan's eyes were bright, and one could only imagine that she was smiling widely under her veil. This was joyous news indeed.

"I guess there's something special about Li Luo's dual resonances after all," she said with a hint of mockery.

Shen Jinxiao knew that there was nothing he could say to flip the situation to his favor. He poured himself one last cup of tea and downed it alongside his anger.

"Haha, that kid's something special. He might not have the brightness that Jiang Qing'e did, but that stamina—it's like he is a damn tree, man. I wonder who's stronger overall," Cao Sheng said before belching.

"In all these years, it's my first time seeing a resonant luminescence last that long as well." Mi Er agreed.

"So this is why dual resonances are special? But it still shouldn't be this long," Chu Zi said, puzzled.

Li Luo's dual resonances were not of a high grade. Together, they were maybe an eighth-grade. He hadn't even mastered proper duality in his cultivation yet. How had his resonant luminescence lasted so long?

The other mentors shook their heads in puzzlement as well, eventually accepting that they still did not fully understand how dual resonances worked at the Resonant Master Stage.

"Who!"

Li Luo took a long, lazy stretch. He felt a rare snugness in his own skin, a good feeling all over, as though he had just soaked in a spring of spirit liquids until even his bones were saturated.

He took a look at his resonant palaces. Both of his resonance seeds had become much fuller, and there were resonant power marks all across them with petal-like patterns.

...The Flowering Seed Tier.

His resonant luminescence had helped him jump from the Clear Seed Tier straight to the Flowering Seed Tier. That was quite significant.

"Settle down, students. The Tree of Resonant Power is active only for a limited time each day. Use it wisely. Cultivate," a mentor reminded them.

The students eventually calmed back down, quickly returning to their own training.

As for Li Luo, his resonant luminescence might have ended, but he was not yet done with cultivating. There was still time left, and he was feeling good. He should draw in some worldly natural energy to firm up his resonant power.

He closed his eyes.

Before he knew it, six hours had passed.

A disruptive crackle sounded, signaling the end of the cultivation time. The students relaxed.

"Not bad. It was worth the wait."

Li Luo was pleased. His first visit to the tree had been extremely fruitful. He had probably covered a couple of months' worth of cultivation.

He stood up and stretched.

His eyes narrowed.

They had landed on a violet jade leaf some distance away, which students were surrounding. It was Lu Qing'er's position.

She had probably just finished her cultivation, and her pretty features were currently in a neutral expression. Which meant that she was irritated.

And the source of her irritation was not hard to pin down. It had to be the fan-waving, greasy, smiling "nice guy" who was doing his best to talk her ear off.

Wang Hejiu.

Li Luo frowned.

It was natural to chase pretty girls, but one had to consider if the other party was willing, right? Otherwise, it was harassment.

And in Lu Qing'er's case, it sure looked like harassment.

Are you messing with my friends, little poison birdie? In all my years of life, I've never met someone as obnoxious as you.

Chapter 0148: A Pesky Birdie

Lu Qing'er's patience was wearing thin.

In the last few days, Wang Hejiu had come calling incessantly. The moment there was time to spare, he was on her front door, trying every possible method he could conceive of to create a reason to meet.

She had never met a more tiresome person.

This time was no different.

She had lingered after cultivation because she wanted to talk to Li Luo. She should have foreseen that Wang Hejiu would come after her yet again.

"Qing'er, I think we grew close during our battle. I was too heavy-handed during the Choosing. I couldn't sleep for nights afterwards, so I kept coming to you to apologize."

He said this with deep contrition. Deep down, he was checking her out. Sexy, lace thigh-highs under a short skirt, and a waist so slim he wished he could slip an arm around it. Best of all was her unblemished, alabaster skin, and those hands sheathed in the ice silk gloves that did nothing to hide their perfection.

He could not stay away from her.

"No need to apologize," she replied, projecting as much disinterest as she could into her tone. "We were opponents during the Choosing. You did nothing wrong, so please stop using that as an excuse to find me."

"Qing'er, must you be like that?" he asked plaintively. "I have no other intentions but to get to know you better. Please believe in my sincerity."

She turned on her heel and walked away.

His jade fan reached out, a grin on his face as he prepared to stop her from leaving.

When he lifted his hand, a whistling sound made him pause. He whirled around, coating his fan with resonant power as he lifted it defensively.

Psh, psh!

A few water arrows melted away, dripping harmlessly to the ground.

"Hello there. Your upbringing is horrible, friend. If harassment was all that was needed to chase girls, would there still be single men in this world?"

Lu Qing'er turned at the humorous and familiar voice. Li Luo pushed his way out of the crowd, walking over with a smile.

Wang Hejiu frowned when he saw Lu Qing'er's face brighten up. "Are you Li Luo?" He cocked his head.

"I might be a little arrogant about this, but it's really hard not to recognize me, given how handsome I am," Li Luo said.

Wang Hejiu's eyebrows almost spasmed. He knew that Li Luo was trying to goad him, but the urge to beat him up was hard to hold down in the face of such shameless remarks.

His face smoothed. "Li Luo, don't try to create trouble. We have no enmity. Why are you doing this?"

"Indeed, I often assume that everyone is good," he replied, walking up to stand in front of Lu Qing'er. "But from the moment you injured her in the Choosing, you chose to sow the seeds of hostility between us."

Lu Qing'er had stopped Wang Hejiu for him. Since Wang Hejiu had hurt her, Li Luo was obligated to stand up for her like a man.

The Choosing of the Mentors was a free-for-all. He had no problem with Wang Hejiu coming at him for a violet talisman. But to harass Lu Qing'er after the Choosing? That was going overboard.

Lu Qing'er was staring at Li Luo's back with shining eyes.

The tension here was immediately noticed by others nearby. After all, this was Li Luo, the man who had just broken the resonant luminescence time record by a gigantic margin.

Versus Wang Hejiu, second in strength only to Qin Zhulu.

It was going to be epic.

Wang Hejiu looked at Li Luo with disinterest. "And what can you do about it?"

"I hope you can leave my friends alone. This sort of harassment is not only ineffective, you're only going to make her hate you more."

Wang Hejiu laughed derisively at him. "I have my ways. Who are you to teach me, Li Luo?"

"You stubborn little poison birdie." Li Luo rolled his eyes.

"What did you say!?" Wang Hejiu snarled.

"I was speaking nicely to you, but you didn't listen. Are insults the only thing that will get through?"

"You better go check. I, the young lord of House Luolan, have never lost a verbal battle before!"

Wang Hejiu's fan glowed green, and he waved it, sending a wave of smoking, green energy forth.

Li Luo's own resonant power answered. Bending two fingers, he slapped the jade fan aside.

Peng!

Both attacks were equally nullified.

"Oh? The Flowering Seed Tier already?" Wang Hejiu said, reassessing Li Luo. From his strength during their brief clash, he could tell.

"Seems like the resonant luminescence did you good.

"But.

"Do you think you're the only one who gained something?"

Wang Hejiu clapped his fan shut, then he showed the full extent of his resonant power aura, resulting in gasps from those around.

"That resonant power..."

"Wang Hejiu's broken through to the second tier of the Resonant Master Stage, the Pattern Genesis Tier!"

"Well, he was already at the Upper Flowering Tier. It wasn't far, and he had the resonant luminescence too."

"Amazing. No wonder he's ranked second."

Wang Hejiu calmly let his aura fade. "Let me teach you something else, kid. Never make contact lightly when you're fighting a poison resonance user."

He gestured at Li Luo's finger. A green light still lingered on it, a poison that was eating away at his body.

Li Luo lifted his finger, inspecting the poison curiously. It was special indeed. Even the briefest contact had allowed it to spread.

However, he did not panic. He simply channeled his wood resonant power. The two shades of green collided at his finger.

In a trice, the poison was nullified.

Wood resonance had antitoxin properties.

"That little bit of poison?" Li Luo yawned. "Couldn't kill a chicken."

"Impertinent!" Wang Hejiu's eyes flashed with anger.

"Wang Hejiu!" A voice interrupted him. "I already said that I'll deal with Li Luo."

Li Luo looked toward the source of that voice. Duze Beixuan, already closing in on him.

Lu Qing'er looked around. Was he planning to fight?

She took a step forward, ready to stand by Li Luo's side, but she was interrupted by flower vines suddenly twisting around her feet.

She reacted instantly, frost energy coming up to guard herself. Turning her head, she saw a girl with a ponytail grinning at her.

This was Qi Luozi, the teammate of Wang Hejiu and Duze Beixuan.

"Li Luo!" Duze Beixuan called. "I was careless at the Choosing. Let's go again!"

He tensed, ready to spring at Li Luo.

But suddenly, a dark bolt of energy slammed into Duze Beixuan's stomach.

He doubled over at the attack, punching out reflexively with a blast of energy that dispelled it.

He turned to see a figure clad entirely in black, standing in the shadows nearby.

"Xin Fu?" He noted coldly.

A phosphorescent light appeared above Lu Qing'er's head, lowering itself on her. The vines holding her feet receded rapidly.

Lu Qing'er saw a small girl, sweet and adorable, giving her a bashful but friendly smile.

Bai Mengmeng.

Chapter 0149: Charisma

The sudden appearance of Duze Beixuan, Qi Luozi, Xin Fu, and Bai Mengmeng made the situation escalate quickly. What started as an individual face-off between Li Luo and Wang Hejiu was now a staredown between two teams.

"Ooh, are the two Violet Vibrance teams going to fight?"

"Shit, that's a great show!"

The other students whispered as they came crowding over.

"Wang Hejiu, shame on you. You look like a goblin, so stop your harassin'~" A voice sang out from the crowd.

Somewhere else in the crowd, another person picked up the catchy jingle. "Wang Hejiu, shame on you. You look like a goblin, so stop your harassin'~"

The crowd laughed.

Wang Hejiu swung around. "Who was that!" he demanded. "Say it to my face if you dare!!"

"I don't dare!" the first voice quipped back without hesitation.

A vein pulsed on Wang Hejiu's temple. He was shaking with fury.

Li Luo, on the other hand, was shaking with laughter. The voice had been purposely altered just now, but how could he not recognize it? Yu Lang, that impudent, little imp.

The second supporter was probably Zhao Kuo.

Wang Hejiu was just about to turn his wrath on the crowd when he sensed another strange wind blowing.

Weng!

A spear forcefully buried itself between the two groups, its shaft twanging from the impact of the throw.

"Who's bullying my sister?!" a cold voice demanded. The person landed beside the spear, snatching it up in a practiced move and spinning it. The tip glinted dangerously in Qi Luozi's direction.

Bai Doudou.

Who would have thought that even she would join the fray.

Wang Hejiu's face darkened further at her arrival. "Bai Doudou," he said coldly. "This matter does not concern you."

"If you harm my sister, it concerns me," Bai Doudou replied acidly.

Wang Hejiu's face scrunched up in anger, and he was just about to reply when an overwhelmingly savage aura loomed. He looked up to a platform above him to his right. He saw Qin Zhulu standing there, arms folded across his chest, standing motionless as a statue.

He said nothing, but the passive aura was enough to make Wang Hejiu tremble.

The crowd was getting excited now. Even Qin Zhulu had made an appearance.

"See that?" Li Luo told Wang Hejiu. "This is charisma. We're here in school to cultivate. If all we do is piss people off, wouldn't you say we've failed?"

"No need for the smart talk, Li Luo. Better pray we don't meet at the monthly ranking battle."

He turned to Lu Qing'er. "As for Qing'er, I won't give up," he said in a much softer tone.

"Besides," he turned back to Li Luo. "You're an engaged man. Best keep your nose out of others' business and stay away from Qing'er, if you care about her reputation at all. If you end up offending president Yu and the Golden Dragon Bank, you'll be screwed permanently."

Wang Hejiu was a poisonous character. Even when he knew he was beat, he couldn't resist a few parting shots.

Duze Beixuan threw one last cold look Li Luo's way, then he turned and left.

Qi Luozi was waiting for them at the periphery, having backed away much earlier.

And so the altercation ended on a somewhat anticlimactic note.

The crowd was a little disappointed.

Li Luo turned back to look at Bai Doudou and Qin Zhulu. He was not too surprised at the appearance of the former, here to play white knight to her sister-in-distress.

Qin Zhulu, however, was a surprise.

When he shook himself from his thoughts, Qin Zhulu had already disappeared.

"Quite a protective leader you have there," Li Luo said to Lu Qing'er.

She shook her head. "You've misread the man. Do you know that in a mere three days, he's asked Mentor Cao Sheng for a transfer 18 times? But Mentor Cao Sheng rejected him every time.

"Yesterday in training, Mentor Cao Sheng ordered him to spar with Yin Yue. He jumped through the window and ran away. Yin Yue was almost crying from exasperation."

Li Luo's mouth fell open. Was Qin Zhulu really that afraid of women? That was really something new.

"A worrying outlook for the military school's future." Li Luo sighed. His military academy must have torn their hair out dealing with him too. This was a ticking time bomb.

They would rather be wiped out by some super-strong enemy.

Lu Qing'er did not seem too interested in why Qin Zhulu had come. Instead, she batted her eyelashes at Li Luo. "The Young Lord was very cool today."

Li Luo waved it away casually. "Oh, enough with the obvious."

Lu Qing'er unwrapped her extra top from around her waist, putting it back on. "Then I wonder, what does the Young Lord think of Wang Hejiu's last words?" she asked almost too casually, tweaking the collar of her shirt.

"What?" Li Luo asked, surprised. "Oh. He's a perverted guy. All his thoughts are a little warped. Besides, our friendship is strong enough to bear any slander."

He paused. "Your mom wouldn't beat me up over that, right? That seems a little too petty and excessive. I mean, she runs the Golden Dragon Bank in the Xia Kingdom!"

"No talking bad about my mom!"

Li Luo sighed. "Well, if you think our friendship will affect your reputation, I'll be more circumspect next time."

"I didn't say that!" Lu Qing'er hastily said.

"But your question showed your doubt. I guess I overestimated the depth of our relationship," Li Luo said sadly.

"I really didn't!" Lu Qing'er said nervously. "Alright, I was wrong. I shouldn't have asked."

Li Luo grinned. "Well, since you've turned over a new leaf, I'll let it pass. I'm off to find Yu Lang and Zhao Kuo for a meal. I guess I'll let you treat us to make up for it."

He paused mid-step. "Hey if your mother wants to beat me up, you have to stop her!"

He ran away.

Lu Qing'er glared after him.

Played again by that cheeky Li Luo!

1. TN: The author uploaded a picture of Yu Lang. It's available at https://bking.cdn.bcebos.com/pic/00e93901213fb80e7becf402f39f382eb9389a503e9d?x-bce-process=image/watermark,image_d2F0ZXlvYmFpa2UxODA=,g_7,xp_5,yp_5/format,f_auto

Chapter 0150: School Points

After his first cultivation session at the Tree of Resonant Power, Li Luo's life fell into a fruitful and orderly rhythm.

In the training room.

Li Luo and Chi Chan were sitting in the lotus position opposite each other. They each had a hand stretched out, and their palms were in contact, her palm below his.

There was a faint warmth coming from her palm.

Li Luo was oblivious to the sensation, his face screwed up in concentration.

In his palm, two resonant powers emerged, a deep sapphire-blue and an emerald-green. His water and wood resonances.

They were clear and distinct elements.

But when they appeared on Li Luo's palm, an unstoppable force crushed them, forcing them to inexorably merge.

An unsteady sphere of light was formed.

Within the sphere, his water and wood resonances struggled to break free.

"Feel that moment when the resonances are in harmony. You must dispel the repulsion between them. Make them one in your heart." Her voice was as calm as the ocean.

Li Luo's mind quietened as he dived into his resonant powers. One was ice and silk; cool, supine, fluid. The other was life incarnate, a heartbeat and pulse that never ceased. Neither would budge on its nature, until Chi Chan forced them into each other.

A brook's deep currents flowing through a tree's roots.

He had the image for a brief flash, but then Chi Chan broke the contact between their palms.

It was like taking the bridle off two untamed horses. They ran amok.

Boom!

With a faint puff, both resonant powers on his palm vanished.

Li Luo opened his eyes and made a noise of frustration. Training his dual resonances was incredibly difficult. It demanded precise control, a subtle finesse that eluded a novice like himself.

"Don't be discouraged. If dual resonances were so easily mastered, the Duke life would be very easy." Chi Chan said stoically.

Li Luo nodded wryly. He had been at the Astral Sage College for half a month now. Besides his visits to the Tree of Resonant Power every three days, he had spent his time learning to master dual resonances from Mentor Chi Chan. However, the difficulty had caught him off guard.

Luckily, he had a Duke expert as a mentor to show him the way. As it was, his cultivation was moving at a painful crawl.

However, she was right—dual resonances had always been the special domain of Duke experts. Li Luo was just a weak little Resonant Master. It was almost like putting a heavy ax into the hands of an infant.

"Slow and steady. If you can even get the first step of dual resonances, your strength will improve greatly. You will even be able to take down Wang Hejiu without trouble," she said.

"Mentor, that's not right," Li Luo said with a straight face. "Take down Wang Hejiu? We are all schoolmates. We should be lifting each other up."

Chi Chan just stared at him, amused. Given the chance, you would love to break Wang Hejiu's skull, Li Luo. Of course, he was waiting for the first opportunity to stomp you to the ground too. All for the girls.

She ignored his crap. "You might have dual resonances, but don't underestimate the others. Those that can rank highly among the newcomers are all uncommonly strong. They are rare jewels, now being polished under the skilled hands of their respective mentors. They're improving at godly rates as well."

Li Luo nodded. Underestimating others was not his thing. It was the opposite of his thing—he preferred to flip the tables on people when they let their guard down after underestimating him.

"Mentor... are there any other treasures or such things that can help one cultivate faster?" Li Luo suddenly asked.

Chi Chan was taken aback. "How fast?" she asked suspiciously.

Li Luo scratched his chin. "Something that can make a person reach the Duke Stage in five years."

"Duke in five years?"

She was speechless for a moment, then she nodded.

"There is?" Li Luo exclaimed.

She nodded again. "After training ends, go back and take a bath, then have a good night's sleep," she said gravely.

"When you enter your dreams, you can be a King or even higher! As you please!"

Li Luo's bamboozled face was priceless. Bai Mengmeng's head dipped down, her shoulders shaking in laughter. Even Xin Fu's lips twitched.

"Mentor, you're pulling my leg," Li Luo said, red-faced.

"Wasn't it you who pulled mine first?" she replied mildly. "Duke in five years? You think your dual resonances are that ridiculous?"

Li Luo squirmed. "Well... Mentor, how long do you think I'll take to reach Duke?"

"Dukes need talent and potential, but they also need the right character and a bit of luck. Who's to say for sure? But for you? Perhaps in ten years or so."

His face fell. Ten years? In five years, he would be dead.

That was all the lifespan he had left to his name.

Hadn't he worked hard just to get access to the cultivation resources and mentorship that only the Astral Sage College could provide, all so he could get stronger faster?

She looked at him more closely. She had sensed an undercurrent of urgency in his cultivation, but she had not thought too much of it. After all, House Luolan was not in a good state, and he was worried about his parents on the Nobles' Battlefield. It was only normal for him to want to get stronger quickly.

"Li Luo," she said more kindly. "Cultivation cannot be neglected, and it cannot be rushed. Or you run the risk of stumbling."

He forced a listless smile. He could not possibly tell her about his lifespan, and so she could not understand his burning urgency.

"However, there are many methodical ways to increase one's cultivation speed in the Astral Sage College. Of course, the Tree of Resonant Power is necessary. You can also seek more advanced energy cultivation arts. I see that your energy cultivation art is not a Duke level art." She raised her eyebrows at him.

"Energy cultivation arts..." Li Luo was still using the upper-General stage Black Waterfall Breathing Technique. Although it was quite good, it, of course, fell short of Duke level energy cultivation arts. Then again, those required one's resonance to be at the seventh grade.

But his waterlight resonance was stuck at the sixth grade.

Although he had tried his best to improve it as quickly as he could, there had been no results so far.

She knew his frustrations well. "Ordinarily, virtually all Duke energy cultivation arts make demands on the user's resonance type and grade. But it is not a rule without exceptions. Perhaps there are no exceptions to be found in House Luolan, but this is the Astral Sage College."

Li Luo perked up hopefully. "The Astral Sage College has such energy cultivation arts?"

"If I remember correctly, there is a Duke energy cultivation art somewhere called the 12 Step Weave. It only requires the user's resonance to be a sixth-grade."

Li Luo was overjoyed. It felt like having a pillow slipped under your head just as you jumped into bed. This 12 Step Weave was perfect for his situation.

"Besides trading up your energy cultivation arts, there is one other thing in the Astral Sage College that is very helpful for cultivation. It can help you cultivate faster at no risk of harm to your body," she continued.

"What is it?" he asked eagerly.

She smiled. "Energy liquid."

"Er, energy liquid?" The name was as uninspired and boring as could be.

"Don't sleep on this one. Energy liquid is a special product of the Astral Sage College. It's made from the sap of the Tree of Resonant Power, and definitely ranks in the top three favorite things among students," Chi Chan told him.

Li Luo wanted to cry and hug every brick of the school. Oh, Astral Sage College, I love you.

It was a wise choice to come here indeed.

"Mentor, how can I get these two things?" Li Luo asked, fired up now.

Her veil stirred as she smiled underneath it.

"Very simple. The 12 Step Weave costs 3,000 school points. One vial of energy liquid, 300."

Li Luo choked. He looked down at his feet for a moment. "Mentor," he said with utter seriousness, "can I take out a loan on school points?"

She cracked up.

"What do you think?"