

Resonance 591

Chapter 0591: Mixed-level Competition Ends

"1.2 million points?!" It was lucky Li Luo was already lying down, because his knees went weak for a moment. They had left the second placed Lan Lan squad far in the dust.

"We only had, like, 700,000 or so when we entered Russet Rock City," Li Luo blurted out.

"Not surprising. Since I got the kill on the Bloodtailed Other, that bounty came to us. Then 500,000 points for clearing Russet Rock City, split between all the squads as it should be." Li Luo nodded slowly. The 500,000 points for clearing Russet Rock City had to be split between multiple squads, which meant maybe 100,000 points or so for them. Which meant the majority must have come from the Bloodtailed Other.

Although the other squad leaders had to be credited for injuring the Bloodtailed Other, the final hit belonged to them. Besides, they had also brought down the even more fearsome crimson knight-general between the two of them.

"Seems like we're winning this, then," Li Luo said happily. The heavy burden that Principal Pang had laid upon him could finally be lifted. He could already smell the second half to the Heavenly Libation Chant.

Besides, the champion of the Holy Grail Meet would be heavily rewarded by the Academic Federation as well.

The prospect of riches in his future flooded him with ecstasy. The mixed-level competition had been tough as hell, and the danger they had faced in the form of these Others seemed somehow unreasonable for what should have been an inter-school competition.

"The Astral Sage College only won because of you," Jiang Qing'e said, smiling fondly down at Li Luo. "Are you sure you don't want to announce your achievements? Maybe the First Princess will take a liking to you and give you a little something extra."

"I have no interest in her extras," Li Luo said piously. "The First Princess might be a goddess to others, but I have a different religion. I worship a plump swan that resides in House Luolan."

Jiang Qing'e had no interest in engaging in his rubbish. "The rest are waking up," she said simply.

Li Luo turned to see auras of resonant power starting to form around Lan Lan, the First Princess, Gong Shenjun, and the others, which was a sign that they were regaining consciousness.

After the crimson knight-general had been killed, the illusion on them had faded as well.

All of them were awake a few minutes later, and they were looking around them in wonder.

They were amazed to see no trace of the crimson knight-general.

"No need to look, everyone. The crimson knight-general has been finished off," Jiang Qing'e said.

"Finished off?!" They all stared at her in disbelief.

Jiang Qing'e merely pointed to the corpse by the wall.

They all stared at it in disbelief.

The crimson knight-general had been killed?!

How was that possible?!

He had merged with the Bloodtailed Other and reached the Greater Heavenly Resonance Stage in power. Their combined efforts could not take him down. Who had defeated him?

Qin Yue frowned with uncertainty. "Er, am I still in an illusion?"

Lan Lan shook his head. "The illusion is shattered. The crimson knight-general before us is real. That resonant power trace is unfalsifiable."

Zhao Beili pinched himself. "Dead? How?"

The First Princess looked to Jiang Qing'e, who had awakened before all of them. "Qing'e, did you do this?"

The other squad leaders fell silent. Jiang Qing'e might be a ninth-grade light resonance user, but she was only a Fiend Finisher cultivator. Even with her superb skills that put her on par with a Heavenly Pearl Stage cultivator, the crimson knight-general was at the Greater Heavenly Resonance Stage!

The strongest possible existence below a Duke.

Surely not even a ninth-grade light resonance could cross two stages in strength?

"Open your spirit mirrors and take a look," Jiang Qing'e said. It was the simplest way to convince them.

They looked at the points, and their eyes went round.

"1.2 million points?!"

"Qing'e, you're the best!" the First Princess shouted in joy. Her face was lit up in pleasure and she ran up to hug Jiang Qing'e exuberantly.

Jiang Qing'e was not used to such unrestrained physical affection, but she did not resist, instead patting the other girl awkwardly on the back.

Li Luo was enjoying the extremely sexy view. The others looked around at each other numbly. The facts spoke for themselves. There was only one way that the First Princess' squad could have reached such a score—they had to have killed off the crimson knight-general.

And since the First Princess had been in the illusion with them, she could not have been the one.

Which only left one possibility in the squad.

Perhaps Jiang Qing'e had pulled out some amazing trump card to turn the battle.

Slowly, they came to terms with the fantastic turn of events, each coming up with their own explanations in their heads. In any case, they had to thank Jiang Qing'e for killing the crimson knight-general and saving all of their lives.

"Junior Jiang is truly amazing. A ninth-grade light resonance lives up to its legendary reputation and more," Lan Lan said with an envious sigh.

The only one who did not look too happy was Gong Shenjun. This was not the conclusion that he had expected.

His mission had been to deny the Astral Sage College the win and the Dragon Bone Holy Grail, but he had thoroughly failed. Both the Bloodtailed Other and the crimson knight-general had fallen, and the First Princess' squad had won first place far beyond all of the other squads.

There was no way for anyone else to catch up now.

But he was very suspicious. How in the world had Jiang Qing'e pulled it off? How could she have posed such a threat to the Greater Heavenly Resonance crimson knight-general?

Had the two house lords of House Luolan left something to her?

Forcing a smile, he hastened forward with the others to offer his congratulations.

Even though his mission had failed, he could not afford to blow his cover. If the school was angered, his father would be even more troubled than he was sure to be.

The other non-Four Star Hall students were starting to come around as well, and they started to flock over too.

When they heard that the crimson knight-general had been killed by Jiang Qing'e, another round of surprise broke out.

Lu Ming was surprised as well, but she edged in close to Li Luo. "The crimson knight-general's death," she said softly, "are you sure it had nothing to do with you?"

Li Luo felt a nervous jolt run through his spine, but he kept a cool front. "What are you talking about? A Resonant Master like me? The crimson knight-general could stand there with his pants down, and I couldn't make a dent in his buttcheek."

Lu Ming harrumphed, not thrown off by his disgusting description. "I still think it had something to do with you."

Li Luo winced. Was this what they called a woman's intuition? It was completely illogical.

"Everyone, the crimson knight-general and the Bloodtailed Other are both dead. The mixed-level competition must be over, so we should leave," Lan Lan announced to them.

They all nodded. This place was too dangerous, and none of them wanted to stay in the Red Clay Province a moment longer than they had to.

"Finally, we can go back. The school administration is really unreasonable, to get us to do such a dangerous mission," the students grumbled.

"Yeah, they'd better give us lots of compensation to keep us happy."

"Do they know how much we've suffered?"

Amidst the complaints, they all pulled out their spirit mirrors and snapped them.

The sky was soon filled with light columns, transporting them out.

When each column disappeared, the person within it disappeared as well.

Soon, Russet Rock City was empty again, and it would stay that way for a while.

Only when the neighboring powers gathered their strength together and came in would the area be properly revitalized again.

Chapter 0592: Champions

When the dizziness from being transported faded away, Li Luo opened his eyes to see the familiar courtyard around him, filled with spectators.

They were back in the Holy Grail Meet area.

Li Luo turned to see Jiang Qing'e and the First Princess by his side, and the other squads from the mixed-level competition nearby.

Rapturous applause and cheers were ringing out all around, welcoming them back and celebrating the safe return of their champions.

Even the school administrators were smiling down from their platform, approval clear in their eyes.

Through difficult battles, the competing teams had successfully laid down an extensive network of cleansing dew all through the Red Clay Province, and the administrators had witnessed all of it through their special viewing method involving the cleansing dew points.

Except for what had happened at Russet Rock City, after the crimson knight-general had merged with the Bloodtailed Other.

The crimson knight-general's ability had blocked the scrying ability of the dew, and that was the only time throughout the entire competition that the administrators felt like things were slipping out of control. All the spectators were extremely nervous at the time.

After all, the eight squads that had disappeared in Russet Rock City were the best and brightest of the East Divine Continent. These people all had the potential to reach the Duke Stage in the future, so it would be a terrible loss if they perished.

Even so, the schools had no way to save them. The spirit mirrors had been the ultimate rescue tool, but the illusion formation of the crimson knight-general had disabled them. However, just at the height of the panic, the vision from the cleansing dew had been returned, and somehow the crimson knight-general had been killed.

A shocking but happy ending.

Even the school administrators were completely stumped.

No one knew what had happened. Merged with the Other, the crimson knight-general had surged to the Greater Heavenly Resonance Stag. Who had killed him?

But the points told the story.

When everything had ended, it was the squad of Gong Luanyu, Jiang Qing'e, and Li Luo who had rocketed up to 1.2 million points, far beyond all the other squads.

This meant that both the Bloodtailed Other and the crimson knight-general had fallen to that squad.

But everyone had been trapped within the crimson knight-general's illusion, so how had a single squad eluded that and even overcome the enemy?

Their squad was the center of curiosity at the moment.

Moreover, the points meant that the winner of the Holy Grail Meet was very obvious. This part was not too surprising, as the two strongest students from the Hall-level competition were in that squad. Even though the One Star Hall Li Luo did not count for much, Jiang Qing'e was a formidable asset in the competition.

The two girls together combined would rival even the Four Star Hall winner, Lan Lan.

But if they went up against the Greater Heavenly Resonance crimson knight-general, the difference would be too unreasonable.

But in any case, that was the result. The crimson knight-general was dead, the points were in the pockets of Gong Luanyu's team, and the only possible explanation was that the squad had some unspeakable trump card hidden away, which they had used under the cover of the illusion formation to secure a win.

In any case, that was a good ending for all. No one wanted to see their entire elite force wiped out at the hands of the enemy.

It would not only be a terrible loss for the schools, but student morale would be absolutely crushed. It would also reflect badly on the organizer and all future organizers.

Elder Ling Yu from the Academic Federation stepped forward, beaming kindly down at all of them. "Welcome back! We are pleased that all of you have returned safely. Your efforts have been closely watched, and all of the schools across the East Divine Continent are proud of your achievements.

"Together, you have cleansed the Red Clay Province of corruption, bringing purity to a tortured and dark land. You have planted seeds of hope that will sprout into very real progress in the not-so-distant future.

"All of you are heroes."

His proclamation was greeted with thunderous applause.

The Astral Sage College students were the most emotional. They had won.

"Wow, Brother Luo is really amazing," said analyst Yu Lang, immediately offering his expert opinion to everyone within earshot. "Truly the strongest student of the One Star Hall throughout the East Divine Continent. Although I did not personally witness what happened, based on my understanding of Brother Luo, I'm sure he was the one who contributed the most to the killing of that crimson armor whatever."

Duze Beixuan snorted so loud that his nose rattled. "What the hell are you talking about? Do you even know how strong that crimson knight-general was? A Greater Heavenly Resonance, for Gods' sake! How about Li Luo? A Resonant Master! He couldn't even get close enough to see his reflection in the armor! Even you have to have a limit to your exaggerations."

"It must have been the First Princess and Senior Jiang who did something," Wang Hejiu said with a confident drawl. "Li Luo's contribution was probably clapping from the sidelines or something."

Yu Lang shook his head as though he were talking to particularly slow children. "Oh, my sweet summer child. What do you know of the greatness of Brother Luo?"

His condescending attitude absolutely infuriated Duze Beixuan and Wang Hejiu, but they were drowned out by the cheers of the other students, who could not care less who the credit belonged to. All they knew was that their school had won, and all of them were lightheartedly laughing at Yu Lang's bragging.

"Maybe Yu Lang's version is a little too much, but even though Li Luo's only a Resonant Master, I'm sure not even Her Highness the First Princess had any complaints about his contributions to the team," Lu Qing'er said happily.

"Leader's results shine brightly on all of us. He's set a new record," Bai Mengmeng said earnestly.

Duze Beixuan and Wang Hejiu rolled their eyes. Let it go. What was the point of arguing with these Li Luo simps? Both of them wisely chose to shut their mouths.

High on the platform, Elder Ling Yu conferred briefly with the other school administrators, and then the students saw Vice Principal Su Xin's face light up.

Elder Ling Yu's warm voice rang out again.

"With this, all phases of the Holy Grail Meet have come to a close. The team that won the mixed-level competition comes from the Astral Sage College."

All eyes turned to the exalted trio in a mix of envy, curiosity, and respect.

"Gong Luanyu.

"Jiang Qing'e.

"Li Luo."

Several golden nimbuses flew out from elder Ling Yu's sleeve, and they shone brightly in the air for all to see. Each was a small palm-sized golden badge with the crest of a tree in the middle.

The Golden Resonant Tree Brooches!

Chapter 0593: Violet Resonant Tree Brooch

A Golden Resonant Tree Brooch!

Even Li Luo's eyes lit up with desire.

He had longed for one for so long.

The Golden Resonant Tree Brooch could passively improve one's resonance quality, which made it like an endless source of Spirit Liquids and Purifying Lights.

Of course, it was not as potent as an individual bottle of Spirit Liquid, but over time, the effects would accumulate very nicely.

Besides, it was not an either-or situation. It could perfectly complement any Spirit Liquid and Purifying Light he could get his hands on, and double the effects.

Truly a cultivation treasure.

A treasure of this level was too rare to be found even in the Golden Dragon Bank, and its price would be far beyond even a gold-eye treasured artifact.

"Besides its resonance artificing powers, the Academic Federation has also put an Eternal Youth Blessing on it, which activates when the holder is seriously injured. It will rapidly regenerate one's energy and heal wounds in a short period of time," Elder Ling Yu explained. The additional effect of the Golden Resonant Tree Brooches was unexpected.

A coo of envy spread through the crowd. The Eternal Youth Blessing could be a lifesaver. Imagine two equally-matched opponents wearing each other down to the bone, and then one of them regenerated completely. What despair the opponent would feel!

Three Golden Resonant Tree Brooches floated down to Li Luo, Jiang Qing'e, and the First Princess.

One of them landed in the First Princess' hands.

"And since Jiang Qing'e and Li Luo from the Astral Sage College were also awarded the strongest student titles, they each have two Golden Resonant Tree Brooches. As per the rules, you may choose to trade them for a Violet Resonant Tree Brooch, which is higher in quality," Elder Ling Yu said with a smile.

"Keke, Violet Resonant Tree Brooches are even rarer than Golden Resonant Tree Brooches, and they have even more mystical properties. There are very few of them in the East Divine Continent."

"Violet Resonant Tree Brooch!" The other students discussed it excitedly and enviously. "They haven't given one out in decades! Two in this meet?!"

"Yeah, two Golden Resonant Tree Brooches for one violet one is too tough a condition to meet."

Those who were awarded the strongest student title could get a Golden Resonant Tree Brooch, and then they would have to win the mixed-level competition to get a second one to trade for a Violet Resonant Tree Brooch. Anyone who could win such a thing would have to be far ahead of their peers, which was an extraordinarily difficult achievement.

"Would the two of you prefer two golden brooches, or one violet one?" Elder Ling Yu asked Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e.

They shared a look, and instantly decided to make the trade.

And so Elder Ling Yu waved his long sleeves again, and the Golden Resonant Tree Brooches disappeared. Now two violet nimbuses of energy landed before the pair.

Li Luo saw that the new brooch was similar in design to the last, although the carvings were even more intricate than before. Also, there was a purple eye in the middle of it.

A violet-eye treasured artifact!

Li Luo's heart leaped. A support violet-eye treasured artifact... If he brought it to the Golden Dragon Bank to sell, it would net him a fortune.

Violet-eye treasured artifacts were so rare that even Dukes coveted them, especially one that would support cultivation.

Li Luo had never possessed something so powerful before.

"The two of you, place your blood essence within them, and then they will be yours. If they are taken away by force, the treasure will self-destruct immediately," Elder Ling Yu told them.

A Violet Resonant Tree Brooch was too rare a treasure for people of their power level to hold. Jiang Qing'e might be able to put up some defense, but a Resonant Master like Li Luo would be food for anybody. The Academic Federation had foreseen that, and they had taken measures to prevent the holder from being robbed and attacked.

Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e immediately pricked their fingers and summoned a drop of blood essence, which they marked their Violet Resonant Tree Brooches with. Both felt a tingle as a powerful connection was made between them and their treasures, and they sensed the power of the brooches.

"Resonant artificing.

"Spirit deposit.

"Eternal Oak Armor."

Resonant artificing was the basic power that even the golden brooches had. Li Luo carefully studied the spirit deposit function. This was related to one's resonance quality too, although it worked a little differently from resonant artificing. It would drain away the energy accumulated within the brooch to produce a powerful artificing energy that boosted one's resonance quality.

The effects of spirit deposit were far stronger than the passive resonant artificing process.

However, each use of spirit deposit would reset the energy within the brooch, putting it on a long cooldown. It would even reduce the effects of resonant artificing for some time after each use.

Li Luo was still euphoric. The effects of spirit deposit were much stronger than resonant artificing anyway.

For example, if he reached the Earth Fiend Stage and got his third resonant palace, he could use spirit deposit to immediately push his third resonance up to a decent grade. Surely a sixth-grade resonance was not too much to ask for.

That would save him a lot of time and energy.

Li Luo next looked at the Eternal Oak Armor.

Compared to the Golden Resonant Tree Brooch's Eternal Youth Blessing, the Eternal Oak Armor was even stronger. Once activated, it would shield the user with a mighty wooden armor.

It was defensive, but it also applied the same regenerative effects as the Eternal Youth Blessing.

It was truly the upgraded version of the Eternal Youth Blessing, adding defense on top of healing. It was the ultimate safety mechanism.

Li Luo's eyes were ready to pop out of their sockets, and he checked his mouth for saliva dripping out. A violet-eye treasured artifact was something else indeed. These three powers combined far exceeded any gold-eye treasured artifact you could ask for. Although the Violet Resonant Tree Brooch did not have offensive abilities, these three powers would enable him greatly. That was the beauty of the brooch—it provided a universally welcome boost.

He reached out with a trembling hand, and the Violet Resonant Tree Brooch landed in his palm.

Li Luo saw a corresponding violet leaf mark appear on his hand.

"The Academic Federation really is generous," Li Luo thought to himself happily. No faction in the Xia Kingdom could possibly give out a treasure like this.

He turned around to look at Jiang Qing'e, who was smiling broadly, out of character for the plump swan that he knew.

On the dais, Elder Ling Yu spoke again. "This iteration of the mixed-level competition has been highly unusual. In light of these difficult and strange circumstances, and in acknowledgment of our student heroes who have risen up to the challenge, the Academic Federation has decided to hand out additional rewards."

This got enthusiastic cheers from the entire crowd. That was more like it! With risk should come proportional rewards!

Elder Ling Yu smiled down at all of them, and concluded his speech. "With this, the current iteration of the Holy Grail Meet has come to a happy ending. I wish all of you the best in your cultivation journeys, and may you all reach Duke and beyond."

The students bowed in respect to Elder Ling Yu. Li Luo bent low at the waist as well, then he straightened up to share a huge smile with Jiang Qing'e.

The Holy Grail Meet was over.

Although to them, the dangers of the future loomed ever closer on the horizon.

[Chapter 0594: Going Home](#)

The Holy Grail Meet had concluded happily for all concerned.

Next, all the schools were going to leave.

In the courtyard, the students were divided up into their schools, but there was a lot of cross-talking as they made their farewells.

Li Luo, Jiang Qing'e, and the First Princess were thronged by the Astral Sage College students, and of course they were being cheered on like crazy. Such was the adoration of the students for their heroes. If not for Jiang Qing'e's reserved and aloof reputation and the First Princess' status as royalty, they would already have been thrown into the air in celebration.

"Li Luo, how does it feel to be famous throughout the East Divine Continent?" Lu Qing'er asked with a sunny smile. His handsome looks and silver hair marked him with an exotic handsomeness, and many girls from other schools had been looking at him openly since a while ago. Li Luo smiled back modestly at the beautiful girl. "I just went along for a ride. It was Her Highness and Qing'e who made sure we won."

Lu Qing'er scrunched up her mouth. "Hmm, that would usually be the case. But somehow, I feel like that isn't the truth."

"Why is that?" Li Luo asked, eyes wide and innocent.

Lu Qing'er just smiled at him. "No real reason. A woman's instinct."

Li Luo cringed inside. Damn, he had created a perfect cover, all for it to be ruined by womanly instinct? Was his light already so bright that it could not be hidden?

"Li Luo, you were just lucky to have Senior Jiang and Her Highness with you. A lucky dog getting luckily good results," a sour voice stated. Li Luo turned to see Duze Beixuan.

Li Luo beamed gratefully at him upon hearing those salty words.

Thank goodness there were still normal people around.

Duze Beixuan thought he was being mocked, and his hackles immediately rose. "You cocky little..."

"If someone was crowned champion across the continent and still couldn't be cocky, then when could they ever feel proud?" someone beside him asked.

Duze Beixuan turned to see Li Luo's teammate, Xin Fu, and jumped. When had this mysterious guy appeared beside him?

"Haha, as incisive as always, Xin Fu. Where did you go just now? I didn't see you at all," Li Luo asked.

Xin Fu looked at him morosely. "I was waving at you throughout."

Li Luo jumped. "Er, really? Well! Erm, your shadow resonance is getting better and better by the day."

Xin Fu said nothing, but he quietly made another note in his heart.

"Leader, can the rest of the Fairness & Justice Squad ride your coattails to greatness?" A girlish face popped up behind Xin Fu, fresh as a flower. She was looking at Li Luo with large, liquid eyes filled with adoration.

Who else but Bai Mengmeng could be this cute?

Being praised by someone this cute, it was hard not to let it get to his head.

"Li Luo, the dual name of Luo-Lang is rising in reputation. They expect great things of us," Yu Lang boomed, slapping Li Luo hard on the back as he turned him away from the adoring gaze of Bai Mengmeng.

"Yes," Li Luo said lazily, "I hope the Lang half holds up his side of the name as well. I highly admire your potential, so after this, I intend to make a personal and urgent request to Vice Principal Su Xin to send you to the Umbra Cave to cultivate for half a year to develop that potential. When you come out, our name will be famous throughout the Xia Kingdom."

"Fuck, that's cruel!"

Yu Lang jerked his hand back quickly, as though Li Luo were covered in spiders and lizards. He quickly yielded space to Bai Mengmeng.

Bai Mengmeng blinked, then she continued chatting with Li Luo, ignoring what had just happened.

Yu Lang stood forlornly at the side, closing his eyes in pain. "Oh, my dream girl..."

"Your what?" Yu Lang jumped, then he cracked open one eye nervously. "Oh... er, my dream goal was achieved by Li Luo before I could! Haha! Oh noo...."

Bai Doudou glared at him. "I think Li Luo's suggestion was superb. The Umbra Cave is a good place to train someone up. If you stayed there for half a year, you'd improve a lot. Yu Lang, you only have a sixth-grade wind resonance. If you don't work twice as hard as others, you're not going to see results."

She suddenly sighed, speaking more softly. "You can't compare to your friend in either background or talent. If this keeps up, you'll be left further and further behind. I don't doubt that Li Luo will think no less of you, but the dynamic of your friendship will inevitably change."

Yu Lang looked at her in surprise. This short-haired amazon was not as beautiful as her younger sister, but she had her own charms.

"If you think I'm belittling you, then just ignore me," Bai Doudou said snappily, reading Yu Lang's surprise as discomfort.

"Oh, that level of insult, belittle me? You underestimate how thick Yu Lang's skin is," he said, hurriedly shaking his head. "I'm just surprised that Leader cares that much about my future."

"It's my job as your leader to manage your health and progress. It benefits the squad, and it would help us if you were stronger as well."

Yu Lang nodded glumly. "Thanks, Leader. All that you say, I already know. My family is modest, and I've only come this far thanks to humble methods and scraping together meager resources. Li Luo comes from a different background, but he has never looked down on me because of it. He is a good friend, a true friend. But you are right as well—I should try harder so I'm not left behind.

"Perhaps it's time for me to consider Mentor Mi Er's proposal."

Bai Doudou looked at the uncharacteristically serious Yu Lang. He was usually jolly and carefree, but he did have a serious side to him when the situation called for it.

"Mentor Mi Er's suggestion is very extreme. It's risky," she warned him.

Mentor Mi Er had become a Duke with a sixth-grade resonance, a highly unusual feat among the many mentors of the Astral Sage College. He also favored Yu Lang, a highly unusual opinion to have. Perhaps he saw a younger version of what he used to be.

Only, if Yu Lang wished to walk the same path as Mentor Mi Er, then he was in for a steep challenge.

Yu Lang nodded with a smile.

This world was full of commoners trying to chase the geniuses. If he didn't risk his life to go for it, how could he ever hope to stand out?

While Bai Doudou and Yu Lang were discussing the future, someone else had pushed their way through the crowd to reach Li Luo.

Lu Ming.

Tall and slender, with her alabaster complexion and cool confidence, Lu Ming moved through the crowd that parted before the famous illusion-lightning dual resonance user.

Beside her was an escort, the Heavenly Inferno Sage College's Zhao Beili.

Lu Ming walked straight up to Li Luo. "Li Luo, I've come to say farewell, although I don't know when we might meet again. I am very interested in your dual resonances as well. I hope we can share more knowledge on it again."

Beside her, Zhao Beili looked extremely displeased by the way the conversation had begun. He shot a warning glare at Li Luo. This kid might be handsome, but Lu Ming was not acting how she usually did. She was as distant as the moon in school, but after spending a short time with Li Luo, the two had already built a relationship.

Luckily, the Holy Grail Meet was ending soon, thank the heavens. Otherwise, they'd be married already.

The moment he saw Lu Ming make her way over to the Astral Sage College side, he had accompanied her immediately.

Li Luo smiled back at her. "Lightning-illusion is a much stronger combination than water and wood," he said graciously.

It was true. Li Luo was quite envious of the versatility that her combination afforded her. Used well, it could confound any opponent.

"Watch yourself. Hopefully, you'll have reached the third level of dual resonances the next time we meet. I sense I'm getting close myself."

Her eyes swept once across the coolly smiling Lu Qing'er, then she turned to leave.

Li Luo waved to her retreating back.

"Li Luo, what charms you have. It's been such a short time, and already the ice flower of the Heavenly Inferno Sage College has come to settle in the garden of the Astral Sage College," Lu Qing'er said sweetly even while she ground her teeth.

Li Luo waved it away modestly. "Not at all, not at all."

Lu Qing'er sighed. Men couldn't be too handsome, or they would attract too much honey.

The final event was the handing over of the Dragon Bone Holy Grail to the Astral Sage College, which proceeded smoothly, and then the various school leaders led their own students away.

Chapter 0595: Holy Tree Marrow Crystal

When Li Luo saw the familiar gigantic Tree of Resonant Power of the Astral Sage College, he felt a sense of relief. He was home. The Holy Grail Meet had lasted about a month from start to finish. Objectively speaking, it was not a very long time, but it had felt like forever. Li Luo was shaken out of his reminiscing by loud cheers that shook the entire area.

"Senior Gong is the best!"

"Senior Jiang is the best!"

"Li Luo is the best at being lucky!"

Li Luo turned to see the entire student body of the Astral Sage College gathered. They were cheering their hearts out for the returning champions.

Evidently, the results had beaten them back.

The entire school was in a madly festive mood.

They, the Astral Sage College, had won the Holy Grail Meet!

The honor was enough to stir pride in the heart of every student.

And of course, the three who had made it possible were hailed as heroes.

Li Luo alone was sulky. How come the others were the "best" while he was only the "best at being lucky?!" They made it seem as though Jiang Qing'e had made him hot milk and the First Princess had tucked him into bed, and then the two girls had gone out to win the whole thing without him.

The Violet Vibrance mentors had come over as well, to offer congratulations and other appreciative words for their efforts.

Vice Principal Su Xin beckoned for Li Luo, Jiang Qing'e, and the First Princess to come to her.

"These three are the ones responsible for our win," she gushed. She then called out the names of three mentors, including Chi Chan.

These three were the mentors of the winners.

Since their students had done such a great job, of course the mentors had to be credited as well.

The school would remember both, and grant rewards accordingly.

Li Luo looked at his mentor, still clad in her usual black with a veil over her face. She looked at Li Luo with a glint of approval in her eyes.

Strongest One Star Hall student. It spoke of Li Luo's eclipsing talent and ability. In all her years of mentorship, this was the best result that one of her students had ever achieved.

"Vice Principal, since these three kids have done so well, the school cannot be stingy with the rewards," Chi Chan said lightly.

Vice Principal Su Xin smiled at her. "What does Mentor Chi Chan suggest?"

Chi Chan turned to the three of them and said in a serious tone, "Winning the Holy Grail Meet is not just about reputation and glory. Holding the Dragon Bone Holy Grail will ease the burden on the school for the next four years, saving countless student lives. The weight of your contribution cannot be overstated."

She paused.

"I suggest that each of them be granted a Holy Tree Marrow Crystal.

An alarmed murmur spread through the Violet Vibrance mentors, and even Vice Principal Su Xin looked surprised.

This was a huge reaction from the Duke experts, and Li Luo had to ask Jiang Qing'e about it. "What is a Holy Tree Marrow Crystal?"

It was the First Princess who answered him. "The Tree of Resonant Power absorbs worldly natural energy. It then produces its own energy that is stored as crystals, which naturally is the purest and strongest form of energy that it can produce. Even Dukes would want such a good thing.

"As far as I know, it is exceedingly rare, and each Violet Vibrance mentor in our school is only granted two Holy Tree Marrow Crystals per year. It is the most sought-after object for the Gold Gleam mentors, but because of the rarity, they are not allocated any unless they do something special that the school wishes to reward.

"It is especially good for you and Qing'e," the First Princess said with a knowing smile. "Because the Holy Tree Marrow Crystal has an additional breakthrough power imbued within it, suited for those with many more stages to cross."

Li Luo immediately perked up with interest. "Breakthrough power?" Did this mean it could help him move from the Resonant Master Stage to the Earth Fiend Stage? No wonder even the exalted Violet Vibrance mentors coveted such an object.

"There are so few Holy Tree Marrow Crystals that every Duke expert in the Xia Kingdom wants one. But such objects are rarely circulated outside of the school. If even the school's own Violet Vibrance mentors can't get enough, how could they ever reach the Dukes outside? The occasional one appears at the Golden Dragon Bank's auctions, and each one always fetches tens of millions easily."

"Mentor Chi Chan must be very fond of you, to fight for such a treasure on your behalf," the First Princess said with a laugh.

Li Luo was burning up with excitement, and he looked in Mentor Chi Chan's direction gratefully. He was a Fourth Changing now, the peak of the Resonant Master stage. Next, he would have to fight the ceiling for the difficult breakthrough to the Earth Fiend Stage. Only then would his power grow significantly.

And a Holy Tree Marrow Crystal would definitely help him out a lot.

"Keke, Mentor Chi Chan," an oily voice replied, "the three of them have indeed done the school a great service. I, too, would heartily recommend a generous reward for them. However, the Holy Tree Marrow Crystal is such a unique reward, and there are so few of them that even we Violet Vibrance mentors fight over them. More importantly, the Gold Gleam mentors strongly desire them as well, and we grant them none although they play an important role in holding up the school and dedicate their lives to bettering the students. Perhaps a different reward would be more appropriate?" Li Luo turned around angrily to see that bastard Shen Jinxiao stepping forward.

"Son of a bitch! One day, I'll have my sword in hand and cut down the Shen dog!" On the surface, Li Luo showed polite acknowledgment of Shen Jinxiao's words, but he had already stabbed him a thousand times in his mind.

Shen Jinxiao must have sensed the undercurrent of hostility from Li Luo, and he turned to him with a thin smile. "Li Luo, I'm not saying this to bring you down. However, Holy Tree Marrow Crystals are very advanced objects... too advanced for some of you, I fear. If you use it, you will be squandering its power. I suggest you choose other rewards, and the school will not shortchange you, of course."

Shen Jinxiao's words had some of the other Violet Vibrance mentors nodding as well. Holy Tree Marrow Crystals were too scant and precious. If three pieces were given out here, it would affect their own supply for sure. Indeed, the three students had done the school a great service, but Shen Jinxiao had put forward reasonable considerations. It would be overkill to use such a resource on a Resonant Master.

They were not against rewarding Li Luo and the others richly, but there were definitely other rewards suited to them.

"Their deeds warrant commensurate merit," Chi Chan said primly. "I do not think that there can be any contribution more important to the school than carrying home the Dragon Bone Holy Grail. Nor is it up to us to decide what is a waste and what is not. They can decide how best to use what is given to them."

"Mentor Chi Chan speaks well. Bringing the Dragon Bone Holy Grail home contributes more to school than even us Violet Vibrance mentors, I daresay." The middle-aged woman who had spoken out had fire-red hair and a fierce face to match. "And if even we are given two pieces a year, why shouldn't they be given one?"

This was Jiang Qing'e's mentor, Huo Xu.

The other Violet Vibrance mentors gave up almost immediately. Mentor Huo Xu's temper was legendary, and fighting with her never ended well.

Shen Jinxiao was the only one who seemed willing to continue arguing, but Vice Principal Su Xin cut him off with a gesture to keep the peace. "We will table this discussion. However, you have my assurances that the rewards will be good."

"Mentors, please lead your students back. I am sure they are tired from the competition. Do allow them to rest."

With this, the argument among the Violet Vibrance mentors came to an end.

Vice Principal Su Xin suddenly looked over at Li Luo and gave him a small smile.

"Li Luo, you come with me."

There was general surprise at this command, and even Shen Jinxiao narrowed his eyes curiously.

Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e spoke briefly, then he obediently went over to Vice Principal Su Xin's side.

Chapter 0596: The Secret

Within Vice Principal Su Xin's office.

Li Luo was quietly sitting at attention for once, looking extremely eager and honest. Vice Principal Su Xin couldn't help but smile at this sight. "There's no need to put on an act in front of me. I'm sure that you've taken all of Mentor Shen Jinxiao's words to heart... and want to repay him in some way."

Anxiously shaking his head in response, he said, "Vice Principal, you shouldn't malign me! Everyone knows that I, Li Luo, am exceptionally filial towards my teachers. Although Mentor Shen Jinxiao is heartless, vain, cruel, and all around terrible, I truly DO respect him from the depths of my heart."

"The Holy Tree Marrow Crystal is an exceptional cultivation resource that even Violet Vibrance mentors desire. Thus, Mentor Shen Jinxiao merely voiced what was on everyone's minds," Su Xin explained.

Li Luo continued to innocently sit by, only giving a frank reply. "But I feel that our efforts are deserving of the reward... Cough! We almost died for it after all..." He clearly expressed his covetous desire for the Holy Tree Marrow Crystal.

Vice Principal Su Xin gracefully took a seat, even taking the initiative to pour Li Luo a piping hot cup of tea. "Truly a straightforward brat."

Taking the words as a compliment, he grinned. "It's only because I trust you, Vice Principal Su Xin. You're the one teacher that all the students of the Astral Sage College adore! In fact, you're even more trustworthy than that old man Principal Pang Pang. When it comes to rewards and punishment, there is no one better fit to make a judgment!"

Su Xin helplessly shook her head. "Li Luo, your silver and honeyed tongue causes me to feel concern for all the innocent girls that will inevitably be tricked by you."

"Cough. Well, Vice Principal, I'm already an engaged man. You can't slander me like this!"

"Your engagement? Jiang Qing'e dotes on you way too much. There's no way she'll be able to keep you in check."

Not deigning to continue bickering with a child, she took a long sip of her tea. "You can relax. You have done the college an immeasurable service. I won't keep such simple rewards like three Holy Tree Marrow Crystals from you. If you truly want one that much, I'll give the order to have some sent to you immediately."

"Wow! Thank you, Vice Principal!"

"The mixed-level competition was exceptionally dangerous this time around. You have paid no small price to eke out a victory and bring honor to our college. How can we mistreat you?" Su Xin sighed.

Thinking back to the events at the Red Clay Province, Li Luo couldn't help but to ask, "Vice Principal, I've always had this thought at the back of my mind. Could the Other Disaster of the Blackwind Empire have been caused by human hands? That crimson knight-general clearly belongs to some sort of mysterious faction."

Su Xin's expression turned grave, but she did not hide anything from him. "Your mixed-level competition was closely observed by numerous experts from the sage colleges. The appearance of the crimson knight-general and his fusion with an Other has also caused Elder Ling Yu significant concern. His expression changed upon seeing it, and he even blurted out their name. The Origin Reversion Institution."

"What? That's the faction?"

"It's not just any faction. It's a terrifying and titanic organization possessing monstrous might. You simply cannot comprehend the terror they can inflict upon the world. However, the Origin Reversion Institute is usually only found on the Central Divine Continent. Who would have expected them to spread their tendrils upon the East Divine Continent? It looks like the wheels have started turning once again. They can be considered the nemesis of the Academic Federation. No... perhaps it's more apt to say that their beliefs and ours are as incompatible as fire and water."

"What sorts of beliefs?" Li Luo tentatively asked.

"Mankind is full of different factions with differing approaches to dealing with the Others. The faster we can come to a consensus, the better. After all, you've seen the horrifying devastation the Others can bring. "

Li Luo nodded solemnly. He had personally witnessed Others devouring humans like livestock in the Red Clay Province. Even the most stalwart and ironhearted individuals would be filled with fury upon that sight.

The Others did not possess any form of conscience or mercy, they were simply the agglomeration of negative emotions. The more of which were born from the human race, the better for them.

Their existence was a source of disaster for all.

"However, the Origin Reversion Institute is not the same. They wish to coexist with the Others. In their eyes, the Others are simply the manifestations of the dark side of humanity. They claim that they are still a part of humanity and have only been temporarily separated from our true selves. As a result, the human race has declined by not embracing them! After all, the human race was incomparably glorious in the past. Thus, to reclaim that prosperity, one would have to fuse with two. This is the true meaning of their chant, the reversion to one's so-called origins to bring about their true form. The crimson knight-general you met had utilized such means to strengthen himself," Vice Principal Su Xin accurately explained.

Li Luo's expression changed for the worse. "A bunch of lunatics."

"Yes, they truly are lunatics. In order to allow for more Others to descend upon our world, they have constantly attempted to crack apart the borders separating the worlds. They incite Other Disasters and wreak destruction before culminating in an attempt to fuse with the strongest Others. This allows them to find their 'true forms.'" At this point, traces of killing intent gushed out of Vice Principal Su Xin uncontrollably. "They don't care for the people dying for their goals. It's just a mere number. So long as they can attain their true form, nothing else matters, not even lives."

These words cause a frown to form upon Li Luo's face. A bunch of madmen were inciting disasters around the world whilst countless Kings and Dukes were forced to enter the Nobles' Battlefield to block the Others from descending upon humanity. At the same time, these crazy bastards continued to drag their feet and were even releasing vile Others onto the unsuspecting innocent. Truly an infuriating thought!

"Aren't there any peak experts who can get rid of these cancerous tumors?" Li Luo asked curiously.

"The strength of the Origin Reversion Institute far exceeds your imagination. Even if the Academic Federation brings their full force to bear, they are unlikely to wipe them off the face of the world. Furthermore, they'd take the opportunity to burrow themselves even deeper. They are an extremely insidious group, and no one knows the extent to which they have infiltrated the ranks of the valiant. You simply can't tell who belongs to their faction. They are a sleeping dragon, and even I fear the thought of facing them." Vice Principal Su Xin sighed lightly.

Li Luo could feel a chill run down his spine. This sort of information was way out of his grade! In the eyes of the Origin Reversion Institute, House Luolan was no more than an ant. Even the Xia Kingdom could be completely destroyed if they so wished.

The Blackwind Empire was a history lesson for all to see. An empire no more powerful than the Xia Kingdom could be devastated by the Origin Reversion Institute without difficulty.

This was a true peak faction of the world.

Li Luo heaved another sigh. Forget about it. This problem was not something that a puny Resonant Master should be concerned about. He'd leave it in the capable hands of the powerhouses of the Academic Federation.

Vice Principal Su Xin did not continue to speak on the topic. Knowing more only added unnecessary stress upon the individual. The Origin Reversion Institute was not something that the Astral Sage College could afford to scuffle with.

"In any case, let's move on. Might you have guessed why you're here?" She flashed Li Luo a smile.

Li Luo's mind raced through countless possibilities, but he opted to remain silent.

Vice Principal Su Xin opened up her palm, and a blinding radiance emitted from an object within her grasp. It was a dark-golden chalice the size of a palm. There was a golden dragon sculpted upon it, the tail and the head formed the handles of the chalice. An indescribable sense of suppression exuded from its very presence.

It seemed as though tremors were occurring throughout the room in its very presence.

At that very moment, the roar of a dragon from ancient times echoed through his mind, seemingly transcending through space and time to arrive at his very location.

Li Luo seemed a little shellshocked as he continued to stare at the chalice, his heart trembling and his eyes wide.

This was the artifact they had been fighting for.

The legendary Dragon Bone Holy Grail.

Chapter 0597: Completed Heavenly Libation Chant

"The Dragon Bone Holy Grail. Your biggest reward from the Holy Grail Meet."

Vice Principal Su Xin gave a wry smile as she grasped the chalice. Her voice was filled with emotion. "This is the object that countless sage colleges throughout the East Divine Continent have struggled over. We are lucky to have you here, to have obtained this. Our college can now suppress the Umbra Cave with it, bringing about a period of peace."

Li Luo's gaze flashed and he replied without hesitation, "That's too much credit! I'm just a mere hoodlum riding upon the coattails of Qing'e and the First Princess."

"You don't need to play dumb with me around." Vice Principal Su Xin grinned as she beckoned at the red bracelet around Li Luo's wrist. "So how did the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf's power feel?"

A look of dismay and that of being wronged hung on his face. He had never expected anyone else to know this secret.

"Principal Pang told me about it," she explained curtly. "However, I had my doubts when he chose you, a new student from the One Star Hall. On the contrary, he had confidently assured me that you would be the reason that the college would return in triumph with the Dragon Bone Holy Grail. I suppose what's truly shocking is that his prediction came true to the very letter."

Li Luo gave a bitter smile. "Well, this is just borrowed strength, a silver bullet in a time of need—it doesn't count for much." He truly did not think much of this trump card. The only reason he had been able to defeat the crimson knight-general was due to the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf's borrowed strength. It was all external aid.

"There's no need to unnecessarily humble yourself. This sort of power is not something that just anyone is able to control. An ordinary Resonant Master would never be able to harness the power of the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf, as its influence would drive them to the depths of insanity. If you were replaced with someone like Zhu Xuan... Well, the best case scenario is that he would be directly seduced by its almighty power, losing all sense of rationality and turning into a puppet only capable of mindless slaughter. Your ability to remain calm and take advantage of the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf is the most important part. The Heavenly Libation Chant is just a key to this power, nothing more. Your personal ability is what allows you to effectively control it. The Principal has always been exceptionally discerning. He could tell from a glance that you were someone with the capability to wield this."

Li Luo scratched his head awkwardly. Who was this person Vice Principal Su Xin was complimenting? It definitely couldn't be him! "Well, I didn't actually fully control the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf's power. I

had to pay a price, and without Sister Qing'e's assistance, I probably wouldn't be standing here right now. I'm pretty sure of that too..."

"Regardless, you've performed magnificently. As a Resonant Master, the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf's influence and power is nothing to scoff at," Su Xin continued while lightly shaking her head. At this moment, she raised her palm and the Dragon Bone Holy Grail floated before Li Luo.

"Principal Pang is unable to leave the Umbra Cave at the moment and thus he has entrusted me to resolve the other half of the promise he made to you."

The pocket sphere on her wrist was activated, and a jade slip appeared, which she placed before Li Luo. "This is the other half of the Heavenly Libation Chant. With this, you should be able to fully harness the entire strength of the Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf. However, I must remind you that using this power too often is playing with fire. You have to remain disciplined and alert." Li Luo gleefully received the art, channeling his resonant power into it. Familiar information poured into his mind, completing the Heavenly Libation Chant which he had desperately sought to attain.

Storing away the jade slip, he now turned his gaze towards the Dragon Bone Holy Grail. Now that he had received the benefits, it was time to pay the price.

Yet he still had no idea why Principal Pang had wanted his blood essence.

Countless possibilities ran through Li Luo's mind, but nothing made sense. Without further hesitation, he took out a small blade and pierced his thumb with it, letting rivulets of fresh blood fall upon the Dragon Bone Holy Grail.

This chalice seemed to possess some unmentioned mysteries. It was clearly an object that held a massive pocket dimension; however, the droplets of blood did not disappear into the void as expected. Instead, it seemed to have turned into an unremarkable everyday cup, gradually filling up with blood.

Half a minute later, dear Li Luo's face started turning pale as blood continued to flow out of him like a tap. A momentary sense of weakness shrouded him when he finally stopped providing blood essence.

Vice Principal Su Xin retrieved the Dragon Bone Holy Grail and carefully stored it away before reminding him, "Don't tell anyone about this. Anything to do with Principal Pang will undoubtedly attract unwanted attention. Even a mere rumor could lead to unwanted stalking and supervision."

Li Luo nodded knowingly. "Vice Principal, now that we have the Dragon Bone Holy Grail, will Principal Pang finally take the stage within the college?"

This question was met with a deep sigh. "I'm afraid things are not as easy as you might think. There are some specific troubles within the depths of the Umbra Cave that cannot be extricated from so easily. As a result, Principal Pang has been kept busy for many years. However, with the assistance of the Dragon Bone Holy Grail, he will definitely have a much easier time. And with some preparations, it's not impossible."

Hearing these words brought Li Luo a sense of regret for the principal. Just who knew how long these "preparations" could take?

"Vice Principal Su Xin, now that I've victoriously returned with this, would you say that the college owes me a favor?" A sneaky glint flickered through Li Luo's eyes as he grinned like a cat that got the cream.

Vice Principal Su Xin smiled. "Well, didn't I promise a Holy Tree Marrow Crystal in return?"

"We'll talk about that in time." Li Luo was quick to reply.

"So, what do you want?"

No longer beating around the bush, Li Luo honestly explained himself. "Well, I would like to seek the Astral Sage College's support for House Luolan."

The upcoming Housemeet would be the culmination of hidden plots and machinations. The hidden powers causing trouble were mighty, and Dukes would likely make an appearance. Although House Luolan had the assistance of Uncle Biao, he wasn't in peak condition and was merely one man...

Based on Li Luo's expectations, the opponents he would be facing would consist of House Duze, House Jiyan, and the rest. Additionally, the mysterious House Lanling specialized in assassinations and covert intelligence. If someone were to pay a sufficient price, they would undoubtedly intervene as well.

Even the friendly House Jinque could not be fully trusted. Ties of friendship were weak and easily broken, and the crux of the relationship was built on the graces of his parents' presence. Considering that they had disappeared for untold years, who knew how things would have changed?

As a result, all of the other four great houses were opponents he had to be wary of.

One had to also take note of the Xia Kingdom's royal court and take the necessary precautions. Even though the First Princess' faction was on good terms with him, they could not be compared with the Regent's side just yet.

Just the thought of the Regent caused Li Luo to feel a faint premonition of danger. As a result, both he and Jiang Qing'e had opted to stay as far away as they could.

Conversely, they had no idea where the Regent stood when it came to the Housemeet, especially with their limited interactions.

Hearing Li Luo's words caused Vice Principal Su Xin to go silent. She did not seem to be surprised in any way, and it was clear that she had expected this. After a moment of consideration, she gradually shook her head.

A gentle sigh came from Su Xin before she reluctantly replied, "Li Luo, you must know that I am incredibly sorry. I truly want to assist you. Unfortunately, the Astral Sage College is an independent party, and we definitely cannot be embroiled into the Xia Kingdom's internal turmoil. Thus, the Astral Sage College will be unable to assist you when it comes to House Luolan's Housemeet."

[Chapter 0598: Royal Engraving](#)

Li Luo did not feel too disappointed at Vice Principal Su Xin's words as it was within his expectations. The Astral Sage College could not simply get rid of their stance of neutrality built over countless years on the whim of a single student, even though he had made exceptional contributions.

"Sigh. I guess two of the most talented students of the Astral Sage College might very well just vanish off the face of the world in two months' time..." Li Luo sighed pitifully, a look of depression on his face.

Vice Principal Su Xin couldn't help but feel a tinge of pity even as she stared at the melancholic and handsome youth who was clearly putting on a play. Feeling helpless, she spoke out. "You don't have to be all doom and gloom. Although House Luolan may be coveted by a pack of hyenas, I refuse to believe Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan didn't leave any sort of preparation for this eventuality. Furthermore, if you're truly unable to hold on, I can assure you that no matter how dangerous the situation is, no one in the Xia Kingdom will be able to harm you if Jiang Qing'e and you can make your way into the Astral Sage College."

Although the college was unable to take sides or be implicated in the underhanded politics of the kingdom, Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e were still exceptional students. So long as they continued to hold this identity, the college would protect them to no end.

Practically speaking, the college wouldn't really offer this sort of treatment to just any student. However, Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e had proven their value and potential and were definitely worth the cost. It would serve as a deterrent as well.

"House Luolan is the product of my parents' blood, sweat, and tears! It would be a shame if it were to crumble into dust in my very hands. It truly seems like we've been an incompetent couple." Li Luo sighed.

"When there's life, there's still hope," Vice Principal Su Xin patiently chided. "Even though Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan have disappeared and their whereabouts and status are unknown, no one can truly say for sure that they will not return in the future. Plus, you and Jiang Qing'e have potential and talent that is no worse than theirs. You two entering the Duke stage is merely a matter of time. Once that's done, you'll once again be a house with two Dukes, and rebuilding House Luolan and taking revenge will not be too hard. Who in the Xia Kingdom could stop you? Thus, there is no need to struggle bitterly to the end. Take a step back and give up the present for greater victories in the future. Frankly speaking, although the businesses that House Luolan own aren't that small, there's no need for you and Jiang Qing'e to care too much about it. So long as you possess cultivation strength and true power, that's what will really matter for House Luolan in the long run."

Su Xin's care and concern for Li Luo was obvious as she patiently explained the situation. Stubbornly tying one's life to their house was the only foolish decision they could choose to take!

Li Luo nodded and smiled. "Vice Principal, you can rest assured. I'm not the sort that would run into a brick wall headfirst. If the situation takes a turn for the worse, we'll definitely give up on the house, and we will truly need your protection if that happens."

Su Xin heaved a sigh of relief. "So long as you are able to step into the college grounds, even the royal court would be unable to force us to give you up. In such a situation, House Luolan would probably be gone and there wouldn't be any issues with protecting you. Even if your opponents wanted to get rid of the roots, they'd realize that it can't be done. If they still continue to disregard us and attempt something funny... Well, we'd take it as a provocation and show them why the college is where it is today." Cold and tyrannical aura could be felt from her, contrasting against her gentle and warm smile.

Jiang Qing'e and Li Luo were two fine seedlings whom she had taken a fancy to. Plus, they had contributed immensely to the college. Unfortunately, due to the school's stance of neutrality and what she represented, she could not go against the flow. Otherwise, if the request was not too outrageous, she would definitely have been able and more than willing to provide some assistance.

This was also a form of investment in them. Both of these students would hold exceptional value once cultivated.

"Then I will have to thank you sincerely." Li Luo expressed his gratitude honestly. He understood that this was the extent to which Vice Principal Su Xin was able to assist. These rules of neutrality were set by the Academic Federation, and a mere vice principal could not upend them as she pleased.

The Academic Federation might be a lofty and far away concept, but they had plenty of means to ensure compliance. If, for example, they reduced the cultivation resources provided to a college, that would cause massive ripples throughout the student body.

Thus, Li Luo did not resent her decision.

In fact, the college could be said to have treated them extremely well! Especially if one considered the situation with Jiang Qing'e. She had been identified as a ninth-grade light resonance user early in her life and possessed infinite potential. As a result, she was subject to the countless machinations of House Luolan's enemies. If the school had not provided a safe haven and duly protected her, perhaps even a Duke expert might have shown up to get rid of her.

Vice Principal Su Xin had made her intentions clear. The college would not protect House Luolan, but if the duo were in danger, the school would guarantee their safety within their means. This was an escape route for them, another path of survival.

Pushing for any more benefits would infringe upon the vice principal's graces and would ruin the current relationship between them.

Vice Principal Su Xin waved her hand towards Li Luo to indicate that this conversation would come to an end. She then swiped at the pocket sphere on her wrist and a green scroll appeared in her hand.

The scroll was crafted from a strong spirit beast's hide. Mysterious and enchanting engravings of light could be seen on it, flowing across constantly and seemingly bringing the object to life.

More importantly, a terrifying sense of suppression could be felt emanating from it.

Vice Principal Su Xin flicked her finger, and the scroll unraveled before Li Luo's very eyes, greeting him with a sight for sore eyes. One could feel surging resonance power within the green scroll constantly churning and emitting a blinding radiance. Within the radiance, a green feather of energy seemed to have taken physical form.

"What is this?" Li Luo asked curiously.

"This is actually another reward provided by the Academic Federation for exceptional students. You might have heard of the Royal Engraving. It is something created by Duke experts as a consumable artifact that possesses extraordinary power. The one before you is the Phantasmal Spirit Wing Evasion Art, a third grade Royal Engraving. This is the highest quality middle-grade Royal Engraving that has been

provided by the Academic Federation. Its function is simple: it creates a clone that then allows one to escape in a flash of light! It has the ability to confuse one's opponent and provide the means to a quick retreat. No one under the level of a Duke will be able to catch up, and even if faced with a Duke, your escape is still very much possible if they're caught off guard."

Li Luo didn't know whether to laugh or cry upon hearing this. Vice Principal Su Xin truly seemed to care a lot for him. Even the reward provided was one to escape with, having no offensive or defensive capabilities...

However, if one thought about it... an art that even an average Duke could not catch up to... that was an exciting proposition indeed.

This would definitely accord him sufficient protection.

Thus, he did not choose to reject Vice Principal Su Xin's good intentions.

"The Royal Engraving still requires a form of activation, so find Mentor Chi Chan and get her assistance," reminded Su Xin as she saw Li Luo greedily snatch up the Phantasmal Spirit Wing Evasion Art.

"Additionally, you earned 120,000 points in the Holy Grail Meet, correct?"

Li Luo nodded in acknowledgement. The points earned in the competition could be converted into school points, which meant that he now possessed a monstrous amount of wealth. This could all be converted into cultivation resources.

"This is truly a fearsome amount... The Academic Federation is really causing trouble for us colleges." Even Vice Principal Su Xin could only smile through the pain at the thought of having to compensate for this, and she sighed slightly in the end. The usual cultivation resources that could be bought would be insufficient to even create a significant dent in this large trove of wealth...

As a result, she fell deep into thought as she drummed her fingers against the table...

"So, Li Luo... are you interested in Duke Arts?"

Li Luo's eyes widened like saucers and a tear fell from the edge of his eye in joyful anticipation.

Chapter 0599: Communion Ascends the Soul, One's Destiny, Transcendent

Li Luo had an exaggerated look on his face, and even Vice Principal Su Xin couldn't help but burst out in laughter. "Your house possesses two Dukes. I'd be lying if I said I believed that Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan didn't leave behind any Duke Arts. How can you look at me like that?"

To the average student, a Duke Art was a far-removed concept. Each one was possessed only by almighty experts, and their value was incalculable. After all, there were only so many Dukes in the entire Xia Kingdom.

Li Luo also had two Dukes propping up the house and hence should have been no exception.

This was met with a bitter reply. "My parents did leave behind some Duke Arts, but they are simply things I cannot comprehend." In the deepest depths of House Luolan's library were two Duke Arts that had been left behind by Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan. They were the foundation of House Luolan. However,

it was as Li Luo had said, those two Duke Arts were of too high a grade and had a high requirement on the user, resulting in them being unsuitable for him right now.

During the Holy Grail Meet, he witnessed the raw capabilities of the Enlightened Sage Scripture utilized by Lan Lan. As a result, he now held great interest and desire for a Duke Art he could call his own. At the same time, he understood that the requirements of a Duke Art were nothing to scoff at. The current him was woefully inadequate as well. Lan Lan had to obtain Heavenly Pearl Stage strength before being fortunate enough to cultivate the art. It was both a result of ability and chance.

A tiny, little Resonant Master was a long distance away from reaching Lan Lan's heights.

Sun Dasheng also possessed a Duke Art, but that was an incomplete one. Its strength was far from what it could be in its complete state and thus Li Luo was not interested in it.

What he truly wanted was a complete and appropriate Duke Art that fit him like a worn glove!

The requirements for that would be harsh, and even the ones in House Luolan were not sufficient. The fact that Vice Principal Su Xin had taken the initiative to speak out meant that there was an underlying reason. Perhaps there was something that would be perfect for him? This train of thought led Li Luo's heart to beat wildly in excitement.

Vice Principal Su Xin said, "Even an itty, bitty Resonant Master is interested in a grand Duke Art. Don't you think you might have overestimated yourself? I bet you are still unable to master a dragon-general resonance art."

Li Luo thickened his skin in response. "Only because I have not had enough time to do so! Plus, the choices are few in number! Conversely, if there truly was a Duke Art that one could understand and cultivate at the Resonant Master Stage, it would be beyond difficult to find! A treasure of the cultivation world! Why would I give up such a wonderful opportunity? No! Of course I will have to seize the day! It goes without saying," he exhorted with absolute enthusiasm.

Vice Principal Su Xin gave him a wry smile. "There is a proverb within the Duke Arts that goes 'Communion ascends the soul. One's destiny, transcendent!' This actually refers to the four different grades of Duke Arts going from weakest to strongest. Communion-grade, Soul Ascension-grade, Destiny-grade, and Transcendent-grade. A Duke's might is heaven-splitting, and they are able to rend the earth and the heavens precisely because they possess Duke Arts.

"Now, the lowest grade, Communion-grade, is something anyone under the Duke Stage is able to comprehend. Success comes from both talent and a good amount of luck."

Li Luo nodded. He had an understanding of the different Duke Art grades as the ones in House Luolan were Soul Ascension-grade arts. Even the average Duke might be hard-pressed to possess just one of this tier!

The difficulty of cultivating one was several times higher than a Communion-grade Duke Art. Thus, it was impossible to comprehend the ones he had access to.

Based on his personal evaluation, even if his strength were to soar even higher, the most he would be able to handle would be a Communion-grade Duke Art.

"Duke Arts aren't common cabbages found everywhere, and naturally they are extremely valuable. Even considering the Astral Sage College's background, the number available is not plenty. If you truly want to harness the strength of one, you will require a high degree of compatibility with the art itself. Just like Sun Dasheng. His Demon Ape's Will might be an incomplete Duke Art, but the crux of the matter is that he is highly compatible with it. Perhaps if he were to enter the Earth Fiend Stage, he would be able to use it in its entirety."

At this point, Vice Principal Su Xin turned to size Li Luo up with a glint in her eye. "Though I have to admit, you have some outstanding points. In fact, you probably have an advantage over others. Do you know why?"

A quick think revealed the most probable answers. "Because I can wield dual resonances?"

"You're not the dullest tool in the shed after all. Indeed, that is the case. Duke Arts are created when one reaches the Duke Stage, and they are based on the user's dual resonances, the true core of their might. But what I'm referring to here is the true utilization of dual resonances, not your half-baked application of them."

Li Luo was a little miffed at the sudden disparagement. Weren't they talking about Duke Arts? How did it come to them critiquing his abilities!? How could a puny Resonant Master compare with a grand Duke?

"Regardless of how shallow your usage of dual resonances is, it's still at the very least the usage of dual resonances, which gives you an edge. Thus, if the Duke Art you were to pick is extremely compatible with your innate talents, your chances of cultivating one successfully will be exponentially higher."

Li Luo's gaze lit up once again. He would definitely have more choices if that was the case! He possessed both water and wood resonances with the secondary traits of light and earth, which would increase the range of his compatible arts.

"Let's do it this way. Come back in three days and I will allow Mentor Chi Chan to lead you to the top level of the resonance art library. Within is stored all of the Duke Arts the college has collected, and you can search to your heart's content to find one that is suitable," Vice Principal Su Xin suggested.

Li Luo nodded in glee. Finally, there was an opportunity!

"I need to first set things straight. If you pick a Duke Art and successfully cultivate it, I'll be using up all 120,000 of your points. If you fail... then it will just cost you 50,000," Vice Principal Su Xin stated.

Li Luo was taken aback before roaring in frustration, "Wait! 50,000 points even if I fail? Aren't you a little too calculating and blackhearted, Vice Principal Su Xin!?"

Fully expecting the response, Su Xin haughtily responded, "Well, that's also because we'll be giving you a special cultivation method too. This will inevitably deplete the school's reserves and you'll see the benefits regardless. Its efficacy is unmatched. If you were normally only able to cultivate a Duke Art to 20% of its true strength, with the aid of this cultivation method, it will go up to 50%. So don't you think these are points well spent?"

"Wait, what? 50%?" Li Luo was once again slammed with another surprise. What sort of special cultivation method was this? It seemed ridiculously effective!

"Hm, but it does vary from person to person..." she continued.

Forced into this situation, Li Luo frowned. Clenching his teeth, he made his final decision. "Fine! I agree!"

Although the price seemed large, the possibility of cultivating a Duke Art would make it all worthwhile. After participating in the Holy Grail Meet, he was clear that his current strength was insufficient. His trump card was not sufficiently game-changing.

The Three-tailed Heavenly Wolf was merely external strength, and only building his own strength would matter in the long run.

Duke Arts were perfect for providing an explosive burst of might at a crucial moment.

Vice Principal Su Xin seemed to smile even more radiantly at this point, and she lightly clapped her hands. "Truly bold, as expected of the son of Li Taixuan and Tan Tailan. Well, I've said enough. Time for you to find Mentor Chi Chan and receive her assistance in activating the Phantasmal Spirit Wing Evasion Art. It will protect your little life well." Li Luo nodded and stood up to leave.

Just as he was about to open the door, Su Xin's voice rang out.

"One last thing. Remember to be wary of the Golden Dragon Bank. Especially during the upcoming Housemeet."

Li Luo's pupils shrank slightly as though he remembered something. However, Vice Principal Su Xin did not say more, and so he left.

Chapter 0600: Popularity

On the way to Mentor Chi Chan's abode, Li Luo continued to ponder over Vice Principal Su Xin's warning.

"Be wary of the Golden Dragon Bank?"

"What in the world does that mean? Could it be that the Golden Dragon Bank covets the secrets of House Luolan as well?"

"Or perhaps she was referring more specifically to President Yu Hongxi."

"Based on our previous interactions, Yu Hongxi has treated me quite well. Could it all have been an act?"

Li Luo's forehead creased with wrinkles as he continued thinking over this new dilemma. The Golden Dragon Bank was a titanic beast with a background that far exceeded that of House Luolan. When it came to riches, they were the preeminent faction in the Xia Kingdom. Even the Astral Sage College and the Royal court could not compare.

With such monetary prowess under their control, they prioritized harmony and business. On the other hand, any mistaken fools who took them as a fat sheep would awaken the dragon and be struck off the annals of history.

Although Yu Hongxi was the Xia Kingdom's president, she was just one of many forces within the organization. Could there be another faction within that lusted for the secrets of House Luolan?

Li Luo's imagination went wild before he eventually sighed. There was no point to this mental exercise. He would worry about the problem when it came.

Finally raising his head and looking forward, he realized that countless students were eyeing him. Even some of the higher starred hall students were glancing at him with a renewed degree of respect.

This was the result of winning the Holy Grail Meet.

He had received the title of the strongest One Star Hall student, which spoke volumes of his own capabilities. Although the public didn't know how much he had contributed in the mixed-level competition, they knew that as a member of the winning team, he must have done something significant.

As such, he had now become one of the Astral Sage College's influential figures.

In some ways, he had even reached the stature of the Seven Astral Pillars.

Plus, they had obtained the Dragon Bone Holy Grail, and with it suppressing the Umbra Cave, the Others within would be duly weakened, resulting in significantly less danger when they had to enter it. Just how many lives would be saved as a result?

Therefore, the students felt a deep sense of gratitude towards the trio.

Faced with the curious and respectful gazes, Li Luo flashed a stunning smile without seeming arrogant or overbearing, giving others a good impression of him.

These were all the shining talents of the Xia Kingdom's younger generation. Once they graduated, they would inevitably become people of standing and wielders of might. Building a good relationship today would pay dividends in strengthening House Luolan's future foundations.

Especially those from the Resonance Artificers Hall... every one of those genius artificers were treasures that Li Luo yearned for. If he wanted to make the Suncreek Villa the best resonant artificing shop, these resonance artificers were critical.

Otherwise, without a steady stream of talent, even a significant amount of his high-grade secret water source and recipes would be worthless.

Looking at it in a different way, especially from the students' point of view, House Luolan seemed to be gradually ascending once again, and he was not the only one representing it. The Three Star Hall possessed the indomitable Jiang Qing'e. Once she graduated to the Four Star Hall, she would truly cement her legendary ascension as the overlord of the Astral Sage College's students... At that point, her reputation would probably eclipse even that of Gong Shenjun and the First Princess.

At that point, there would probably be a frightening army of helpers at her beck and call.

Of course, this was if they could tide over the crisis of their Housemeet in the coming two months...

"I'll have to uproot that white-eyed wolf Pei Hao!" A cold hint of killing intent surged through him. Pei Hao was the root of all the problems in House Luolan. He had already taken control of half of their forces and businesses and was now gunning for the title of house lord. He had finally orchestrated an

elaborate scheme to take over the house in a supposedly upfront manner to achieve the goals he'd always wanted.

Only by being rid of this irritant could House Luolan's internal turmoil cease. The house would finally be whole again and regain some semblance of its previous prosperity.

The Housemeet would be the crucial turning point. Pei Hao, that piece of crap, would definitely struggle with all his might as House Luolan was showing signs of revitalization in Li Luo and Jiang Qing'e's hands. Eventually, there would no longer be any further opportunity to launch his coup. This would also be his final chance. Frankly speaking, a single Pei Hao was not worth Li Luo's concern. What was more troubling were the hidden forces behind him.

The hand hidden within the shadows was the true enemy.

Two months was, frankly, not much time.

He would have to resolve many problems in this period of time. Breaking through to the Earth Fiend Realm was one as he would be able to grasp his third resonance. He would also look to upgrade both his existing resonances and to cultivate a new resonance art. The Holy Grail Meet had demonstrated that his means were insufficient in keeping up with his growth, and dragon-general resonance arts were now necessary.

And lastly, the possibility of wielding a Duke Art.

Though this might be an idle pipe dream due to the extreme difficulty. Li Luo himself did not have much confidence in succeeding. He could only give it his all and hope for the best. Success was best, while failure meant that he would just move on and focus his efforts on dragon-general resonance arts. They were more suitable for him anyway.

Eventually, he arrived at Mentor Chi Chan's lodging with a head full of ideas and plans. Knocking on the door lightly, he stepped into the silent courtyard. His mentor was sitting within a pavilion adorned with windchimes and bamboo furnishing, calmly watching him.

Taking wider strides, he pretentiously spoke out. "Where should the strongest student of the One Star Hall make himself comfortable?"

"Why are you so proud of your achievement? You merely split apart some melons and cracked some seeds. Is there a need to be so ostentatious?" Chi Chan sniped back after shooting Li Luo an unimpressed gaze.

"Jing Taixu and Lu Ming aren't random cannon fodder! A quasi ninth-grade and a dual resonance user! They aren't even considered weak when we compare them to other incarnations of the One Star Hall competition! In fact, I've brought great face and respect to you, Mentor Chi Chan! You don't need to thank me though, just pouring me a cup of tea to show your gratitude would suffice." Li Luo grinned as he plonked himself on a seat opposite his mentor.

"Oh? Someone has grown in audacity too? Let's see... since you're such an overachiever, don't you think it's a good idea if I hang you atop the Tree of Resonant Power for all the other students to study and emulate your excellence?" Mentor Chi Chan completely disregarded the young lord's pompous behavior, only laughing coldly. "Pouring him a cup of tea? He should be keeping his tail tucked between

his legs!" Li Luo shivered upon hearing that suggestion. If that really happened, all of the hard work in building his newfound reputation would be for nought! Of course, the ever-nimble and flexible Li Luo wasn't going to stubbornly insist... only bitterly complain.

"Mentor, Vice Principal Su Xin is much more caring than you! Don't you want to be my favorite mentor?"

"Scram and find her, then," Chi Chan icily replied.

"Did this brat dare to say I'm not caring enough? Hmph! You definitely didn't say this when you were trying to get my assistance to refine something!"

"That's definitely impossible. We have an unbreakable alliance to murder that dog named Shen," Li Luo solemnly replied.

"If you dare to let the caring Su Xin hear of a single whisper of this, just sit tight and watch me get rid of you," Mentor Chi Chan snapped.

"Of course not! This is a secret between us and us only! That beast has forced you to be veiled whilst squandering important resources. He deserves death!" Li Luo continued with his tirade.

Mentor Chi Chan then gave a light sigh and her gaze seemed to soften a little. When it came to matters of Shen Jinxiao, the two were definitely in agreement in more than just words.

Seeing this change in his mentor, he beamed happily and quickly took out the Royal Engraving.

"Esteemed Mentor Chi Chan, I just have one tiiiiiiiiiny request of you."

Mentor Chi Chan grabbed the Royal Engraving before inspecting it quickly. "A third-grade Royal Engraving. The Academic Federation does have quite the stash of nice treasures. The previous Holy Grail Meets only gave out second-grade ones at best. It looks like things really escalated this time."

After which, she turned to glance at Li Luo before lightly raising her chin.

"Take off your clothes, then."