

The Doctor 281

Chapter 281: Dijing Yuan Meridian

The crowd couldn't understand Mu Qinghe's thoughts, and all of them quietened down.

On the other hand, Chu Liuyue was very calm. She sat down as if nothing had happened, allowing all sorts of gazes to size her up.

She could roughly guess that Mu Qinghe had thought of the past, but she didn't know where his anger came from.

After meeting him, she realized that Mu Qinghe's personality seemed to have changed. Even though he was also quiet in the past, he wasn't as temperamental.

Emperor Jiawen eased the situation. "Hehe, Lieutenant Mu, didn't you say last night that you came here to pick some people to follow you back and cultivate? Is that true?"

Once this was said, everyone's attention immediately shifted to Mu Qinghe.

Countless pairs of eyes were filled with hope and excitement.

Follow Mu Qinghe back?

Doesn't that mean going to the Tianling Dynasty?

That's an enormous opportunity!

The Tianling Dynasty is a very formidable existence. In the entire Country Yao Chen, only Emperor Jiawen has the right to go there. Others can't even think about it, yet we have such a chance now!

Mu Qinghe actually came to pick people personally.

"That's right."

Mu Qinghe's two simple words immediately caused the crowd's hearts to rise.

Even though Emperor Jiawen already knew about this yesterday, he still felt very emotional when talking about it now. His pair of old and always unaffected eyes were filled with unconcealable excitement and glory.

"Almost all of Country Yao Chen's outstanding talents are here. Do you have anyone that you like here?"

Other than the princes and princesses, important characters from aristocratic families, Tian Lu Academy's Elder Sun, and the others were seated here.

Of course, there was also Fu Yunshan and Cheng Han.

Upon hearing Mu Qinghe's definite answer, the two of them looked at each other, and they could see desire in the other party's eyes.

Mu Qinghe really came here to pick people, and he wants to bring them back to the Tianling Dynasty! I really don't know what kind of luck Country Yao Chen has! But since we're here, we might be able to join in! After all, there are quite a few outstanding talents in our academies!

If they can be chosen... their future possibilities are endless!

...

Mu Qinghe's gaze lightly swept past the crowd.

All those who were looked at by him unwittingly sat up straight and held in their breaths.

"Lieutenant Mu." Rong Jin suddenly stood up. "May I know if I-I can recommend myself?"

Rong Jin habitually wanted to say 'as the prince,' but he suddenly realized that even his father didn't dare to pull his rank in front of Mu Qinghe. Thus, he hurriedly changed his sentence.

Emperor Jiawen was also very surprised because he didn't expect Rong Jin to suddenly take the initiative and speak up.

But from another perspective, Rong Jin was indeed the most talented at cultivation amongst his prince brothers. Hence, Rong Jin could give it a try.

If even he couldn't gain Mu Qinghe's approval, then the others weren't even worth mentioning. After all, Rong Jin was the Crown Prince, and he should have some courage.

Mu Qinghe glanced at him. "Stage-four warrior?"

This kind of strong warrior just needed to glance at someone to tell their cultivation level.

Rong Jin nodded nervously. "I should be able to break through and become a stage-five warrior in another month's time."

The crowd looked at Rong Jin in shock.

It wasn't that easy to break through and become a stage-five warrior. Some people would forever be stuck in front of that door for the rest of their lives.

But since Rong Jin dared to say this in public, he had to be very confident in himself.

Noticing the crowd's reaction, Rong Jin couldn't help but feel delighted. Even though he lost to Heng Jingchuo during the Qing Jiao Competition a few days ago and was even poisoned by him, it wasn't completely disadvantageous.

After clearing the remaining poison in his body, Rong Jin shockingly discovered that he had signs of breaking through.

He had been diligently cultivating in the past two days, and he could vaguely touch the invisible barrier. Hence, he was certain that he could definitely break through in another month's time.

This was also a surprise for him, and he planned to announce it when he actually broke through. However, he couldn't care about that now.

As long as I can get Mu Qinghe's praise, then...

"Should be? There's no should or should not in cultivation. As long as you haven't broken through, you're still a stage-four warrior." Mu Qinghe's voice was cold, sounding as if he was very unaffected.

Rong Jin was stunned. He looked up and saw the obvious nonchalance in Mu Qinghe's eyes.

That was the attitude of one staring at an ant!

Rong Jin was dazed. "I..."

"You should already be in your twenties, right?"

Rong Jin hesitantly nodded.

Mu Qinghe lightly grunted. "Then, how do you have the cheek to stand here and say that you want to recommend yourself? How... do you have the right?"

Rong Jin never expected himself to be humiliated by Mu Qinghe in front of so many people. His face immediately flushed red.

Mu Qinghe's every word made him embarrassed to no end.

Rong Jin had always been talented since he was young, and he had always been praised. This was the first time someone had looked down on him.

Emperor Jiawen looked very awkward.

Rong Zhen thought for a while before she playfully smiled and said, "Lieutenant Mu, my brother is already the most outstanding one. If you don't like him, then nobody else here can fit your standards."

Rong Zhen smiled brightly, and her tone was upbeat as if she were talking in a coy manner.

Mu Qinghe glanced at her.

Rong Zhen's heart beat really quickly; she was nervous yet expectant.

"What are you?" spat Mu Qinghe coldly.

Rong Zhen's smile instantly froze.

The palace fell into dead silence.

As her lips curved up, Chu Liuyue looked down and played with the empty cup in her hands.

Mu Qinghe climbed up from the very bottom of the ladder, so he is very resilient. After he became my henchman, many women wanted to give themselves to him. Skinny, chubby, pretty, and ugly. Which has he not seen before? But even until my death, he still didn't have a wife or concubine even though he was 27 years old.

Rong Zhen truly doesn't meet his standards. I wonder where she got her confidence from, which made her think that Mu Qinghe would buy into her methods.

"I-I..." Rong Zhen had never been this humiliated in public, and her face—covered with makeup—became as pale as ever.

Emperor Jiawen scolded Rong Zhen harshly in his heart. How stupid! Didn't she see that even I don't dare to put in a good word for Rong Jin? Yet, she still dared to say that... She's really embarrassing the entire royal family!

“This isn’t a place for you to speak!” hollered Emperor Jiawen harshly.

Tears welled up in Rong Zhen’s eyes, and she lowered her gaze.

The Empress looked behind and ordered the people behind her to pull Rong Zhen to make her sit down.

The atmosphere in the palace became even stiffer.

Mu Qinghe asked, “Who here has the Dijing Yuan meridian?”

Dijing Yuan meridian!

Every single word made everyone dazed.

How many years did it take for someone with the Dijing Yuan meridian to appear? It didn’t matter if Mu Qinghe didn’t say anything, but he made an extremely high demand once he did!

If he is finding people according to his standards, I’m afraid nobody here will pass!

“I think there isn’t any.”

Chu Liuyue’s heart fluttered, and she stood up. “I have it.”

Chapter 282: Yuan Stone

The palace was instantly silenced.

Everyone looked at Chu Liuyue in shock. Does she know what she’s saying? Someone with the Dijing Yuan meridian is a top talent that only appears once in a hundred years!

In Country Yao Chen’s history, there were few such people, and all of them were very formidable.

When everyone was young, they would undergo a Yuan meridian test.

Once one was found to have the Dijing Yuan meridian, they would immediately become a family’s cultivation focus.

This kind of talent cultivated much faster, and they were much stronger than ordinary cultivators.

But Chu Liuyue...

“Chu Liuyue, we all know that you took first place in the Qing Jiao Competition, and it’s an indisputable fact that you’re a real talent, but are you sure that you have the Dijing Yuan meridian? Lieutenant Mu is here; you can’t lie to his face!”

The Lu family’s head—Lu Ming—suddenly spoke. “You said you have the Dijing Yuan meridian, but why hasn’t there been news of this after so many years? Chu Xiao, Chu Liuyue used to be part of the Chu family, so you should be the clearest about this, right?”

If this were true, the Chu family would’ve long announced it to the whole world. How would they still treat Chu Liuyue in that manner?

When everyone heard this, they all looked at Chu Xiao with hidden excitement as if they were watching a play.

Everyone could tell that Lu Ming said this on purpose.

Chu Liuyue was indeed part of the Chu family in the past, but everyone knew that they had severed ties with each other.

The two parties had completely fallen apart, and their conflict could never be resolved. This was especially so because the Chu family had suffered quite a few times.

Now that Chu Liuyue had suddenly turned over a new leaf and became a genius from a good-for-nothing, the Chu family would definitely suffer and regret it the most.

...

Chu Xiao had a dark face ever since he walked in. In actual fact, he had been in a very bad mood ever since he knew that Chu Liuyue took first place in the warrior competition.

After that, his mood just took a turn for the worse, and it had arrived at an unsalvageable state.

When Chu Liuyue first entered Tian Lu Academy and took first place in the mid-semester assessment, they could still comfort themselves and say that this result was just slightly better than Chu Xianmin's. They could say that it wasn't a terrible loss for them.

But it was different this time.

The Qing Jiao Competition was a competition where the top talents from the three academies battled each other!

Being able to take first place—even two first places in this competition—was more than enough to prove Chu Liuyue's formidable talent!

As for Chu Xianmin? She had long been drowned in the sea of talents and wasn't worth mentioning.

However, Chu Liuyue had become famous from the competition, and her name was known throughout the city.

Chu Liuyue had long harshly flung Chu Xianmin far behind her.

If Chu Liuyue was still part of the Chu family, they would be able to dominate the Imperial City in the future. But... Chu Liuyue had already severed all ties with them!

She was even their enemy!

Even though Chu Xiao really hated Chu Liuyue to the core, he was overwhelmed with regret.

Upon seeing Chu Xiao's sorrow, Lu Ming was secretly elated.

Recently, Lu Yao didn't have a good time in the Chu family, which embarrassed their entire Lu family. Now, he had finally found a chance to take revenge!

"Chu Liuyue used to lack a Yuan meridian when she was born, but she somehow recovered it after that. I don't know if she has the Dijing Yuan meridian," said Chu Xiao as he suppressed his anger.

Mu Qinghe squinted his eyes. Lacked a Yuan meridian?

This wasn't a big problem to him, but this should be an unsolvable problem in a place like Country Yao Chen.

It would be interesting if Chu Liuyue had actually recovered from the lack of a Yuan meridian and obtained the Dijing Yuan meridian.

Lu Ming laughed out loud. "Oh, right! I almost forgot that she isn't part of the Chu family after she recovered her Yuan meridian! It's normal that you don't know about it. Chu Xiao, I said it by accident, so please don't take it to heart!"

Chu Xiao's expression became stiff, and he casually acknowledged Lu Ming. However, his face was as tense as ever.

Emperor Jiawen looked at Sun Zhongyan. "Elder Sun, Liuyue has entered Tian Lu Academy for a period of time already. You should know about this, right?"

"This... Your Majesty, please forgive me. Due to various reasons, Liuyue did not undergo the Yuan meridian test when she entered the academy," said Sun Zhongyan as he looked at Chu Liuyue.

"However, Liuyue has always been stable and trustworthy; she's definitely not someone who lies. In addition to her outstanding performance in the Qing Jiao Competition, I believe that she indeed has the Dijing Yuan meridian."

Sun Zhongyan was openly standing on Chu Liuyue's side and putting in a good word for her.

Chu Liuyue's heart tingled. Even though she didn't become Elder Sun's disciple, he had always taken great care of her and helped her countless times.

It was rare for someone to be so nice to her.

Chu Liuyue stepped forward and said loudly, "If Lieutenant Mu doesn't believe me, we can conduct a Yuan meridian test now."

Now is the best opportunity, and I must grab it!

Mu Qinghe looked at Chu Liuyue for a while. Suddenly, he took out a black jade card and flung it toward Chu Liuyue. "Since this is so, do the test!"

That black jade card stopped in front of Chu Liuyue and quietly floated in the air.

Chu Liuyue glanced at it and could immediately confirm that this was a Yuan Stone—which was used to test one's Yuan meridian.

A faint doubt popped up in her heart—Why does Mu Qinghe carry this around with him? Even though Yuan Stones aren't rare objects in the Tianling Dynasty, usually only aristocratic families and academies have them.

Mu Qinghe actually brought this along with him when his current status... Perhaps it is for him to test one's Yuan meridian conveniently?

Chu Liuyue felt like something was amiss. However, she looked calm and didn't show that there was anything wrong.

“Place your hand on the Yuan Stone and inject your force into it. It’ll then test your Yuan meridian standard,” said Mu Qinghe.

Chu Liuyue nodded, stepped forward, and placed her hand on the Yuan Stone.

It was cold to the touch.

Chu Liuyue gathered her focus, controlled some of her force, and injected it into the Yuan Stone.

Buzz!

A bright star suddenly appeared on the black Yuan Stone.

One star, two stars...

Stars started accumulating, causing the black Yuan Stone to look like it was the mesmerizing night sky that was filled with stars.

Mu Qinghe focused on it. She actually has the Dijing Yuan meridian!

An average cultivator’s Yuan meridian could only summon ten stars. However, a person with the Dijing Yuan meridian could easily summon up to 100 stars.

All the stars currently gathered on the Yuan Stone proved that Chu Liuyue was way over this boundary.

Chu Liuyue’s heart jumped. This is weird. Why did the stars appear on the Yuan Stone much faster and in higher quantities than expected? It seems like it’s still going to continue!

Her thoughts changed, and she immediately summoned her force back.

The stars on the black Yuan Stone finally stopped increasing in number.

Chu Liuyue pulled back her hand and looked at Mu Qinghe.

Mu Qinghe’s gaze was deep, and he said with deep meaning, “That’s right. You indeed have the Dijing Yuan meridian.”

The crowd went crazy.

Chapter 283: Green Sparrow

Chu Liuyue’s eyes curved downward as if she heaved a sigh of relief. But in her heart, she wasn’t surprised at all. Instead, she was all the more confused.

Mu Qinghe seems to care about the Dijing Yuan meridian a lot. Did he specifically come to Country Yao Chen to look for talents with the Dijing Yuan meridian? But even though these people aren’t super common in the Tianling Dynasty, they’re definitely not rare. Why would he come all the way here to look for such talents?

The crowd looked at Chu Liuyue in shock, and they only recovered their senses after a while.

W-what does this mean?

Chu Liuyue actually has the Dijing Yuan meridian?

Doesn't this mean that she can follow Mu Qinghe to the Tianling Dynasty?

Mu Qinghe put away his Yuan Stone.

Chu Liuyue tried to ask, "Lieutenant Mu, since we've already proved that I have the Dijing Yuan meridian, then whatever you said before—"

Mu Qinghe didn't show any emotion. "Since you have the Dijing Yuan meridian, you can follow me back."

Chu Liuyue held her breath. She could clearly hear her own heart beating rapidly.

"Don't be happy too early. Having the Dijing Yuan meridian is only the start; I still have some other requests at the back, and you still won't be able to follow me if you can't meet them," said Mu Qinghe plainly.

Chu Liuyue lowered her eyes. "Thank you, Lieutenant Mu. I'll do my best."

I knew things wouldn't be this simple. But at least there's a chance, and it suits me better.

Even though Chu Liuyue really wanted to go back as soon as possible to make those who harmed her experience a hundred-fold of what she had been through, she knew very clearly that this wasn't the best time.

With her current abilities, she would just be digging her own grave if she went head-on against them.

Mu Qinghe acknowledged her, and nobody could tell his emotions from his face.

Chu Liuyue heaved a sigh of relief, but other people felt conflicted.

Everyone present came with much hope, but the demand of having the Dijing Yuan meridian was too high. They simply couldn't satisfy it.

After so long, Chu Liuyue was the one who benefitted again!

How could this make them happy?

After hesitating slightly, Emperor Jiawen still carefully asked, "Lieutenant Mu, do you only want people with the Dijing Yuan meridian? Actually, there are some people who aren't bad, though they don't have the Dijing Yuan meridian. Do you want to pick again?"

"If they're all like him, forget it." Mu Qinghe's gaze swept past Rong Jin.

Rong Jin felt even more embarrassed. As the Crown Prince, he had never experienced such a thing. Even when his father had grounded him and took back his power, he never felt this humiliated.

This was akin to slapping him harshly in front of everyone.

Emperor Jiawen didn't know what to say for a short while.

Even if Mu Qinghe said that to Emperor Jiawen, he wouldn't dare to show any form of dissatisfaction, let alone Rong Jin.

After hearing Mu Qinghe say that, Emperor Jiawen couldn't continue speaking any longer and swiftly kept his mouth shut.

The entire palace's atmosphere became increasingly eerie and cold.

But Chu Liuyue was very composed; she calmly ate her food and ignored the surrounding gazes.

Rong Zhen clenched her teeth because she hated Chu Liuyue for getting such a rare opportunity. She also regretted her previous impulsive actions.

After being lectured by Mu Qinghe, Rong Zhen already felt very humiliated. But when she noticed how Mu Qinghe treated the rest—including Rong Jin—in a similar manner, she didn't feel so angry.

When she gradually calmed down, Rong Zhen also felt that her previous behavior was overboard. Who is Mu Qinghe? He's the Tianling Dynasty's envoy, a superior lieutenant! Even Father has to abide by him; it doesn't matter if I get lectured. Besides, I'm still counting on Mu Qinghe to help heal my body!

Thinking of this, Rong Zhen flashed her mother a look.

Upon seeing the anxiety in Rong Zhen's eyes, the Empress naturally knew what she meant. However, this made her even more frustrated.

Does Rong Zhen think that I don't want to beg Mu Qinghe for help? Why doesn't she know how to see what kind of situation this is?

First, it was the Crown Prince; then, it was Rong Zhen. These two siblings have consecutively been scolded in front of so many people and utterly humiliated me. If we anger Mu Qinghe, he could kill us with a single finger. How can I say anything else?

Seeing that the Empress didn't do anything at all, Rong Zhen couldn't help but become anxious. She even wanted to walk over a few times.

Luckily, the palace maids serving her had already received instructions from the Empress, so they silently stopped her.

Rong Zhen was very upset, but she didn't dare to cause a scene at this place. Thus, she could only swallow her grievances.

At this moment, something suddenly flew in through the door.

Chu Liuyue took a look at it and was dazed.

The something was a green sparrow. It was the size of a palm and was thoroughly green, but its claws and eyes were bright red.

The green sparrow's eyes sparkled especially bright, seeming like rubies, and were very pretty.

This green sparrow waved its wings rapidly and speedily flew without a sound.

Hence, it had already reached the middle of the place when the crowd in the palace discovered it.

"Stop it!" hollered Rong Jin as he knitted his brows. "How did you guys do your jobs? What kind of place is this? How can you not stop such a nonsensical thing?"

The guards outside rushed in immediately and felt wronged when they heard Rong Jin's scoldings.

This thing flew too quickly! We can't stop it at all!

"Your Highness, please calm down!"

"There's an important guest here. You—"

"This is my fiend," said Mu Qinghe, who was sitting at the front.

Rong Jin's remaining words were stuck in his throat; his entire person froze, his limbs icy cold.

Mu Qinghe waved his hands, and the green sparrow flew toward him.

The palace was deadly quiet.

The green sparrow landed on Mu Qinghe's hand.

Mu Qinghe looked at it and saw blood underneath its wings. He knitted his brows slightly, and coldness flashed across his eyes. "Are you injured? Who hurt you?"

The green sparrow moved its wings and hid the bloodstain.

Mu Qinghe knitted his brows even more tightly.

Hong Yao was a seventh-grade fiend, and it was very formidable, so it rarely lost in battles.

For some reason, Hong Yao was quite frustrated yesterday, so Mu Qinghe let it out.

He didn't expect it to get hurt.

Who has such abilities in Country Yao Chen?

Hong Yao bit the feathers on its wings in grievance.

Mu Qinghe said coldly, "How did you assure me that you wouldn't get into trouble before we came? Did you learn your lesson yet?"

Hong Yao didn't expect to be lectured after it was injured, and it felt increasingly wronged.

Its clear, ruby-like eyes blinked as tears quickly filled them, and it looked very pitiful.

Mu Qinghe sighed in his heart. It really has been spoiled by that person. I only lectured it a little, and it feels wronged.

"Hong Yao—" Mu Qinghe's voice was even sterner.

However, Hong Yao suddenly turned around. Hong Yao then stopped in its movements as it dazedly looked at Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue's heart skipped a beat.

The next moment, she saw that tiny thing flying toward her!

Chapter 284: Especially Jealous

Everyone was stunned by this sudden scene.

The green sparrow is Mu Qinghe's fiend. Why did it suddenly fly toward Chu Liuyue?

Mu Qinghe suddenly stood up. "Hong Yao, you're not allowed to hurt anyone!"

However, Hong Yao ignored him and drew a green line across the sky as it directly rushed toward Chu Liuyue.

Just as the crowd was pondering over how Chu Liuyue was going to face this trouble, they saw the small ball pounce into Chu Liuyue's arms suddenly.

Hong Yao's claws grabbed the clothes in front of Chu Liuyue's chest tightly, and its two tiny wings expanded as it leaned against Chu Liuyue closely. Hong Yao's round head kept rubbing itself against Chu Liuyue's body, seemingly with much reluctance and longing.

Chu Liuyue's heart harshly skipped a beat when she looked down and saw Hong Yao lying against her chest. Did Hong Yao... recognize me? But... how is that possible? My current look is completely different from before. Even Mu Qinghe can't detect anything, so why would Hong Yao...

One had to know that Hong Yao was never intimate with strangers. Sometimes, when Hong Yao threw its temper, it wouldn't even care about Mu Qinghe. It could be considered as one of the most hot-tempered fiends she had met before.

Chu Liuyue's heart started beating rapidly. Now, she couldn't even care if Hong Yao had recognized her. This unusual reaction would definitely arouse Mu Qinghe's suspicions. I definitely can't expose my identity at this time!

Just as Chu Liuyue was hesitating about what to do, a red figure suddenly flashed before her eyes.

Chu Liuyue dazedly looked up; she saw Tuan Zi holding its claws together and ferociously glaring at Hong Yao, who was in her arms.

Tuan Zi's pair of eyes seemed to be burning with fire.

Chu Liuyue's heart skipped a beat.

The next second, Tuan Zi grabbed Hong Yao's wings and harshly flung it outward.

Hong Yao was deeply immersed in shock, happiness, and disbelief, so it didn't even detect the incoming danger.

When Hong Yao finally realized that something was amiss, Tuan Zi had already thrown it out.

Tuan Zi hurriedly dashed toward Chu Liuyue and glared at Hong Yao, looking like it wanted to fight with Hong Yao.

Hong Yao was flung away so harshly that its head started to whirl.

When it finally stabilized its body with much difficulty, it suddenly felt that something was wrong.

Hong Yao raised its wing and glanced at it, only to shockingly realize that a bunch of its feathers had been plucked off.

It instinctively looked downward and was greatly hurt by that ball of green feathers.

Chiu!

Hong Yao let out a silent cry and charged toward Tuan Zi.

Tuan Zi bared its cold teeth and met with Hong Yao without any avoidance.

Seeing that the two of them were about to brawl, Chu Liuyue immediately put a stop to it. "Tuan Zi! Come back!"

However, Tuan Zi—who was always obedient—was especially stubborn this time. It only paused for a while when it heard Chu Liuyue's voice before rushing forward again.

I can't lose this time!

A green blaze started burning in Hong Yao's body.

The entire palace's temperature suddenly rose by a notch.

The crowd was shocked. This palm-sized green sparrow is actually so formidable!

Chu Liuyue was even more anxious in her heart.

Even though Hong Yao was only a seventh-grade fiend, its combat skills were enough to tie with an eighth-grade fiend due to its special bloodline.

How could the current Tuan Zi possibly be Hong Yao's match?

Mu Qinghe coldly said, "Hong Yao, if you dare to continue causing trouble, then return to Qiu Shui Court immediately!"

This sentence finally had an effect.

Hong Yao's body shivered, and the fire around it started to fade away rapidly. But it didn't move backward and continued to stare at Tuan Zi head-on.

The two of them ferociously glared at each other as if they were born to be mortal enemies.

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows. For some reason, this scene looks very familiar... In the past, Hong Yao and...

"Hong Yao." Mu Qinghe's voice didn't change much from earlier, but it was a lot colder.

Hong Yao knew that Mu Qinghe would really get angry if it continued to cause trouble, so it could only turn around indignantly.

When it turned around, it didn't even forget to shoot a reluctant glance at Chu Liuyue.

Tuan Zi grunted before returning and jumping onto Chu Liuyue's shoulders.

Chu Liuyue shot a look of warning at Tuan Zi.

Tuan Zi knew that it was in the wrong, so it obediently rolled up into a ball and rubbed its face against her cheeks in an attempt to make her happy.

Chu Liuyue was helpless, and she looked at Mu Qinghe. "Lieutenant Mu, please forgive me. My fiend is still young and doesn't know—"

"Hong Yao was the one who caused trouble first." Mu Qinghe really didn't intend to blame anyone for this as he glanced at Hong Yao.

Hong Yao indignantly turned around, clearly showing that it wouldn't admit its mistakes.

Mu Qinghe paused for a while and didn't say anything more. In actual fact, his current feelings were definitely not as calm as how he looked on the surface.

He knew Hong Yao's character the best. No matter how close a person was to Hong Yao, it might not be very intimate. To strangers, Hong Yao either had enmity, or it wouldn't even care about the other party.

Ever since that person died, Hong Yao's temper became even worse, and it usually ignores me frequently. However, why did it act so weird when it saw Chu Liuyue today?

He had previously seen everything very clearly.

Hong Yao acted very intimate toward Chu Liuyue, and it really depended on her. All these years, I've only seen Hong Yao do this in front of one person! Is there actually something wrong with Chu Liuyue?

A ridiculous thought flashed across his heart, but Mu Qinghe immediately rejected it. No matter if it's in terms of looks, age, or anything else, Chu Liuyue has nothing similar to that person. Besides, given the situation that day, how could that person possibly survive?

Mu Qinghe only felt that the path before him was clouded and that he couldn't see anything clearly.

"Hong Yao isn't usually like this. The reason for its behavior today is probably because... it's fated with you." Mu Qinghe's voice was a little hazy.

Chu Liuyue seemed to heave a sigh of relief, and her lips curved up. "It's good if Lieutenant Mu doesn't blame me for this."

Mu Qinghe's mood was messed up, and he didn't plan on staying any longer. "Let's end this here today."

It's better if I go check on Hong Yao's injury. Mu Qinghe then lifted his leg and walked outside.

He paused for a moment when he walked past Rong Jin. "Not any random trash can enter some places."

Rong Jin's face turned as white as a sheet, but he couldn't utter a single word.

Mu Qinghe then continued to walk forward.

Hong Yao followed behind him, but it turned back thrice for every step it took. Its pair of beautiful, red eyes were filled with reluctance.

Chu Liuyue's heart ached as she watched it, but she lowered her head in the end.

Hong Yao must have recognized me. Even though I don't know what's going on, but...

Chu Liuyue didn't know how to describe what she was feeling. It was like a heartache with indignance, but it also had hints of happiness and warmth.

It turns out that I am still remembered after my death. It's a pity that it is impossible for me to reconnect with Hong Yao in such a situation.

On the other end, Mu Qinghe rejected Emperor Jiawen and the rest's company as he left the palace on his own.

When he walked to somewhere isolated, he finally stopped and looked at Hong Yao. "Say it. What exactly is going on?"

Chapter 285: Throwing a Tantrum

Hong Yao tilted to its side, not wanting to deal with Mu Qinghe.

Mu Qinghe stared at it. "Your temper has grown."

Hong Yao glared at him, and it actually had tears in its eyes. Mu Qinghe never had the guts to treat me like this when she was around in the past! It hasn't even been that long, and my treatment is getting worse! I've suffered enough in this one year! Mu Qinghe, this stupid master...

Hong Yao got more upset as it thought about it. It wanted to go back and look for Chu Liuyue badly. However, Hong Yao knew that Mu Qinghe would never agree. Besides... that fellow was there...

I have lost a few feathers!

Bang!

In a pique of anger, Hong Yao flopped to the floor. I'm not leaving! I cannot go on living like this anymore!

Mu Qinghe felt the corners of his eyes twitch. "It's useless for you to throw a tantrum."

Hong Yao didn't move an inch, dead set on not leaving with him. Just let me die!

Hong Yao felt embarrassed when it thought about how it was injured by a beast that had been imprisoned for so many years when it went out yesterday!

And Mu Qinghe treated me like this... I cannot go on living like this anymore!

Mu Qinghe shut his eyes tight and tried to control his emotions to prevent himself from murdering his fiend. "If you tell me who hurt you, I can take revenge for you."

Hong Yao moved its eyes, but its body was still tense. Hong Yao thought about it, but it was conflicted.

"To be able to get injured in a place like this, it seems that you have not been diligently cultivating recently."

Mu Qinghe's words successfully dashed all of Hong Yao's thoughts of asking him for help.

A blue flame covered Hong Yao's body and burned away the remnant blood.

Mu Qinghe raised his eyebrows, a little surprised.

Hong Yao had the habit of getting into trouble outside and having him clean up after it; he didn't expect it to be so stubborn today.

“Since you don’t want to say anything, here’s a different question.” Mu Qinghe stared intently at Hong Yao as if he wanted to see right through it. “In the main hall earlier, you...”

“Lieutenant Mu.” Before Mu Qinghe could finish, he was interrupted by a clear female voice.

He turned and saw that it was Chu Liuyue.

It was such a coincidence.

Mu Qinghe’s expression changed, and he glanced at Hong Yao.

The bird on the floor froze instantly. Oh no! She saw me. This is too embarrassing!

Without thinking, Hong Yao got up and flew around Mu Qinghe, dipping up and down as it pretended that it was playing with him.

From afar, it looked like a happy butterfly.

Mu Qinghe: ...

“Lieutenant Mu, your fiend is so energetic.” Chu Liuyue walked over and spoke in a surprised tone. En, it’s just as good at throwing tantrums as before.

Mu Qinghe: ...

Hong Yao instantly felt awkward. It didn’t know if it should continue flying around. It suddenly faltered and almost fell to the ground.

Hong Yao could only look down with resignation, full of regret.

“Can I help you?” Mu Qinghe coughed, but he remained expressionless.

Chu Liuyue smiled lightly. “There’s a matter that I would like to ask for your help with. I wonder if you’re willing to agree to it.”

“Speak.” Given Mu Qinghe’s personality, he would never be interested in such matters. Before today, he wouldn’t have uttered a single word if Chu Liuyue spoke to him in this manner.

But after thinking about Hong Yao’s reaction toward her, Mu Qinghe felt a need to get to know Chu Liuyue better.

Chu Liuyue bowed. “My friend’s mother has been unwell for years, and her condition worsened recently. I wonder... I wonder if Lieutenant Mu would be willing to help? I would be eternally grateful.”

Mu Qinghe frowned. “Your friend?”

Chu Liuyue nodded. “Mu Hongyu, who is also Country Yao Chen’s Princess Yong Ping.

Mu Qinghe didn’t care if Mu Hongyu was a princess; he might not even be willing to help Emperor Jiawen. But...

“Hong Yao seems to have an affinity for you. On account of this, I can help you.”

Chu Liuyue was a little surprised. and she looked toward Hong Yao. "Then, I guess... thank you Hong Yao?"

She parted her lips and gently called out the name.

She was the one who gave Hong Yao its name. Back then, she had been hunting for fiends with Mu Qinghe. They got Hong Yao by chance, but they didn't know what to call it.

Chu Liuyue thought that they shared some affinity since it was a green sparrow that shared a character with Mu Qinghe's[1] name. She then deliberately gave it the name Hong Yao [2. Hong means red] to contrast.

Now that she called out this name again, everything had changed.

Hong Yao paused and instinctively wanted to fly toward Chu Liuyue.

Chu Liuyue glanced at Hong Yao.

Their eyes met.

Hong Yao suddenly paused. It seems like she doesn't want to... now.

It looked at Chu Liuyue pitifully, wanting to fly over and tell on Mu Qinghe.

Tuan Zi stood on Chu Liuyue's shoulder, staring at Hong Yao warily.

Hong Yao felt the spot where it had lost a few feathers throb.

After a moment of conflict, it did not go over. Instead, it buried its head in its wings.

Nobody saw its tears landing among its fear.

After a while, Hong Yao's wings were drenched.

Chu Liuyue felt her heart ache as she looked at it.

Hong Yao had always been arrogant and had always created trouble. But when it was tired, it would bury its head in its wings and cry like it was doing now.

Chu Liuyue really wanted to hug Hong Yao. Since she had been reborn, everything from her previous life seemed like an illusion.

All her relationships were false pretenses, and loyalty turned to betrayal. Only Hong Yao remembered her in the end.

After seeing Hong Yao's reaction, the pain deep in her core was soothed a little. However, now was not a good time.

Mu Qinghe said: "I'll be staying here for a while. Ask her to come, and I'll send for a heavenly doctor to treat her."

As the Black Guard's lieutenant, he had a lot of power. Activating a few heavenly doctors was easy.

Chu Liuyue retracted her gaze and smiled. "Then, thank you Lieutenant Mu."

She then asked a little hesitantly, “But Lieutenant Mu you’re saying that... you’re not leaving immediately?”

Wasn’t he here to find someone with the Dijing Yuan meridian? Does he have other things to attend to?

“En,” replied Mu Qinghe, but he didn’t say much.

Chu Liuyue knew that she was currently not in the position to ask any further, so she remained silent and bowed. “If that’s the case, I won’t take up any more of your time. I’ll take my leave.”

With that, she backed away and turned.

“Hold it right there,” Mu Qinghe said suddenly.

Chu Liuyue paused and turned around with a smile. “Lieutenant Mu, is there anything else?”

[1] Qing means green

Chapter 286: Useless

The girl before him was pretty, and her eyes were crescent moons.

Chu Liuyue’s eyes really resembled ‘hers,’ but upon looking closer, there was a slight difference.

That person was like the sun and the clouds, high and mighty—unparalleled. Just her standing there was enough for others to fear and respect her.

But the Chu Liuyue before him was more approachable.

Upon looking closer, even though Chu Liuyue’s eyes were just as clear, one would find that a lot of things were hidden in her eyes.

Curious, eager to please, and a little anticipatory.

He had seen too much of such expressions. Anyone who wanted anything from him would look at him with the same expression.

Perhaps it was because she was young. Even though her expression was calm, Chu Liuyue’s eyes couldn’t lie.

The strange feeling in Mu Qinghe’s heart gradually disappeared.

The same set of eyes in his mind slowly became two people.

“Nothing.’ Mu Qinghe suddenly lost interest; he didn’t say anything as he turned to leave.

Hong Yao looked at Chu Liuyue sadly before it flew after Mu Qinghe. This time, it was obedient and didn’t look back.

“Bye, Lieutenant Mu.” Chu Liuyue bowed respectfully.

The eager smile on her face only faded after the two had completely disappeared. She pursed her lips into a thin line, looking rather cold. I’ve managed to fool him today, but I have to be more careful from

now on. Thankfully, Hong Yao has always been obedient. It didn't come any closer after it sensed my thoughts.

Chu Liuyue dazedly stood in her spot until her neck was sore.

When she looked down, she saw that Tuan Zi was standing on her shoulder, looking at her with its doe-like eyes.

Chu Liuyue patted its head. "You feel wronged? You know, you almost got me into big trouble today."

Tuan Zi fought Hong Yao in front of so many people. If Mu Qinghe had pursued the matter, she also would've been in deep trouble, not just Tuan Zi.

Tuan Zi rubbed itself against Chu Liuyue's face to try and appease her.

"Hong Yao is of noble status, and it's strong. Don't provoke it in the future," Chu Liuyue continued.

But Tuan Zi widened its eyes when it heard Chu Liuyue's words. It looked at her indignantly. You're actually speaking for that fellow! Who's your fiend?!

Chu Liuyue raised her brow and looked at Tuan Zi. "Today is the first time you met Hong Yao, right? Why are you so hostile? It didn't provoke you..."

Tuan Zi shook its head wildly. It did provoke me! It did provoke me! That fellow had the guts to run into your arms! How dare it! Plucking a few of its feathers was just to teach it a small lesson! I will teach it a real lesson if this happens again!

Looking at Tuan Zi's hostile and agitated behavior, Chu Liuyue remained silent and gave up on persuading it.

Tuan Zi hadn't been with her for long, but she had figured it out.

Since it dared to attack Hong Yao in the main hall, their conflict would only be more intense in private. There was no use trying to persuade it.

"Your temper is really like..." Chu Liuyue muttered softly, but she didn't finish her sentence.

If it were before, she could still mediate in the middle, but things were different now!

Hong Yao's status was different—it was almost unparalleled in Country Yao Chen.

If Tuan Zi continued to target and attack Hong Yao like this, it could get into trouble if ill-intentioned people found out.

Chu Liuyue tapped Tuan Zi's nose with her slender finger. "If you're not obedient, I won't bring you out next time."

This worked on it, and conflict flashed across Tuan Zi's eyes. What if the other fellow takes advantage of things because I couldn't go out with Chu Liuyue?

In the end, Tuan Zi nodded unwillingly.

Chu Liuyue sighed slowly. For some reason, she had a feeling that Hong Yao and Tuan Zi would still be fighting when they met next time. "Let's go; there's still quite a bit of trouble waiting for us!"

...

Pilihuala!

The sound of things breaking came from the room. The person's anger was clear from the commotion.

All the servants stood in the yard; they fearfully glanced at the room from time to time.

"Are you done?" The Empress's authoritative voice sounded as she pulled the manic Rong Zhen back to her senses.

Rong Zhen glanced at the Empress with red eyes, looking as if she had been wronged.

But the Empress didn't console her like before. Instead, she was even more upset. "You're indignant? Do you know what you've done today?! That person is the Tianling Dynasty's envoy! He has seen all kinds of tricks, and he has already seen right through you! Who do you think you are?!"

Rong Zhen looked at the Empress in disbelief. Her mother had spoiled her since she was young. No matter how unreasonable she was, her mother would always help her.

Rong Zhen had never been lectured like this before! Her face turned pale as she faltered, seeming as though she couldn't take such a scolding.

However, the Empress wasn't done. She stepped forward—heading toward Rong Zhen—and glared at her angrily. "Do you know that not only could you have lost your life today, but you could've implicated other people as well! Look at your brother; wasn't that the case? It's fine if you threw tantrums in the past, but how dare you be insolent today!"

"I-I..." Rong Zhen shuddered as tears rolled down her face. "Mother, what did I do wrong? I just said something..."

"And was that not enough?!" The Empress raised her voice, and Rong Zhen shuddered as fear crept up her eyes.

How could the Empress's heart not ache for Rong Zhen? But she was set on educating Rong Zhen today! Otherwise, her personality could get everyone in trouble!

"It's fine if you get in trouble, but can you take responsibility if you implicate your brother?!"

The Empress was both scared and pained for Rong Jin losing his face in front of everyone today.

On one hand, she was worried that this would impact Rong Jin negatively. On the other hand, she was afraid that this would affect His Majesty's views of Rong Jin.

If word of what happened today got out, Rong Jin's predicament would become even more difficult to resolve.

Rong Zhen looked up in disbelief. Mother just said that... it is okay for me to get in trouble? Brother, brother! Haven't I done enough for Brother since I was young!?

She laughed coldly. "Mother, even if I did make a mistake today, is Brother entirely innocent? He's weak; that's why he couldn't compare with Chu Liuyue and was looked down on by Lieutenant Mu! He's useless!"

Pak!

Chapter 287: Has not given up yet

The crisp sound of a slap echoed in the room, and it silenced the agitated Rong Zhen.

Dead silence.

Rong Zhen's head was tilted to the side, and she covered her face without moving.

The Empress was stunned too. She didn't expect herself to hit Rong Zhen in the heat of the moment. Even though she wanted to teach Rong Zhen a lesson, she was still her daughter. This was also the first time she had ever hit Rong Zhen.

"Zhen Zhen..." The Empress was hesitant and stretched out her hand.

Rong Zhen backed away and avoided the Empress's hand.

The Empress froze.

Rong Zhen looked up gradually, and her hairpin fell due to the strike's force. Her hair unraveled messily, but it couldn't conceal her cheek, which was swelling up rapidly.

The corners of Rong Zhen's lips—which had been pale from anger—now had blood trickling down, and she looked a mess.

"What, did I hit a sore spot?" Rong Zhen curled her lips into a cold smile; her eyes were bloodshot and crazed.

The Empress's heart sank.

"Brother is the Crown Prince and your pillar of support. Therefore, Mother, you've always put him first in all your considerations. And me... you've never really cared about me, right?"

Since Rong Zhen was young, her mother had taught her to put her brother first. Even though she would be jealous occasionally, she didn't mind it since she had been pampered, and she had done as she was told.

Otherwise, she never would've made things difficult for Chu Liuyue when she heard that her brother's hunting ground had been sold. At the time, she was trying to seek revenge for her brother.

But Rong Zhen now knew that there had never been room for her in her mother's heart! Her mother would probably sell her out at any time for her brother!

The Empress was a little regretful after she saw Rong Zhen's strong reaction, but her expression turned cold when she heard those words. "Zhen Zhen, you're overthinking it. Your body hasn't recovered yet, so we'll end this conversation here today. You rest well and do some reflection."

With that, the Empress turned and left.

However, Rong Zhen had a sarcastic smile on her face as she pointed to herself and pointedly said, "Yeah, my pearl of essence is destroyed, and I'm a good-for-nothing. I have no value to Mother and Brother now. You can obviously toss me aside as you will!"

The Empress's face was grim. She took a deep breath and finally suppressed her anger as she turned and walked away. "Fourth Princess has had a relapse, and she needs bed rest. You all better keep a careful watch! You'll have to answer me with your lives if anything happens to her!"

All the servants answered frantically.

The Empress made a face at the servant next to her.

Someone hurried forward and shut the door.

The Empress then left.

The servants stared at each other. Has the Fourth Princess been grounded? It seems like even the Empress has lost her patience.

Fourth Princess had always been spoiled and willful. She had loved to torture people with all sorts of means. Many would suffer as long as she was unhappy, but that was over now!

If even the Empress didn't favor her, the Fourth Princess would no longer have any right to be so willful and arrogant!

Anger almost overflowed from Rong Zhen's eyes as she stared at the tightly shut doors in her room.

She bit down on her lips so hard that they bled.

"Elder Zhu." Rong Zhen called out a name raspily.

After a moment, there was a ripple in the space behind her, and a dark figure appeared slowly.

"Bring me to see Chu Liuyue."

Zhu Lin looked at her hesitantly. "Fourth Princess, I'm afraid that now is not an appropriate time."

Rong Zhen laughed coldly. "What's so inappropriate about it? Survival of the fittest. The longer I'm a good-for-nothing, the longer I have to put up with the humiliation. If you refuse to bring me there, I'll find a way myself!"

She knew now that she couldn't count on anyone in this world!

There was no turning back now. She had to turn to Chu Liuyue!

Zhu Lin was silent for a moment. "Fourth Princess, Chu Liuyue has just been chosen by Lieutenant Mu today. She's the talk of the town now. If we strike now, we'll attract a lot of attention. How about... another day."

Rong Zhen gritted her teeth. "Fine, I'll wait!"

...

When Cheng Han returned to his quarters gloomily, he found Situ Xingchen waiting for him. "Xingchen, why are you here?"

Situ Xingchen's eyes were evasive. "I was a little worried about you, so I decided to wait for you to return here."

"You still care for your mentor." Cheng Han shook his head with a bitter smile. Situ Xingchen was right next to me when Mu Qinghe warned me, so she definitely knows.

"Don't worry, I'm fine."

Situ Xingchen heaved a sigh of relief. "That's good."

She was a little worried when she saw that Cheng Han's expression was strange.

"Master, what is that Lieutenant Mu doing here in Country Yao Chen?" asked Situ Xingchen testingly.

Cheng Han knew that she was curious, so he told her what happened.

Situ Xingchen was stunned when she heard this. "...You're saying that he chose Chu Liuyue... to go to the Tianling Dynasty?"

Situ Xingchen's voice was a little faint.

Cheng Han frowned with annoyance. "That's what they said, but Mu Qinghe said that they wouldn't depart immediately. It seems like there are still some things to get through. If Chu Liuyue doesn't pass those obstacles, she can't go. Chu Liuyue really might not be able to go."

Situ Xingchen suppressed the overflowing jealousy in her heart. "Since they're looking for a person with the Dijing Yuan meridian, why didn't Lieutenant Mu go elsewhere? Why is he only looking in Country Yao Chen?"

Neither Country Xing Luo nor Country Huai Cang had received any news!

How could she not feel indignant?

"I'm afraid that everyone is curious about it." Cheng Han shook his head. I wanted such an opportunity too. What a pity...

Situ Xingchen didn't speak for a while. What if Chu Liuyue really is eligible? This is a one-in-a-million chance, and Chu Liuyue will definitely take full advantage of it. Even if I hate Chu Liuyue, I have to admit that she really is talented. Such talent might really allow Chu Liuyue to succeed.

Once she goes to Tianling Dynasty... the distance between the two of us will widen rapidly!

"Why was Lieutenant Mu only looking for prodigies with the Dijing Yuan meridian?" Situ Xingchen muttered.

If they were looking for heavenly doctors, she definitely would've made the cut!

Cheng Han shook his head. "Prodigies with the Dijing Yuan meridian are rare over here, but there should be a number of them over in the Tianling Dynasty. His trip here is rather strange... Oh well, these aren't things in our control. You better go back and pack up; we're leaving for home soon."

Situ Xingchen was stunned. It was only then that she recalled that the Qing Jiao Competition had ended and that there was no need for them to remain here.

However...

Rong Xiu... Situ Xingchen hadn't given up entirely.

Chapter 288

What happened at the palace banquet quickly spread amongst the major families of Imperial City.

Chu Liuyue also became a topic of discussion for many.

First, she took first place twice at the Qing Jiao Competition. She was then chosen to head to the Tianling Dynasty together with Mu Qinghe because she possessed the Dijing Yuan meridian.

In a few days, Chu Liuyue was famous! She had become an existence that everyone was envious of!

Commoners might not have known, but everybody of importance in the major families understood what the Tianling Dynasty represented!

Chu Liuyue's future was limitless from here onward!

The palace banquet ended at noon, but Chu Liuyue had received quite a number of presents by nightfall.

Even without looking, she knew that those people wanted to get into her good books. Thus, she turned all of them down.

After she returned to the academy, she chose to cultivate at Jiuyou Tower, tossing the chaos of the outside world behind her.

...

The Chu family residence.

Chu Xiao's expression was gloomy after he returned to the Chu family.

The servants felt like they were walking on thin ice when they saw his expression. They didn't dare to speak.

However, such a situation was quickly broken. Countless people had been requesting a meeting since noon, and they all asked for the same thing.

"What?! Let Chu Ning and his daughter return to the Chu family again?!" Chu Xiao almost exploded when he heard the suggestion. "No way! Don't even think about it!"

This father-daughter duo had broken away from the Chu family, and everyone in Imperial City knew that they were on opposing sides!

If they went to discuss this matter now, it would be as good as them admitting that they were conceding!

The entire Chu family would become the Imperial City's laughing stock then!

Chu Xiao felt uncomfortable all over whenever he thought of that. Hence, he refused to agree to it!

But everyone in the Chu family—who had always done his bidding—was adamant.

“First Elder, times are different now. News of Chu Liuyue being chosen to head to the Tianling Dynasty has spread across the major families! Even if we have our differences with her, we’re still family, and the same blood courses through our veins! What can’t we get past?”

“Yeah! She’s not the good-for-nothing that she was before! She’ll definitely accomplish a lot in the future; this is a one-in-a-million opportunity for us!”

“First Elder, we share your considerations, but we’ll only stand to lose if we continue to oppose them! How many people will want to get into Chu Liuyue’s good books after today? She came from our family after all. As long as we seek reconciliation voluntarily, she’ll definitely give us our due...”

Chu Xiao was frustrated by all the hopeful words. He cut them off abruptly and shouted, “Quit dreaming! Don’t you know what Chu Liuyue is like?! We’re just looking to be insulted if we seek reconciliation now!”

Everyone looked at each other hesitantly. They understood that, but they didn’t have any other solutions.

Were they just going to watch such a big opportunity slip by?

What was their pride compared to the Tianling Dynasty?

They could have anything that they wanted as long as they repaired their relationship with Chu Liuyue!

“First Elder, we understand that you don’t like Chu Liuyue. However, shouldn’t you think for the entire Chu family?” said Third Elder a little coldly.

Chu Xiao’s expression was stern. “What are you trying to say?”

Third Elder smiled. “Nothing. We all know why Chu Liuyue wanted to break away from the Chu family. If we really think about it, you played a part in this. It’s nothing if things had stayed the same, but Chu Liuyue is different now. No matter what, we have an edge over others. Won’t it be a pity if we give up now?”

The others nodded in agreement.

“Chu Ning and his daughter are not unreasonable people. As long as we apologize sincerely, I’m sure we can...”

Chu Xiao was furious. “You are all insane!”

“First Elder, we’re not crazy. This is our only option now.” Third Elder was unfazed by Chu Xiao’s outburst. His expression remained unchanged. “The Chu family has been declining in recent years. We finally managed to cultivate a Chu Xianmin, but she’s basically useless now.”

“Now that we finally have a genius like Chu Liuyue, shouldn’t we grab hold of her? No matter what, she’s valued by Lieutenant Mu now. What’s wrong with giving in? It will be a lot harder for us to do this when she’s successful in the future!”

Third Elder's words caused others to be in agreement.

Everyone was saying that they hoped Chu Xiao would apologize to Chu Ning and his daughter as their representative and invite them back into the Chu family.

Chu Xiao was frustrated. "Whatever! You can go get into Chu Liuyue's good books all you want, but I'm not going!"

Third Elder smiled wryly. "First Elder, I wonder how the family head would see your stubbornness when he returns."

Chu Xiao's expression froze! He had almost forgotten about that!

The family head had been in seclusion for so long that he had already seen himself as the Chu family's head.

Even though Third Elder's words were unpleasant, they weren't without reason.

He didn't need to take the others to heart, but the family head... It would be bad for him then.

After hesitating for a while, Chu Xiao's expression changed multiple times before he finally agreed to it. "Send Chu Liuyue... Never mind! Send Chu Ning an invite and tell him that there's something I would like to discuss with him!"

...

Chu Liuyue entered Jiuyou Tower again. Since she had broken through to stage two, she managed to enter the second floor easily.

Since the Qing Jiao Competition had just ended, not many students were there.

Chu Liuyue walked around the second floor. She found that there wasn't much of a difference from the first floor, other than the fact that the force was stronger here.

She then randomly picked a room and began her cultivation.

Having just settled down, Chu Liuyue heard a raspy but sharp roar.

The sound grew closer and clearer, and there was increasingly strong pressure!

Chu Liuyue felt like the blood in her body was going to freeze!

Screech!

It seemed like the roar had sounded by her ears, and her eardrums felt like they were going to burst!

Chu Liuyue's eyes flew open, and she saw a pair of sharp, bloodshot eyes before her!

Fire was burning in those eyes, and the fire was everywhere!

Chapter 289: Tuan Zi's Secret

It's this beast again! Chu Liuyue steeled herself, and she was about to move when she realized that it wasn't an illusion!

A curtain of light was before her eyes, and a pair of vicious eyes were projected onto the light curtain.

At that moment, Chu Liuyue was certain about one thing—this beast was targeting her!

This pair of eyes—surrounded by endless flames—were accompanied with a pitiful and vicious roar!

The beast came prepared this time, and it was much more terrible than before!

Chu Liuyue stared at the pair of eyes. “Who are you?”

She was met with a loud roar.

Buzz!

A buzzing sound suddenly came from within Jiuyou Tower!

Chu Liuyue only felt pain all over as if a terrifying force was crushing her—it was a crushing sense of pressure!

Chu Liuyue was stunned. There is actually such a strong seal within Jiuyou Tower!?

As the buzzing rang next to her ears, Chu Liuyue clearly saw a hint of fear flashing across those bloodshot eyes that were filled with hatred.

The next moment, the curtain of light flickered and dissolved into countless specks of light before it disappeared!

Everything happened so quickly. By the time Chu Liuyue realized what had happened, everything had disappeared without a trace.

It was like this scene had never happened. However, the pain in her eardrums—caused by the buzzing—and the fear that remained in her heart made it clear that everything which happened earlier wasn't an illusion!

The fiend trapped in Jiuyou Tower seemed to be struggling to get out, but it was still struggling before the powerful seal.

But... Why did it target me?

At this moment, Chu Liuyue felt her shoulders sink—Tuan Zi had appeared.

Chu Liuyue stared at it strangely, but Tuan Zi suddenly jumped and leaped toward the outside.

“Tuan Zi!” Chu Liuyue was stunned and ran after it!

Tuan Zi moved exceptionally quickly and dashed out of the room! It was like a ball of flames that left a streak in the air before it quickly disappeared!

Chu Liuyue dared not shout out loud, so she could only chase after it.

By the time she was at the room's door, Tuan Zi was already on the stairs in the middle of Jiuyou Tower!

Tuan Zi was looking up.

Chu Liuyue's heart skipped a beat, and she spoke in a hushed tone. "Tuan Zi, what are you doing!? Come back!"

The stairs were located right in the middle of Jiuyou Tower. It was the one path that connected all of the tower's floors.

There was a barrier on every floor of the staircase.

One could only pass through the barriers and head to the next floor when they reached the corresponding stage.

This was how Chu Liuyue managed to arrive where she was from the first floor.

But what was Tuan Zi intending to do?

Tuan Zi moved its ears when it heard her, but it didn't turn. In the next instant, it dashed upwards!

"Tuan Zi!" Chu Liuyue finally knew where her uneasiness came from.

Tuan Zi really intended to head upstairs!

She looked around, secretly thankful that nobody else was around here at this time.

This small commotion didn't startle the few students that were in the middle of cultivating.

Chu Liuyue hesitated for a moment, and she saw that Tuan Zi had already dashed up the stairs!

Troublesome! Chu Liuyue gritted her teeth and ran after Tuan Zi.

After a few steps, she felt the pressure coming from the barrier.

Only stage-three martial artists could pass through this barrier, but what happened next stunned Chu Liuyue—Tuan Zi actually passed right through the barrier!

It seemed so effortless. If she hadn't seen the ripples when Tuan Zi passed through it, she would've suspected that there was no barrier at all!

Tuan Zi turned and glanced at Chu Liuyue. It blinked as if it were wondering why Chu Liuyue didn't follow.

Chu Liuyue waved toward it. "Tuan Zi, come back! You can't go up there!"

But Tuan Zi refused to move; it just shook its tail. Tuan Zi clearly wanted her to join it.

Chu Liuyue was caught between laughter and tears. "I can't pass through this..."

Before she could finish speaking, Tuan Zi sprinted over, grabbed her hand, and dragged it through the barrier!

Chu Liuyue stared at her hand—which had passed through the barrier effortlessly—and she was stunned. T-this... I can feel the pressure of the barrier clearly, but it doesn't seem to affect me.

Chu Liuyue stepped forward hesitantly.

Her hand came first; her arm was next, and then...

She passed through the barrier blocking the way to the third floor!

Chu Liuyue was still a little confused as she stood on the steps to the third floor. What... just happened?

She turned and checked. The barrier was still there, and the ripples were just fading away.

Everything seems right. Chu Liuyue held her breath. Even if my ability is higher than that of a stage-two warrior, I shouldn't have passed through the barrier that easily!

However, Tuan Zi seemed to think that this was normal. It grabbed Chu Liuyue's fingers, tugging her toward the upper floors.

Chu Liuyue knitted her brows slightly. "You want to go further up?"

Tuan Zi blinked and nodded.

Chu Liuyue had a bad feeling in her heart, but after looking at Tuan Zi's face, she had no choice but to play along.

Jiuyou Tower was rather quiet.

Chu Liuyue could only hear her footsteps echoing in the empty tower.

She soon saw the barrier for the fourth floor—it was significantly stronger and exerted greater pressure than the one before. Even Chu Liuyue found it a little hard to breathe, but all her attention was on Tuan Zi.

Without hesitation, Tuan Zi sprinted toward the barrier, and it managed to pass through easily!

Chu Liuyue suppressed her surprise and stretched her hand out cautiously. As she inched closer, she felt strong pressure!

She stopped.

"Tuan Zi," called out Chu Liuyue.

Tuan Zi seemed to have sensed what she was trying to say. It ran back and grabbed her hand.

Chu Liuyue tried again, and the pressure had disappeared!

This time, she went through the barrier and entered the fourth floor successfully!

It really is because of Tuan Zi... Chu Liuyue stared at Tuan Zi as curiosity and confusion overflowed. What is going on? When did the barriers not have any effect on Tuan Zi?!

Tuan Zi looked at Chu Liuyue proudly, wagging its tail as if it were seeking praise.

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath. There is no way I could've done that based on my own ability. It is clear that all the credit belongs to Tuan Zi, but it is just a third-grade fiend. How...

Chu Liuyue rubbed her glabella. I almost forgot... If Tuan Zi really was a regular blood ferret, how could it be that tough in battle, and how could it have consumed Heng Jingchuo's force directly?

Chu Liuyue raised her eyebrows when she saw Tuan Zi's excitement. "You want to go up further?!"

Chapter 290: The Sixth Floor!

Tuan Zi nodded eagerly.

Chu Liuyue was speechless.

This was already the fourth floor, and only stage-four warriors and stronger could come up here.

When she looked around the floor, she noticed that it was deserted.

Less than ten students had reached the fourth stage. As for stage-five students... there were none!

Chu Ning was a stage-five warrior, and stage-five warriors could be considered the cream of the crop in the entire Country Yao Chen.

It was obvious that hardly anyone would be beyond the fifth floor.

Right now, Chu Liuyue found it difficult to figure out how Tuan Zi managed to pass through the barriers so easily.

Chu Liuyue was more concerned about another matter. Will our actions startle Elder Wei Yun, who is watching over Jiuyou Tower?

The tower was rather important to Tian Lu Academy, and it would be difficult for her to explain things if they were discovered because of the commotion.

When Tuan Zi saw that Chu Liuyue was just standing there—deep in thought—and didn't have any intention of following it, it turned and headed straight for the fifth floor!

Chu Liuyue frowned as she watched Tuan Zi head for the barrier.

Even though there was still some distance between her and the barrier, Chu Liuyue could feel the pressure emanating from it. The pressure was multiple times stronger than what emanated from the fourth floor's barrier.

Perhaps this barrier will stop Tuan Zi? It wouldn't make sense for Jiuyou Tower to be so accessible, right? At this thought, Chu Liuyue felt more at ease as she watched quietly. However, her illusion was soon shattered.

The strong barrier had no effect on Tuan Zi!

Tuan Zi went right through as if the barrier didn't exist!

Chu Liuyue was stunned as she watched Tuan Zi wag its tail happily at her. She seemed to have underestimated this blood ferret that she picked up...

After hesitating for a moment, Chu Liuyue took a deep breath before deciding to follow Tuan Zi up! Since she was already here, she wanted to see what was attracting Tuan Zi!

There was also another thing that she wanted to get to the bottom of—the sculpture of the beast, which seemed to come to life when she came to Jiuyou Tower and opened the door for the first time!

Chu Liuyue also wanted to investigate the eerie sounds that she had heard after she began cultivating here.

Even though she wasn't sure what fiend was trapped here beneath Jiuyou Tower, she was sure that it was targeting her!

At this thought, Chu Liuyue became surer and stretched her hand out toward the barrier.

Tuan Zi immediately grabbed her hand happily and pulled her through the barrier!

Looking at the lively Tuan Zi and herself, Chu Liuyue pursed her lips and looked upwards.

There was a spiral staircase that led towards the top, but there was a barrier for each floor—which shrouded everything in fog.

A question suddenly flashed across Chu Liuyue's mind: Since only stage-five warriors can enter the fifth floor, do the same rules apply to the top few floors? For example... Are stage-seven warriors the only ones that can enter the seventh floor?

However, no cultivator can reach such a high stage outside of Heaven's Canopy! If that is the case, then what is the purpose of Jiuyou Tower's top few floors? The strong warriors in Country Yao Chen are only stage-five, not even stage-six! That is to say that the limit of the Jiuyou Tower for the people here was the fifth floor. Also, who placed such a powerful tower here?

Chu Liuyue recalled that Bai Chen had introduced Jiuyou Tower to her when she first arrived at the academy. But he only mentioned that the Pit of Heavenly Origins was beneath Jiuyou Tower, which gave it stronger force than the outside world.

He hadn't elaborated on it any further.

A large part of why Chu Liuyue wanted to enter Tian Lu Academy was because of Jiuyou Tower. But it was only now that she realized that Jiuyou Tower seemed to be hiding a lot of secrets.

She looked toward Tuan Zi. "Do we continue?"

...

When Chu Liuyue broke through the Jiuyou Tower's fifth-floor barrier, Rong Xiu had just returned to Yi Feng Courtyard from Prince Li Mansion.

Yan Qing followed after him, reporting everything that had happened in the past day.

Rong Xiu lay down in the chair, his face calm and unreadable. "Has a time been fixed?"

Yan Qing bowed. "Not yet. I heard that Lieutenant Mu intended to stay here for a while. And... he seems to have plans to assess Ms. Liuyue further. He will only bring her to the Tianling Dynasty if she passes all of his tests."

Rong Xiu curled his lips into a half-smile. "Of course, he won't return immediately."

Mu Qinghe had other important things to attend to during this trip.

"You said that she brought up the fact that she had the Dijing Yuan meridian herself?" Rong Xiu asked.

Yan Qing nodded and respectfully replied, "Yes."

Rong Xiu remained silent for a while. He interlocked his fingers, his eyes dark. "It seems like she really wants to go."

Yan Qing sensed that his master's aura was off. He hesitated a little before he spoke. "For someone from Country Yao Chen, being able to go to the Tianling Dynasty is a big opportunity. It makes sense that Ms. Liuyue would want to go. Besides, she is talented, and it would be a waste for her to remain here."

Rong Xiu closed his eyes. I know that, but... It is something else that bothers me...

Suddenly, Rong Xiu opened his eyes as he sat up and looked in the direction of Jiuyou Tower!

Yan Qing was shocked. "Master, what's wrong?"

Rong Xiu frowned. "Someone entered the sixth floor of Jiuyou Tower!"

Yan Qing was stunned! Isn't the sixth floor of Jiuyou Tower exclusive to stage-six warriors? There isn't anyone in the entire Imperial City that can enter the sixth floor, not to mention Tian Lu Academy?!

"Master, could it be those..."

Rong Xiu raised his hands to cut Yan Qing off as he narrowed his eyes. "No."

He was familiar with that aura.

It is her! His expression changed as he headed toward Jiuyou Tower. Why did she enter Jiuyou Tower at this time!?

...

On the other end, Chu Liuyue turned and looked around. She couldn't believe that she had just entered the sixth floor!

With Tuan Zi leading her, she barely felt any resistance from the barrier!

If she hadn't experienced it for herself, Chu Liuyue never would've believed that this would be the way that she would ascend to Jiuyou Tower's top floors!

Chu Liuyue looked around herself; there was indeed nobody here.

The space up here was a lot smaller than the previous floor, but its force was much stronger.

Cultivating here would take half the effort to yield twice the effect.

But there were also all sorts of impurities that deterred one in this rich force.

However, there was no trace of the fiend here either.

Chu Liuyue took a deep breath as she looked up. Could it be... that it is further up?!