

Daily life 161

Chapter 161 The Old Couple Falters

"So master Yang Qing is from the Order? Truly only an institution as big as the Order is as worthy of a young dragon like yourself," grandpa Wang said without missing a beat.

Zou Yi who was busy eating his share of the blueberry cake coughed as he accidentally choked on it.

He threw an incredulous look grandpa Wang's way

"I didn't know grandpa was this good with words. He seems more of a natural at it than I am despite my years of practice. Look at that, he didn't even flinch," Zou Yi thought as his eyes gleamed in respect for a fellow practitioner in the dao of fawning.

However, compared to grandpa Wang he was but a fledgling starting on the road while grandpa Wang seemed like a seasoned veteran who had been walking the road for centuries and even made a few contributions to the road.

Zou Yi still found it hard to reconcile the fawning expert he saw before him and the volatile grandpa Wang who would wack customers with his ladle while throwing vicious words from time to time.

His look of awe was disrupted when he turned Yang Qing's way and saw his smug look that was covered in a thin layer of fake humility and calmness.

Tsk

Zou Yi clicked in disdain though deep down he was envious and jealous.

Yang Qing seemingly noticing this threw a few supercilious words of how he was but a humble servant of the Order with small gains not worth mentioning which drew more words of flattery not only from Grandpa Wang but also from grandma Wang too.

Yang Qing threw a hidden gloating look Zou Yi's way before he turned his gaze back to the couple.

"You're not even cool mmph," jealously muttered Zou Yi as he decided to turn his head and admire the streets below.

"Big brother sure is an oddball. He doesn't carry the air of a palace realm expert at all," thought Zou Liqin as she giggled at the hidden battle between Zou Yi and Yang Qing.

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"So what do you say? Any thoughts of opening up a restaurant at the Order?" asked Yang Qing once he was done cementing his status as the big brother to Zou Yi.

"This..." grandpa Wang seemed a bit hesitant at the sudden invitation.

Even if they wanted to be genuine restaurant owners and retire, he still found it difficult just to pack up and leave the place he had known for all his life, then there were also the regulars to think about.

They were a noisy bunch with no sensibilities when it came to good dining etiquette but they were one of the contributing factors to the homey ambiance of the Wang restaurant. Grandpa Wang felt like it would be a betrayal if he just up and left them.

But then he looked at the two siblings then another dilemma sunk in. Even if they would be moving to the Order which was safer in comparison to staying in the Purple city, they would still be starting over in an unfamiliar place.

They were just kids despite their mature demeanor and they would be alone in there. Even though Zou Yi said it was okay, he still felt guilty for not looking out for them all for the sake of maintaining his cover.

"Master Yang Qing, can you give us time to think it over? Even if we were to agree to leave with you, we can't do it immediately. We need to let our customers know and we also need to give a polite notice to our employer about our departure and tie up a few things with him.

All these would take time, three to four months atleast. I don't know if there's a way to reach you once we have come to a decision?" asked grandma Wang.

"Although she is a bit hesitant like old man Wang, she seems more open to the idea of moving.

Mmh there may be a chance," Yang Qing pleasantly thought as he took out his gold eagle medallion.

"Whatever you decide on you can tell me via our branch in Yellow Plains County, who will then forward the message to me.

If you do decide to make a move to the Order this is a recommendation letter that you will present to someone from the Yellow plains county branch so they can arrange your transportation to the main headquarters.

It's quite a ways away so it's safer for you to travel with their help rather than coming by yourselves.

This letter will be handed back to you so you can present it to the responsible personnel from the Order who will handle your permit and relocation.

It will take some time to review it but the Order will give you a place to stay as you wait for the review process to be completed," Yang Qing patiently explained as he stamped the scroll he had just written with his gold eagle medallion.

A silhouette of a golden eagle materialized from the medallion as it embedded itself into the scroll.

Gasps of awe escaped from the two siblings as they stared at the medallion and the eagle silhouette that seemed a little too lifelike.

Yang Qing handed the scroll to grandma Wang who along with his husband had looks of confusion on their faces. It seemed like something was bothering them but they seemed a bit hesitant to ask.

It didn't take too much for Yang Qing to guess their thoughts.

"Opening a restaurant at the Order is a process, while my recommendation helps, the evaluation process more so due diligence can't be skipped."

Yang Qing's words only made them frown even deeper. They had automatically assumed if they did decide to move to the Order they would get to run a restaurant there. But now it seemed it wasn't even a guarantee.

Their worry was what they would do if they were rejected. Would they just aimlessly stay there or embarrassingly come back to the place they had just left to start over someplace else?

None of these options was good for them, especially with the sacrifice they would be potentially making by moving.

Chapter 162 The Mercurial Emperor

"The rules I've mentioned only apply to opening up an independent restaurant in the middle of court building grounds.

There are a few other options you can take in case the review doesn't go your way; one is to work in an already established restaurant within the Order. With your skills, it wouldn't be too hard for you to get in. I can make a few suggestions if you want.

The other is to be the siblings' legal guardians. When they pass their entrance test they will be resettled inside the Order and they will also have the option of bringing family members with them if they have any. It isn't restricted to blood relatives.

Based on your interaction I can see that the sentiments you share for each other are genuine and I'm willing to vouch for you which would be enough to get you resettled with them.

There's an area within the Order where they settle students and the families of the employees of the Order. It's called the glowing respite valley. Even though it's basically where they go to sleep the area has devolved into a town of its own.

All sorts of businesses have been opened up there by the families of the Order employees. You could open your own restaurant there if you wanted, and the process is simpler and shorter.

I hope the explanation has assuaged any concerns you may have," said Yang Qing.

"Many thanks, master Yang Qing," said grandpa Wang as both he and grandma Wang cupped their fists in thanks.

Zou Yi and Zou Liqin were clearly excited by the suggestion of the old couple being their guardians because in their minds they already considered them family. But they were mindful enough to hold themselves back despite the excitement.

They did not want their actions to pressure the couple into agreeing. Leaving a place you knew all your life was not easy, and they knew that feeling all too well as they would occasionally get nostalgic about their old home despite the tragic memory tied to it. They could only imagine it being a thousand times harder for the couple as they had lived longer and seemed to have a genuine love for their empire.

Grandpa and grandma Wang both chuckled as they saw the two siblings who were sitting on pins and needles, trying really hard to hold themselves back.

"When we come to a decision we will make sure to inform you," Grandpa Wang finally said as he smiled in gratification with a gentle gaze falling on the two siblings.

Yang Qing smiled as he cupped his fists in thanks. Even if it seemed like they were still undecided but from the looks the couple was giving the two siblings it seemed like they had already come to a decision.

"By the way do you know who this is?" Yang Qing suddenly asked the old couple as he reproduced an image of the orange-red-haired he had fought with a couple of minutes ago.

He felt with the connection the couple had and their admission of being close with one of the palace realm experts from the empire, they might know his identity.

Though he felt it would be awkward if the same palace realm cultivator they had deep ties with ended up being the same person he had given a solid beating to.

"That is Emperor Duan Hou, though he abdicated the throne thousands of years ago. The current emperor is his grandson. He is also one of the palace realm experts of the empire and the youngest too," grandpa Wang said with a hint of reverence in his tone.

Yang Qing noted that the old couple almost reflexively bowed the moment the image of the orange-red-haired man appeared.

"How was he as a ruler?" asked Yang Qing.

"His rule though brief in comparison to his predecessors and successors was actually the most stable and peaceful.

He was respected by all; from the ministers to the citizens. Just his mere presence alone...,"

"Stop!! He is not here and I'm not his friend either looking to investigate how his people think of him. I just need your honest raw opinion of him as a person and as a ruler."

Yang Qing hurriedly stopped grandpa Wang who seemed like he would go on and on endlessly with platitudes as if he was a court announcer introducing the emperor to the public or foreign dignitaries.

Grandpa Wang flinched once he felt a formless pressure being exuded from Yang Qing.

"Sorry about that, it's a reflex reaction," said grandpa Wang as he dryly chuckled.

Grandma Wang sighed at his display as she decided to step in.

"Truthfully he wasn't the most outstanding emperor but he wasn't mediocre either. During his reign things remained the same, there were not too many waves or surprises.

He is a person who adjusts to circumstances and has no qualms about the methods either.

To me, it always felt like he never wanted that seat and it was just hoisted on him. So when a suitable heir presented himself he was all too quick to abdicate it.

While he may not be notable as an emperor, as a cultivator it's something else. His talent is something that hasn't been seen among the Duan family for quite some time. He became a palace stage expert in under 2,000 years. It's one of the fastest speeds recorded in the empire's history.

With him we may have hopes of becoming a rank 2 empire," grandma Wang said with longing in her eyes.

"What about him?" Yang Qing asked as he created an image of the elderly man.

"That's the branch leader of the golden bamboo pavilion branch here in Purple city. He is rumored to be sworn brothers with Emperor Duan Hou," said grandma Wang.

"If you don't mind me asking, why are you asking about them, master Yang Qing?" Grandpa Wang couldn't help but feel curious if there was something going on with the two people Yang Qing asked about.

"Nothing really, I just met them on my way over and we parted before I even had a chance of knowing their names," Yang Qing casually explained choosing not to divulge that he had just given their former emperor a serious beating and was now lying in some dungeon getting questioned.

The Wang couple didn't think much of the half-hearted explanation however it was a different case for the Zou siblings.

Both Zou Yi and Zou Liqin had pensive looks on their faces for some time when suddenly Zou Yi rose from his seat almost screaming out but Zou Liqin hurriedly used her hands to shut his mouth.

"Keep quiet Zou Yi and good job Liqin. Both of you act normal and don't say anything."

Yang Qing's voice suddenly sounded in both of their minds. They reflexively looked up before they tried to pretend their attention was on something else.

Zou Yi even made a flimsy excuse of how he had just noticed Yang Qing's hair was green and how he wished he had one too.

"I'd like to thank you both for your hospitality. I enjoyed the meal and I hope to see you again. If you ever need my help just drop my name in any order branch and I'll be there.

Take care grandpa Wang, grandma Wang," Yang Qing said as he offered both of them daoist salutes.

He decided to make a quick goodbye before Zou Yi made any more unbelievable excuses that would definitely draw more questions instead of deflecting them.

"And to think he wanted to be an information broker with an act like that," Yang Qing ruefully thought.

Chapter 163 Zhong Quan's Fury (1)

Yang Qing paid for both his and the Zou siblings' meals. The old couple insisted he didn't need to pay but Yang Qing still paid since the meal didn't cost that much and effort should always be rewarded.

The meal was too good for him not to show his appreciation. He was flush with money thanks to the generous per diem he received for his upkeep during his evaluations.

He left for a few minutes to go call Ellie, though that was just an excuse since he wanted to give the old couple and the Zou siblings space to say their goodbyes.

Even if it seemed in all likelihood like the couple would be joining them at the Order, things could happen and plans could change. It was better for them to say their goodbyes now just in case something happened atleast they would have not left any words left unsaid.

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Ten minutes later

"Goodbye grandpa and grandma, thanks for taking care of us," Zou Yi gingerly said as he waved his hands.

Zou Liqin went and hugged them both with tears hugging the rim of her eyes.

"Thanks," she softly said. It seemed like those were the only words that could come out of her mouth.

Even if it was just one word all present could feel the weight of the emotion behind it.

"Safe travels master Yang Qing. Yi'er, Liqin'er make sure to eat your meals and use the herbs we have given you, keep warm, don't cause trouble...." Grandma Wang went on with an endless list of things they should be mindful of.

If it wasn't for grandpa Wang forcefully pulling her away it seemed like she would have gone on forever. Zou Yi who had been trying to put on a brave face during the goodbye started tearing up which became the catalyst for the dam in Zou Liqin's eyes to overflow as they waved goodbye.

"Let's go," Yang Qing gently said as he held their hands and flew up with them to meet Ellie who was hidden in the clouds above the restaurant. He made sure to drag the blood fiend cultivator too whom he knocked unconscious before carrying .

Both Zou Yi and Zou Liqin had their eyes wide open the moment Ellie fell into their eyesight. She had a regal bearing, a gold white plumage, and was massively huge that one of her wings could cover the whole of the Wang restaurant and still leave space.

Her questionable habits aside even Yang Qing had to admit Ellie's base looks left an impression. It was only when she started showing her nasty habits does her awe-inspiring look disappear. And one of her nasty habits had come to bear the moment the two siblings appeared.

She released a bit of her fearsome pressure to scare them both however the terrified expressions she expected to see never came. She increased the pressure by a few more levels but still, there was no reaction.

She twisted her head in confusion almost as if to say 'what's happening? How are two brats the size of my nostril handling this much pressure without breaking down? Even that silly dragonfly would be paralyzed by now.'

"Can you stop fooling around?"

Yang Qing's voice halted her just as she was about to up the pressure. Seeing his clenched fist she meekly put aside any plans she had of 'welcoming' the two siblings.

Yang Qing had expected something like this to happen since Ellie always did this sort of thing to someone new. She's suffered a few times when she misjudged the situation but she still maintains the habit no matter how many punches she receives.

Luckily Yang Qing had shielded the two siblings in a formless barrier that dissipated all the pressure that came their way otherwise based on the strength that Ellie had released they would have already passed out by now.

"I'm definitely having her reeducated at the beast hall and have Luo Meili follow up when we get back," Yang Qing thought as he landed on her back along with the Zou siblings.

"So soft," Zou Liqin muttered as she brushed her hands against Ellie's feathers. Zou Yi even looked like he wanted to pluck some from the fervent gaze he was throwing at them.

Yang Qing chuckled as he shook his head at Zou Yi's fearless thoughts. Any one of those feathers that were as soft as clouds could effortlessly slice through an early core formation expert like a knife through butter let alone a bronze body refining stage cultivator.

"We are headed to Green pine county," said Yang Qing. He had already shared an image of their travel route and evaluation points with Ellie earlier so he didn't need to keep showing it to her, he only needed to mention the location and she would be able to get them there.

With a flap of her wings, they were already a few hundred meters away from the Wang restaurant.

Zou Yi and Zou Liqin didn't even have a chance to have a melancholic goodbye to the City that they had called home for three years. They were busy reeling with excitement at how fast Ellie was flying.

Yang Qing had already covered them with a thin water-like barrier that protected them from the winds that would tear them apart due to the high speeds Ellie was flying at. The barrier also helped anchor them to Ellie's back.

Within a few minutes, Purple city was but a dot in the background. Ellie even did a few maneuvers to show off once she heard the excitable shocked voices the Zou siblings were making. Yang Qing didn't interfere as he let both parties enjoy their moments.

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Earthvine restaurant

"I told you if you don't change your attitude one day you will invite disaster to this place.

DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU DID?!" Zhong Quan loudly yelled at the middle-aged man who was sprawled on the floor coughing blood. There was a four-inch deep slice mark on his chest that looked like it was done by a massive claw. He was in no mood to stop the building as he stared fearfully at Zhong Quan.

The current Zhong Quan was vastly different from the amiable and gentle-looking Zhong Quan from the courtroom.

His frame had turned taller and burlier with long wild looking hair with a golden yellow iris. His hands looked like a bear's paw with golden claws that had just soaked in blood.

He looked like a ferocious beast of slaughter with thick killing intent flashing in his eyes.

Chapter 164 Zhong Quan's Fury (2)

The rest of the workers were fearfully hurdled together as they stared at Zhong Quan and the restaurant manager with dread in their eyes. Only the two elderly-looking gentlemen in white robes seemed calm and unperturbed within the whole group of people.

A lot of the workers present were filled with confusion at how things took a drastic turn within a few minutes of the return of Zhong Quan.

It was just a few minutes ago that he came into the restaurant in a cheery mood and even loudly announced that he would give the employees raises because he made a great harvest. It was then that the restaurant manager hurriedly came down to greet him and also inform him of the Golden bamboo pavilion envoy that would be coming by to dine.

Everything seemed to be proceeding normal other than the short frown Zhong Quan had when he heard who was coming but it went back to normal seconds later even asking for more food to be prepared no matter the cost.

However, things took a sudden turn when the manager offhandedly mentioned that someone had come in saying they knew him and how he had told them to come over for a meal if they were ever around.

Zhong Quan at first thought nothing of it when he heard that since many people would lie using his name to try and gain entry into the restaurant. He never did anything to those caught lying with his name so it was a pretty common thing. He even took it as a badge of honor that people would go to that extent despite the risk just to eat a meal at his restaurant.

Out of curiosity, he asked what the person looked like. The manager went ahead and described the person along with those he came with. The more Zhong Quan heard the description the more his eyes widened.

Toward the end, Zhong Quan rushed to the manager with eagerness in his tone asking where that person went, to which the manager said he didn't know since he kicked them out in preparation for hosting the envoy from the Golden bamboo pavilion. He even added how it must have been a ruse from that person since he was being accompanied by two children he regularly sees scamming on the streets.

It was then that he got a vicious palm strike to his chest that tore up his robes along with the deep shred marks.

The manager would have suffered an even more ferocious attack had the two elderly men not stepped in to calm down Zhong Quan.

"Master Zhong what have I done wrong?" the manager asked still in confusion and trepidation from the sudden attack.

"Tang Xue I kept you by my side despite your horrible temperament and personality due to our longtime friendship and the debt I owe to your father for always looking out for me when I was young. However, this is how you repay me!!!!?" Zhong Quan roared threatening to attack however he held himself back at the last moment.

"Do you think just because the restaurant is a subsidiary of the Golden bamboo pavilion that means we can act wantonly as we please?"

The earth beneath our feet is littered with the blood and bones of those who were foolish enough to think just a little bit of background would give them the license to act however they pleased.

It isn't from some sense of altruism that I insist on never turning away a guest despite how they look, dress, stature, or the level of their cultivation base.

You never know who you may end up provoking or what fortuitous encounter you may end up missing by narrow-mindedly judging by what you see.

But you never listen. Do you think the Golden bamboo pavilion knows or cares who you are that they would be willing to step out for you in case you got in trouble? Even the restaurant is nothing but a useless afterthought to them that they entertain much less the people that work in it.

That's not even considering the larger scheme of things. The Golden bamboo pavilion can't even be considered a hegemon amongst rank 2 organizations much less when they are pitted against all the organizations around the continent.

There are thousands of other organizations more powerful than them. That's why I insist on always being cordial. But you are either too arrogant or too stupid to pay my words any heed," Zhong Quan said as his look turned colder and calmer. However the calmer he looked the more terrified the manager became.

He still had no idea who he had provoked. Wasn't it just a youth with two kids he sees scamming people by the streets? What background could they have?

"The nobody you thought you were turning away was infact someone from the Order and a particularly powerful someone at that with who I managed to form a connection. But now I guess it's all gone especially if you behaved like you normally do. He must assume this place is like that too by now since it's the people that make a place," Zhong Quan said with a tired sigh as he turned to leave.

"Tang Xue we will part our ways here. On account of our ties, I'll let this matter end here but I don't want to see you here when I get back. You can go open a high-end restaurant someplace else and you can even pick those who want to go with you, half of the ingredients in stock and this month's earnings.

Think of it as my parting gift to you old friend," Zhong Quan's voice echoed as he shut the door behind him.

"Master Zhong...." The manager weakly said as he struggled to get up. He had a lost look in his eyes still confused at what just happened. The rest of the staff all shared the same look.

"Tang Xue you've truly angered him this time," one of the elderly men said as he patted the manager's shoulder.

"What do I do?" the manager lifelessly asked.

"I think you should do as the master says and start over someplace else. If you insist on staying then....," the other elderly man softly said.

He didn't finish his statement but they all knew there was a high likelihood that the manager would end up with a horrible fate if he ended up staying.

Zhong Quan rarely got mad but whenever he was triggered he would turn into a completely different person. It was, for this reason, the other subsidiary organizations of the Golden bamboo pavilion never went too far in their competitions especially when it came to him.

"Everyone get back to your posts, we still have a dinner to host," the elderly man said as he and his compatriot left for the kitchen leaving the listless Tang Xue behind.

Chapter 165 Unexpected Turn Of Events For The City Lord Of Purple City

City Lord's office (Purple City)

"What do you mean you haven't seen them? They should already have been there over thirty minutes ago,"

"I haven't seen or heard from them at all. I even sent people over to the restaurant and they haven't spotted them coming there. But I have someone waiting there just in case they show up," said a dignified-looking middle-aged man who had on black robes with a gold cloud pattern on them.

He had orange-red hair and his hair was tied in a daoist top knot.

"Make sure to tell me if they show up,"

"I will," said the red-orange-haired middle-aged man as he put down the communication talisman in his hand.

He slumped back in his chair as a tired sigh escaped his lips.

"I hope nothing happened, but even if it did it's not like a mere city lord can help. I shouldn't have accepted this post. Cultivating at the clan's verdant ancestral grounds is better than the headache Purple City brings," the red-orange-haired man sighed some more as he massaged his temples.

Just as he was about to close his eyes, his door got unceremoniously opened.

"DIDN'T I SAY NOT TO BE INTERRUPTED!" he madly roared as he brought forth the cultivation pressure of a tenth-stage core formation expert.

"Mmph, it seems little Hu has gotten bolder since becoming the city lord that he even doesn't put his old caretakers in his eyes anymore.

If I knew you'd turn out this way maybe I should have let that dark scythe mantis have its way with you back then," said an old man who walked in with another elderly lady by his side.

With a wave of his hand, the elderly man made the pressure that was bearing upon them disappear like a formless wind.

The red-orange-haired man on seeing the old couple hurriedly rose from his seat as he went over and offered a humble salute as he bent his waist.

"Nephew Duan Hu greets uncle master Wang Siyi and Aunt master Wang Huiyin," Duan Hu said as he faintly shivered.

While the old couple before him seemed old and harmless they were a source of nightmares to the soldiers of the Five Clover Kingdom.

Wang Siyi was a ferocious spear of carnage who tore through the defenses of the Five clover kingdom while his wife Wang Huiyin was the blade in the dark striking the enemies' key points when they least expected it.

Together they had caused endless grief to the ranks of the Five Clover Kingdom. However, their greatest act of notoriety was when they worked together to slaughter an up and coming young general of the Five clover kingdom who had just taken half step into the palace realm.

The young general had just gotten sudden enlightenment from battle and had thus decided to close himself off while in the camp rather than risk the chance opportunity escaping from him. He successfully improved his cultivation from the peak of core formation and took a half step into the palace realm. But before he could stabilize his realm and firm his findings he got attacked by the old couple.

The battle was ferocious and quick. Despite the old couple catching the general off-guard and in his weakest moment they still left the battle with serious life-threatening injuries however they had managed to kill a young talent who had high odds of reaching the palace realm.

Should that future have played out then the fragile balance being maintained by the Red Maple Empire and the Five Clover Kingdom would have tipped in the Five Clover Kingdom's favor.

The successful assassination proved to be an important win for the Red Maple Empire. While that earned the couple enormous merits within the Empire it was a different case on the Five Clover Kingdom's side.

They became so furious when they heard about the death that all their palace realm cultivators joined the battle at the border which triggered the Red Maple Empire to send their own which created a 5,000-kilometer blood bath that lasted for three months with no signs of abating.

It was only when the battle hit five months did it show signs of stopping because the casualties on both sides had grown too severe to the point it would create an opportunity for other enemies to take advantage of.

A temporary ceasefire was created. However, despite that, the hatred the Red Clover Kingdom had for the old couple didn't reduce. They put out a huge bounty on their heads in which they offered 50,000 high-grade spirit stones and a low-rank monarch-grade artifact along with the opportunity to cultivate in their five-clover garden.

Any one of these offers would drive those in the core formation and early palace stage experts insane especially the five clover garden that would have even attracted some middle-stage palace realm cultivators.

The garden was a blessed ground that had a natural formation created by five different clovers that symbolized the five elements; fire, wood, water, metal, and earth. The clovers combine to create a resonance that devolves into a natural formation that helps anyone who cultivates in the area to gain a deeper understanding in any of those elements. What they harvest from cultivating there depends on their powers of comprehension, their affinity to any of those elements, and the nature of their cultivation arts.

The appearance of that garden became the main catapult behind their sudden growth to the point that they were able to go toe to toe with the Red Maple Empire despite having a shorter history. Up until 10,000 years ago, they were just another rank 4 kingdom but they slowly grew to the point of threatening the Red Maple Empire.

Their palace realm cultivators grew to five in comparison to the Red Maple Empire's four. However, despite them having a higher number the palace realm cultivators from Red Maple Empire were all seasoned with the weakest one being a second-stage palace realm cultivator while those from the Five Clover Kingdom were either at the first or second level.

However, the increasing number of palace realm cultivators in just a span of 10,000 years showed the immense value of the five clover garden.

With it being added to the ante, every cultivator came out of the woodwork to claim the old couple's head. For their safety, they were taken out of the front lines, and resources were spent to help change their identities.

Their new identities landed them in Purple city as a couple running a restaurant together. Despite them being here for quite some time they have never interacted with each other to avoid drawing eyes.

City lord Duan Hu couldn't help but wonder what they wanted with him. The memories of when he served under them as an early-stage core formation expert flashed in his eyes as he stared at the couple before him. It was grandpa and grandma Wang.

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"Little Hu, don't you feel like the crime rate in this city has been growing too much off late? Two of my favorite customers have been constantly harassed by one of those organizations, I think they call themselves the black viper. A third-rate organization with a fourth-stage core formation cultivation realm.

It shouldn't be difficult for the city guards to handle that right? It wouldn't do well for old people like us to have to step in and handle the matter personally when we have our good nephew here to help us," Grandpa Wang menacingly said as he narrowed his eyes.

"It will be taken care of Uncle master. I'll have Duan Changyin take care of it personally," the city lord nervously said.

"It isn't just the black viper, you need to eradicate the other underground organizations too and do a thorough mop up of it since a blood fiend cultivator was just apprehended from one of them," solemnly said Grandma Wang as she remembered the blood fiend cultivator kneeling by Yang Qing's feet.

"What?! Where is he?" the city lord urgently asked. A blood fiend cultivator was a walking calamity, especially in a highly populated city like the Purple city.

"He has already been apprehended by someone from the Order. By the way, we will be attacking the Mo family branch. One of their scions has ties with the black viper gang where the blood fiend cultivator was hiding.

Even if I think they're not stupid enough to collude with blood-fiend cultivators, one can never be too careful, especially with their unveiled ambitions for the throne.

So we just came to tell you beforehand so you can plan ahead and also inform the emperor. You've always been good at these sorts of things," Grandpa Wang said as he chuckled at the city lord's paling figure.

Just as the city lord was about to weakly support himself on his chair to process everything he just heard, an official rushed into his office with an even paler face like he had just seen a ghost.

An incredulous look appeared on the City lord's face as he dreaded what news made the official's face look like that.

Things were already bad as it is and he wasn't sure he had the stomach for more.

"City lord there's been an issue. The captain has just arrested all the scions of the noble families caught loitering around and he has thrown them in the dungeon.

A confrontation is about to happen between those families and the city guards. The city guards have already injured a few of their guards and it doesn't look like they're stepping down. It's almost as if they're wishing for a battle. City Lord Hu you need to step in before the chaos devolves further," said the official as he bowed.

The City lord froze on hearing what the official had to say. Seconds later he started laughing hysterically as he mumbled a few things.

"Missing emperor and envoy from the golden bamboo pavilion, blood fiend cultivators in the city, Mo family destruction, Order member in the city, facing off against underworld organizations and city guards going to war with other noble families hahaha!! I quit, hahaha! I quit. I don't want it anymore. No! No! No!.. What's going to come next? The capital has been burned to the ground and Purple city becomes the new capital..No, No, I need to get out."

The City lord went hysterical then seconds later he vomited blood and fell unconscious leaving a dumbfounded Wang couple and official.

"Maybe we came at a bad time," said Grandma Wang with pity in her eyes as she stared at the collapsed city lord.

Chapter 166 Murong Family

Skies above Green pine county

"Ellie watch over him and don't eat him or fool around. I can't worry about finishing the evaluations on time and still keep an eye out for your games," said Yang Qing as he released a heavy pressure on Ellie.

Ellie screeched as she lowered her head submissively. Only when Yang Qing was satisfied he had got his point across did he remove his pressure.

He left the blood-fiend cultivator on Ellie's back in the sky as he gently leaped downward with Zou Yi and Zou Liqin in tow.

It had taken them almost half an hour before they finally made it inside Green Pine County. It was quite some distance away from Purple city as it was a border county just like the Yellow plains county. Except Green Pine County shared a border with Blue deer kingdom, a rank 4 kingdom.

To avoid the problems he had gone through when Ellie got attacked when she was out of range, Yang Qing decided to have her fly directly over the location he would be conducting his evaluation. This way in case something happened, he would be able to detect it before it became anything since she would be within range of his palace sense.

He still had her camouflage herself though, to avoid drawing unnecessary attention and trouble if they could.

Yang Qing used his cultivation force to gently land along with the Zou siblings who were still reeling in excitement from the flight over.

"That was so coooooool!!!" Zou Yi fervently said before he and his sister rumbled endlessly when Ellie did various maneuvers on the flight over.

Yang Qing left them to it as he removed the cloaking art he had used as they were dropping from the sky.

He had conveniently chosen to land in a secluded forest a few hundred meters from his evaluation point.

"Let's go," he said to the two siblings who were still heated in discussing Ellie's maximum speed.

It took them less than ten minutes before they stopped in front of a large grey rock ebony wood gate.

There were two burly-looking men in the early stages of qi refinement guarding the entrance of the gate.

Their looks turned vigilant once they saw Yang Qing and the Zou siblings however it turned normal once they detected the body refining stage cultivation of the two siblings.

They couldn't see through Yang Qing's cultivation but they just assumed he was a mortal with no aptitude for cultivation.

"Hi there, my name is Yang Qing. I have an appointment with your clan leader. Could you tell him someone from the Order has arrived for the clan's evaluation," Yang Qing introduced himself once he was a few steps away from the gate.

The two guards blanked out once they heard the mention of the name Order. It took a few seconds before they processed what they had just heard which was followed by dumbfounded gazes that gradually devolved into fear and anxiety then awkward silence which went on for too long that it prompted one of them to finally react.

"Yes, yes, the clan head informed us that there would be an evaluation. Please, this way esteemed master," One of the guards nervously said as he almost tripped over himself as he invited Yang Qing past the gate.

"Aren't you going to confirm my identity first?" thought Yang Qing though that didn't stop him from accepting the invitation and following the guard who almost tripped over a couple of more times before he finally got a grip on his legs.

His partner wasn't doing well either as he walked stiffly even too afraid to look back as he kept looking straight ahead while Yang Qing and company were behind him.

Ppft

"Zou Yi don't," Zou Liqin whispered softly as she hurriedly closed her brother's mouth.

"I can't help it, look," Zou Yi said as he pointed to the stiff walking guard who almost walked into some hedges as he kept walking in a straight line despite the pathway meandering.

Zou Liqin almost burst out laughing when she saw it but she managed to hold herself back in the end.

Yang Qing shook his head when he saw this. It wasn't exactly a new experience for him. Atleast the guards didn't faint or stand rooted for hours at the same spot without saying anything. There was even one time when one of the cultivators from the organization he was evaluating forgot his name and where he was due to the massive panic despite being informed beforehand that someone from the Order would be coming.

To the unranked organization, finally reaching the requirements to be promoted was an overwhelming experience for them all around despite their ranks. That feeling got amplified on the day of the evaluation and more so if they were the person interacting with the evaluator.

It got too much for them sometimes.

To Yang Qing, this was just another day in the office for him. Still, to these unranked organizations like the clan he was evaluating today, this was a monumental moment for them, the equivalent of an earth-shaking fortuitous encounter.

After a successful evaluation, they could be considered to finally have an identity in the southern continent no matter how minuscule it seemed, to these organizations it was a massive step.

....

After a couple of minutes of walking, a few building structures started appearing.

They were all made from earth-rank materials that were in the lowest of ranks even among earth-rank materials. However, despite the low quality used, the buildings' craftsmanship was good and they were properly maintained.

Yang Qing even spotted minimalistic courtyards around most likely used to host guests who stayed over.

"For an unranked clan they seem to be doing well," thought Yang Qing as he noted that all the buildings were made of spiritual wood. Even though it was the lowest earth-rank wood, it was still something when you considered this was an unranked clan.

The clan that he would be evaluating was called the Murong clan. One of their members had managed to break through to the foundation establishment realm six months ago after which they filed for an evaluation with the Order.

Due to the manpower issue vs the astronomical number of unranked organization filing for an evaluation, there was usually a backlog since only superior core court judges could handle rank 5 evaluations.

Since for one to be a superior core court judge one has to have a purple or gold core, it always ensures that their numbers are always small.

The Murong clan had filed for their evaluation six months ago the moment their clan member broke through however they had to wait six months before their evaluation spot came through.

Their wait time couldn't be considered long as there are times when it would last a year since the judges have to handle their cases and the evaluation and evaluations get less of a priority when the caseloads get too many.

Though the Order did create a few measures to handle the astronomical numbers and reduce the wait time. One of the methods was a quadrant evaluation model where the judges would evaluate a minimum number of evaluations within that quadrant. In Yang Qing's case, he was to conduct atleast 1,400 evaluations within his given quadrant.

The organizations that fell under the 1,400 was up to his discretion since he would be choosing the 1,400 from a longer list of atleast 5,000 unranked organizations that were within his quadrant.

The Murong clan was lucky it fell on the list of 1,400 organizations he chose otherwise they would have had to wait along with the other 3,599 organizations that didn't make it into Yang Qing's list.

However, to avoid unranked organizations with horrible luck suffering, all unranked organizations had a maximum 15-month wait time from the time they applied.

....

After walking for close to a quarter of an hour, they reached the center of the Murong clan's grounds.

"Please wait here while I go call the clan leader and the other elders," said the tripping guard as he dashed away like he was running for his life leaving his stiff walking partner with Yang Qing and the rest.

Yang Qing wasn't sure but he could have sworn he saw a look of envy flash in the stiff walking guard's eye as he watched the other guard bolt away.

"Am I that scary," He inwardly wondered as he chuckled to himself.

They met other clan members along the way who looked briefly at them as they went their way. Though the irony was, during the walk over those that looked their way were not doing so due to Yang Qing and the Zou siblings instead, it was due to the weird display from the two guards which drew curious looks from those members however all they did was look and never approached.

During the walk over Yang Qing noted that the average cultivation realm of the Murong family clan was in the early stages of qi refinement realm. There were a few who were in the middle stages but those who were in the middle stages were mostly elderly.

Based on his brief scan with his palace sense they were in their late sixties as for the younger generation those from between four to fifteen were mostly in the body refining stage with a few in the early stages of the qi refinement. But the latter group didn't number more than ten as Yang Qing detected seven of them and they seemed to be worshipped by other clan members around them.

Yang Qing couldn't help but sigh at the disparity he was seeing. Just a casual nobody from Purple city would be treated as a genius here.

This level of disparity was the reason unranked organization would try their very best to become ranked because with it they would get a chance to have one of their members train at the Order and with it a chance to change their fate. Otherwise barring special circumstances it would be impossible for them to improve on their circumstances let alone etch out survival in such a ruthless world.

Chapter 167 Murong Family's Evaluation (1)

Yang Qing didn't wait too long before he detected hurried footsteps coming their way from the direction the tripping guard had disappeared off to.

Since Yang Qing had already deployed his palace sense he detected that the majority of the members coming were in the late stages of qi refinement realm. However, most of the auras were weak the kind that you'd find on those who were nearing the end of their lifespans.

"Mmmh! so that's the foundation member, that's a surprise," Yang Qing mused.

A few seconds later a flurry of old men and women kept swarming out with agitated and excited appearances.

Their sudden appearance made all the other clan members who were walking about, pause their footsteps in shock as they saw the elders running like they were chasing some treasure.

At the lead of this group was an elderly man with a slender build, white hair tied in a topknot, and a long flowing beard that had reached his chest. He had on white robes which were similar in fashion to the rest of his party.

"Forgive us for our poor manners, envoy from the Order that we were not there to receive you. Had we known you were coming today we would have prepared a proper welcome and feast," said the elderly man in the lead.

They all looked excited and also a bit worried since from the schedule they were given for the potential evaluation date, it was meant to be a week from now.

The only reason the evaluation happened a week early was due to the interference by Lei Weiyuan when he was handing off the evaluations to Yang Qing instead of it going to the allotted judge and the decided time schedule.

"It's okay, I'm the one who came without giving prior notice," Yang Qing replied as he gave a polite smile.

"Sorry, where are my manners? My name is Murong Jie, I'm the current patriarch of the Murong family, and behind me are the elders of the clan," Murong Jie said as he cupped his fist.

"Nice to meet you clan head Murong Jie. My name is Yang Qing and I'll be in charge of your clan's evaluation today. These are Zou Yi and Zou Liqin. They are my friends who I brought to tag along, I hope you don't mind.

Zou Yi, Zou Liqin say hi to patriarch Murong Jie and the rest," Yang Qing said as he pushed the two siblings forward.

"Greetings patriarch Murong Jie, we offer our greetings and congratulations in advance," Zou Yi and Zou Liqin simultaneously said as they cupped their fists.

"Did they rehearse on the flight over," Yang Qing wondered as he saw them speak at the same tempo while cupping their fists at the same time.

"Hahaha!! it's Master Zou Yi and Master Zou Liqin, I thank you for your warm wishes on behalf of the Murong family," clan head Murong Jie smiled as he offered them daoist salutes.

The rest of the entourage mirrored Murong Jie's actions as they offered their thanks in unison.

Zou Yi inadvertently puffed up his chest when he was called master which drew light smiles from the elderly group around even Yang Qing couldn't but smile as he shook his head.

"Their experience these past three years wasn't a total waste," Yang Qing thought as he gauged the interaction between the Zou siblings and the rest of the Murong family.

The reason he pushed them forward in their greetings was to monitor their temperaments and attitudes towards a low-ranking family.

When the Order was founded to date, one of their fundamental rules of recruitment was they would only recruit from rank 5 families and unranked organizations, and rogue cultivators. They would not touch anyone from rank 4 organizations and above though there are special exceptions to this rule. For example, if a cultivator is banished from their parent organization like in the case of the Zou siblings where they were banished from the Zou clan.

In that case, the Order would accept them should they pass their evaluations. This is because technically they could be considered rogue cultivators. However, even then those who once belonged to high-ranking organizations would be closely monitored on what their characters are like even after they pass their entrance examinations and get admitted into the Order.

The reason for this requirement was, those born from high-ranking organizations even though they may or may not mean it, tend to have an unconscious or conscious bias towards those beneath them.

If it was any other place such temperaments would not be an issue but within the Order that's supposed to be a beacon of fairness to all, such a habit would be a huge hindrance and a source of potential rot in the organization.

Even though Yang Qing was sympathetic and valued their abilities in observation, he was still worried about their characters. They were born in a rank 2 family and with it came the prestige of belonging to such a high-ranking clan.

From Purple City up to now, he had been closely monitoring their interactions with others, and from what he could see, their interactions with people thus far didn't have the disdain one would expect.

They did wear a mask at times but that was more of a protection for them to hide their identities than anything else.

To Yang Qing it seemed like the three years they lived by themselves had beaten any sort of superiority they had in them and made them into people who could interact naturally and comfortably with people of all walks and stations of life.

"Atleast their odds of getting in now are higher," Yang Qing thought as his gaze turned toward a lady standing alone in the middle of the crowd of old men. She looked to be in her late thirties. She too had on a white robe and had tied her hair in a simple bun.

She wasn't a breathtaking beauty but one would notice her if they passed by her on the streets. She had deep black hair, rosy skin, and round black eyes that seemed to flash with a tenacious will.

The reason Yang Qing's eyes drifted towards her wasn't admiration for her beauty but rather from the fluctuations she was releasing. He surmised she was the foundation establishment member he was evaluating.

Chapter 168 Murong Family's Evaluation (2)

From what Yang Qing could detect she was already at the peak of the first stage of the foundation establishment realm and it was stable. Yang Qing could also tell from the brief scan that the age she was depicting was her real age. She looked to be about 37.

Even though a 37-year-old early foundation establishment cultivator was nothing much when compared to other high-ranking organizations, it was something major in a small family such as the Murong family which only had ageing qi refinement cultivators who were at death's door.

Those who break through to the late stages of the qi refinement realm usually get a lifespan of about 200-300 years and from what Yang Qing could detect the majority of the elders present had all reached the 250-year mark.

Only the clan patriarch, Murong Jie seemed younger at 150 years. While they may have the highest cultivation bases excluding the lady, their age meant their hopes of reaching the foundation establishment stage were slim to none.

A decrease in vitality meant their sensitivity to qi and also their internal energy had dwindled so much that it made their journey to the foundation establishment stage an impossibility. And those who by some miracle do reach a point of attempting a breakthrough, suffer the risk of dying in the process due to how much energy and concentration it requires in a person.

But having such a young foundation establishment member ensured they would at least guarantee their survival as a rank 5 clan for at least 1,000 years without risk of demotion. A lot could change within 1,000 years, especially with the one quota given where they could have one of their members trained at the Order every three years since every member receives a three-year training period at the Order.

That means in 1,000 years they could have 300 of their clan members train at the Order which would qualitatively change their power composition. And who knows maybe in the 300 members they may actually get other foundation establishment members.

However, all this was predicated on the assumption the lady before him would forever remain at the foundation establishment realm. While breaking through to the core formation realm wasn't easy, especially with lightning tribulations appearing from that realm, Yang Qing thought the odds of her breaking through was much higher considering how young she was.

As long as she took her time solidifying her cultivation base every step of the way she would breeze through it. Most, at the Order even sleep through it, it's only when they are breaking through to the palace realm do they have to be a tad bit serious.

"The only thing that may hold her back is her cultivation art but if she is the one who gets the quota to come to the Order she will be training in an orange-grade art for free and depending on her aptitude she may get the high ranking one," thought Yang Qing.

Even though she'd be forbidden to share it with her clan members, she could continue to use the art even after she completed her training. And if the Murong family paid the equivalent price they could even buy the rights to use it with no restrictions.

The Order didn't have any shortage of Orange grade arts so they had no scruples about selling them considering the tradeoff. They'd get to sow goodwill with these organizations all at the mere price of an orange-grade art.

A lot of new rank 4 and a few rank 3 organizations grew from that single opportunity.

"Maybe next time I come here it will be for a rank 4 promotion and then the balance of power in the southern continent will become even more chaotic," Yang Qing thought as he chuckled inwardly.

....

"Clan head Murong Jie where would you like to conduct the evaluation," Yang Qing asked once he pulled his thoughts back.

He had already confirmed everything he needed with his palace sense and the evaluation he would be conducting was more perfunctory.

"Let's do it in the clan assembly hall," Murong Jie calmly said trying to hide the excitement in his tone. The elders behind him were already trembling and the other clan members who had been gawking by lit up once they heard the words evaluation. Some even ran to call their friends.

"Okay," said Yang Qing as he nodded.

"Envoy Yang Qing, can the rest of the clan members watch? I promise the clan hall has a huge space and the members present won't be many just a hundred or so. It's such a huge occasion and I'd like the young ones to be present too so they could get motivated. It's too late for us but for them..," Murong Jie hesitantly asked as he cupped his fists in a plea.

"I don't mind, you can bring them in and it doesn't have to just be a hundred, bring as many as can fit into the hall. It's a celebration for you all, you should all be there to witness it and the evaluation process doesn't take much time either," Yang Qing lightly said.

His response caused a massive wave of roar from the young clan members who had been eavesdropping on the whole thing from different sides all around. It was only when they were glared at by the elders did they calm down.

Zou Yi and Zou Liqin were taken aback by the atmosphere and mood. With their age and prior starting point, they still couldn't understand how important and life-changing such a moment was to the Murong family.

To them, it may just be a normal recognition but to the Murong family, it is the fulfillment of the countless generations of Murong members and the start of a new journey where something special may happen like maybe thousands of years later they may turn into a rank 3 family and the catapult for that journey was the evaluation happening today.

...

A few minutes later they made their way into the clan assembly hall. It was archaic looking in a dome shape with a few spirit-calming incense sticks burning.

From its size, it could easily fit a thousand people comfortably. There were cultivation cushions neatly spread about the hall room and a slightly raised platform on the north side of the hall. It had a hint of mysticism that made it stand out in the whole hall room.

Yang Qing, the Zou siblings, the elders, and the young lady all made their way to their platform as other senior members went to maintain order in the entry of other members to make sure they didn't cause a ruckus.

After a couple of minutes, the whole hall room was completely filled though it didn't feel congested. Young and old were all excitedly looking straight at the platform afraid to even blink fearing they may miss a single moment of it.

There was not a single member who was left out. Since the Murong family wasn't a large clan the hall room that had a capacity of a thousand fit everyone perfectly and even left a few spaces for others.

If they knew Yang Qing's date of arrival they may have invited a few other organizations they had a good relationship with to celebrate but Yang Qing's impromptu visit made it so that only the clan members would be in attendance.

"Let's begin," Yang Qing softly said as his robe transformed into his official deep blue judge robes in all its grandeur.

Chapter 169 [Bonus]Murong Family's Evaluation (3)

His voice though soft sounded next to everyone's ears whether they were at the front or the back, the volume was the same.

His whole demeanor turned regal and inviolable which made the eyes of the two siblings widen in shock especially Zou Liqin who had seen him goofing around with Zou Yi just a few moments ago. She found it hard to reconcile if the playful person from before was the same person she was seeing right now. She had detected such an aura from her late father, grandfather, and other prominent seniors of the clan.

"Is it still big brother Yang Qing?" Zou Yi muttered.

The rest of the members went silent as the atmosphere turned somber. The young lady who would be evaluated had her pupils tremble as Yang Qing's solemn gaze turned her way.

"Don't look down, it's your moment along with the clan. Look ahead the journey has only begun."

Yang Qing's voice sounded in her mind when he saw she was about to lower her head.

The young lady looked up with even more shock as she looked around only to find out she was the only one who seemed to have heard that voice. She even suspected she had hallucinated the voice since she was so anxious.

Prior to this, she thought she'd breeze through the evaluation. Even when she saw Yang Qing at most she was just a bit curious and apprehensive about him but that was only because he was from the Order. Because of Yang Qing's easygoing aura, she didn't feel as much pressure, unlike the rest of the elders who were on tenterhooks because they knew a few things or two about those who conducted evaluations.

This was why, when Yang Qing's demeanor changed as he unleashed a bit of his aura, among the members on the platform she was the only one who had the most intense reaction despite being the strongest. The other elders other than being excited were calm.

A few of the elders even took in the young lady's reaction with the look of a senior purposely letting a child learn the lesson a hard way.

"It seems they purposely withheld a bit of the information. Mmmh may be as a means to reign her pride in," Yang Qing thought as he watched the interaction of the elders and the young lady.

"Since you have entrusted her to me I should do a good job of it lest she gets careless out there and brings calamity upon herself and the clan," thought Yang Qing as he released a tiny bit more of his aura which he centered on the young lady.

It would not harm her since it was just a wisp of his aura but it would give her a tiny exposure to the might of a palace realm cultivator.

The young lady felt her whole body compress like there was a huge mountain above crushing even the very air out of her lungs. The Yang Qing before her had suddenly turned into the blazing sun. Just when

she thought she was about to pass out, the pressure disappeared like it was never there to begin with, all she felt was a calm lightness.

However even though outwardly she felt that way, inwardly her heart was beating madly.

"Hold on to that feeling and let it be your motivation to push forward. There will always be a mountain above a mountain, don't slack off and let down your talent and the hopes of your seniors. I wish you luck on the journey ahead and I hope when I come back here it would be when the Murong clan finally has a core formation expert."

Yang Qing's voice echoed in her head once more. This time she knew the voice she heard before was no hallucination.

The clan leader noticed something from the young lady's expression before a knowing look appeared on his face. He bowed slightly in thanks to Yang Qing who returned a nod in return.

"No matter the rank, these leaders are usually perceptive," thought Yang Qing as he decided to proceed with the show.

"I Yang Qing, judge of the superior core court of the Order hereby begin my evaluation of the Murong clan for a rank 5 promotion in accordance with article 34 ranking protocols and guidelines.

The clan is to present a member with a foundation establishment cultivation for evaluation.

Clan Murong, bring forth your member," Yang Qing's voice boomed as it reverberated around the hall room that even the walls vibrated.

The atmosphere in the hall room had reached its peak at the moment.

The clan patriarch solemnly walked out as the young lady followed behind him.

"Patriarch Murong Jie presents Murong Yan who will be representing the family in the rank evaluation for the rank 5 promotion.

The Murong clan wholly submits to the ruling of the Order and its punishment should we be found to be in infringement of those rules."

Murong Jie loudly said as he moved to the side for Murong Yan to walk ahead of him toward Yang Qing.

"Murong Yan presents herself for the evaluation," Murong Yan stopped before Yang Qing as she cupped her fists.

"The evaluation will be a two-step process. First, you will pour your qi into this foundation white haze stone," Yang Qing said as he presented a palm-sized round cloudy white stone.

"The stone will only react if you have strength that is at the foundation level and above. You don't need to pour out a lot just a tiny bit will do," Yang Qing said as he handed the stone over.

Murong Yan held it tightly between her hands as she poured her qi into it.

The clan members all inadvertently gulped in anxiety despite already knowing she was a foundation establishment.

The moment her qi seeped into the stone, a swirling circle was formed in the stone as its cloudy white color got swallowed in the swirl as it started changing colors. It went from cloud white to pristine white, then light red as the shade got darker and darker, and then the color jumped to light orange as the swirling finally stopped.

Chapter 170 Murong Family's Evaluation (4)

The whole assembly hall heaved sighs of relief once they saw the color change. Some of the senior members with high cultivation even lit up when they saw the color on the crystal ball especially the elders on the platform. Some even started tearing up as they knew what the orange color signified. It meant Murong Yan had orange pillars.

They knew the higher the grade of the pillar, the better the chances of making it to higher realms.

If Murong Yan had white pillars, she would have an almost impossible chance of reaching the peak of the foundation establishment realm, let alone breaking through to the core formation realm. But she had an orange-grade pillar which was above white pillars and red pillars.

Even if it was a low-rank orange-grade pillar, based on the intensity of the color, it was still an orange-grade pillar and with it, she had a high chance of reaching the peak of the foundation establishment realm as long as the resources were there and with some luck breaking through to the core formation realm was not an impossibility either.

Those who knew the significance of that color held their breaths in excitement.

Yang Qing also took a brief pause to transmit his voice to Murong Yan and explained the significance of the color. He did it out of goodwill in case the clan didn't have such information.

Murong Yan's eyes lit up when she heard the significance but then dimmed when she heard of the other grades that were above her. Yang Qing didn't withhold the information since it was better for her to expound her horizons now rather than later. Though he didn't tell her about purple grade pillars since they were so rare and there was no need to. He only reached the gold grade.

After that, he took out a cracked grey stone steel that had a few cracks all over and placed it on the floor.

It looked unassuming like it was part of the foundation of some old building.

"This is a heart steel. You'll pour a drop of your blood essence in it and it will show other details that can't be shown with the foundation white haze stone," Yang Qing said as he motioned for Murong Yan to start when she was ready.

Yang Qing was deliberately vague with the details since the stone's main purpose was to find out if she used forbidden techniques to reach her realm which usually came at the sacrifice of her lifespan. If that were the case then the evaluation would be considered a fail.

The Order instituted such a measure to prevent the unranked organization from using forbidden means, all for the chance of moving up.

Before this method was instituted, there would be organizations where the older members who were at death's door would use a forbidden art to push their realm briefly at the foundation establishment realm then perish a few months after the evaluation.

This meant other than risking the lives of the members of these unranked organizations, it also increased the workload of the Order as they did rank demotions. The heart steele by Yang Qing's feet was used to address this issue. It was an ascendant-grade artifact and was but a replica of the real thing which was a saint-grade treasure found in the ruins of some ancient sect and fell into the Order's hands.

...

Murong Yan grimly bit her hand as she poured out a drop of her blood essence on the steel, which shimmered for a second, as a few words appeared on it.

Cultivation realm peak of the 1st stage of foundation establishment,

Status, stable

Lifespan, 1,067 years

Bloodline affinity, wind.

After the last word, the sentences remained in the steele for a few minutes before it all disappeared and the steele went back to its blank look.

"With that, I can affirm that your cultivation base is real. I Yang Qing. by my authority as a superior core court judge of the Order, hereby approve the promotion of the Murong family to a rank 5 organization and with it the accorded privileges and stipulations," Yang Qing loudly announced as the assembly room exploded into a loud cheer and roar.

Clan members from young to old started weeping as they hugged each other. Even the elderly men at the platform were no different as they looked to the skies with tears in their eyes.

"Grandpa I did it," Murong Yan said as she jumped into the embrace of Murong Jie who patted her back as she sobbed.

Zou Yi, like the softy he was, almost let out a few drops however Yang Qing's presence gave him the motivation he needed not to let a single one through. Zou Liqin didn't have such reservations as she smiled with reddened eyes as she stared around the room.

Yang Qing smiled in gratification at the mood. No matter how many times he has experienced it, the feeling is always novel every time.

He drafted an official certificate on a yellow-brown scroll which he then stamped with his medallion and formed a couple of seals on the scroll which flashed with a blinding sight before a voice echoed out.

"Received,"

A record of the certificate had appeared in the records hall of the Order. When the Murong family decided who they'd send to the Order for their quota, that record would be their entrance ticket and proof of identification.

He created another certificate and stamped it which he then handed to the clan patriarch who was still smiling.

"Thank you very much judge Yang Qing," Murong Jie said with his voice shaking as he held the scroll like a precious treasure.

"All the best to your Murong family. We will not be staying since I have a long schedule but do enjoy your celebration and I hope there will be more.

Murong Yan, don't forget what I said, blaze on ahead," Yang Qing said as he held both Zou Yi and Zou Liqin's hands and disappeared into a grey cloud of smoke.

Despite their shock, all the members of the Murong family present stood up as they deeply bowed towards the exit door.