

## ABSOLUTE RESONANCE

### Chapter 0003: Li Luo Wants An Annulment



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The lionhorse rapidly galloped through the wide streets of Southwind City. It pulled the carriage behind it in a stable yet fast manner, causing the forest of buildings to rapidly disappear.

The inside of the carriage was quite spacious, and the temperature was quite comfortable. Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e were seated facing each other, with a small tea table between them. The two didn't exchange many words – Li Luo just sat there calmly with his eyes closed, while Jiang Qing'e had opened up a book and was intently reading it.

A ray of sunlight shone into the carriage from a crack in the curtains, falling upon Jiang Qing'e's exquisite jade features and giving her an almost crystalline, translucent complexion.

After a long period of silence, Jiang Qing'e blinked her long lashes, lifted up her slender face, then stared intently at Li Luo with her golden eyes. "It seems the words I spoke at Southwind Academy all those years ago have caused you some trouble. I'm very sorry about that."

Li Luo remained silent, but he opened his eyes. He looked back at her, noting her exquisite features as well as her aura of strength and fierceness, then chuckled. "I don't see any sincerity in this apology. If you *are* sincere, then let me cancel our engagement."

Jiang Qing'e flipped through a few more pages. "Is this the legendary 'annulment request'? But according to the way the script is supposed to play out, I should be the one making this request. Have you perhaps gotten things backwards?"

Li Luo was caught off-guard by her sudden display of deadpan humor. For a moment, he didn't know whether to laugh or to cry.

Jiang Qing'e raised her head and cast him a glance, then said calmly, "What's the problem? Are you afraid that our engagement will cause you even more problems in the future?"

Li Luo was silent for a moment, then shook his head. "I'm worried that I would be holding you back. There's no reason for a girl like you to be burdened by an unnecessary engagement. And while we are on this topic – do you know how many times my old man got his ass kicked by my mom because of this engagement? Now, I personally *supported* her kicking his ass for him coming up with such a stupid idea, but the real problem was – each time, after she finished kicking his ass, *I* would get my ass kicked as well!"

A resentful look appeared in Li Luo's eyes as he discussed this. As for Jiang Qing'e, when she thought back to how that normally gentle and refined woman had repeatedly giving drubbings to both Li Luo and his father for her sake, her small red lips couldn't help but quiver in amusement. Afterwards, she calmed back down and shook her head. "I'm not worried.":

Li Luo felt a headache coming. "Then what if you fall for someone else in the future? This is absolutely ridiculous, you know."

Jiang Qing'e smiled calmly. "I might not meet such a person. I'm quite picky, you know... and now that the two of us are engaged, there's no way I'd give my heart to another."

Li Luo stared hard at Jiang Qing'e. Suddenly, a hint of anger entered his voice. "Jiang Qing'e, what the hell are you thinking? I know my parents treated you well, and you are very grateful towards them, but there's no need for you to express your gratitude this way. What the hell do you take me for? A tool for you to show gratitude? You might have agreed to this engagement, but I never did!"

Li Luo's sudden show of anger startled her. She stared pensively at him with her pure golden eyes for a long, silent moment, then lowered her head slightly. "I apologize. I admit that I didn't take your feelings into consideration."

Seeing this, Li Luo pressed the advantage. "If that's the case, then we should—"

"However!" Jiang Qing'e raised her head again, then stared at Li Luo intently. "You know what the rules of our House are. If two House members are unable to come to an agreement, then the only way to resolve it is through a duel. The winner gets to make the final decision."

This was a rule which Li Luo's mother had laid down, and it was applicable to any household disagreements whatsoever. Thus – every time she and Li Luo's father had gotten into an argument, she would roll up her sleeves and then drag the old man into the training grounds to fight it out.

"If you truly are completely unwilling to be engaged to me, then we can go to the family training grounds and then resolve it in accordance with our House rules," Jiang Qing'e said.

Li Luo's face turned comically stiff for a moment, before a variety of expressions flashed through it. Finally, he gritted his teeth, pointed at her, and said furiously, "Jiang Qing'e, you go too far! I'm still in the early stages of the Ten Seals. How the hell am I supposed to fight against you, an Earth Fiend?"

Human cultivators, after establishing their resonant palace, were considered to have entered the most rudimentary stage, the Ten Seals stage. After this came the Resonant Master stage, at which point they could be considered to have truly embarked into the path of cultivation.

Following which, there were three primary levels after the Resonant Master stage – General, Duke, and King. Putting aside the latter two stages for now, the 'General' level itself also consisted of two sub-levels; the upper level was

known as the Heavenly Dipper General, while the lower sub-level was known as the Earth Fiend General. As for Jiang Qing'e? She was already at the Earth Fiend General level.

For someone so young to be able to become an Earth Fiend General was simply stunning. Everyone was truly shocked by Jiang Qing'e and her talent. Some even suspected that she would soon be the one to break the record for being the youngest Duke of the Xia Kingdom.

For an Earth Fiend General like her to battle against Li Luo, who was still in the Ten Seals stage... honestly, Li Luo was rather worried that if she might whack him to death with a palm, just by accident.

Jiang Qing'e put away the book, then said in a regretful manner, "It seems you don't want to accept my proposal. There's nothing else I can do."

Li Luo was so furious, he was shaking. *What the hell is wrong with the world? Why is it so hard for me to annul my engagement?* He then turned to stare lifelessly out the carriage window. From the corner of his eyes, he could still catch a glimpse of Jiang Qing'e – specifically, her dazzlingly exquisite features and her intoxicatingly pure golden eyes.

Li Luo let out a sigh, then said in a much more subdued voice, "Big sister Qing, we've known each other for years. I know very well that the feelings you have for me are not romantic in nature. What's the point of being engaged when love isn't part of the picture?" *novelNExt.COM*

Jiang Qing'e was silent for a moment. "Honestly, my first reaction is to say – a seventeen-year-old kid like you shouldn't put on such worldly airs. But, I have to admit that you do speak some sense. However, I have no interest in any other men at all. As for you – at least I don't find you repulsive."

Li Luo let out a bitter chuckle. "Big sister Qing, the main reason you set up this engagement was to show your gratitude to my parents. I'm sure that your

feelings towards them are much stronger than any feelings you might have towards me. But... I really have no need for this form of 'gratitude'."

Li Luo lowered his head. He said in a slow voice, "I know that it isn't going to be easy to get you to annul this engagement, but..." He raised his head to stare directly into her eyes. "I hope that you will give me, and yourself, a chance."

Li Luo paused a moment, then continued. "Let's do a trade. I'm not strong enough to manage our House, and so in the interim you have taken over on my behalf. One day, however, I will take back control. If on that day, you are able to return to me a House that is more-or-less as strong and prosperous as the one you took over, then as *my* way of showing gratitude, I will 'grant' you freedom from this engagement. Deal?"

Jiang Qing'e did not immediately respond. For a long, silent moment, she tapped her long, slender white fingers on the table in a rhythmic manner. Finally, she said in a soft voice, "Li Luo. Do you really dislike me that much?"

Li Luo was startled. He took a deep breath, then said, "Jiang Qing'e, I think you may have underestimated your attractiveness and your appeal. Your beauty and your charisma is enough to cause anyone of our age to be instantly smitten with you. If I claimed to have no interest in you at all, then I would be lying to both myself as well as to you."

"But. This is not the type of engagement I want, or need."

Jiang Qing'e raised an eyebrow, then suddenly smacked the table with one dainty hand.

*Crack!* The sudden sound jolted Li Luo, causing him to quickly sidle backwards. "Hey, let's keep it civilized! No need to resort to violence."

Jiang Qing'e rolled her eyes at him, then said calmly, "Li Luo, it's been a while since we've met. Clearly, you've become a bit more eloquent since then. I

agree that your words have some merit. Fine. We can treat this as a trade. Once you are ready to assume control over House Luolan, I'll be sure to hand it over in a healthy, intact state. At that time, you can annul our engagement."

Li Luo was speechless, then let out a long sigh. He instantly felt as though he had been relieved of a heavy burden. However – in the deepest part of his heart, he couldn't help but feel a sense of inexplicable loss. He cursed at himself for feeling this. *The hell is wrong with you?*

"Your little speech today has caused me to look upon you in a new light. It seems you are no longer a little boy."

Li Luo was irritated. "Little boy? There's nothing *little* about me."

Jiang Qing'e ignored his words. She gaze at him with an enigmatic half-smile, then continued, "But, Li Luo... I do have to give you a little reminder. Are you absolutely sure you want to enter this deal with me? Once our engagement is off – I suspect that you will never, *ever* have a chance to get it back."

Li Luo narrowed his eyes, then leaned forward with both hands pressed to the desk and stared directly at Jiang Qing'e. Their faces were less than a foot apart. "Jiang Qing'e, I really have no interest in this type of 'engagement' – because in the future, I intend for you to personally hand *me* an engagement agreement, rather than hand my parents one."

Jiang Qing'e stared right back into Li Luo's handsome face with her golden eyes, the amusement on her face growing stronger. She knew exactly what Li Luo meant. The reason why he wanted to annul this marriage agreement was because as of right now, she had no interest in him as a man. If in the future, she once more proposed to be engaged to him, it would only be because she had fallen for him.

"Sit your butt down." Her red lips quivered. Suddenly, an invisible force appeared out of nowhere and pressed Li Luo back into seat with enough force to cause him to let out an involuntary squawk.

Just like that, all of his posturing had been wiped away.

Jiang Qing'e rested a hand on her fragrant cheeks, then cast Li Luo a rather lazy look. "You don't have a lot of skills, but you sure have a lot of guts. I've encountered many geniuses in recent years, but none of them ever dared to speak to me like this. Li Luo – don't let your reach exceed your grasp by too much. Your goal is completely unrealistic. But – if you really want to give it a shot, I'll give you a chance."

Her golden pupils suddenly glowed with a mysterious, inscrutable light. "I'll wait for you at the Astral Sage College. This is your first step. If you can't even accomplish this, then let's both just forget about what you said today. We'll chalk it up as being the words of a rebellious youth."

This time, Li Luo didn't interrupt. He leaned back against the carriage window as he slowly closed his eyes. He said in a calm voice, "Then just wait for me there."

Jiang Qing'e turned her gaze out the window. As she watched their carriage move past the various buildings, a stray ray of sunlight sparkled across her golden eyes. The tiniest of smiles appeared on her face, filled with a rare look of softness.

After they had traveled for a long period of time, Li Luo suddenly opened his eyes. Rather puzzled, he said, "This isn't the way home."

Jiang Qing'e gently nodded, then said quietly, "We're going to pay a visit to the Golden Dragon Bank. There's something we need to pick up there."

She turned her golden gaze towards Li Luo. "Before Master and Mistress left, they prepared something for you. They said that you were only to open it up after you reached the age of seventeen."

Li Luo was speechless. His heart shook. *Mom, Dad... you left something behind for me?*

1. These stages come from the Tales of the Water Margin/Suikoden; there were 108 legendary heroes, who were divided into the 36 'heavenly dippers' and the 72 'earthly fiends'.