

## The Doctor 1431

### Chapter 1431: Close Relationship

On the top floor of the pagoda, Elder Meng—who heard this question—fell silent for a moment. He looked at the door floating quietly and said after some time, “It’s fine.”

Outside the barrier, Elder Bo Yan then heaved a sigh of relief. “With you around, there naturally won’t be a problem. I’ll go back now.”

Then, Elder Bo Yan cupped his fists, bowed politely, and turned around to leave.

Silence resumed in the surroundings as if nothing had happened.

After some time, Elder Meng sighed lightly. “I wonder when the girl will come back... Does she not want her item anymore?”

*After such a long time, she didn’t even send a letter back. I wonder what she’s busy with...?*

Elder Meng shook his head, and thinking of the two below, he couldn’t help but shake his head again. *It seems like if I have the time, I need to ask Rong Xiu about it. Perhaps I can find something out from him.?*

...

On the second floor, Chu Liuyue lay on the thousand-year cold jade bed.

Rong Xiu sat beside her and held her hand.

The duo’s fingers were interlocked, and a faint golden light shone.

A warm strength entered Chu Liuyue’s body and carefully rejuvenated it.

Her organs, including a portion of her Yuan meridian, were injured in the previous accident. Even though her recovery power was great, Rong Xiu still insisted on using his force to help heal her injuries every once in a while.

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Chu Liuyue’s condition was indeed much better now. A hint of red dyed her pale and frail face, and her aura was much stabler than before.

Perhaps it was because Rong Xiu was around, and the familiar faint cold fragrance lingered, but she felt more at ease. She didn’t have a nightmare again, and she slept with a peaceful appearance.

...

When Elder Wen Xi brought Mu Hongyu into the academy, it attracted quite a few people’s attention.

In the past half-month, not many people came to the academy. Now that one suddenly came, she naturally became everyone’s focal point.

As he liked Mu Hongyu very much, Elder Wen Xi directly arranged her residence personally.

“Originally, I wanted to arrange for you to stay with Chu Yue on the same mountain. But as Chu Yue has moved, I can only try my best to let you stay closer to him.” Elder Wen Xi and Mu Hongyu stood at the middle of a mountain, and the former pointed in a certain direction. “This is Hutou Mountain. In the southeastern direction, that mountain is Jiuhe Peak. That’s Rong Xiu’s residence, and Chu Yue has also moved there as well.”

“His Highness?” Mu Hongyu was rather confused.

Elder Wen Xi was dazed for a moment and recovered his senses. *Since Mu Hongyu is good friends with Chu Yue, it was normal for her to know Rong Xiu. Hearing this address, she seems to be one of the people from the 28 divisions under the Sky-Cloud Empire??*

“Yes. After Rong Xiu came into the academy, he has been living there alone. Chu Yue was the first one who was allowed to stay with him. I must say that Rong Xiu treats him extremely well!”

*Even we elders can’t casually approach Jiuhe Peak, and only Chu Yue can. Doesn’t this state something??*

“Isn’t it normal for His Highness to treat him well?!” Mu Hongyu chuckled. *The two of them have a marriage agreement and only lack an official wedding. Others naturally can’t compare to such a relationship.?*

Hearing this, Elder Wen Xi was curious. “Oh? Why do you say that?”

“Of course, it’s because—” Mu Hongyu had spoken halfway when she suddenly recalled that Chu Liuyue came here under the alias ‘Chu Yue,’ so she hurriedly stopped talking.

Her almond-like eyes turned, and she smiled playfully. “Of course, it’s because they naturally have a good relationship!”

Without waiting for Elder Wen Xi to ask further, she immediately changed the topic. “Oh right, Elder... Since they’re all living at Jiuhe Peak, can I directly go over to see them?”

Elder Wen Xi’s expression stiffened, and he laughed hoarsely. “Hehe, that’s... a long story...”

“Mentor!” At this moment, a gentle voice sounded.

Elder Wen Xi looked over. “Shishi, what brings you here?”

Luo Shishi’s figure flashed, and she quickly arrived before the duo. She respectfully bent her knees and bowed to Elder Wen Xi before smiling delightfully and saying, “Elder Hua Feng came over to look for you. He heard that you were helping the new student to ease in and left. He said that if you have the time, you should drop by his place as he wants to talk to you about something.”

Elder Wen Xi lightly grunted. “What things can’t be said directly? The older he is, the more troublesome he gets.”

Even though he said this, he still had a smile on his face and was just clearly teasing him.

Luo Shishi was used to the way these two elders interacted and didn’t really mind it.

Her gaze turned, and she saw Mu Hongyu at the side. Curiosity filled her eyes. "This is the new junior sister that came in, right?"

She had already been here for a few months, so she naturally addressed herself as senior sister.

Elder Wen Xi laughed out loud. "That's right! This is Mu Hongyu, a new student I recruited today. Hongyu, this is Luo Shishi, and she's my student."

Mu Hongyu smiled and said, "Hello, Senior Sister!"

Luo Shishi saw that the lady wasn't old and that her face was malt-colored, but it didn't hide her beauty at all. This was especially so for her round and bright almond-like eyes that were energetic, active, carefree, and cute.

She smiled and nodded. "Junior Sister Hongyu, you don't have to stand on ceremony. Since you've come to the academy, we're all one big family. Especially since you were also personally assessed by Mentor, we have even more fate. In the future, if you don't understand anything in the academy, you can just ask me about it."

"Haha! That's not where your fate ends!" Elder Wen Xi smiled and stroked his beard. "Hongyu, did you know that when Shishi came into the academy, she was assessed together with Chu Yue!? And the few of them are quite close even now!"

*They're so close that they got into trouble at Million Wine Mountain together...?* However, he naturally couldn't say this.

Once she heard that the other party was also Chu Liuyue's good friend, Mu Hongyu instantly felt closer to her.

However, Luo Shishi found it strange. *?Hearing what Elder Wen Xi said... It seems like Mu Hongyu and Chu Yue know each other??*

As if seeing through her thoughts, Elder Wen Xi smiled and said, "Oh, I forgot to mention. Shishi, Hongyu is Chu Yue's good old friend! Look, she came to the academy looking for Chu Yue!"

Luo Shishi was dazed. *?Oh, so she's...?*

Mu Hongyu blinked. "Elder, you haven't said where Chu Yue is now. My f-father and mother told me to ask about her."

In actual fact, she hadn't gone home in a long time. During the period of time she was in the Red Moon Desert, she also didn't correspond with her family through letters. However, her father and mother indeed were grateful to Chu Liuyue, and they sometimes missed her even more than they missed Mu Hongyu. Hence, it wasn't wrong to say this.

Luo Shishi found it strange. "It seems like Junior Sister Hongyu and Chu Yue are really close..."

*If they are normal friends, why would a young lady's parents care about him so much? And seeing Mu Hongyu's appearance, it does seem like she isn't ordinarily close to Chu Yue...?* An unknown sadness crept into Luo Shishi's heart.

She pressed her lips against each other and said, “Chu Yue isn’t at Jiuheng Peak now. She’s at Fengmin Mountain.”

### Chapter 1432: Similar!

The corners of Elder Wen Xi’s eyes twitched. *“Aiyo! Why did this kid say it directly?! I had been thinking for so long, and I didn’t know how to speak!?”*

“Fengmin Mountain? What place is that?” Mu Hongyu looked confused.

She had just come to the academy, so she naturally didn’t know what Fengmin Mountain meant.

*“Since she said it... It’ll be better to say it upfront.”* Elder Wen Xi silently advised himself in his heart and explained, “This incident has to be explained starting from when all of us went to the Flood-Desert Northern Region...”

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Elder Wen Xi used about ten minutes to explain the entire incident to Mu Hongyu once.

Actually, much of this incident had been spread far and wide outside, so it was fine if they talked about it. He just saw that Mu Hongyu didn’t seem to know much about it, so he didn’t know where to start. But upon deeper thought, these things had to be said sooner or later, so he decided to say it directly.

“...That’s roughly what happened. During this period of time, Chu Yue has been locked up at Fengmin Mountain. Bo Yan hasn’t said when he can come out, so I’m not sure either.”

Mu Hongyu widened her eyes slightly and digested this after some time. After reacting, she hurriedly asked, “How is Chu Yue now?”

Elder Wen Xi comforted, “Don’t worry about this. He went to Fengmin Mountain after he woke up, and he seems to have pretty much recovered. Logically speaking, nothing much will happen to him.”

Mu Hongyu was still worried. “But didn’t you just say that Fengmin Mountain is very dangerous? She—”

“Um... I think that you don’t have to be too worried about this. He has gone to Fengmin Mountain twice previously, and he seemed to be fine...” Elder Wen Xi was rather open-minded about this. After witnessing that kid’s ability to get into trouble, he actually felt that he didn’t need to be too worried.

Under such circumstances in the Flood-Desert Northern Region, he could still have a twist of fate and directly break through to become a stage-nine warrior from an intermediate stage-eight one. There was no need to be worried about such a person.

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Mu Hongyu then felt slightly more at ease. *“That’s true. Liuyue can always convert dangers into benefits, and this is just a punishment in the academy, so it should be fine.”*

“Then, I’ll cultivate first and wait for him to come out!” Mu Hongyu quickly adjusted her mindset and smiled.

Luo Shishi was stunned by this dazzling smile and couldn't help but ask, "Hongyu, are you... really not worried at all?"

During this period of time, Luo Shishi actually couldn't sleep well as her mind kept recalling Chu Yue's bloody and disheveled appearance. Additionally, many people were still waiting to cause trouble for him outside...

This was really worrying. However, it seemed like Mu Hongyu didn't have this consideration.

"Of course, I'm worried!" Mu Hongyu nodded, and she changed her tone. "However, I believe in her!"

The life and death experiences they had experienced together in the past made her always believe in Chu Liuyue unconditionally.

Luo Shishi was slightly dazed.

"Shishi, bring Hongyu around first. I'll go to Hua Feng's to take a look."

"Hm? Oh, okay." Luo Shishi recovered her senses and hurriedly agreed.

Elder Wen Xi handed Mu Hongyu to Luo Shishi assuringly and quickly left.

Luo Shishi thought for a while and said, "Shall we go to Qing Ming Square to check it out first? Chu Yue got onto the Qing Yun Ranking not long after he came to the academy. When we get there, I'll tell you about it in detail."

Mu Hongyu nodded excitedly and gratefully. "Thank you, Senior Sister!"

Luo Shishi smiled. "You're Chu Yue's friend, so you're naturally my friend. Let's go!"

Then, she left with her.

...

"Hua Feng, why are you looking for me?" Elder Wen Xi quickly rushed to Elder Hua Feng and asked this question as he walked into the house.

Nobody answered.

Elder Wen Xi looked inside and realized that his friend was sitting behind the study table and staring at an item dazedly.

"What are you looking at?" Elder Wen Xi walked over and was about to reach out to take it.

Elder Hua Feng hurriedly stopped him. "Hey! Don't touch it!"

Elder Wen Xi wasn't angry, but he became even more curious as he leaned in and looked toward that item. "What item are you hiding so preciously..."

Elder Hua Feng looked up, and his expression was solemn.

Elder Wen Xi suddenly felt that something was amiss, and his heart slightly skipped a beat.

*Bang.?*

Elder Hua Feng closed the door outside. At the same time, a barrier appeared in the surroundings.

Elder Wen Xi felt even more uneasy. *According to my understanding of Hua Feng, something must've happened for him to behave in this manner.*

His teasing smile froze slightly. "What's the matter?"

Elder Hua Feng paused and looked very conflicted. After a while, he moved his fingers.

The item on the table flew up and quietly floated in the air under his control. It was a squarish piece of paper with one thin layer, but its material was very good and even glowed with a faint jade light—holy and pure.

On it, countless rays of light intersected and formed a very complicated Xuan formation.

Elder Wen Xi stared at it for quite a while and felt dizzy before he hurriedly averted his gaze. "What Xuan formation is this? How is it so strong?!"

Although he wasn't a Xuan Master, he had been in the academy for so many years, and there was a powerful Xuan Master like Elder Hua Feng beside him. Hence, he had some understanding of Xuan formations.

He had seen quite a few advanced Xuan formations, but the Xuan formation here couldn't be considered the most complicated one he had seen. Yet, it exuded a strong aura.

He only stared at it, and he could already feel the harsh combative and murderous intent that seemed to want to break the paper and directly rush out!

Elder Hua Feng waved his hands, and that piece of paper flew back again. He then picked up a paperweight and placed it in the middle.

The shocking ripples then gradually appeased.

"You can also feel how strong this Xuan formation is?" Elder Hua Feng knitted his brows. "But this isn't even a complete Xuan formation."

"What?" Elder Wen Xi was taken aback. *An incomplete Xuan formation is this formidable. If it is complete... It is hard to imagine just how shocking it would be!*

"Where did you get this Xuan formation from?" *According to my understanding of Hua Feng, he shouldn't be able to execute such a terrifying Xuan formation, right??*

"Do you remember me previously telling you we had met with quite a few troubles on the road after we reached the Flood-Desert Northern Region? And that there was one time we were even trapped by a Xuan formation?"

Elder Wen Xi nodded. "Yeah, I do. Hiss... Could this be that..."

"This isn't that Xuan formation." Elder Hua Feng rubbed his temple and smiled helplessly. "Even I can't execute that Xuan formation now. This... is the Xuan formation that Chu Yue drew. He only recalled a part of it, so during this time, I've been trying to replicate that Xuan formation. Even now, I can't do it completely and only finished a part of it, but... You've also seen its strength."

Elder Wen Xi knew that Chu Yue had contributed to them escaping back then, but he didn't know many details. "So?"

Elder Hua Feng took a deep breath in and said every word carefully after some time. "This Xuan formation is extremely similar to the one the first director left behind!"

### **Chapter 1433: Break**

The first director that only existed in distant rumors was one that even Elder Hua Feng and the rest couldn't be compared to. Back then, that person created Ling Xiao Academy on his own and left behind many of his precious items, which were all kept and treasured in the academy's secret library.

Over the past thousands of years, only the directors and specific elders could enter.

Elder Hua Feng was coincidentally one of them. That was also the reason why he could personally witness the Xuan formation the first director had left behind. However, it was a pity that this Xuan formation contained too much strength, and it was too hard for Elder Hua Feng—who wasn't capable enough—to remember it thoroughly.

But even if he only recalled a portion of it, it would be extremely beneficial for him. Back at Flood-Desert Northern Region, he already felt that it was faintly familiar when he was trapped in the gigantic barrier, but he wasn't too sure.

After he came back, he recalled the Xuan formation Chu Yue drew for him in detail and slowly repaired it bit by bit. Now, he had already solved more than half of this Xuan formation, and he could finally confirm that this Xuan formation was indeed extremely similar to the one left behind by the first director.

Of course, he didn't dare to confirm that it was the same Xuan formation. After all, if these things were the slightest bit different, the effects would be vastly different. However, he could basically confirm that this Xuan formation did have some relation to the first director!

Upon hearing this, Elder Wen Xi was also stunned and couldn't recover his senses for a long time.

"D-do you know what you're saying?" Elder Wen Xi spoke with much difficulty. He felt his throat tighten and become hoarse.

His first reaction was 'impossible,' but rationality told him that nothing was impossible.

Even though Elder Hua Feng liked to joke normally, he was definitely serious about this type of issue. He could even confirm that Elder Hua Feng must've compared it repeatedly on his own and basically confirmed the situation before he found him.

Elder Hua Feng bitterly laughed. "I don't know what to say now either. Perhaps... we should tell Bo Yan about this."

Elder Wen Xi fell silent for a moment. "Let's not be so anxious. Recently, there have been many matters in the academy that he has to handle. I think he's quite busy as well, so why don't we discuss this first..."

You said that Chu Yue told you about this Xuan formation? Even though he is talented as a Xuan Master, he shouldn't know such an advanced and complicated Xuan formation, right?"

Elder Hua Feng calmed down for a while before telling Elder Wen Xi about that day's incident in detail.

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The room was completely silent.

After a while, Elder Wen Xi then asked, "So this means that Chu Yue accidentally saw this Xuan formation?"

Elder Hua Feng nodded and said, "That's what he said, but I don't know the authenticity of his words."

This matter was serious, and one had to maintain a doubtful attitude toward every aspect of it.

"I think this Xuan formation is very likely to be related to the first director. As for whether Chu Yue knows about this, we have to ask him." Elder Wen Xi's gaze landed on that piece of paper again.

This type of paper was specifically used by Xuan Masters to carve their advanced Xuan formations and was very precious. However, one could clearly write their Xuan formations down on it, so it was widely loved by the Xuan Masters.

The rays of light glowed iridescently, but who would've expected that the Xuan formation hid such a big mystery?

"...Actually, I think that Chu Yue might not know about it. If he did, why would he directly tell you about the Xuan formation?" said Elder Wen Xi hesitantly.

Elder Hua Feng couldn't deny it. "Since this has already happened, we have to solve it first. You're right—Bo Yan has been pretty tired recently. We should talk about this after Chu Yue comes out of Fengmin Mountain."

For the past few days, he had felt unsettled by this matter. In the end, he had no choice but to call Elder Wen Xi over and discuss with him.

Now that he had confirmed his train of thought, he felt a slight sense of relief.

Elder Wen Xi nodded as well. "This matter has great implications. Before we have any concrete evidence, we must be discreet."

"I know."

...

Chu Liuyue was unconscious for two days and nights before she slowly woke up. She tried her best to open her eyes, and it was blurry.

Someone leaned over.

Before she could see that person's face, a familiar cold fragrance wafted toward her nose. That was the smell that allowed her to sleep peacefully during this period.



Her originally uneasy heart settled down suddenly.

“Rong Xiu?” Her vision became clearer bit by bit. With Rong Xiu’s help, she sat up and surveyed her surroundings.

It was empty, and there was a jade bed below her.

“This is...”

“This is the second floor of Fengmin Mountain,” explained Rong Xiu. “You previously met with an accident when you tried to break through to become an intermediate stage-nine warrior, and the forces clashed, so you fainted. For the past two days, you have been recovering here.”

Rong Xiu explained the entire incident to her in a few sentences.

Chu Liuyue rubbed her temples and felt her entire body ache. *?Previously...?*

Suddenly, she stopped in her actions and wanted to get down from the bed! *?Father!?*

But as she had been lying down for two whole days... Now that she suddenly got up, her vision instantly turned black, and her legs became weak as she almost collapsed onto the ground.

Rong Xiu held her up by the waist and slightly furrowed his sharp brows. “You haven’t fully recovered yet, so you can’t run around for now.”

During the past two days, he kept using his own force to heal her body, and about 50% of it had recovered with much difficulty. But for the next few days, she had to recuperate properly to return to normal. After all, failing to break through was not a small matter.

Besides, it was a breakthrough to become an intermediate stage-nine warrior. It was only because her body was strong that she could endure the impact of the force. If it were someone else, their situation would be more severe, and they might not even be able to continue cultivating.

Chu Liuyue was very worried and grabbed Rong Xiu’s sleeves tightly. “B-but Father is very dangerous now!”

*If something happens to him—*

Chu Liuyue could never forgive herself if so. For the longest time, she wanted to save her father but kept getting delayed by everything, dragging on until now. But in actual fact, she could make it if she wanted to go!

Rong Xiu held her wrist. “Where are you going to go now? Do you even know where he is?”

This sentence was like a bucket of cold water that instantly calmed Chu Liuyue.

She closed her eyes, and all the energy in her body seemed to be sucked away. *?Oh yeah. I only know that Father should be in the God Residence Realm, but I don’t know his exact location. The only item that had a connection with Father was broken, and our last hint of hope is now gone. How hard will it be to find him??*

Rong Xiu hugged her and slightly patted her back. He then lowered his voice, and it was filled with tolerance and gentleness. "Don't worry. I've already sent someone to check secretly, and they should be able to bring us news soon."

Chu Liuyue placed her forehead on his shoulders and nodded lightly.

"Rong Xiu, you—" Elder Meng just walked down the stairs and was about to say something when he bumped into this scene and lost his voice.

#### **Chapter 1434: Substitution for Love**

At that moment, the air seemed to be frozen. The surroundings were silent, and even breathing became earth-shattering.

The air seemed to contract silently and squeeze within the middle, causing one to suffocate.

Elder Meng had his eyes open and mouth agape. Even if he had been dominating the God Residence Realm for so many years and witnessed countless storms, he was taken aback when he saw this scene. *Rong Xiu and Chu Yue are actually hugging?! The key is that it isn't an ordinary hug! Such intimacy looks wrong in all ways! Even if they really are biological brothers, they shouldn't do this, right?!*

Even though Elder Meng didn't speak, his heart was in turmoil.

In comparison, Rong Xiu was calmer and more composed.

Hearing Elder Meng's voice, strangeness flashed across Rong Xiu's eyes. However, it quickly disappeared, and his eyes returned to normal.

Elder Meng was stronger than him, and he placed all his focus on Chu Liuyue previously, so he didn't notice Elder Meng coming.

But... So what?

Rong Xiu lightly patted Chu Liuyue's shoulders. "Be good. Go back and rest first."

Chu Liuyue originally wanted to ask more about her father, but seeing this current situation, she knew she couldn't do it.

She nodded and removed herself from Rong Xiu's embrace as she turned and looked at Elder Meng. "Thank you for letting me stay, Elder Meng."

Even though Rong Xiu didn't talk about it, she knew that it was all thanks to Elder Meng that she and Rong Xiu could stay here.

Not to mention others, she was really much more comfortable here than outside, and it was more convenient for her to recuperate her body.

She had to say this word of gratitude no matter what.

However, how could Elder Meng take it in now?! He nodded rather slowly and stiffly. "Oh, it's n-nothing much... You're injured, so you should rest first..."

It seemed like he had lost his soul even when speaking.

Chu Liuyue obediently lay on the jade bed.

Rong Xiu stood with one hand behind his back and lightly said, "She just woke up. I was just about to tell you."

The corner of Elder Meng's lips twitched. *Just about to tell me? I couldn't tell that Rong Xiu had this intention at all!*

"It's good that he's awake." Elder Meng took a deep breath in and swallowed his words with much difficulty. "I coincidentally have something to discuss with you. Follow me."

Rong Xiu lightly nodded. "Okay."

Elder Meng turned around, went up two floors, and couldn't help but turn around to glance at Chu Liuyue. He met with that pair of black, gem-like eyes.

Chu Liuyue blinked. "Elder Meng, is there anything wrong?"

"N-no!" Elder Meng suddenly felt guilty for some reason as he hurriedly retracted his gaze and went upstairs.

His figure quickly disappeared in the stairs.

Rong Xiu and Chu Liuyue exchanged a glance, and the corner of their lips curled up slightly.

"I'll be right back."

Chu Liuyue nodded.

...

After Rong Xiu left, Chu Liuyue was alone on the entire second floor.

Originally, she wanted to rest for a while longer, but she missed her father and couldn't calm her heart no matter what.

After thinking for a while, she swiftly took out the Physician Medicinal Guide that Elder Wan Zheng had previously left behind to read.

Ever since she came back from the Flood-Desert Northern Region and broke through to become a stage-nine warrior, a long crack had appeared on her black pyramid. Just one more touch, and it would break completely.

She recalled quite a few things, including many advanced Xuan formations and medicinal formulas. Now that she couldn't use her force, she could only read the medicinal guide.

After those memories came back, she seemed to be a master without a mentor as she naturally learned those items—especially the medicinal formulas. Although they were as complicated as ever, she could memorize them smoothly.

Chu Liuyue faintly felt that she seemed to have reached the barrier to becoming a Physician. But with the previous failure, she became even more careful.

...

Rong Xiu followed Elder Meng to the top floor.

Ordinary people had no right to enter here, but Rong Xiu was an exception.

On the one hand, Elder Meng—who was agitated—had lost his rationality. Besides this place, he really couldn't think of another place he could talk to Rong Xiu properly.

On the other hand, Rong Xiu had come here before.

After walking to the top floor, Elder Meng raised his hand to seal the barrier and sat down on his usual seat.

Rong Xiu followed him and saw the door quietly floating in the middle.

He squinted his phoenix-like eyes slightly, and a ray of dim light flashed across his eyes. Then, he silently retracted his gaze and stood five steps before Elder Meng. "Elder Meng, you said that you have something to discuss with me. May I know what it is?"

Elder Meng lowered his head, and when he heard this, he couldn't help but look up and glance at him strangely. "Do you really not know what I want to ask?"

Rong Xiu was straightforward. "Elder Meng, please enlighten me."

"Hmph!" However, Elder Meng didn't fall for his trick and harshly grunted. "Why don't you say what's going on with you and Chu Yue!?"

*If Rong Xiu doesn't make this clear, I will feel very uneasy the whole day!*

Upon hearing this, Rong Xiu smiled slightly. "Didn't you see it just now? He just woke up and wanted to go out, but he got up anxiously and almost fell. Hence, I went to support him."

Elder Meng half-believed his words. *I didn't see the front and only saw their backs! Besides, was that supporting him? The two of them were clearly hugging!*

*I've known Rong Xiu for a few years. According to my understanding of Rong Xiu, he definitely wouldn't do such a thing unless... that person has an extraordinary status in Rong Xiu's heart!*

*But seeing Rong Xiu's behavior, he clearly won't say anything more. That's true. Chu Yue... is handsome, clean, has an outstanding talent, and people will fall for him when he smiles. However, he's a true young man! Doesn't Rong Xiu already have a Princess Consort? What is he thinking?*

The two of them fell silent and faced each other.

After a moment, Elder Meng's gaze unintentionally swept across that door.

His expression suddenly drooped, and he looked lethargic. He then swiped the dust and rubbed his brows. "Rong Xiu, you... are already married now. You need to know your limits in some things."

Rong Xiu raised his sharp brows slightly. *This sentence...*

"I heard from Bo Yan that you picked your own princess consort and that you seem to be very satisfied with her. You... should like her very much, right?"

Rong Xiu's expression became even more incredulous, and he nodded. "Of course."

Elder Meng hesitated for a moment and spoke with much difficulty. "I know that when the girl left without coming back, she broke your heart. When you went to find her personally later, you experienced life and death situations and came back filled with injuries. However, those are matters of the past. Since you already have your princess consort, you need to treat her nicely, and not..."

He sighed. *It shouldn't be me saying these words, but if I don't say them, nobody will care about Rong Xiu. Hence, no matter if Rong Xiu hates to hear it, I still have to say it!*

Thinking of this, Elder Meng's gaze became much more solemn as he said, "That kid Chu Yue is indeed quite similar to the girl. However, it's unfair to both of them if you treat him as that girl's substitute!"

Rong Xiu's eyelids harshly twitched.

#### **Chapter 1435: Exiting Seclusion!**

*W-where did all of this come from?* Rong Xiu rubbed his brows rather helplessly. "Elder Meng, you're thinking too much."

*The two of them are clearly the same person. Besides, I wouldn't do such a thing.*

"The relationship between Chu Yue and me... can't be explained in a word or two, but don't worry. It's definitely not what you think it is."

Elder Meng looked at him, and his heart wavered. "Really?"

Rong Xiu retracted his hand, and his thin lips curled up into an extremely faint smile. "Do you think Chu Yue would accept it if I did that?"

*Of course, he wouldn't! That kid looks handsome and is always smiling, but in actual fact, he isn't someone who would let others step all over him. If not, could he have gotten into so much trouble?* Seeing that Rong Xiu had guaranteed it himself, Elder Meng felt more at ease.

*Rong Xiu doesn't have to lie about such a matter, but the duo's relationship is indeed strange. When I have the chance in the future, I must ask about it properly.*

"Okay, let's not talk about this first. It's fine as long as you know what you're doing." Elder Meng stopped the conversation and flung the dust. His gaze then swept across Rong Xiu's shoulders and landed on the door that was quietly floating. "I told you to come because of an even more important matter. Look at this door and see if there's a problem."

Previously, he went down just for this.

Rong Xiu turned around, and his brows were raised slightly. "Actually, I wanted to ask—when did this door come up?"

Elder Meng squinted his eyes. "Probably... ten days ago. At that time, I already felt that the door wasn't right, so I moved only it up. After observing it for a while, I realized that it's indeed amiss, but... I can't be sure, so I invited you over to take a look."

Rong Xiu stared at the door for a few seconds and suddenly laughed. "You've guarded the door for so many years. Nobody else knows it better than you, right? If you think it has a problem, then it definitely has."

Elder Meng still felt uneasy. "This situation is rather complicated. Take a look at it first."

Seeing how insistent Elder Meng was, Rong Xiu didn't decline him further.

He took a few steps forward and walked to the door. Then, he raised his hand and slowly stuck his palm against the door.

It was cold to the touch. A faint coldness directly dug into his heart from his palm, but there faintly seemed to be warmth.

That gush of warmth was very peculiar as it flashed across, and one couldn't differentiate it. It seemed as though something was wavering and wanted to rush out from within, but it turned around and disappeared the moment it was about to come out.

Rong Xiu retracted his hand and looked calm.

"How is it?" Elder Meng leaned his body forward and asked rather anxiously.

In the beginning, he didn't want Rong Xiu to intervene in this matter. But now that Rong Xiu was already here, and he increasingly felt that the door was problematic, he still decided to ask Rong Xiu for his opinion after much thinking.

Rong Xiu paused for a moment and looked at Elder Meng. "What do you think?"

Elder Meng's brows were tightly furrowed, and his expression was solemn. "I thought... that item is about to wake up..."

The first time he detected the ripple, perhaps he could convince himself it was a misunderstanding. However, it was still like this the second time and the third time, and the commotion got increasingly bigger.

He couldn't help but be alert.

Rong Xiu smiled. "Since you already have a decision, why are you still asking me?"

"But this isn't right!" Elder Meng couldn't hold himself back as he rushed forward and flung the dust in his hand. Then, he pointed toward that door. "That girl is still missing now, and I can't even see her figure. How can this thing have a commotion, or does it represent that the girl is coming back soon?!"

When Elder Meng said the second half of the sentence, faint elation surfaced in his eyes. Thinking that Rong Xiu was still standing here, he hurriedly restrained himself.

Back then, many people knew that Rong Xiu liked that girl, but they basically didn't mention it anymore.

A few years had passed, and everything had changed. Rong Xiu even had his own princess consort, so it seemed more inappropriate to bring up that girl.

However, Rong Xiu looked normal as if he didn't mind talking about this. He thought about it seriously and nodded thoughtfully. "That might be possible."

*She is indeed... coming back soon.*

"You think so too?" Hearing this, Elder Meng felt more at ease.

Previously, he was still worried if this represented that the girl was in trouble. But now that Rong Xiu said that it just represented that she was coming back soon, he felt more relieved and less worried.

Rong Xiu's gaze flickered, and his peripheral vision lightly flashed across that door. *If she didn't fail to break through two days ago...*

"You don't have to be worried. It seems like everything is fine," Rong Xiu added.

Elder Meng heaved a sigh of relief. "T-then, I'll just wait for her to come back!"

It seemed like Rong Xiu had already put things down, so Elder Meng had let go of his last consideration. "There's nothing else now. Take good care of Chu Yue."

Rong Xiu nodded. "I won't disturb you further then."

Then, Rong Xiu cupped his fists, turned around, and left.

Looking at his departing back, Elder Meng sighed. "Sigh... Thinking of back then..."

*What a match made in heaven! Yet, it became like this now... Forget it! Since Rong Xiu doesn't think about it anymore, why should we join in?*

Elder Meng's hands slightly slid across that door. The intricate markings on the door left a smooth and gentle touch on his palm.

"That girl... is really magnanimous..."

...

The Sky-Cloud Empire, Wan Zhong Mountain.

The sun set, and the remaining warm orange glow dyed the sky a faint golden.

Jiang Zhiyuan—who had kneeled for the entire day—finally loosened her body and rubbed her sore and numb kneecaps. Even though she had been here for quite a few days, she still wasn't used to this kind of punishment.

Anyone who had to maintain the same kneeling posture for 12 hours from morning to night wouldn't be able to take it, yet she had to endure it. This was because it was her only path of return now!

Jiang Zhiyuan looked up.

The top of the mountain was peaceful.

*I wonder when the clan leader can come out of seclusion...* She thought with much grumbles. But once that idea popped up in her mind, she became hopeless again.

The clan leader had already been in seclusion for so many years and didn't show any signs of coming out. Now, Jiang Zhiyuan didn't know when she had to wait until...

*Crack!*

A crisp shatter was suddenly heard!

Jiang Zhiyuan's heart skipped a beat, and she hurriedly looked up!

She saw an inch-long crack appearing in the middle of the gigantic Xuan formation on the mountain. Faint and pure rays of light shone out from within.

*This...* Jiang Zhiyuan's eyes suddenly lit up, and a bold guess surfaced in her mind!

*Crack!*

At the side, another crack appeared!

It was as if a switch was suddenly activated, and the entire Xuan formation moved.

Those cracks appeared one by one according to the Xuan formation's outline. Not long later, the bright light shining out from below had already wrapped the entire mountain!

A tremendous aura exuded from within!

Detecting that suppression, Jiang Zhiyuan wasn't terrified at all and was elated. *The clan leader is coming out of seclusion!*

### **Chapter 1436: Hide Away**

*Boom!?*

A loud sound suddenly came from the skies—it was earth-shattering!

The sky—which was still considered clear earlier—rapidly darkened. The dark clouds gathered, and the winds howled!

Jiang Zhiyuan looked up and increasingly confirmed her guess. *It must be! The clan leader must be coming out of seclusion! And seeing this formation, he is clearly about to break through!?*

This commotion quickly attracted the attention of the other people from the Sky-Cloud Empire.

*Shua!*

Sounds of things piercing through the air could be heard. In just a moment, many figures gathered in the surroundings! Amongst them were the guards in black armor in charge of guarding Wan Zhong Mountain and some distinguished venerables!



Even 36 Respected Elder Ming and the rest quickly gathered over when they heard the noise!

Everyone looked at the place that triggered the commotion—Wan Zhong Mountain!

In the dark skies, only Wan Zhong Mountain had bright iridescent lights!

“Is... the clan leader coming out of seclusion?” Someone from the crowd couldn’t conceal their shock and muttered.

The voice was light and very low, but of the people who could appear here weren’t top warriors? This sentence clearly landed in everyone’s ears.

In actual fact, this was what they were thinking!

.....

Wan Zhong Mountain was the place the clan leader specifically chose to go into seclusion. For the past few years, it had been very quiet, and there was no noise at all.

Today, the Xuan formation on the mountaintop was activated. Everything opened, and the Heaven and Earth Force burst out!

The answer was: only that one!

*Hong long long!?*

Many rays of silver light swam in the dark clouds! The aura was stunning!

Jiang Zhiyuan’s hair and clothes were blown into a mess by the crazy winds.

That terrifying suppression descended from the skies and wrapped the entire Wan Zhong Mountain!

Excruciating pain pressed on Jiang Zhiyuan’s body! Her face paled, and she directly spat out a mouthful of blood!

She almost rolled down from the mountain! She hurriedly grabbed the rock at the side and tightly nailed herself to the ground.

*I can’t leave! I can’t retreat! At such times, I have to persevere to the end! When the clan leader comes out, he must see me first!?* Holding this belief, Jiang Zhiyuan’s originally weak body exploded with great potential.

Her face was blown till it hurt by the wind, and her body didn’t seem to be hers anymore as it was in so much pain that it turned numb. Only that pair of hands hugged that rock tightly and didn’t let go at all!

The next moment, that gigantic Xuan formation suddenly broke from the middle!

*Tsing!?*

The entire Wan Zhong Mountain shook thereafter!

A figure suddenly rushed out from below! Almost at the same time, countless lightning bolts landed in unison from the sky!

*Hong hong hong!?*

Wan Zhong Mountain was like a thunder sea.

The terrifying energy spread toward the surroundings!

*Thump!*

The barrier outside Wan Zhong Mountain suddenly exploded!

36 Respected Elder Ming's gaze focused, and he rolled up his sleeves. "Silver chain!"

A long silver chain flew out and expanded with the wind. In the blink of an eye, it enveloped the entire middle of Wan Zhong Mountain.

After the exploding force hit the silver chain, it seemed as though the force was absorbed and disappeared rapidly!

"Jiang Zhiyuan, out!" 36 Respected Elder Ming yelled at the top of his lungs. The end of the silver chain flew up with the wind and reached not far behind Jiang Zhiyuan.

As long as she turned around and jumped onto this silver chain, she could escape successfully.

However, Jiang Zhiyuan seemed like she didn't hear it as she knelted on the ground, lowered her body, and tightly hugged that rock.

36 Respected Elder Ming knitted his brows and coldly snorted. *At this time, Jiang Zhiyuan is still thinking about that... It's really hard on her!?*

*Rumble!*

A ray of silver lightning rapidly slashed toward Jiang Zhiyuan!

She detected the danger and finally looked up. *Hide? Absolutely not!?*

Jiang Zhiyuan clenched her teeth and persistently chose to face it head-on. She whipped out her sword, went on her toes, and rushed toward that lightning!

*Crack!*

The sword in her hands broke once it met the lightning!

Jiang Zhiyuan's heart harshly trembled, and she immediately had thoughts of running for her life.

But just as the lightning was about to split her head, a barrier suddenly appeared before her! At the same time, a strong force came from the side, held her body, and slowly put her down.

When Jiang Zhiyuan's feet hit the ground, they were trembling. However, she still turned around as soon as she could.

Shock and elation overlapped, and tears welled up in her eyes. "Clan leader!"

A figure that was slightly curved but had a terrifying aura walked out from the never-ending light.

He walked forward in the air. Everywhere he passed, the surrounding force froze gradually and later dissipated!

Those lightning bolts seemed to be swimming in his body and quickly disappeared underneath his skin. It was as if he had swallowed them.

Finally, he stopped in his tracks. He then raised his hand, and the last bit of shining thunder broke in his palms and disappeared.

The erratic Heaven and Earth Force all froze at this moment!

Everyone was taken aback by this scene.

Now, they could finally see the elder's true appearance clearly. He was wearing a dark-green robe, and he wasn't considered tall. His face was old and ordinary, his hair was white, and he looked no different from an ordinary elder, other than that pair of eyes.

Experienced, calm, and mysterious.

When he looked over, there seemed to be the feeling of stars extinguishing and the months flying by. It seemed like there was a wide universe in that pair of eyes.

Everyone in the surroundings fell silent.

Baili Chun surveyed his surroundings, and the wrinkles on both his cheeks seemed to deepen.

Wherever his gaze passed, the crowd felt fearful, and they lowered their heads. They faintly felt like they had to bow down to him.

Quite a few people were secretly shocked. *?The clan leader has been in seclusion for a few years and has indeed broken through. Such suppression is really...?*

"I really haven't come out in a long time..." Baili Chun lightly sighed. His voice was experienced and low; one couldn't hear his emotions.

"Congratulations on coming out of seclusion, Clan Leader!" A voice that couldn't conceal its excitement sounded from the quiet crowd.

36 Respected Elder Ming glanced at the side. *?When Jiang Zhiyuan was in danger previously, he didn't come out. Now that the clan leader is out of seclusion, he reacts very quickly. Of course, I can't say for sure if it was done on purpose.?*

Respected Elder Yu Jing looked agitated, and his old face blushed for once. "Clan Leader, you're finally out! We've missed you very much during the past few years!"

It was during these few years that Rong Xiu strengthened his rule with ruthless methods, and he had completely controlled the entire Sky-Cloud Empire!

If the clan leader didn't come out, Rong Xiu would probably teach all of them a lesson!

Respected Elder Yu Jing's voice reminded the crowd. At that point, everyone bowed in unison. "Congratulations on coming out of seclusion, Clan Leader!"

Baili Chun smiled slightly, but probably because he had been in seclusion for a long time, his smile seemed rather stiff and had a thick distance to it. "No need to stand on ceremony."

As he spoke, his figure flashed as he walked to Jiang Zhiyuan. His expression became much gentler with more hints of cherishing. "This kid, why didn't you hide?"

### **Chapter 1437: Pitiful**

So many people had rushed over, but the first person Baili Chun saw and the one he asked about most concernedly was still Jiang Zhiyuan.

But toward such a situation, everyone was just dazed and exchanged a knowing gaze before they quickly accepted it. Anyway, it was like this in the past, so it wasn't surprising at all.

There were so many people in the Sky-Cloud Empire, and there were many outstanding ones amongst the younger generation. However, they all couldn't be compared to Jiang Zhiyuan.

Baili Chun had personally raised her by his side, so she was naturally different from the others.

The tears that Jiang Zhiyuan held back for a long time fell as though they were free.

Her happiness had hints of grievances, and she was indeed pitiful. If her face didn't have the messy wounds and bloodstains, she would look even more pitiful.

But when Baili Chun saw this, he didn't feel disdain at all, and his heart ached even more.

"Why? Yuan Yuan, why are you crying suddenly?" He took another step forward and lightly patted Jiang Zhiyuan's head. "Look, isn't Grandpa fine?"

In the entire Sky-Cloud Empire, only Jiang Zhiyuan could call him 'grandpa.'

"Grandpa Chun..." Jiang Zhiyuan hurriedly wiped her tears, but she cried even more fiercely. "This is embarrassing..."

"What nonsense are you saying?" Baili Chun watched on, and his heart ached. He couldn't help but knit his brows.

Previously, he didn't notice it. But after approaching her, he realized that Jiang Zhiyuan's condition was indeed terrible.

Her aura was chaotic, and she was filled with injuries. Her face was frail as well. Her body and face even had stunning bloodstains.

.....

*These definitely aren't because of the aftereffects of the thunder force from just now! Once I came out, I detected that Jiang Zhiyuan was nearby and looked after her carefully. Logically speaking, she would at most be slightly shocked and wouldn't be this severely injured!?*

"W-what happened to you?!" Baili Chun's expression became stern. "Who bullied you?!"

Jiang Zhiyuan pressed her lips against each other tightly and was hesitant in speaking. "I-it's not..."

But to Baili Chun, this behavior essentially looked like she was bullied!

Baili Chun comforted her. "Don't worry. With Grandpa around, I won't let you be aggrieved at all!"

Then, he looked at 36 Respected Elder Ming and the rest. He suppressed the anger in his heart and asked, "What exactly is going on?"

*Why is Jiang Zhiyuan at Wan Zhong Mountain? How did her injuries come about? In my memory, she has always been elegant, active, and magnanimous. Since when did she look this disheveled?*

*36 Respected Elder Ming sneered in his heart. This Sky-Cloud Empire's clan leader is indeed strange. He has never married in his entire life and doesn't have any descendants. His personality is arrogant, and he is extremely stubborn.*

*In the Sky-Cloud Empire, the Baili clan actually holds power. The Baili clan's connections are extensive, and there are many divisions below with good talents. However, Baili Chun has always had a cold and nonchalant attitude toward them, and he has very strict requirements. He only dotes on Jiang Zhiyuan very much.*

*When Jiang Zhiyuan was a few years old, she came to the Sky-Cloud Empire and was spotted by him. Then, he left her behind and personally raised her up. He acted as if he were taking care of his own biological granddaughter.*

*Even though Jiang Zhiyuan's background is slightly worse than that of the children in the Sky-Cloud Empire... With Baili Chun doting on her, her treatment was even better than the eldest daughter of the Sky-Cloud Empire!?*

*And Jiang Zhiyuan herself has long been used to such a feeling, so she always treats the Sky-Cloud Empire as her own home.*

*She isn't from the Baili clan, but it would be great if she became the prince, king, and monarch.*

*When she first saw Rong Xiu being brought back, she liked the young man that was cold and arrogant. All along, she thought that everything was rightfully hers. Hence, when another woman appeared and occupied the position of the prince, king, and monarch, even snatching everything that should belong to her, she was filled with vengeance and grudges.*

"It's a long story." 36 Respected Elder Ming's expression was light. "Clan Leader, please head to Tongshen Palace. We can all talk about it openly."

...

*Putong!?*

The moment Jiang Zhiyuan entered the hall, she directly kneeled on the ground as tears welled up in her eyes again.

"Yuan Yuan, what are you doing? Quickly get up!" Baili Chun—who had just sat down—saw this, and his heart ached terribly. *All these years, Jiang Zhiyuan has never kneeled to anyone in the Sky-Cloud Empire. Why did she become like this now??*

However, Jiang Zhiyuan refused to get up. She just cried, "Grandpa Chun, I'm in the wrong! Please punish me!"

Upon seeing this, Baili Chun could only suppress his emotions and anxiously ask, "What exactly is going on?!"

Jiang Zhiyuan looked up.

In the surroundings, 36 Respected Elder Ming, Respected Elder Yu Jing, and the rest were all gathered here as they split up and sat on both sides.

*In front of these people, there are many things that are inconvenient to say. I can only... pick what I can say.* An idea popped up in Jiang Zhiyuan's mind, and her expression was depressed. "Grandpa Chun, I previously did something wrong and angered Mentor. H-he doesn't want me anymore!"

Baili Chun was dazed.

36 Respected Elder Ming kindly explained, "She was expelled by Ling Xiao Academy, and they didn't publicize the reason. However, this incident has spread far and wide, and the entire God Residence Realm knows about it."

*I'm humiliated!* Jiang Zhiyuan clenched her fists tightly, and her nails dug into her palm.

She wanted to defend herself, but she couldn't say anything. She could only swallow this anger.

Baili Chun tightly furrowed his brows and didn't speak in a while.

He did not expect such a thing would happen. No matter how much he doted on Jiang Zhiyuan, he had to admit that this incident was a major black mark for her and the Sky-Cloud Empire.

After a while, he took a deep breath in and boomed, "Your injuries—"

"They were left behind when I went to the Flood-Desert Northern Region..." said Jiang Zhiyuan as she lowered her head. "They're already much better now. Grandpa Chun, you don't have to worry about me."

*Much better? Doesn't this mean that her previous injuries were more serious??* Seeing her aggrieved yet considerate behavior, the bit of doubt Baili Chun had because she was expelled from Ling Xiao Academy disappeared. *I brought Yuan Yuan up personally, and she has always been a good kid. Besides, didn't the academy elders all like her? There must be a misunderstanding here!?*

Thinking of this, Baili Chun looked around. "Where's Rong Xiu? It's been so long, yet why isn't he here?"

*Even if he is His Grace, he can't be so sloppy!?*

Jiang Zhiyuan wiped her tears and fearfully said, "Brother Rong Xiu should still be in the academy... It's normal for him not to come in such a short time. Don't be angry at him."

She paused and looked down. "But I don't know why Sister Princess Consort isn't here... Logically speaking, you came out of seclusion. so she should be here..."

"Princess Consort? What Princess Consort?" Baili Chun was confused.

Jiang Zhiyuan laughed bitterly. "Oh yes, you don't know yet. Brother Rong Xiu—h-he has already chosen his princess consort. She's staying at Jishen Palace now—"

*Thump!*

"How dare he!?" Baili Chun was enraged as he slapped the desk and stood up! *Jiang Zhiyuan was appointed as the princess consort long ago, yet Rong Xiu wants to change to someone else now. What exactly is he doing?!*

"Princess Consort... is indeed daring! Someone, go get that woman over!"

### **Chapter 1438: What a Coincidence, She Truly is a Genius**

36 Respected Elder Ming lazily said, "Clan Leader, the princess consort is cultivating in seclusion at Jishen Palace. I'm afraid it won't be too good to invite her over suddenly, right? It won't be good if it delays her cultivation."

This sentence stopped the people who were planning to rush over. They stood rooted to the spot and paced back and forth.

On the one hand, it was the clan leader. On the other hand, it was the head of the venerables. Who should they listen to?

Normally, they should listen to the clan leader. But these few years, the clan leader had been in seclusion and didn't really come out. Many matters were left to His Grace and 36 Respected Elder Ming to handle.

Now that His Grace wasn't around, 36 Respected Elder Ming represented the power on this side. Even the clan leader had to be polite to him.

Upon seeing this, Baili Chun was so angry that he laughed. *How many years has it been? So the sky has changed in the Sky-Cloud Empire!*

"What, do you not understand what the clan leader is saying?" Baili Chun spoke deeply, and his expression was harsh.

The two words 'clan leader' were emphasized even more.

The subordinates' faces paled, and they trembled. Just as they were about to leave, 36 Respected Elder Ming stopped them again. "His Grace has already commanded that without his permission, nobody is allowed near Jishen Palace to disturb the princess consort. What, did you all forget about His Grace's instructions?"

When 36 Respected Elder Ming spoke, he didn't look at Baili Chun. His formidable gaze only swept across the subordinates one by one, and it was enough to terrify them. At the same time, he retaliated

against Baili Chun from the side. *The clan leader's status is distinguished, but don't forget who holds the power in the Sky-Cloud Empire now. Besides, Jishen Palace has always been His Grace's territory. Even if the clan leader wants to intervene, he has to think about it!*

"We wouldn't dare!" The subordinates—who were originally wavering—were fearful and respectful when they heard the words 'His Grace.' They moved back respectively and stood in their places obediently.

Baili Chun was dazed for a moment.

What kind of situation is this?! *As the clan leader, I have commanded the Sky-Cloud Empire for many years. Now, I can't even summon a single person?!*

36 Respected Elder Ming touched his teacup and found it rather boring. *Times have changed. Does he still think he is the top character that nobody can defy? If it really were so, then His Highness and I would've done nothing in the past few years.*

The hall fell into dead silence.

Jiang Zhiyuan didn't quite expect this. Originally, she thought that the clan leader could stand up for her after he came out and take revenge for the humiliation she received. But now, it seemed like it wasn't the case.

The Sky-Cloud Empire... had long changed its owner! Even Respected Elder Yu Jing and the others had hesitant expressions and didn't really speak. They either didn't want to offend 36 Respected Elder Ming, or they didn't want His Grace to take revenge on them later!

36 Respected Elder Ming nodded in satisfaction as he smiled gently. "Clan Leader, the princess consort has actually always been elegant, mature, and well-mannered. The reason why she couldn't come here in time today is definitely that she's still focusing on her cultivation. If not... If she knew that you've come out of seclusion, she would've long come to welcome you. Why wouldn't she be here?"

All the important people in the Sky-Cloud Empire had come, and only she did not. Who would be so stupid to cause trouble for themselves? There must be a reason!

Baili Chun snorted in disdain. "Seclusion? Cultivation? Is she an absolute genius and can't even afford this little time out?"

His words were filled with mockery.

However, 36 Respected Elder Ming laughed out loud, and he looked elated. "Clan Leader, you're really intelligent! How did you know that our princess consort is an absolute talent? Back then, the Extreme God Sundial tested her bloodline power, and it reached the same '11' as His Grace!"

Baili Chun's smile suddenly froze. *E-eleven?! The Extreme God Sundial had tested her bloodline power? Yeah... Since she is the princess consort, she definitely had to pass this test... Why would it be so high?!*

At that point, countless thoughts flashed across Baili Chun's mind. His original expression filled with mockery and insults seemed frozen. "Is this true? That woman... What's her background? The tested result is indeed an '11?'"



One had to know that in such a big family clan like the Sky-Cloud Empire, there was only one standard '11' like Rong Xiu in a thousand years. Why was this woman—who suddenly popped up—coincidentally an '11' as well?

Jiang Zhiyuan lowered her voice, and she clasped her fingers tightly. "She... Elder Sister Princess Consort was tested in public, and the Extreme God Sundial did show an '11.' Even though she's from outside the realm, with such talent, we can't—"

"Wait a minute!" Baili Chun suddenly interrupted her and was in disbelief. "Outside the realm? You're saying... she's from outside the realm?!"

*How can this be?* Baili Chun was about to go insane. "Rong Xiu... Rong Xiu is really wreaking havoc!"

*The Sky-Cloud Empire is a top-tier aristocratic family in the God Residence Realm. Those who can be the princess consort... Even if they aren't of similar status, they should at least have a decent background, right? In the end, she is someone from outside the realm?!*

"Isn't this completely humiliating my Sky-Cloud Empire's face?! No—I will never agree!"

36 Respected Elder Ming scratched his ears and wasn't so agitated. He even wanted to laugh. "Clan Leader, are you serious? This princess consort has talent that doesn't lose out to His Highness. In days to come, her future will definitely be bright! If word goes out, many aristocratic families would be envious. Why is it a humiliation to you?"

"You—" Baili Chun was stumped, and his expression changed. *I really can't argue against this point.*

"As for Jiang Zhiyuan..." 36 Respected Elder Ming raised his chin and snorted. "Being expelled from Ling Xiao Academy, being chased by the Liang family over thousands of miles... She got into so much trouble, yet we have to clean up her mess... This is the real utter humiliation, right?"

All these years, this was the first time the Sky-Cloud Empire had someone suddenly expelled from Ling Xiao Academy for no reason!

Baili Chun felt annoyed.

"Do you know that our Sky-Cloud Empire's reputation has hit rock bottom because we allowed her back and protected her? Do you want to hear how the people from outside mock us?"

Baili Chun was so angry that his face turned pale. "Enough!"

Jiang Zhiyuan softly whimpered. "I-it's all my fault..."

Baili Chun sat back down, depressed. *Why must that so-called princess consort be such a top genius? Even I don't have a reason to find trouble with her! In the God Residence Realm, at any point in time, being strong is the best defense!*

"Besides... Jiang Zhiyuan, if I haven't recalled wrongly, the princess consort is only 17 this year. She's much younger than you, so I think you shouldn't continue calling her 'elder sister,' right?" reminded 36 Respected Elder Ming very leisurely.

Jiang Zhiyuan felt as though she was slapped by someone harshly, and she wasn't even in the mood to cry. She just wanted to disappear from the spot! *I don't understand. The clan leader has already come out of seclusion. Logically speaking, I should be able to make a comeback. But why... is everything not right?!*

## Chapter 1439: Stop

Jiang Zhiyuan still didn't understand.

Earth-shattering changes had happened in the Sky-Cloud Empire during the past few years. Rong Xiu now held great power and was very formidable. Even if the clan leader came out of seclusion now, he was no longer as powerful as he was back then.

At this moment, Rong Xiu was the person with the most speaking rights!

Shangguan Yue was the princess consort he personally chose. Even if those people didn't care about her, they had to give him face, right? Not to mention Shangguan Yue's shocking talent.

One would have a dent in their head, and they would have to be not thinking straight to go against them.

Baili Chun looked at the scene before him and was a little late in realizing it. After understanding the issue, he clenched his teeth. *When I was in seclusion back then, it wasn't that I didn't think of such problems. But at that time, Rong Xiu was still green, and I didn't really take him into consideration. How would I know that everything would change in just a mere few years? How could it be so easy to get back the empire I've lost??*

After a temporary silence, Baili Chun took a deep breath in and finally said, "Yuan Yuan is Fairy Water Mound's eldest missy after all. When she's in trouble, can the Sky-Cloud Empire really sit at the side and not care about her? Besides, she has already come. What's the use of saying all of this now?"

The crowd silently exchanged glances and revealed meaningful expressions. *Look, he still protected her! I really don't know what kind of luck that Jiang Zhiyuan has for the clan leader to protect her so much. But if Jiang Zhiyuan continues to cause trouble, even the Sky-Cloud Empire can't protect her!?*

36 Ming was too lazy to continue discussing Jiang Zhiyuan with him. "Since the Clan Leader insists, we'll put this matter to the side first. When His Grace comes back, he can make the decision."

*According to Rong Xiu's personality, he might not want to have Jiang Zhiyuan around.?*

Baili Chun's lips moved, and he still swallowed the words of retaliation in his throat. After a moment, he appeased himself and stood up. "Since the princess consort is so busy, I'll meet her personally!"

Harshness flashed across the 36 Respected Elder Ming's eyes! He stood up as well and silently blocked Baili Chun's path.

In a seemingly smiling manner, he said, "Clan Leader, I'm afraid... This wouldn't be appropriate, right? You're a senior, and she's a junior. No matter what, she should find you. If word goes out... won't they say that our Sky-Cloud Empire's Princess Consort has no manners?"

.....

*Without a doubt, she would be scolded yet again. Besides... if he goes to Jishen Palace now, he can't see her anyway!?*

Baili Chun stopped in his tracks and glanced at 36 Respected Elder Ming suspiciously. Perhaps it was an illusion, but he felt that the latter seemed to be continuously stopping him and didn't want him to go to Jishen Palace, or look for the new princess consort. *Could there be something wrong??*

Jiang Zhiyuan didn't cry any longer. She stood up, wiped her tears, and walked to Baili Chun's side with red eyes. "...Grandpa Chun, you just came out of seclusion today, and you must have a lot of things to do. We can just wait for this matter..."

She paused. "Ever since she became the princess consort, she has been staying in Jishen Palace the entire time and hasn't really come out. I believe she must be busy cultivating and breaking through, right?"

*No matter how diligent she is, she should not do this! Does she not even have the time to come out and meet a person?!?* Baili Chun's blood boiled, and he coldly snorted. "Yuan Yuan, this matter has nothing to do with you. You don't have to intervene. I want to see how hard it is to see this princess consort!"

As he spoke, he flung his sleeves and walked forward with big steps!

36 Respected Elder Ming couldn't stop him any further. After thinking for a moment, he immediately followed them.

Behind him, quite a few people silently followed with varying mindsets.

...

Walking out of Tongshen Palace, Baili Chun looked up.

On Suming Peak, Jishen Palace stood magnificently.

A strong barrier covered it. From here, one could only see the white clouds floating across, but they couldn't see its specific appearance clearly.

Jiang Zhiyuan stood behind him and looked at that palace while she secretly clenched her teeth. *In the past, I have always casually walked in and out of Jishen Palace. But today, I have fallen into such circumstances...*

Without a word, Baili Chun flew forward!

36 Respected Elder Ming's heart was suddenly tightly clutched! *Baili Chun is the clan leader. Even if he doesn't have actual power now, he still has the most distinguished identity in the Sky-Cloud Empire in name. He has the right to enter Jishen Palace directly! If he discovers that the person he wants to find isn't in Jishen Palace, then... Won't all our efforts during this period of time be wasted?! But if I continue to stop him, it would be too obvious and might arouse their suspicions.?*

36 Respected Elder Ming held his breath in and stared at the front tightly.

Baili Chun was very quick. In a few breaths, he reached the lone barrier before Jishen Palace.

A few guards in heavy armor looked over in unison and respectfully bowed. "Greetings, Clan Leader!"

Baili Chun nodded. He knew that these people were Rong Xiu's most trusted confidants, so he had no intentions of playing around with them. He said in a straightforward manner, "Where's the princess consort? I want to see her."

*This is giving her enough face, right!? Anyone who has brains and wants face would have to give in!?*

At this point, a figure hurriedly rushed over from behind.

"The clan leader came over, but we couldn't welcome you in time. Clan Leader, please forgive us." Yu Mo bowed respectfully and smiled.

Baili Chun knitted his brows and felt dissatisfied. However, he knew that the people from Jishen Palace never interfered with outside matters, so he couldn't rage. "Where's the Princess Consort? Is she still cultivating in seclusion?"

Yu Mo smiled. "Clan Leader, you're so wise! The princess consort is indeed at the point of breaking through. I'm afraid it's inconvenient to disturb her now..."

Baili Chun had long predicted this answer and was about to walk in. "Then, I'll just wait here! She can come out to meet me whenever she's free!"

Yu Mo's smile froze. *?This...*

*Roar!?*

A thunderous lion's roar filled with murderous intent reverberated throughout the air! The next moment, a fit white figure came through the air! With a few flashes, it appeared in front of Baili Chun!

It was Xue Xue! It stood before the barrier and faced Baili Chun head-on.

Its ice-blue eyes were filled with cold nonchalance in a high and mighty manner.

*Roar!*

It raised its head toward the sky and roared—the suppression was aplenty!

Baili Chun's expression changed. *?Is this beast planning not to let me in?!?*

## **Chapter 1440: Scheme**

Xue Xue snorted from its nose. *Isn't it very obvious? Is there a need to ask?*

Seeing Xue Xue arrive, Yu Mo instantly heaved a sigh of relief in his heart. However, he still had to do perfunctory work. "Xue Xue, the clan leader wants to go into Jishen Palace and meet the princess consort. Don't cause trouble."

Xue Xue licked its claws and bared its white teeth. It looked nonchalant and didn't care about this.

It was clearly bent on blocking the door this time!

Baili Chun felt that it was extremely ridiculous! *I am the Sky-Cloud Empire's clan leader and could originally come and go from Jishen Palace freely. But today, I was actually stopped by a beast?! The world has changed!*

!!

An idea popped up in Baili Chun's mind, and his gaze turned much colder. *Anyone can tell who intended this. Rong Xiu clearly doesn't want to let me in, and he even did it so openly—publicly! There are so many people watching below! Rong Xiu's actions don't give me any face at all!*

Baili Chun's face darkened, and he said, "Move."

Xue Xue stretched and nonchalantly glanced at Baili Chun, not moving at all. Its meaning was more obvious than ever.

Yu Mo rushed up and looked like he was in a difficult spot. He looked at Xue Xue and then glanced at Baili Chun. "Clan Leader, this... You also know that Xue Xue has always had a stubborn temperament and won't listen to anyone. I'll apologize to you first! Why don't you come back another day? You came out of seclusion today, and you should celebrate it grandly! Don't be unhappy because of such a small matter!"

Yu Mo looked sincere. *Even if he doesn't consider us, he should consider the whole group of people at Tongshen Palace's square that is looking at this scene in unison from below. Does he still want his face? If a commotion is caused, it won't be good for anyone.*

Naturally, Baili Chun didn't want to make a big fuss about it.

What's there to fight with a beast about?! However, it was also very difficult for him to take this lying down!

"Clan Leader, why calculate it against Xue Xue?" 36 Respected Elder Ming heaved a sigh of relief. He leisurely strolled up, smiled, and said, "The princess consort is in Jishen Palace. Can she escape? If you want to see her, there'll be plenty of chances in the future! You've been in seclusion for a few years, and you finally came out today! It's a happy matter! Yu Mo is right. No matter what, you must celebrate it properly! If not, let us tell you about the situation in the Sky-Cloud Empire and the God Residence Realm these few years so that the subordinates can prepare?"

He spoke personally in a sincere manner, which was akin to giving Baili Chun an out.

Hearing the sentence at the back, Baili Chun was tempted.

In such a short period of time, he did notice that the Sky-Cloud Empire had changed greatly. He desperately wanted to understand the current situation so that he could prepare himself mentally.

"His Grace hasn't been around lately. There are many things awaiting your opinion." 36 Respected Elder Ming smiled genuinely.

Baili Chun was determined, and his expression became much better. "Then... I'll settle these matters first. As for..."

"As for the other things, we can talk about them another day!" He glanced at Jishen Palace. *I don't believe that this Shangguan Yue can be arrogant forever!*

Seeing them retreat, Jiang Zhiyuan almost smashed her teeth. *We're already at the door, but we still can't go in! There must be something wrong with that Shangguan Yue!*

At this point, someone rapidly flew in from afar. "Big Missy Jiang, Fairy Water Mound has sent you a letter."

...

Ling Xiao Academy, Fengmin Mountain.

Chu Liuyue was sitting on the thousand-year cold jade bed and silently flipped through the medicinal books in her hand.

A strange commotion suddenly came from outside. "Elder Meng! Elder Meng!"

Chu Liuyue recognized this anxious voice to be Elder Wen Xi's. *Why is he here?!*

Chu Liuyue was curious and planned on getting up to take a look. However, she suddenly recalled that she was 'locked' up here, so it wasn't appropriate for her to go out suddenly. Hence, she sat back down obediently.

Rong Xiu coincidentally came down from upstairs.

Hearing footsteps, she turned around and looked up.

The two of them stared at each other.

Chu Liuyue carefully sized Rong Xiu up and didn't notice anything amiss. She felt more at ease and pointed outside. "Elder Wen Xi is here. He seems to be looking for Elder Meng urgently."

Rong Xiu walked to her side and smiled slightly. "Don't worry. Elder Meng will handle it."

Chu Liuyue nodded.

As expected, Elder Meng's voice sounded from upstairs. "Wen Xi, what's so urgent?"

"Let me in first! I have to tell you this in person!" Hearing that the voice was amiss, Elder Meng opened the barrier and let Elder Wen Xi in.

Elder Wen Xi's steps were hurried, and he looked anxious. "Elder Meng, it's not good!"

He walked to the hall on the first floor and searched around. Then, he suddenly stopped. "Where's Chu Yue?!"

At this point, Elder Meng's figure flashed, and he had already appeared before Elder Wen Xi. "He's gone to rest, and he isn't here now. What issues do you have? Say it."

Elder Wen Xi smacked his palm. "Aish! This kid is in big trouble!"

Upon hearing this, Chu Liuyue's brows moved slightly.

Rong Xiu turned around and looked down.

“Why do you suddenly say this?” Elder Meng found it weird. “That kid has been in my place recently, and he’s fine. He didn’t do anything—”

“It’s the Flood-Desert Northern Region!” Elder Wen Xi furrowed his brows tightly. “I don’t know who is spreading news outside, but they say that the Flood-Desert Northern Region’s matters are done by Chu Yue in cahoots with Black Demon Hole. They even said that the true Heavenly Square Cauldron has long been with Chu Yue! Everything was just a scheme between him and Black Demon Hole!”

“This news has spread far and wide outside. Now, all the aristocratic families are requesting to investigate Chu Yue properly!”