

Rebirth Of The Urban Immortal Cultivator

- Chapter 1: I Am Back

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In the summer of 2007, a bus operated by Golden Dragon Travel Service was heading towards the County of Si Shui near Chu Zhou, a city in the Hu Dong Province.

Si Shui was a backwater county in the middle of nowhere. In the heat of the summer, the passengers on the bus had mostly fallen asleep.

A five foot six, handsome boy with a smooth face and a sleek haircut suddenly jerked his head up as he woke up from a nightmare. He scanned the bus with a weary look.

As reality finally set in, his face suddenly hardened with a frown. He had been to another world and back, yet no one on the bus would have any idea of what he had just been through.

“This is the same bus as the one I took to Chu Zhou City for my last year of high school!”

“Why am I here? Am I no longer in the Tribulation?”

“Could it be that I am back in the mortal world again?” Disbelief flickered in Chen Fan’s eyes as he thought to himself.

“How is it possible that I, Chen Beixuan, escaped the heavenly tribulation, and was reborn again as my former-self?”

Chen Fan, also known as “Chen Beixuan,” was a cultivator. “Bei Xuan” was the cultivation name that his teacher had given him when he met his teacher for the first time.

He cultivated for five hundred years under one of the nine celestial sects in the universe: the True Martial Immortal Sect, and he was the disciple of the sect’s Grand Elder: Cangqin, the immortal cultivator.

Thanks to Chen Fan’s incredible talent, it only took him five hundred years to enter the last stage of his cultivation: The Tribulation. He was thought to be the most likely cultivator in centuries to successfully ascend beyond the current realm to that of the immortals.

Chen Fan lived in this universe for five hundred years, fighting and winning every battle against any sentient being across the universe that dared challenge him. His invincibility had earned him the title: The North Mystic Celestial Lord.

However powerful he had been, he had lost himself in the heavenly tribulation after all.

It was not until his doom was knocking on the door did he realize that the culprit of his failure was the hastened pace during his cultivation. Fast and furious was his motto, but it had also made his cultivation foundation riddled with weak points.

His resolution and dedication— the so-called “Dao-Heart”—crumbled when he had to face the mental demons that lurked in the darkest corners of his mind.

His eagerness to complete the cultivation had become his downfall. To advance as fast as he could, he had left many regrets and made countless mistakes. As guilt and self-resentment slowly eroded his mind, he became vulnerable to the mental demons’ deceptions and illusions.

As Chen Fan reflected his battle against the mental demons, he tried to tap into the energy within his system, to see if he was in another illusion. To his surprise, he found that not only was there no trace of his star-devouring Dharmic Power, but his boundless Primordial Essence had also disappeared.

“This is not the work of mental demons. I really am BACK!” Chen Fan furrowed his brows as realization finally dawned upon him.

Chen Fan knew that however real and vivid mental demons’ illusions were, they could not mask all traces of a Celestial Lord’s Primordial Essences.

“My powers are gone. There is not even a trace of Dharmic Power, Primordial Essence, Immortal Enlightenment in me, much less my precious Dharma Treasures. I am now no different than an ordinary man, and anyone could strike me down if they try hard enough.”

Despite the huge setback in his cultivation, he did not seem to be too upset about it. Instead, he laughed at his defeat lightheartedly.

“So be it, my last life’s cultivation was doomed from the beginning anyways.

“This time around, I will make sure that I take my cultivation one step at a time. I will not only complete but also perfect each and every level.”

He cracked a smile as fire danced in his eyes.

“I will return the humiliation and contempt the world had given me in kind, and I will learn from my previous mistakes and leave no regrets as I progress.”

There had been many regrets in his past life. Although his mind had always been preoccupied with cultivation, the regret and sorrow persisted.

“Mom, Dad, Sister-An, and Xiao-Qiong. I am BACK! This time I will not fail you.”

Chen Fan lowered his head as resolution rose in his heart.

Chen Fan was born in an ordinary family in the Si Shui County. His father, Chen Gexin, was in the Jin City of the Hu Dong Province. His mother, on the other hand, hailed from a prominent household in the Yan Jin City.

The two met at college, and they quickly fell in love, despite the outcry from Wang Family. The overall sentiment of the society was hostile towards marriage without the parents' arrangement. It was particularly true in a prestigious old-money family such as the Wangs.

After failing to put a stop to the marriage, Chen Fan's grandfather went as far as denouncing his own daughter.

In a fit of anger, Wang Xiaoyun left her parents with her husband and settled in Hu Dong Province.

In order to prove to the Wang Family that he was worthy of their daughter's hand, Chen Gexin did not choose to stay in the populated cities where Wang Family's influence was strong; instead, he had moved to Si Shui County and started working as a low-ranking public servant.

Chen Gexin continued working for the county for a few decades, and never once had he tried to seek advantage using his connection with the mighty Wang Family. He had worked his way up from his first low-ranking position to the management level, but it was still a far cry from the expectation of the Wang family.

The tension between the two sides finally started to ease after Chen Fan was born. Chen Fan's grandfather granted the couple a visit during the Chinese New Year. However, unbeknownst to the young couple, what awaited them at Wang Family were cold sneers and lofty disdain.

The entire family had considered Chen Fan's parents a taint on the family's reputation. They had defied the will of the family patriarch and gave birth to a son who had brought no joy but only shame to the Wang family.

As for Chen Gexin's achievement in the county, it was laughable and pathetic in their eyes.

The thought brought a bitter taste to Chen Fan's mouth. He shook his head and smiled wryly.

“Wang Chen, I bet that you had never expected me to be back from the future!”

“My family had worked hard to catch up with you and your parents, but in the end, we are still worthless worms in your eyes.”

“My mother was a proud person, and she could not stand being looked down upon. That was why she worked so hard, but what did she get in the end? Nothing!”

“I swore I would avenge my mother. Although I am an ordinary person right now, once I got my power back, I will be knocking on your door. I will show you what it is like to be looked down upon and to be crushed like a worthless worm.”

Wang Chen was Chen Fan’s cousin. He was the favorite child of the great house Wang. In Chen Fan’s last life, he had tried for all his worth to catch up with Wang Chen but failed. The gap between Wang Chen and Chen Fan was unbridgeable.

The last time that Chen Fan saw any visitor from Wang Family was during his mother’s funeral. As if the Wang Family thought the death of Chen Fan’s mother was not tragic enough for the young man, they had to gloat over the tragedy and sent only three youngsters to attend the funeral. No one from the older generation of the Wang Family had come to pay tribute to their own blood; not his grandfather, uncle, or grandmother.

To rub salt into the wounds, one of the visitors was Wang Chen. Wang Chen acted as if he was walking the red carpet instead of attending his aunt’s funeral. Surrounded by his sycophantic entourage, his steps carried such a haughty and proud quality that blatantly disrespected the dead.

He was the star, and wherever he went, he deserved attention and respect, regardless of the circumstances.

Although it had been five hundred years, the thought of the Wang family still lit up the knot of fire in Chen Fan’s belly. This memory was toxic to a cultivator such as Chen Fan.

Without coming to terms with the past, the cultivator would be vulnerable to the attacks of the devious mental demons. A small mistake would lay waste to thousands of years of hard work.

“Anyways, I better not dwell on the past. I wager that Shen Junwen’s family fortune has not reached the Chu Zhou City at this point in time.”

Looking out the window, the familiar scenery of the Chu Zhou City filled Chen Fan’s heart with nostalgia.

The thought of Shen Junwen also reminded him of Xiao Qiong.

He had loved that girl, and she loved him, but that was not how their love story ended. Later on, his love for her had turned into an obsession which ultimately ruined his cultivation.

The mental demons had used her image to weaken his mind during their battle. One look of her face was enough to render his defense useless.

“Shen Junwen! You had robbed me of my fortune and the love of my life! You forced me to return to the county where I came from. You sat on your throne while I licked my wounds like a street dog.” The thought brought Chen Fan’s blood to a boil, and his eyes glinted like sharp steels.

Shen Junwen was the director of the Wanrong Group, a magnate of the real estate industry, and he was the son of the richest man in the Hu Dong Province.

He was also Chen Fan’s greatest rival in love. Not only had he stolen Fang Qiong from Chen Fan, but he had also contributed to the collapse of his mother’s company: the Splendor Group.

“Xiao-Qiong and I had a crush on each other ever since we were little, and we hit it off when we met again at university after a long period of separation. However, it was you who came in and stole her from me. You had driven a wedge between her family and me and forced her to give up in the end.”

“The last time I met Xiao-Qiong was at an alumni party where I heard about her engagement to none other than you. I do not expect you to understand how I felt back then, but I promise that I will give it back to you ten times worse!”

“If not for Cangqin’s help, I would have already ended my miserable life after I jumped off from the roof of my apartment. ” Chen Fan murmured.

It has been five hundred years, and he should have already come to terms with what had happened. However, every single word that came out from Chen Fan’s mouth carried a bone-chilling intent that threatened to claim souls.

“I will never forget the moment right before I decided to let go of my life. From that moment on, the old Chen Fan was dead, and the new Chen Beixuan was born.

“Thanks to you, I was able to focus entirely on cultivation. I fed on the anger inside of me and advanced through my cultivation at an incredible rate. It only took me five hundred years to reach the final stage: Tribulation. I felt that I almost owe you my appreciation.”

Chen Fan’s lips curled into a smile.

While Chen Fan had lived as the loser, Shen Junwen was basking in the glory of his success.

The Shen family had contributed to the death of Chen Fan's mother as well as the collapse of the Splendor Group. In other words, Shen Junwen and his family were responsible for nearly all the miseries in Chen Fan's life.

In his last life, Chen Fan had lost everything to his opponent. These old wounds never healed, at least not until redemption was sought and completed. He grunted as anger flickered in his eyes.

"Shen Junwen, Fang Family, Wang Family, and Wang Cheng, I will return the humiliation and suffering back to you in kind."

After five hundred years of cultivation, he was finally ready to right the wrongs in the first thirty years of his life. As he looked outside the window, his mind sought only one thing: retribution.

Chapter 2: Jiang Churan

Suddenly, a loud ringtone wrenched Chen Fan's mind out of his reverie.

He glanced at the caller ID which read: Mom!

"Is this Fan? Are you almost at Chu Zhou City? Auntie Tang should be waiting for you outside the bus station right now. I told her to find a place for you in Chu Zhou City and help me take care of you while you stay there. Do not blame me for being such a tiger mom and sending you away. You know how low your grades are right now. If you do not work hard, you could not even make it into a good university. So, I had to pull some strings to send you to the best school in the city. You listen to Auntie Tang while you are in Chu Zhou City, you hear me? She was one of my business partners while I worked in Chu Zhou City. Really nice people!"

Hearing his mother's harsh voice for the first time after hundreds of years sent a warm current through Chen Fan's body; tears welled at the corner of his eye.

"Mom, I get it. I will study hard, I promise," despite the tears, he replied with a bright smile.

This was the first time he had heard his mother's voice ever since she passed away five hundred years ago, or a few years later, depending on which time-line Chen Fan looked at.

Mother had always been a distant and fuzzy concept to Chen Fan since they did not have many opportunities to meet each other.

His mother, Wang Xiaoyun, was the very definition of a willful woman. After having been held up as the object of ridicule by her own family, she had sworn to prove them wrong. In a fit of anger, she took Chen Fan's sister, An Ya, to the international metropolis of Zhong Hai, and created the Splendor Real Estate Group. By the time Chen Fan went to college, the Splendor Group had grown into one of the largest companies in Zhong Hai, and Wang Xiaoyun was known as the Queen of Real Estate.

Therefore, Chen Fan could not have remembered much about her, at this point in time in his past life. It was not until she died in a car accident did Chen Fan finally realize how much his mother meant to him.

She had always been the backbone of the family. Chen Fan remembered that his father's hairs turned gray overnight after her accident. It was as if the tragedy had sucked his father's soul out of him, rendering him into an empty husk.

"Ah! I almost forgot to tell you. The Tang family has a daughter, and her name is Jiang Churan. Unlike you, she is a straight-A student. Your Auntie is very keen on setting you two up, but I had to warn you that studying is your priority right now!" Wang Xiaoyun said.

Chen Fan laughed in his mind. *What kind of Asian mother would allow her daughter to date in high school?*

Chen Fan paused a second and then said, "Mom, do not worry, I will study hard. Promise me that you will pay more attention to your health and safety while you are in Zhong Hai, particularly when you are driving. Is Sister going to get her driver's license soon? When she does, you better let her drive. I do not trust your driving skills, Mom. Sooner or later you will have an accident! "

"Okay, okay, since when did you learn to preach to your mother? Anyways, I have to go. I have already wired some money to your account but try not to waste it!" Wang Xiaoyun hung up the phone.

Chen Fan knew that although his mother was a resourceful and talented businesswoman, she was not the most detailed and meticulous person. Without the help of his sister An Ya, her company would be plagued by minor mishaps and mistakes.

The thought of his sister An Ya brought another bout of pain to his heart.

Aside from Xiao Qiong, his sister and his mother were the two other greatest regrets of in his previous life.

"I owe her a big one, and I don't even know how to make it up to her." Chen Fan kept his silence; after all, how could he assign a value to familial ties.

As Chen Fan was engrossed in his reflection of his past life, the bus arrived at the destination.

Looking at the flood of people passing by him at the bus terminal, reality finally hit him. He was back; he was seventeen years old, younger, and better than he ever had been.

"Another life, another story." Chen Fan cracked a smile, and then he followed the crowd to the exit.

Meanwhile, outside of the Chu Zhou City bus terminal, something had caught the crowd's attention: an imported red Audi-A6.

This car's worth was seven hundred thousand yuan in 2007. It was no doubt a rare sight of luxury in the street of Chu Zhou City. However, the car was not what the public was gawking at; it was the two women standing right in front of it.

The older one looked like she was in her thirties; she had a beautiful face and was wearing a black dress tailored to her curves, a formal white shirt, and a pair of high heels. No doubt she was an elite-class woman with a white-collar job.

The younger one was no older than 16; she was tall and was as beautiful as the older woman if not more so.

They were Auntie Tang and her daughter, Jiang Churan. Jiang Churan surveyed the exit of the bus terminal with a frown.

"Mom, when will he be here, do you want to call him?" Jiang Churan asked impatiently.

"We have only been waiting for ten minutes." Auntie Tang refuted.

Chen Fan's mother had been her best friend in Chu Zhou City, and she could not let her down. Wang Xiaoyun trusted her, and naturally, she had to do her best to look after the child.

"Chen Fan is a very good child. Be nice to him! You two are going to be schoolmates, so I hope you will get along. This is the first time he's leaving his county, so he is not familiar with life in the city. You need to take care of him." Auntie Tang said.

"I know... I know, Mom! This is the thirteenth time you have told me the exact same thing!" Jiang Churan complained.

Because of the stupid country boy, she thought she had to waste her entire afternoon outside of this stupid bus station under the stupid sun. She could have been spending

time with her friends at the Starbucks with a cup of pumpkin spice latte in her hand right now; but no, she had to be here and be miserable.

What's worse; she had noticed the way her mother had mentioned his name to her: she was trying to set her up with that boy. "Well, over my dead body!" Jian Churan thought to herself.

Suddenly, she heard a voice calling out to her mother.

"Sorry for keeping you waiting, Auntie Tang." The boy politely greeted her mother with a gentle smile.

"Is this Chen Fan?" Jian Churan quietly regarded the boy from head to toe while standing behind her mother.

He was of average height, 5'7" if not less, the same height as she was in her flats.

His look was.... pedestrian at best, and his taste in fashion was definitely questionable.

She shook her head slightly. "He is overrated, not nearly as cool as Li Yichen."

Li Yichen was her classmate, president of the school's student council and the son of the deputy mayor of Chu Zhou City.

Li Yichen got both the good looks and a good family. He was one of the pursuers of Jiang Churan, one that Jiang Churan actually liked. The two were already regarded as a couple on campus.

Auntie Tang smiled at Chen Fan. She was very pleased with Chen Fan's courtesy.

"Xiao Fan, this is my daughter Jiang Churan."

"She will start her last year of high school next semester, and you will be schoolmates. She is three months younger than you. You can call her Ran-ran, make sure that you look after her for me at school, will you?"

Chen Fan nodded and smiled. "Don't worry, Auntie Tang, I will treat her like my own sister."

Afterward, he turned around to look at the girl who he had liked, hated, and eventually forgotten about in his past life.

Her name was Jiang Churan.

She was not only Auntie Tang's daughter, but also his high school classmate and the first girl that he had liked.

Chen Fan reminded himself that the year was 2007, before the real-estate boom and her mother's sudden rise to power. Therefore, in the eyes of the mother-daughter pair, he was just a country boy.

"That was the first time I left the backwater county to a prosperous city. I was young and foolish. How could I not fall for an upper-class beauty such as Jiang Churan?"

The flashback made Chen Fan lighthearted. What a foolish boy he had been!

He should have known better. There was no way that Jian Churan, the princess who was born with a silver spoon in her mouth would have had any feelings for him. Chen Fan shook his head.

"I remembered that she eventually fell in love with the most popular boy at that time, Li Yichen, the son of the deputy mayor of Chu Zhou City. Later, the two of them went to Zhong Hai University together and started officially dating each other. I had been quite devastated by that development."

Chen Fan was no longer the boy he had been five hundred years ago. What would he do this time? Would he make a proper closure to this secret infatuation?

Chen Fan took the initiative and reached out a hand. "Hello, my name is Chen Fan, from Si Shui County. We will be classmates in the future. Let me know if you ever need any help!"

Although Jiang Churan had hurt him once, he had made a promise to Auntie Tang that he would protect her.

Jiang Churan had to admit that although the boy was not handsome by a long chalk, he was not entirely an eyesore. The features on his face could even be pleasing to her eyes, depending on the angle she looked at them.

"Unfortunately, his family was too poor; we could be friends at best." Jiang Churan lamented in her mind as she shook Chen Fan's hand.

"Very well; I will take you up on it." Jiang Churan said, and then her lips thinned into a smile.

Her father was a high-ranking government official, and her mother ran a million-yuan company. She had never thought that she would ever need any help from Chen Fan.

Auntie Tang put in, "Get into the car, we will go to your new place and drop off the luggage first. Then we will go to my house for lunch. Where I will introduce you to your uncle."

"Okay." Chen Fan nodded with a smile.

After getting into the vehicle, they headed toward Chen Fan's new house in the Lakeside Community.

This was a mid-range residential property in the Chu Zhou City. The scenery was beautiful as it was surrounded by trees and was right next to Yangui Lake. It was also not far from the Ivy League High School where Chen Fan would be studying. Chen Fan was led to a large furnished one bedroom suite. It came with air conditioning, hot water, bathtub, TV, sofa, and a refrigerator. It was evident that Auntie Tang had spent a lot of time preparing for his stay in the city.

"Thank you, Auntie Tang, for all of this," Chen Fan said sincerely. Auntie Tang was one of the few people who had been genuinely nice to him.

She was a business partner of his mother, Wang Xiaoyun. She ran an architectural design company and was considered a successful woman.

Worried about her son's low grades, Chen Fan's mother sent him to the best private high school in the City of Chu Zhou: the Ivy League High School and Auntie Tang had been taking care of him ever since. Not only had she helped him with accommodations, but she had also packed him lunch from time to time.

Looking back on his past life, Auntie Tang had always been there looking out for him.

"You are too polite. Your mother has entrusted you to me so that I will take good care of you. Plus, I had always wanted a son," Auntie Tang said with a smile.

"Thank you." Chen Fan nodded, and he was ready to repay Auntie Tang's loving care in his past life.

Auntie Tang felt the sincerity in his words, and she was even more impressed by the boy. Compared to that cocky city boy, Li Yichen, Auntie Tang preferred Chen Fan as a son-in-law. Money and power were not the key to a happy marriage; honesty and integrity were.

After a while, they drove out of the Lakeside Community, and towards the Tang family residence.

Jiang Churan and Chen Fan were sitting side by side in the back seat. They only exchanged a few words before the girl completely lost interest in Chen Fan. She was out of his league. None of them spoke a word to each other, dragging out the silence. Chen Fan eventually put on a tired look and rested his head against the window and pretended to be sleeping.

Although Chen Fan had given her a good impression during their first meeting, she didn't like to talk to people who were less popular than her, especially when the boy was ignoring her in the first place.

She knew the likes of him: pretending he was not interested, thinking that he could make her feel jealous. She had seen too many boys play that trick on her, but none had succeeded.

However, Chen Fan was not even remotely interested in her, much less in the mood of playing tricks. His mind was occupied by his cultivation.

Chapter 3: Levels Of Cultivation

For Chen Fan, the most important thing at the moment was to regain his power.

The progression of cultivation was divided into eight levels:

Qi Refinement, Connate, Golden Core, Nascent Soul, Soul Formation, Void, Reunion, and Tribulation.

Although his teacher, Cangqin the Immortal Cultivator had lived for eight hundred and forty thousand years, he had just reached the seventh level. Once the cultivator reached the seventh level, he was granted the title “True Immortal” and could live up to a hundred thousand years.

In this universe, a seventh level “True Immortal” would be revered as the embodiment of power and invincibility. Their powers would allow them to crush the stars, swallow the sun, and even create another dimension beyond space and time.

In the past five hundred years, Chen Fan had reached the eighth level: Tribulation, surpassing his teacher and earned the title of the: “Celestial Lord.”

However, Tribulation was too far away and too much for Chen Fan to worry about right now.

“I came back to the Earth once during my cultivation. At that time, the Earth’s Spirit Qi was completely exhausted, and it was no longer suitable for the cultivators to live.” Compared to the earth, the realm of “Cangming”—an alternative universe created by his teacher Cangqin—was a much better place for cultivators to harness energy. Chen Fan reflected his last visit to Earth as he started to sense the Qi surroundings him right now.

The last time he returned to the Earth, it would be more than a hundred years later in this current timeline, and by that time, he would already be a successful cultivator.

He ferried across billions of realms that separated him from the Earth in order to reach his home town, but he was disappointed in the end. The earth was no longer the same place as he remembered. The old national-state system had fallen apart, and the

humans had formed the Earth Federation. After the humans colonized Mars, they stepped out of the solar system and entered the era of interstellar traveling.

Chen Fan had continued to live on the earth for another twenty years, and he did not sense the presence of any other cultivators.

“The Spirit Qi in this world right now was slightly more available than that of a hundred years later, but it was by no means abundant.” He shook his head silently. “Even if there is a cultivator, they will be at level two at the most.”

“I am afraid that I am still the only cultivator on earth.”

Chen Fan knew very well what it meant. It meant that as long as he could regain a fraction of his power, he could lord over this world with ease. Chen Fan also knew that he didn’t need advanced technology in order to reach his goals; he only needed to reach level two in his cultivation.

Without reaching level two, one can not even call himself a “cultivator.”

With the wealth of knowledge he had accumulated over the five hundred years, Chen Fan wagered that it would take him only a few years to reach that stage.

“The Spirit Qi is quite inconsistent around here; I better find a place with a stronger presence of Qi to help my cultivation.”

“If I can locate a numinous treasure, I will be sure to break through the second level in under three years.”

The thought of acquiring a numinous treasure amused Chen Fan, “What am I thinking? With such meager amount of Qi on the earth, there wouldn’t be any herbs left for me much less numinous treasures.”

As Chen Fan mulled over his predicament, the vehicle had pulled over to Auntie Tang’s house.

Chen Fan’s accommodation was located at the edge of downtown. Facing the enormous Yangui Lake, it was considered a high-quality mid-range property in the Chu Zhou City. On the other hand, the Tangs lived in a suburban development in Yunshan District, which was only a few minutes drive from Chen Fan’s place.

The car followed a highway that hugged the lake, and it eventually led them to the foot of the Yunwu Mountain. Chen Fanyi saw the name of the suburb development:

Dragon’s View Garden.

Chen Fan recalled that the Dragon's View Garden was a high-end residential development in the Chu Zhou City. A small bungalow in this area would cost as much as two million even before the real estate boom.

Auntie Tang lowered the rear view mirror and saw fascination in Chen Fan's eyes.

"The Yunwu mountain was the most famous landmark here in the Chu Zhou City other than the Yangui Lake. The Dragon's View was only the mid-tier development around this area. Maybe later we will go further into the mountain, and I will show you some villas. They make our house look like a shed in their backyard. You should come to visit us early in the morning too; the entire mountain will be shrouded in mist, hence its name, 'Yun-wu': cloudy-mist."

There was a hint of envy in Auntie Tang's voice while she spoke about those villas high up in the mountains.

"Up there, the cheapest house cost more than ten million. It was developed by the richest man in Chu Zhou City and only his friends and the billionaires from the south could afford those properties. I could probably buy only a kitchenette even if I sold my company," Auntie Tang shook her head and then sighed.

"The richest man in Chu Zhou City... The Shen family?" Chen Fan thought.

"Your house looks very big in my opinion. Our family lived in a 100-square-meter home in our county; it was a government subsidized property."

Chen Fan paused and then said, "If auntie really likes those houses, I will buy you a few of them once I start to make money. I will make sure you can wake up every day to look down at the sea of cloudy mists beneath you."

What was a villa to someone who could have the entire universe? He would have whatever his heart desired as soon as he reached level two.

Auntie Tang was pleased by Chen Fan's words. She said, "Very well, I will take you up on it! Tell your mother to come live with me. To hell with her real estate company! Your mother and sister are two brave souls, trying to make a living in the metropolis where they have no one to turn to. If she retires now, we can go shopping together, or go to the spa if we really run out of things to do. What a life that will be, eh?"

Jiang Churan listened to the conversation, and she was not very impressed by what she heard.

Not even the richest classmate she knew could have promised to buy a villa up in the mountains as a gift. Everyone knew that only the richest of the rich could afford living up there.

“It seems that he is just like the others, full of empty talk and no real action.”

She was slightly disappointed at Chen Fan. She had thought that this boy from the countryside would be different than city boys, but it seemed that she was wrong.

The decoration in Auntie Tang’s home was elegant, in style, and exquisite in their craftsmanship. From the paintings on the wall to the blue-white porcelain vase on the table, it was evident that the Tang family was not only wealthy but also well-educated and had good taste in fine arts.

After entering the hall, Chen Fan saw a middle-aged man sitting on the sofa, wearing a pair of black rimmed glasses. He was watching the news on Tv.

He was Jiang Churan’s father, Jiang Haishan!

He was the deputy director of the Chu Zhou City. Although his rank was not high, he was close to Chu Zhou City’s power center.

Chen Fan bowed to him, and Jiang Haishan nodded absently.

“Come and grab a seat. Ran-ran, why don’t you go to the kitchen and make some tea for your dad and our guest? Can you guys wait a few minutes for dinner? I need to heat up some dishes.” Auntie Tang spoke as she entered the kitchen.

Jiang Churan nodded and took out a box of purple clay tea set made by a renowned artist from the Town of Yixin.

Chen Fan was pleasantly surprised by Jiang Churan’s tea-making techniques; her movement was fluid and smooth like flowing water while her focus on the craft didn’t allow a single drop to be spilled. It was evident that she had trained under a skilled teacher—a detail that Chen Fan did not notice in his previous life.

Jiang Haishan’s eyes were glued to the TV, and he didn’t turn around to face the guest until the news was over.

“How is your father, Reeve Chen doing? The last time I met him was at a government meeting six months ago.”

“He is doing well. Thank you for asking.” Chen Fan said politely.

Chen Fan’s father was the deputy magistrate of the Si Shui County, and although his rank was similar to that of Jiang Haishan, his jurisdiction was a remote county instead of a bustling city.

Jiang Haishan nodded, “Your father is young and full of potential. His proposal, the “Sustainable Development of County Economy and the Selection and Application of

Environmental Protection Policies,” was praised by the mayor. The mayor said that your father has an international perspective, and he agreed with your father that the future economic development is inseparable from environmental protection.”

Chen Fan nodded with a blank smile. Why would he think that a high school boy would be interested in boring politics? If Chen Fan could have understood half of what Jiang Haishan had just spilled out from his mouth, he wouldn't have bankrupted his mother's company.

Seeing that Chen Fan was not interested in he said, Jiang Haishan frowned slightly and then changed the topic.

“I have heard from your auntie that your mother's real estate company in Zhong Hai City is developing very fast. Many experts are predicting that the country's property market will grow substantially next year. Your mother has chosen a good field.”

Chen Fan smiled and said, “My mother's company was insignificant compared to that of Auntie Tang.”

Jiang Haishan shook his head. “You think too highly of her. Her company hired only a dozen people, earning merely hundreds of thousands a year. How would that compare to your mother's corporation.”

Chen Fan hurried a humble reply, “I am not being modest at all. My mother had only a few people working under her, and that's all the help she gets. She had to run between the contractors and the developers and deal with endless paperwork. It's a hard job with not that much money.”

“Oh?” Jiang Haishan frowned.

What Chen Fan had told him was drastically different than what he had heard from his wife. Judging by his first impression of the boy, Jiang Haishan was convinced that Chen Fan was not lying. Therefore, he wagered that the rumors about Chen Fan's mother he had heard before were exaggerated.

Chen Fan's description of the company sounded more realistic, as well. It was started by a woman and her daughter in a place where they knew no one and had no connections. Building up a real estate empire so quickly seemed too good to be true regardless of how hard the mother-daughter pair had worked.

So thinking, the smile on Jiang Haishan's face faded away slowly.

“How are your grades?” Jiang Haishan asked.

Chen Fan smiled and said, "I was the top five hundred in our county, and I have heard that your daughter ranked in the top fifty at the school. I think I will need her help at school."

Si Shui County had the lowest education ranking among all counties under the Chu Zhou City government. Without being in the top ten in the Si Shui County, Chen Fan had no chance in entering even a second-tier university, much less a top-tier.

Jiang Haishan's brow furrowed even deeper after hearing Chen Fan's answer; the remaining traces of a smile on his face evaporated completely.

"Your mother had sent you to Chu Zhou City to study, not for fun. Your family can only help you for a while, but not forever. If you want to be successful, you have to rely on yourself. Education is a stepping stone, no matter which field you are in."

Chen Fan was caught off guard by Jiang Haishan's sudden outburst. He erased the smile he was wearing and answered, "You are right, Uncle Jiang."

Although achieving high academic standing was not Chen Fan's highest priority, once he advanced in his cultivation, getting into a top-tier university should be a piece of cake.

After exchanged a few more words with Chen Fan, Jiang Haishan was disappointed by the boy's lack of knowledge and ambition. He could not help but secretly shake his head in disappointment. It was evident that what his wife had told him about the boy was simply not true.

He had also met the son of the deputy mayor and was very impressed by his appearance as well as his wealth of knowledge in economics and politics. Chen Fan failed to measure up to his most basic requirement for a future son in law.

It seems like I have a lot to talk to discuss with my wife, Jiang Haishan lamented in his mind.

He knew his wife wanted to set up his daughter with the son of her best friend. He didn't protest her plan at first, but after meeting Chen Fan for the first time, he realized that he had to weigh-in.

My daughter would not fall for him anyway, Jiang Haishan thought. He was confident in his daughter's judgment.

Chapter 4: Void Mortal Refinement

This meal Chen Fan had shared with the Jiang family was not unpleasant by any stretch of the imagination. Jiang family strictly followed the traditional table manners, which meant no chattering while eating.

However, Chen Fan didn't mind the silence. His mind had already veered off to the memories of his past life.

"It's been a while since I had a meal prepared by Auntie Tang," he thought wistfully.

Auntie Tang's marriage was not perfect, particularly later in her life when Jiang Haishan had secured a prominent position in the government. Mired in public events, he rarely came home, and therefore the couple slowly drifted apart.

Chen Fan remembered that when he was poor and down on his luck, he had to mooch off Auntie Tang. For him, Auntie Tang's dishes were the best meals he ever had.

"What a pity. Auntie was good looking and had superb cooking skills; it was a shame that she got married to a husband whose only pursuit was power." Chen Fan lamented in his mind.

While bustling about between the kitchen and the dining room, Auntie Tang managed to pause for a minute and spoke to Chen Fan, "Fan, it's your first time visiting Chu Zhou City, I will ask Ran-ran to take you to go to the city center to buy some toiletries and groceries. I doubt you will have everything you need at your rental house."

"Thank you." Chen Fan accepted the offer without consulting Jiang Churan.

Jiang Churan nodded with an annoyed face. She might agree to the task now, but as soon as she walked out of the house, she would ditch the boy right away.

Dinner was over Chen Fan bid farewell to Auntie Tang with a smile.

As soon as Chen Fan walked out of the house with Jiang Churan, the smile on the girl's face evaporated into thin air.

Without even looking at Chen Fan, she said coldly, "I still have something to do, you can go shopping on your own, can't you?"

She paused a second and then she continued, "You know how to get a taxi in the city, right?" Her voice was laced with annoyance. She thought Chen Fan would play dumb and insist on her coming along with him; but to her surprise, she watched as the boy nodded and then said, "Of course I do."

She didn't turn around until Chen Fan's image disappeared behind a row of willow trees. Guilt slowly crept into her heart, and she had the urge to catch up with the boy and help him. However, the thought of the huge difference in all aspects of their lives made her

think better of her actions. They were not meant to be together, the sooner she made it clear to him, the better for both of them.

“Well, that was fast. Did you even go with him?” Auntie Tang asked her daughter curiously as soon as the latter stepped into the house again.

Still grappling with guilt, Jiang Churan said quietly, “He said that he could do it alone.”

She then heard her father snorted, “I will not let my daughter hang out with such a loser anyway.”

Jiang Haishan’s career had hit a glass ceiling. In order to be promoted even further, he would require strong support from those who have significant political clout, such as deputy mayor Li.

Luckily for Jiang Haishan, the son of the deputy mayor was not only his daughter’s classmate, but he also seemed to be very interested in Jiang Churan. The deputy minister had even alluded to a potential marriage on multiple occasions. Although it was an opportunity that he couldn’t pass up, Jiang Haishan couldn’t agree to the proposal so easily, particularly when his daughter was still so young. It would be a sign of desperation if he did.

Giving the illustrious achievement of Chen Fan’s mother, Jiang Haishan, initially had high hopes for the boy. However, after meeting with Chen Fan, he conceded that the reality was far from what he had hoped for. Li Yichen, the mayor’s son was a much more suitable candidate for his daughter.

He jerked his head towards the kitchen and grumbled on, “Your daughter is still young, don’t just bring anyone to our home. She needs to focus on study.”

Auntie Tang frowned deeply and rushed out of the kitchen. “Excuse you? She is my daughter, and this is MY house. I can bring whomever I want to here.”

Seeing her parents were at it again, Jiang Churan heaved a sigh and went straight to her room. It could have been a nice and quiet evening, but that country boy had spoiled everything.

Meanwhile, Chen Fan had already made his way down to the lake. He wasn’t bothered at all by the unpleasant encounter with the father and daughter pair; they meant nothing to him, and he had a much bigger fish to fry.

As he walked along the path that hugged the lake shore, he sensed the ebbs and flows of energy around him very carefully.

The Qi spirit was not static. It flowed like water and always headed toward the area with a lower Qi potential. On very rare occasions, the Qi would pool together, forming what

the cultivators would call a Numinous Abode. Wherever there was sea, there would be a desert; some places hopelessly lacked Qi.

After having followed the path for a few miles, Chen Fan finally stopped.

“This is it. I think I will have to brave the depths of the Yunwu Mountain if I want to find an even better spot.” He looked around and found out he was in a patch of willow trees. Despite it being a hot summer evening, he felt the cool breezes against his bare skin, and it was quite comfortable.

Chen Fan found a big gnarly willow tree, and sat cross-legged, facing the Yanhui Lake.

Nestled beside the developed urban spaces, Yangui Lake, the “Lake of Returning Swallows” was the largest lake in Chu Zhou City. Many residential houses, commercial buildings, and hotels were built around the Lake. Thanks to the abundance of water provided by the lake, Chu Zhou City, a city in the northern part of the province, also had a bit of southern charm.

Sitting under the willow tree, Chen Fan let the breeze comb through his hair as he relished the refreshing cool air from the lake.

The cultivation progression was divided into eight stages: Qi Refinement, Connate Spirit, Golden Core, Nascent Soul, Soul Formation, Void Returning, Dao Reunion, and Tribulation. Within each stage were sub-levels. The first stage, for example, consisted of three sublevels: Foundation Establishment, Ethereal Enlightenment, and Divine Sea.

As the name suggests, the first sub-level was about building a solid foundation from which all the other cultivation stages were developed upon. Once completed, the cultivator would have immense strength, speed, and agility. It was a transitional period when the cultivator reaches beyond the limits of the human body. The cultivation should also have the ability to gather some degree of arcane force to use minor spells.

The next two sub-levels were usually combined together and were called the Immortal Enlightenment phase. Once the cultivator had completed both levels, he or she could use even more powerful spells and arts. They could call upon the natural elements such as dirt to turn it into golems who would fight to the death. In the eyes of an ordinary human, these cultivators were no different than a god, although they were technically not gods by a long chalk.

After the cultivator had breached the first stage, he or she would enter the stage called connate, during which one could ride on the back of the wind to wherever he wanted to and live more than five hundred years. However, even with those magical powers, they were still far from being immortals.

“It’s too early for me to think about Connate. I should start by focusing on the Foundation Establishment for now.”

“What kind of art should I use to rebuild my foundation?” Chen Fan asked himself.

“The reason why my cultivation had failed during the tribulation was not only the mental demons but also my weak foundation.” Chen Fan nodded as he reflected on his past cultivation.

“Ignoring all the pretenses and excuses, my downfall was in my inability to complete each stage to perfection. This time I need to learn my lesson and build each and every stage as firmly as possible.” The thought of his slip up during the most critical moment of his cultivation made Chen Fan heave a sigh of regret.

Nonetheless, there were still many things that Chen Fan should feel grateful for. For one, he was miraculously given another chance to start all over again.

The Foundation Establishment stage was the first stage of the cultivation; it was arguably the most important one as well. In order to not repeat his mistake, Chen Fan was resolved to take his time and perfect this stage.

“I have collected all kinds of secret arts and magical spells in the past five hundred years. In my collection, the arts of building the foundation alone amounted to thirteen thousand three hundred and six different pieces. In the last iteration of my life, I have used the art of Foundation Establishment from the True Martial celestial sect. It was simple and straightforward; however, I need something more powerful to achieve perfection.”

He had formulated a plan and decided on the art in his mind ever since he was in Auntie Tang’s car.

“I will use the Grand Dao Sect’s Art of Void Mortal Refinement!”

The Sect of the Grand Dao was one of the most prominent sects in the realm of cultivation. Although the sect had never sired any heroic grandmasters, they were extolled for their unique art of Foundation Establishment.

Once it was mastered, the art would help the cultivator to harness much more power than those who used other arts.

“Inclusiveness was not only the key in mastering this art, but it was also important for me to cultivate with such limited Qi resources. The Qi on earth is drying up, and I need to scrape any useful resources that I could find, including any medicinal herbs, numinous treasures and even unsavory elements such as the malice Qi and death Qi. There would be no art more suitable than the Art of Void Mortal Refinement given the circumstances.”

The so-called Malice Qi, Yin Qi or Death Qi were not that much different than the bread and butter of cultivation: Spirit Qi. They were all an extension of the universe itself, a reflection of one or two of its countless facets.

That being said, the spirit Qi was much readily available on a planet, and it was easier to be bend into whatever shapes or forms the cultivator desired. The other forms of Qi required specific dharma arts to be harnessed. Without the aid of some very special arts, an ordinary cultivator wouldn't be able to harness all forms of Qi until they had reached the Golden Core stage.

However, with the special ability of the Void Mortal Refinement art, Chen Fan should be able to harness Qi from all sources from the very beginning.

The word "void" in its name referred to the vast universe. The boundless space contained an unimaginable amount of Qi from various sources, all of which could be harnessed using this unique art. whether it is the Qi inside the core of a star or the Qi of demonic origin deep underground; the art could handle them all.

The motto of the Grand Dao sect also reflected their all-encompassing spirit well, "I am nothing and everything."

"What a shame. Despite their great ambition of uniting all forms of Qi into one, the task was ultimately proven to be too much for the sect members with mediocre talents."

Chen Fan shook his head and heaved a sigh. However ambitious the Grand Dao sect was, the advanced level cultivation required specialization instead of diversification. The True Martial celestial sect was able to rise to the top rank of all sects thanks to its dedication to only one or two arts.

Chen Fan gathered himself and started the Void Mortal Refinement.

The art was not only useful in harnessing Qi but was also effective in straightening one's flesh. It was a good way to improve both internal and external prowess.

As he gradually progressed with the cultivation, his body seemed to become a black hole that sucked various Qi and energies into him. The air around Chen Fan was soon devoid of any life, so much so that even the breezy wind became stifled.

He was so engrossed in his cultivation that he nearly forgot the passage of time. The moon rose and fell, and before he knew it, it was a brand new day.

As the sun rose above the placid lake, Chen Fan suddenly opened his mouth as a white light streamed out from it. The light shot up a few dozen meters into the air, piercing the morning air as a sharp knife would to a fish belly. The strange white light didn't disappear until it had hovered above Chen Fan for another few minutes.

Chapter 5: Martial Arts Masters

Chen Fan slowly opened his eyes when his cultivation was finally done. If anyone had been paying attention to him, they would find the boy's eyes shone like a pair of light bulbs. Slowly, the light in Chen Fan eyes dimmed.

"What an amazing art! Although this is the first time I attempted to cultivate, I am already well into the first sub-level. At this rate, I should be able to reach the Ethereal Enlightenment within six months!" Chen Fan exclaimed in his mind.

The fast rate of progress in an environment so deprived of qi had surprised him. Although he was convinced that it had something to do with his past life's cultivation experience, he wagered that the unique art had helped too.

Chen Fan picked himself up and shook his body, and the energy within his system made a continuous popping sound like popping popcorns.

He closed his fingers and felt his body was bursting with energy.

He turned around and punched the willow tree behind him. The old willow tree trembled as countless willow leaves fell to the ground.

Chen Fan removed his fist from the tree, and he saw that his punch had left a three-inch deep impression on the willow tree bark.

This willow tree had lived over hundreds of years, and the age had turned its bark extremely hard. If such a punch landed on a mortal, there would be a hole wherever it landed.

This was the result from his first day of cultivation; it wouldn't be long before he would be able to sever the tree trunk with one blow. Moreover, he did not use any arcane forces in that punch but relied only on the power of his body.

Thus it was, the art of Void Mortal Refinement not only improved his energy but also significantly elevated his strength. He was already half as strong as a superman after only one night of cultivation.

However, Chen Fan shook his head in disappointment. Compared to the power that he used to wield, the strength in this punch was pathetic.

"I have a long way to go." He sighed. He looked up and noticed the nascent sun shining above the surface of the lake. He realized that he had been sitting there for a whole night. To his surprise, he was not at all tired.

Although he didn't succumb to exhaustion, he felt hunger was claiming him. He patted his belly and decided that it was time to eat.

As soon as he was out of the willow trees, he saw three people walking toward him.

There was a woman in a white exercise suit walking beside an elderly man in a traditional Chinese suit. Trailing behind the two was a young man with a fit body and pair of sharp eyes.

The girl of the group pulled her hair in a ponytail; her beautiful face held a cold and distant expression. She had a pair of perky bosom and a tall body. She was as attractive as Jiang Churan if not more thanks to her well-defined features.

Chen Fan was still immersed in the joy of his achievement, and therefore, he didn't think too much of this encounter. He passed the three strangers without even sparing them a glance.

However, three stranger had definitely noticed him.

The young man glued his eyes on Chen Fan and didn't look away until Chen Fan had disappeared at the end of the walking path. Then and only then, he turned his head and looked at the old man in the traditional outfit, and said something.

The old man shook his head in disagreement, " It can't be. He is probably just a morning, jogger."

After returning to his rented home at the lakeside community, Chen Fan found a breakfast stall and ate a big meal. Then he went to the supermarket and bought some groceries. He managed to find a Chinese medicine shop and ordered some herbal medicines. When he got home from the medicine shop, it was already noon.

He soon received a phone call from Auntie Tang who invited him over for lunch at her house.

He wanted to go, but the thought of seeing the cold faces of Jiang Haishan and Jiang Churan made him think better of it. He improvised an excuse and told Auntie Tang that he would have to have lunch by himself.

After hanging up the phone, Chen Fan suddenly reckoned that his parents had not given him a phone call yet. What kind of parents are they? Sending their son away to a new place and didn't even care to make a phone call?

"Maybe Auntie Tang was my real parent." Chen Fan shook his head in dismay.

Soon, the courier knocked on his door, the medicine he had ordered has arrived.

Cultivation without any help was possible, but it would be a very slow process. Things like herbal medicine and numinous treasure would greatly improve a cultivator's rate of advancement. Although the herb medicines on the earth were extremely low in quality, it was better than nothing.

To prepare these herbs, he didn't need any medicine barrels, nor did he need to boil them for seventy-two hours as suggested by the apothecary at the drugstore.

He simply drew a circle directly on the ground, then spread the medicine around and inside the circle. Then he stepped into the circle and initiated the art that he knew to harness qi from herbs.

"Spirit Robbing Array!"

This was the most basic array formation that the cultivator could summon.

The herbs he had scattered around him started to dance around on the ground until they threw themselves at Chen Fan.

As the name of the array suggested, the technique was used to draw out the spirit qi from the herbs and fuse them with the caster's system. This was an easy spell to cast, but extremely effective. It could not only draw out the qi in common herbs but also that in numinous treasures.

The cultivators had been studying and developing the cultivation techniques over millions of years, and therefore no longer did they need to follow the cumbersome methods of cultivation described in Wuxia novels. This was the era of Xianxia!

The effectiveness of the array, to a large extent, depends on the experience of the cultivator. In Chen Fan's past life, he had been widely regarded as a great master in using arrays.

Eyes closed, Chen Fan continued harnessing qi in the herbs for many hours. When he finally opened his eyes, it was already late evening.

"Today's cultivation was even more effective than last night's effort. Unfortunately, the effect wouldn't last long." Chen Fan frowned. "Why the heck are these herbs so freaking expensive? I have already spent most of the money my mother had given me; I can't afford another round of harnessing anymore."

"It seems that I will have to go to the same place that I had spent last night." Chen Fan had never thought that money—the quintessential of worldly burden—would become so essential in his cultivation.

"Why is my mother so stingy? It's not like she is poor!" He thought resentfully.

He went to bed and slept until five in the morning. As soon as he got out of his bed, he went straight to that old gnarly willow tree by the lake.

When Chen Fan finally arrived, he was surprised to find someone else had already taken his spot under the tree.

It was that same girl with the ponytail that he had met yesterday, and she was practicing martial arts under the tree. Soon, Chen Fan noticed that she was not alone. The old man stood behind the tree and watched over the girl's practice. From time to time, he would stop the girl to offer some advice and guidance.

The sharp-eyed young man was sitting inside of a black jeep-like vehicle, his eyes constantly scanning the surroundings with a great measure of vigilance.

Wasn't that the same group of strangers he had met yesterday morning?

Unable to contain his curiosity, Chen Fan approached the group. The old man graced him a glance and then returned his attention to the girl next to him.

Chen Fan was in a hurry yesterday, so he wasn't able to take a good look at the girl, but after observing the girl for a while today, he was shocked by what he found.

In addition to the girl's exquisite face and tenacious body, she carried an almost heroine-like quality in every single movement. Even the simple act of lifting an arm seemed like a declaration of victory, and her powerful roundhouse kicks a righteous ultimatum to her enemy.

However, her appearance wasn't what surprised Chen Fan. It was what he saw inside of her: arcane energy.

"Is she also a cultivator?" Chen Fan was caught by surprise as he did not expect to meet another cultivator on Earth.

"No..." upon a closer look, Chen Fan found out that something was amiss about the energy inside of her. "It was too weak and too... simple. Probably isn't even strong enough to summon the simplest spell."

As Chen Fan continued his observation, he noticed the unique shirt the girl was wearing, as well as the traditional martial arts suit the old man was in; he finally put the two and two together.

"Is that the so-called 'internal energy' inside of her?"

Chen Fan grew up watching Wuxia shows on TV, and therefore he had heard plenty of high tales about Gongfu and Internal energy. He always thought those high tales and legends were exactly what they were: high tales and legends, until now.

He wagered that the so-called internal energy was a much weaker form of the arcane energy inside of the cultivators. Although Chen Fan was at the earliest stage of his cultivation, he would already be the most deadly Martial Artist in the realm of Wuxia.

The internal force inside of the girl was far inferior to the arcane dharma force inside of even the most incompetent cultivator. The difference in the two forms of energy was much like that of the diesel and rocket fuels, where Diesel could only be used to fuel trucks, but rocket fuel could be used to propel a rocket into space. They were both fuels, but one provided far more energy than the other.

In addition, a cultivator could harness the power in the universe to command powerful spells and create miraculous numinous treasures. All of those were way beyond the reach of a martial artist.

After Chen Fan's curiosities were satisfied, he gathered himself and continued watching the girl's practice.

From time to time, he would shake his head disapprovingly.

The girl had noticed Chen Fan's criticism, and it didn't sit well with her. She paused and asked hotly, "What are you staring at? Do you even understand what this is?"

Chapter 6: A Leaf Blade

Chapter 6: A Leaf Blade

"Do I?" Chen Fan laughed in his mind.

He was not only the Celestial Lord but also the embodiment of martial spirit even among the cultivators.

Let it be the basic cultivation techniques or the art of killing and warfare; there was nothing that he did not have a knack for. As the grand master of the True Martial Immortal Sect, he was well versed in all kind of unarmed close quarter combat techniques. The girl's shambling forms and unrefined skills were laughable in his eyes.

Even the True Martial Sect's entry-level technique, the "True Martial thirty-six Sanshou forms" was much more sophisticated than what the girl had used. Not to mention that the "True Martial's thirty-six Sanshou forms" was only used among servants of the True Martial lords and the lowest cast of disciples. Any official member of the sect had long since forsaken the outdated technique.

Nonetheless, Chen Fan did not want to argue with her, nor did he want to reveal his identity as a cultivator, so he apologized readily, "I am afraid I don't fully understand your moves. I am sorry. I shook my head because I was thinking of something else."

"Then buzz off and stop staring at—" The girl was cut short by the elderly man, "Zi Qing, enough."

"Okay, Grandpa." Zi, Qing replied. She managed to shoot Chen Fan a searing glance before she walked back to her grandpa.

Chen Fan glanced at the old man and found out that he, too, possessed the internal energy, and he was much more powerful than the girl.

Chen Fan wagered that the amount of power in the old man was on par with that of a cultivator halfway through the Foundation Establishment phase. In other words, his power was above that of Chen Fan, at least for now. Meanwhile, he registered that the power of the girl was not even near that of a cultivator who had just started the first sub-level.

That being said, Chen Fan conceded that his comparison was flawed since he was comparing apple to oranges. An even better analogy for the cultivator and martial artist were knife and tofu. However large and firm a piece of tofu was, it would not be able to withstand a single slash of even the duller knife.

Chen Fan was confident that he would be able to defeat the old man even if he had to face ten of him at the same time.

Realizing that there was nothing else to see, Chen Fan found another willow tree, sat cross-legged underneath it and started to cultivate.

His body and mind quickly entered the cultivation state as he initiated the Void Mortal Refinement art. Soon an invisible vacuum devoid of any energy formed around his body.

Chen Fan's strange actions aroused the elderly man's suspicion. He wondered why anyone would wake up this early in the morning, come to the park, and only to fall asleep again under a tree?

"Huh?" After a while, the old man suddenly gasped in surprise.

"What's going on, Grandpa?" Zi Qing asked curiously.

"Look at him carefully, did you see that?." The old man's face hardened.

"See what?" Zi Qing squinted her eyes and failed to see anything extraordinary.

“Pay attention to his breathing.” The old man pressed on.

It wasn't until then that Zi Qing noticed that the boy's chest swell up and down at each breath. It was as if his lungs were two blowers. There were two wisps of white light spurting out of his nostrils, and they writhed and turned like snakes. The two rays of white lights were about the size of a needle, and one wouldn't notice them without looking very hard.

“What is that?” Zi Qing frowned.

“This is a very advanced method of harnessing internal energy. It is said that only some ancient sects of martial arts can do it. This kind of breathing required extremely powerful lungs. The practitioner of this technique is able to dive under the water for a really long time.” The old man said slowly. “I didn't expect that I could see such a powerful martial artist in my lifetime. Gosh! he is so young, too; it's incredible.”

The ponytail girl snorted, “He is just breathing heavily. It's not like he can kill people with his big lungs, Grandpa. It's overrated.”

“You are too young too simple, sometimes naive. ” The old man refuted with a loving voice. “No one could have done that without a few decades of practicing martial arts. I have never seen this technique used in real life, but only heard of it in legends.”

“Is it really that powerful?” Suspicion flashed across Zi Qing's face.

Suddenly, she seemed to remember something, “Hold on a second. If he really is a bad-ass like you said then he did shake his head in disapproval of my practice, didn't he?” Zi Qing paused to mull over her own question.

“What a jerk! He did!” After a while, Zi Qing grunted and then she continued, “I don't care how powerful you think he is, I will test his strength.”

Seeing the eagerness in his granddaughter, the old man heaved a deep sigh.

However, the old man didn't design to stop her. However powerful this young man might be, he and his granddaughter should be safe in his own territory. He had fought many brutal wars during his life, and he scarcely feared death, much less a young man.

The grandfather and granddaughter pair decided to wait for Chen Fan to finish his cultivation. About half an hour later, the boy opened his mouth and spat out a ghostly white glowing gas. This parcel of white gas shot forward a few meters and traced a silvery arch in the air.

“I was right. He is a powerful martial artist!” The old man's face hardened as reality set in.

“Don’t worry grandpa; Brother Qi is here to protect us. Can a martial artist dodge a bullet? I think not.”

Zi Qing has a brave soul; although she was as surprised by the development, she was not afraid.

Unlike her grandfather, she was born with a silver spoon in her mouth. Her prestigious family background had sheltered her from many dangers; she was young and fearless, driven by purely the valor of ignorance.

The young man inside the jeep had been watching the development from inside his car. His hand had reached his waist where his gun rested.

Chen Fan pushed himself up to his feet, and he looked dissatisfied with today’s result of cultivation.

Although the numinous abode he had found under the willow tree was able to aid his cultivation, its effect paled in comparison with that directly absorbing the qi in the herbs.

He turned his head around and was surprised by the pair that lurked behind him all the while.

Seeing that the boy had woken up, the old man smiled and stepped forward to greet Chen Fan:” Greetings, young man. Glad to see another budding martial artist! My name is Wei Fu, May I ask what your name is? Where do you hail from? and may I have the honor to know your teacher’s name?”

“Wei Fu?” The name sounded very familiar to Chen Fan.

But he had seen countless people over the past 500 years, so he doubted he would remember who the old man was.

Seeing the tightened bodies of the two, Chen Fan wagered that the sight of his cultivation had caught their interest.

Chen Fan shook his head, “I am not really a martial artist. You can think of me as a... monk who follows the way of Dao.”

He couldn’t tell them his real identity; even if he did, these two mortals would never understand what cultivation meant.

“A monk? Are you from the Dao Sect?” The old man looked confused. He had never heard any martial artist from the Dao Sect before.

“Grandpa, let’s not waste our time on him any longer. Let me spar with him already,” Zi Qing turned around and shot an icy glance at Chen Fan. “Why did you lie to me earlier? Now show me what you can do!”

“Are you trying to provoke me into a duel?”

No one had shouted taunts at Chen Fan for many centuries, and therefore, the girl’s challenge was a refreshing change for him.

“I’ll be damned! Should I beat up a girl or get beaten up?” Chen Fan thought to himself.

Chen Fan felt he was on the horns of the dilemma, after weighing his options, he decided not to get involved. He gave the girl a big shrug and then said, “I am sorry, but I’m just a monk. We only cultivate internal harmony but never fight with fists and weapons.”

The girl snorted contemptuously. “Bull shit, I saw you sneered at me while I was practicing my forms! Don’t play dumb!” The girl flung back at Chen Fan.

“Young man, what will be the harm in a little spar session? Although my granddaughter was still at the beginner level, she was well under way to master our family’s first technique. I was hoping that with your help, she could advance even faster.” The old man said slowly but firmly.

Despite the old man’s calm voice, his suspicion didn’t recede the slightest. He had given the boy his name, but the latter seemed to have never heard of it before. How could any powerful martial artist not recognize his name?

Chen Fan shook his head and heaved a sigh of resignation. He knew he had to oblige the girl’s request.

He picked up a fallen willow leaf from the ground with two deft fingers as he channeled out his arcane energy. With a flick of the finger, the willow leaf flew out like a bullet.

The leaf traveled at such incredible speed that it blurred into a dark shadowy line in the air. It grazed past the girl’s face and eventually hit a large tree trunk. The tree that got hit shook violently, raining leaves and twigs under the tree.

“Watch out!” The old man shouted out as soon as he saw the leaf turned into a weapon, but his warning came too late.

“What the—” Zi Qing was still in shock. Her long dark hair on the right side was cut to shoulder length; the crystal earrings she was wearing also fell to the ground.

She touched her cheek and found a thin line of a wound where blood was seeping through. She turned around and saw the willow leaf was lodged into the tree trunk like a piece of metal.

“Turning a piece of leaf into a weapon? That’s crazy!”

The old man’s heart was caught in his throat during the turn of event. Seeing the girl was unharmed, he finally heaved a sigh of relief.

He smiled wryly, “I have never even dreamed of seeing such martial arts skills during my lifetime. No... this is not martial arts; this is... something far more powerful. Even I wouldn’t be able to withstand such a blow much less, my granddaughter.”

So saying, the old man came up to Chen Fan and saluted him, “It was an honor to meet you, grand-master!” the old man spoke with great emotion in his voice. Never had he thought that he would encounter a hermit grandmaster, a very young one while at it!

The old man wagered that he might be the only person who could comprehend the full power of this young man. He doubted that he could find anyone in China who was more powerful than him.

Zi Qing ran to the willow tree and pulled out the willow leaf with much difficulty, and then she turned to Chen Fan and looked at him incredulously.

“How did you do it?” She murmured.

Even the man in the car was shocked by the development. He almost forgot that he was still holding the gun in his hand.

What was the point of using a gun when his opponent was faster than a bullet?

Chapter 7: Lesser Essence Strengthening Pill

Chen Fan said candidly, “It was nothing. Just a little trick.”

As a matter of fact, the elderly man’s inner energy was much more powerful than that of Chen Fan. But just like the knife and Tofu analogy, Chen Fan would easily defeat the elderly man even with lesser internal energy.

Although Chen Fan was only at the level of foundation establishment, he could channel the arcane energy into a blade of a willow leaf, turning it into a bullet. It had grazed the cheek of the girl and buried deep into the tree trunk. On the other hand, The internal force of the elderly man could at best emanate a few inches out of his body before it

receded. Despite its ample supply, the quality of the energy inside the elderly man fell short.

“It might be a small trick for you, sir, but for me, it was like an unbelievable miracle !” The elderly man exclaimed. He no longer called Chen Fan “young man,” but called him “Sir” instead.

Although the elderly man had lived through a tumultuous life and had eventually earned himself a great fortune, his dream of life was to become a powerful martial artist. However, over the years, he had come to terms with the fact that his talent was simply mediocre.

Although China was a large country with an even larger population, the martial arts grandmasters were a rare breed. As resourceful as the elderly man was, he has not yet got the opportunity to meet a real grandmaster in person, until now.

The elderly man’s words piqued Chen Fan’s interest, “The grand master you were talking about... could he do what I just did?”

“Of course, the Transcendent Grandmasters ¹ were at the precipice of martial arts. They were practically immortals in a mortal body. They could unleash their internal force as far as a few dozen meters. It wouldn’t be difficult for them to kill someone from a distance.”

Suddenly, confusion flashed across the elderly man face. He asked curiously, “Sir... as one of the grandmasters, how could you not be aware of what I have just told you? That was... common sense, after all.”

Chen Fan made a mental note to correct his vocabulary from internal energy to internal force. He wagered that in order to reshape the loosely formed internal force into something as deadly as a killing blow, it would require at least the level of Ethereal Enlightenment.

If that was true, then the so-called Transcendent Masters were martial artists who had achieved Ethereal Enlightenment. From the drift of the elderly man’s words, Chen Fan gathered that such grandmasters ought to be extremely rare in this world, as it should be.

Not only the spirit qi was drying upon the earth, the lack of advanced cultivation technique meant that it would take a one-in-a-hundred-year genius to reach the Ethereal Enlightenment.

Even after knowing that there could be a Transcendent Master somewhere in the world, Chen Fan was not worried that his dominance would be challenged in the future.

Chen Fan's speedy progress aside, he also had another advantage the Transcendent Master did not have: Dharma spells.

Chen Fan paused his train of thoughts and shook his head, "I am really just a person who follows the way of Dao. What you saw was simply the most rudimentary exercise of qi refinement. I have never heard about the internal strength nor the transcendent master. I am afraid that I am not who you think I am."

"The way of Dao?" The elderly man seemed perplexed by Chen Fan's confession. He had heard bits and pieces about monks with otherworldly powers. However, he had been convinced that those were simply high tales. Plus, the technique the boy had just used was emblematic of a Transcendent Master's power.

But why did he deny it? Was he really not a Transcendent Master?

Unable to find an answer, the elderly man decided to push the question aside for now. His priority was to befriend this boy, regardless if he was the grandmaster or not. If he could do what a grandmaster could, what difference did it make anyway?

Plus, he was young and... not ugly. Could be a perfect match for his gorgeous granddaughter. The elderly man's mind raced as he tried to think of ways to befriend the young man.

He quickly plastered on a smiley face and then said, "It doesn't matter. On another note, you seemed to carry an accent of Chu Zhou City. Are you from here? "

"Yes, I lived in Si Shui County for 17 years, and I came to the city for my final year of high school." Chen Fan nodded and continued, "My name is Chen Fan, you can also call me Chen Beixuan, 'Beixuan' is the name my teacher gave me. It's my Dao name."

Although this elderly man is not a cultivator, he had the arcane power in him. Therefore, Chen Fan preferred to communicate with him using his Dao name: Chen Beixuan.

"Si Shui County, Chen Fan, Chen Beixuan?" The elderly man and his granddaughter exchanged a confused glance. He turned his head around and asked curiously: "We will call him Mr. Chen. What about your teacher Mr. Chen's? He is not in Chu Zhou City?"

"My teacher is not on this planet." Chen Fan shook his head.

Chen Fan wondered which galaxy his teacher, the immortal cultivator, Cangqin was visiting right now. Based on the past life timeline, he wouldn't have graced the earth with his presence for another ten years. What's more, any changes in the current timeline might have unforeseeable effects; that meant Cangqin might never visit earth in this iteration of the time and space.

The elderly man misunderstood Chen Fan, as any normal person would. He heaved a sigh and then said heavily: "It is human nature to live and die. Your teacher will be proud of you knowing what you have become. I am old, and so are most of my friends if they are still alive. My martial arts exercise had kept me going a few years longer than my buddies, but I feel that I am going to see them very soon. "

Before the elderly man finished his words, he bent double and was caught by a fit of a violent cough.

"Grandpa!" The girl shouted with a distressed voice.

With a hint of tears in her eyes, she helped the elderly man to his feet and gently patted his back.

"I am fine, just some old wounds that never healed." The elderly man waved a comforting hand at his granddaughter.

Chen Fan cracked a smile and put in, "You shouldn't force the internal energy too hard. It's hurting your lungs."

"Does Mr. Chen also dabble in medicine? How could you know that?" The elderly man said incredulously

Before Chen Fan could say anything, The girl explained, "My grandfather had a close call with death once when he was young. In order to protect his family, he was forced to use the internal strength that he did not yet fully control. That incident had left him with two injured lungs. He didn't go to the hospital in time and hence sowed the seeds of irreversible damage. Since it was an internal injury, it was almost impossible to cure its symptom completely."

"Mr. Chen knew the way of Dao and was able to pinpoint the cause of my grandfather's injury; I wonder if you know a way to cure him?"

She looked at Chen Fan and batted her lashes. The girl would do anything to alleviate her loving grandfather's pain.

However, since the damage was caused by internal trauma, there was nothing modern medicine could do to help. Even the Chinese medicine doctors had given up on the elderly man since the injury had been dragged on for decades unattended.

However, seeing the miraculous power of Chen Fan, the girl finally saw a sliver of hope in curing her grandfather.

"I might as well be frank with you: Wei family is quite influential at the north side of the river. You will be heavily rewarded if you can save my grandfather. You have my word." The girl locked her eyes onto Chen Fan's and announced firmly.

Chen Fan hesitated for a second and said slowly:

“Heck! Why not. It’s not a difficult thing to do anyway. Since fate had brought me here, I will gladly oblige with what fate commands.”

Chen Fan watched as their faces were lit up with glee. “I need to prepare. I will bring the cure to you in two days. Does that work for you?”

“Of course!” The girl exclaimed as a smile finally broke over Zi Qing’s cold and distant face.

Chen Fan couldn’t help but admire her beauty. She looked much prettier when she was not frowning.

“Thank you, Mr. Chen.” Although the elderly man tried to remain calm, his trembling voice had betrayed him. He turned to the young man and said:

“Xiao Qi, why don’t you exchange numbers with Mr. Chen, and give him a ride home as well.”

The elderly man then turned around to Chen Fan, “Call Xiao Qi whenever you are ready, he will come to pick you up. In addition, feel free to let Xiao Qi know if you need any help. ”

“Thank you.” Chen Fan nodded.

Chen Fan was given a ride through the lakeside park to his home.

He noticed that the vehicle was not a Jeep at all; it was a Range Rover with a price tag of at least two or three million. In 2007, it was a sign of enormous wealth and power.

However, Chen Fan didn’t agree to help the elderly man because he wanted to fawn over the rich and powerful. “The elderly man named ‘Wei Fu’ seemed very approachable and easy going, but I can still sense the power he used to command. He was not an ordinary citizen. There is more than what meets the eye” Chen shook his head and thought to himself.

Although they had met each other by chance, the fact that the elderly man also had some resemblance of arcane energy made him felt obligated to offer a helping hand to a fellow cultivator.

After having exchanged numbers with Xiao Qi, Chen Fan went straight home.

As a cultivator, Chen Fan didn’t need medicine; One spirit pill down the throat could purge any disease out of his system.

Therefore, his “preparation” did not involve gathering medicines but the creation of elixirs.

Moreover, in order to cure the root cause of Wei Fu’s injury, he needed some time to enhance the elderly man’s technique of using his internal force.

Although he did not ask for any details about the internal force, as a former celestial lord, he knew the so-called internal force was nothing but the most rudimentary form of the arcane energy. For Chen Fan to solve the elderly man’s problem was as easy as solving a first-grade math question to a mathematician.

“Balls, my wallet is going to shrink again!” The thought of spending money on preparing the elixir made him heave a sigh.

Nonetheless, he had made a promise, and he should follow through. He dragged himself to the Chinese medicine store and purchased some more herbs. Luckily, the ingredients required for the elixir were cheap.

The elixir that Chen Fan want to brew was the most readily available aid to cultivators. It was called the “Lesser Essence Strengthening Pill.”

The essence enhancing pill was the miracle cure of the cultivators. It can cure the ailment, strengthening internal energy, and even prolonging the cultivator’s lives.

The reason that Chen Fan had given it a “lesser” prefix was because the version he was about to create had less than one-tenth of the effect of its original counterpart.

With limited resources, it would have to do. Even if Chen Fan had a deep pocket, he doubted he would be able to gather all the ingredients from the earth.

“The lesser version should be enough. Well, he will have to pay for himself if he needed a better cure.”

Chen Fan shook his head and carried on with his task.

In the few days that followed, Chen Fan had sacrificed his cultivation time to create the elixir and studying Wei Fu’s technique.

During those few days, Auntie Tang invited him several times to join her for dinner, but Chen Fan politely declined her invitations.

After a few days of hard work, he was finally ready to deliver the cure. However, Auntie Tang’s invitation came again, and this time Chen Fan felt obligated to accept her invitation.

Chapter 8: Jiang Churan's BFFs

Over the phone, Auntie Tang told him that it was not just any dinner; it was a dinner party for one of Jiang Churan's girlfriends.

He wagered that he would just show up at the party and leave when no one was paying attention. So thinking, he dialed Jiang Churan's number.

"Hello? Is this Ran-ran? This is Chen Fan."

"What is it?" Jiang Churan's cold voice drifted out of the phone without any trace of enthusiasm.

Chen Fan continued, "Auntie Tang invited me to join your friend's birthday party."

"Ok. I am at the downtown Starbucks. Why don't you come over?" It seems Jiang Churan had received word from her mother.

"Who's that, Ran-ran?"

A girl in all Gucci and LV asked Jiang Churan curiously.

She was Jiang Churan's WRB (white-rich-beautiful) girlfriend, Zhang Yumeng: The birthday girl.

There was another tall and glamorous girl sitting right next to Jiang Churan; both of them were Jiang Churan's BFFs since childhood.

"Just a loser. He is my mom's friend's son. I have no idea what got into my mom's mind, like, seriously? Guess what she had been doing? She wanted to set me up with that dude. Can you believe that? Me and a country hillbilly? Eew!" Jiang Churan put her phone away and said with a heavy frown.

"So, he has met your parents." Zhang Yumeng jested. She was too curious not to press Jiang Churan with more questions, "How's his look? Is he rich? Is he as good as my boy Yang Chao?"

Yang Chao was Zhang Yumeng's boyfriend; he was tall and handsome, a charming captain of the school basketball team. His family owned the 'Tiansheng Grand Hotel,' one of the top five five-star-hotels in Chu Zhou City.

Although the basketball team captain never lacked admirers, he had always been very proud of being able to date the popular girl Zhang Yumeng.

“You are such a gold digger! Is money all you care about?” The tall and more distant looking girl rolled her eyes at Zhang Yumeng.

“What’s wrong with that? I don’t date fat losers who are poor; you know,” Zhang Yumeng put her hands on her hips, elbows up and pointing out, as she shot back at the other girl.

“Fine, fine, we all know you have high standards” Jiang Churan put in. “His name is ‘Chen Fan,’ and he is from Si Shui County. He is from an average family and looked... ok, I guess? But my mom insisted that he is the Mr. Right because he is honest.”

“Honest? How much is that worth nowadays?” Zhang Yumeng burst out laughing.

The tall girl next to Jiang Churna shook her head and said in a serious voice, “Don’t listen to her. However, he does sound very much out of your league. Even if you think you like him, your relationship will be doomed. ”

“I didn’t say that I liked him. Stop worrying your pretty head about it, girls. I am just annoyed with my mom.” Jiang Churan said helplessly.

“If you don’t like him, maybe I can offer you a helping hand. I will teach him a lesson.” Zhang Yumeng snorted.

Jiang Churan’s rolled her eyes, and she felt so annoyed with her mother and her friends that she didn’t even know what to say.

After a while, they saw Chen Fan walking toward the Starstruck.

In 2007, when Starbucks first entered the Chinese market, it was extremely popular among the middle class and white-collar workers. They would meet with their friends to spend a relaxing weekend afternoon.

Even at Starbucks and among her kind, Jiang Churan had caught many customers’ attention. Her beauty was exceptional even among a group of well educated white collar women.

The two girls that accompanied her were also of exceptional beauty. One was tall and glamorous, the other petite and cute. The three women had slowly become the center of attention at the coffee shop.

Therefore, it wasn’t hard for Chen Fan to spot Jiang Churan. He waved a hand at her and walked toward her table.

He sucked at talking to girls; however, he didn’t want to disappoint Auntie Tang and so he better press on.

“Hi.” Jiang greeted him back politely. However, she remained a distance away from Chen Fan.

Chen Fan noticed the girl with a hot body and a glamorous look did not even spare him a look as he approached their table. Carrying a cup of coffee, she peered out of the window but was looking at nothing. Her face lacked any emotion, but the message was clear: Do not talk to me.

“You are Chen Fan?” Zhang Yumeng looked around at him as disdain flickered in her eyes.

Her clothes, shoes, and the entire outfit was worth over a hundred thousand yuan. The purse she carried was the collector’s edition of LV. She was in a pink Chanel dress and a pair of shoes from Mauro Leone, which her father had bought for her from Milan.

Meanwhile, Chen Fan was in a pair of twenty yuan jeans and a five yuan t-shirt. The two stood face to face, looking like from two different worlds.

“Hey, dude! Do you know how many people wanted to date her? Ok, let me see: the super smart kid who already got admitted to Qin Hua University, the super rich one whose dad could buy half of the city and the one whose dad was going to be the new mayor! Guess who did she choose? NOT-YOU!” Zhang Yumeng lashed out at Chen Fan.

“Meng-Meng!” Jiang Churan glared at the girl, willing her to be quiet.

“Don’t worry; I am not interested in her. Her mom wanted me to come here to join her for a party.” Chen Fan said as he glanced at Jiang Churan.

“Meng-meng did not mean what she said; I hope you don’t mind.” Jiang Churan said faintly.

“Yea, right...” Chen Fan thought to himself.

He quickly plastered on a smile and shrugged it off.

Seeing that Jiang Churan was only given Zhang Yumeng a perfunctory glare, Chen Fan knew that Jiang Churan had acquiesced to her action.

Chen Fan’s mind was set on Xiao Qiong, so he didn’t care what the other girls thought of him. Like him or not, it was their own problem, and he didn’t have to kiss their asses.

Feeling satisfied with Chen Fan’s silence, Zhang Yumeng buried her head into a fashion magazine and pretended as if Chen Fan was not there.

Chen Fan went to the counter and ordered a cup of cappuccino and sat down at the table.

Ever since he came in, his attention had always been on the tall girl who still ignored him.

She was Xu Rongfei! One of Jiang Churan's best friends.

If Chen Fan's memory served him right, they even had a little crush on each other.

The glamorous girl was wearing a black crop top that accentuated her ample bosom and left her tenacious waist bare. Below the waist, she wore a pair of tight denim shorts, revealing a pair of long legs that could steal a boy's breath away. Her porcelain-like skin was almost luminescent under the sun.

Although she did not wear luxury brands, her body and exquisite beauty made a supermodel out of her even in those ordinary clothes.

Chen Fan knew that underneath her aloof appearance, she was actually a nice person. She used to give Chen Fan the heads up about Jiang Churan's real love interest and urged him to give up on her and find someone else who would love him back.

She was different than Zhang Yumeng, who was a spoiled brat through and through. Zhang Yumeng had a pretty face too, but also a vacuous brain, and she had always looked down on Chen Fan.

"I recall that Xu Rongzhen was a fine arts student. She was going to Yanjing Film Academy next year. Later she became a popular actress," Chen Fan reflected the details of his past life while he sipped the coffee.

When he first took over the Splendid Real Estate group in his previous life, he had met the actress again, and the two quickly hit on each other.

They met at a reception of a fashion show organized by a large company in the entertainment industry. After so many years, the high school friends had both changed. One had become a multibillion-yuan high roller, and the other a dazzling actress. They both fell for each other that night, and it was beautiful.

However, beautiful things were not meant to last. Chen Fan's life fell apart quickly after that fashion show. Besieged by his business rivals, he had no time to rekindle old flames, so the two slowly drifted away.

Later, when he was abandoned by everyone and returned to Chu Zhou City. He accidentally heard from a friend that Xu Rongfei had ruffled some wrong feathers and had since never shown up on TV again. After a while, her reputation was tarnished by negative news and scandal in the media. Unable to bear the stress and bouts of depression, she killed herself at the young age of thirty.

The memory gave Chen Fan a chill. Here they were, two innocent young souls before the cruel world bent them against their will until both decided to take their own lives.

“Life is a bitch!” Chen Fan lamented.

As if she felt Chen Fan’s gaze on her face, Xu Rongyi finally turned around and asked with a frown:

“Do I know you?”

Unlike her cold appearance, her voice was soft if not cutesy.

Her voice reminded Chen Fan of another famous actress in her previous life.

When Xu Rongfei made her debut appearance, she was dubbed as the protege of that actress. However, she had met a much more gruesome end than her illustrious predecessor.

“I don’t think so... But may I introduce myself? You see, I am not from a rich family, but I can see things that even the richest can’t. I am a fortune teller by birth.” Chen Fan jested.

“Ah- You don’t believe me, no? Let’s see... You are a fine arts student, and your last name is Xu.”

“Oh? Really? What else do you see in me?” Xu Rongfei’s interest was piqued instantly.

“Let me see.” Chen Fan paused and pretended to ponder, “You will be admitted to Yanjing Film and Television College in the future, become an actor, and finally become a big star.”

“How do you know that I am going to the Yanjing Film and Television College? And you are right. I always dreamed of becoming a TV star!” Xu Rongfei answered incredulously. Her mouth gaped open in sheer surprise as if inviting a kiss.

Zhang Yumeng laughed out loudly.

“Are you dumb, Miss Xu? You are one of the most famous bitches at the Ivy League High. He must have learned everything about you from people at school.” Zhang Yumeng explained.

She then turned to Chen Fan with a contemptuous look.

“What a loser. Are you switching your target already?”

Jiang Churan also furrowed her brows and felt disappointed.

She had never thought Chen Fan to be such a slicker.

Chapter 9: Enemy of Past Life

“Whatever.” Chen Fan shrugged. He had planned to warn Xu Rongfei of her tragic end, but Zhang Yumeng’s interruption had robbed him of any interest in doing so.

“How does he know that I am going to apply for Yanjing Film and Television College? I have just told my parents about it, but no one else.” Xu Rongfei thought

Nonetheless, she decided to keep her silence in front of her two sassy friends. But she conceded that something about this boy attracted her regardless of how hard she tried to ignore him.

Suddenly, a group of well-dressed boys and girls appeared outside of Starbucks, and they were waving and shouting through the glass doors at them.

“It’s Yang Chao; they are finally here!” Zhang Yumeng jumped out of her chair and waved back at the group. She then turned to the other two girlfriends and said, “Party starts NOW!”

As soon as Chen Fan walked out of Starbucks, he watched as Zhang Yumeng threw herself into the arms of a tall and handsome boy. The sight of the boy’s face made Chen Fan cringed.

It was Yang Chao!

He was Zhang Yumeng’s boyfriend and Chen Fan’s greatest enemy when he was studying at the Chu Zhou City.

Chen Fan painfully remembered that when he fell for Jiang Churan in his last life, he got put down frequently by Zhang Yumeng as she compared him with the perfect Yang Chao. Yang Chao also made things very difficult for Chen Fan as he often showed off his wealth and good looks in front of the girls, making Chen Fan’s lacking both a sore thumb that stuck out.

“Meng-Meng, who is this guy?” Yang Chao held Zhang Yumeng in one arm and regarded Chen Fan curiously.

The young men and women around Yang Chao dressed in styles that were much more mature and fashionable than Chen Fan. Their pretty faces and hot bodies soaked up the attention from onlookers, making Chen Fan seemed out of place.

"A family friend of Ran-ran." Zhang Yumeng said as she rolled her eyes. And then she whispered something into the boy's ears.

Yang Chao nodded as contempt flashed across his face. He reached out a hand and then said, "My name is Yang Chao, Meng-meng's husband. My family ran a hotel: the Tiansheng Grand Hotel. You got balls to make a move on Jiang Churan, buddy. What does your dad do?" His words were laced with conceit.

He knew that Chen Fan was from an ordinary family, but he wanted to be a dick and point it out on purpose.

Chen Fan did not even spare him a glance. He put both hands into his pocket, refusing the handshake and then said slowly.:

"Chen Fan."

Having had enough of Yang Chao's crap in his past life, he decided never to let him step on his toe again.

"This ones got a temper!" Yang Chao paused a second as he threw his entourage a glance, willing them to laugh at his remark. They obliged.

He then gave Chen Fan a chilling glance and then he nodded and said. "Very well, we will be going to the same school, and we will get to know each other over time."

He left Chen Fan alone after uttering his threats, and he gathered people around to plan their next stop.

Xu Rongfei glanced at Chen Fan with a worried face. Yang Chao was not someone Chen Fan wanted to mess with.

Someone had once ticked off Yang Chao, and the next day the poor boy's leg was broken by a bunch of hooligans from the basketball team. He eventually dropped out of school, and Yang Chao had walked away with no punishment after paying the boy's family a handsome amount of money. After that, everyone learned to stay on Yang Chao's good side.

Chen Fan gave Xu Rongfei a glance that read "Don't worry." To his surprise, the girl snorted and turned her back toward him.

"It's still early, let's go to KTV first. After warming up, we will go to my dad's hotel for dinner. I have prepared an awesome birthday party for Meng-Meng. After that, we will go to the bar district! Nobody's allowed to quit before I say it's over!"

Hearing Yang Chao's plan, the crowd burst into cheers.

“There is a new KTV that just opened up at the new district; it’s called Royal Entertainment. I have heard it’s nice there.” A wealthy looking girl dressed head to toe with famous brands suggested.

“Sounds good; let’s hit it!” Yang Chao announced.

“Balls, If they follow through their plan, they wouldn’t be back until the sun is out. No wonder Auntie Tang told me to look after her daughter.”

Chen Fan’s patience was wearing thin. He still needed to meet with Wei Fu tonight, and therefore he shouldn’t be wasting his time with these groups of kids.

Although the new district was within walking distance from the downtown, the group of youngsters had driven more than six cars.

There were Audi A4, BMW 330 convertible, Buick 308CC, although they were not the top of the line luxury models, it was a rare sight to behold in the year of 2007. It was evident that all of these youngsters were from wealthy families.

The most expensive vehicle was Yang Chao’s Porsche Cayenne, the 4.8T version, costing more than two million. Only the most expensive car for the most expensive girlfriend. Zhang Yumeng hopped into the front passenger seat, and the two other girls followed suit.

As the ringleader, Yang Chao assigned seats to everyone. In the end, Chen Fan was the only person who didn’t get assigned a ride.

As if he had just noticed Chen Fan, Yang Chao slammed his head and said:

“Oh, shit! I have forgotten about you. So sorry, dude.”

Yang Chao didn’t change at all. He had always been very apologetic about the inconvenience that he had a cause on purpose.

“Ah-shit! All cars are full. Can you take a taxi? ”

As soon as he finished speaking, everyone laughed out loud at the miserable Chen Fan.

Chen Fan had made himself an enemy of the group by refusing to shake Yang Chao’s hands. Therefore, no one pointed out that there were still empty seats on a couple of cars.

Chen Fan’s brow twitched a little as he held Yang Chao’s icy gaze. He had been provoking him ever since they met; maybe it was time to teach him a lesson.

The development made Jiang Churan uneasy, after all, it was her mom who had invited him to the party, so to some degrees, Chen Fan was her guest.

Even as Jiang Churan was about to offer Chen Fan a seat, she heard Xu Rongfei spoke out, "Well, you can sit next to me, I can squeeze."

Everyone was shocked by Xu Rongfei's words, and even Jiang Churan had shot her an accusatory glance.

"What the hell is wrong with that bitch today?" Yang Chao thought to himself.

Everyone at the Ivy League High knew that Xu Rongfei had the highest standards of all girls. Even Chu Minghui had failed to win her heart, much less a no account.

Zhang Yumeng rolled her eyes, and fussed, "Can you stop pretending to be nice? Because you are not. Well, fine, fine! Come over here, Chen Fan. I will let you have the shotgun."

She hopped out of the passenger side and went to the back seat. The Cayenne was spacious inside, and there was plenty of room for three girls.

Chen Fan caught a glimpse of Xu Rongfei and thought that the girl was as kind as she were in his previous life. It was not the first time she helped him as she had done it so many times and would continue to do so.

Chen Fan got in the car quietly.

"Well, let's go." Yang Chao was slightly annoyed by his failed attempt to humiliate Chen Fan. He gave Chen Fan a cold glance and then slammed on the gas pedal. His car charged out of the parking lot with others in tow.

The new district was a new development in Chu Zhou City. It was filled with new restaurants, hotels, and entertainment venues such as KTV.

When Chen Fan and others arrived at their destination, the Royal Entertainment KTV, all the lights decorating its facade had already lit up.

Inside the hall stood a row of uniformed staff with above average looks. They greeted the customers with a deep bow.

The boyfriend of the girl who had been here before walked at the front, and the manager of the KTV spotted him right away. The manager hurried to him while wearing an unctuous smile.

"It's my friend's birthday, would you please make an arrangement for us? Is the Imperial Hall still available?"

“I-I am really sorry, Jun Shao. The Imperial Hall has been booked, should I open up the Queen’s Hall.”

Jun Shao looked back at Yang Chao, seeing the latter’s acquiescence, Jun Shao nodded.

It was Zhang Yumeng’s birthday; Yang Chao would pay the bill, so it was his call.

After they had settled in their private room, they ordered some French wine, German beer, and a fruit plate. Under the expectant eyes of the manager, Yang Chao opened two bottles of Louis XIII, each tallying twenty thousand. The manager was so happy that Chen Fan wondered if he could close his mouth ever again..

Sitting in the gilded cage and surrounded by over the top riches, Chen Fan felt like a drop of water in the oil. There was nothing he wanted to talk about to these spoiled brats.

The feeling seemed to be mutual. Most people had known each other, and therefore, it was easy for them to start conversing with each other. However, no one made an effort to include Chen Fan in their conversation.

“All the better.” Chen Fan thought.

He found a corner and poured himself a glass of Hennessy. He swirled the content of his glass as he mused how to leave with Jiang Churan as soon as possible.

He still has an appointment with Wei Fu. Never had he thought that a birthday dinner would involve so many activities, KTV, clubbing, and a banquet. Chen Fan had no time for any of them.

Everyone passed the mic around, but somehow it was never given to Chen Fan.

Not surprisingly, Xu Rongfei was the best singer of all of them. Chen Fan had remembered that Xu Rongzhen had participated in the National High School Music Competition on behalf of ‘Ivy League High School’ and had won the first prize.

Chapter 10: KTV

Yang Chao lifted the wine glass and said, “Brother Chen, how do you like this venue?”

“He is from Si Shui County. How would he be interested in our little squalid venue in the Chu Zhou City?” Jun Shao jested sarcastically.

Chen Fan furrowed his brows and put down his glass. His lips thinned into a smile.

“Yang Chao, are you looking for trouble?”

“How dare I! You are the boss here, just crash our party and eat and drink.” Yang Chao said sarcastically.

“Drop it!” Jiang Churan glared at Chen Fan and turned to Yang Chao. “Today is your sweetheart’s birthday, can you please watch your mouth?”

“Fine, fine, I will stop, madam.” Yang Chao raised his hands above his head.

After a while, Jun Shao’s pretty girlfriend said she wanted to use the washroom.

She didn’t know a lot of people at the party since most of them were her boyfriend’s friends. However, In order to impress everyone, she had put on her sexiest club dress and had spent hours in front of the mirror putting on makeup.

As soon as she walked out of the washroom, someone put a hand at the nape of her neck. Frightened, She screamed loudly.

Jun Shao was just outside, waiting for his girlfriend. Hearing the scream, he rushed to the girl immediately.

He saw a fat middle-aged man pulling his girlfriend’s hair with one hand, and he slapped her face with the other. “Stupid bitch! Who do you think you are? How dare you slap me!”

Jun Shao’s real name was Ding Junfei, and his father ran a clothing factory and was a very resourceful and well-connected businessman.

For most of the time, he and Yang Chao had never met any real troubles since most people knew to stay as far from them as possible. The sight of his girlfriend being attacked made him bursting with anger. He rushed to the middle-aged man and kicked him, sending the latter reeling back and fell to the ground.

“To hell with you, fat ass pig head!.” Jun Shao stomped on the head of the fallen man.

The plump middle-aged man struggled to his feet and shouted, “Who are you, boy? Tell me your name; I will make you pay for this!”

“Name is Ding Junfei; I am in the Queen’s Hall. Come find me if you dare!”

Ding Junfei felt lighthearted after having avenged his girlfriend. He took his girl’s hand and started back to the Queen’s Hall.

When Jun Shao got back to his friends, he was surrounded by his friends asking what the commotion was about. He plastered on a nonchalant look and then said, “A fat pig

had his hand on my girl, Xiao Xin. His accent was from the western side of Jin Province. I kicked his fat ass before he could run away.”

Xiao Xin was his new girlfriend. He was extra protective of her while the flame of new love’s passion was still hot inside of him.

“That’s badass!” A friend next to him punched him in the chest. The comment sent Ding Junfei’s ego high above the clouds.

“It’s better to be careful. We are not on our own turf. We could end up with a hot mess in our hands.” A rich child warned everyone.

“Touche. We are almost done here, anyway; let’s move.” Jiang Churan got up and willed everyone else to do the same.

Like many girls, she hated troubles.

“What are you so afraid of? Yang Chao’s dad can get us out of any shit. His dad owns a five-star hotel. That shit isn’t for show, you know.” Zhang Yumeng held onto Jiang Churan’s waist and said proudly.

Yang Chao smiled, also proud of his father’s resourcefulness.

He held up the glass and said, “There’s nothing to be afraid of! There are so many of us here, anyway. Come on; let’s party!”

Everyone loosened up a bit after hearing Yang Chao’s reassurance. They raised their cups for a toast. Seeing that no one wanted to leave, Jiang Churan simply stood there and was not sure what to do.

This was a group of spoiled rich brats who had never been denied anything. Fueled by alcohol and hormones, they quickly forgot about the incident and started partying like there was no tomorrow.

Chen Fan furrowed his brows as he finally remembered the incident he had heard anecdotally during his past life.

He had heard that Ding Junfei had ticked off the wrong guy and had to learn his lesson the hard way. It had to be that fat man he had just ruffled feather with. He reckoned that he should leave with Jiang Churan as soon as possible before the matter spiraled out of control.

He stood up and said, “Ran-ran, It’s getting late, Auntie Tang is waiting for us at home. Should we head back?”

Hearing this, Zhang Yumeng's face suddenly hardened. "What do you mean? Do you want to take Ran-ran away? My birthday party hasn't started yet!"

"Who the heck are you? Why are you so controlling " Another girl piped up.

Yang Chao shook his head and grunted, "Hey-Man, that's lame. Am I not being a good host to you? Well, the door is right there if you want to leave. But she is not going with you unless she wanted to."

Yang Chao had put Jiang Churan on the spot, forcing her to choose between Chen Fan and all of her friends. She soon felt everyone, including Chen Fan's eyes, fell on her.

Jiang Churan cursed in her mind, but her choice was clear. After all, she was not going to ditch all of her best friends for someone who she barely knew.

After some awkward moments, a faint smile finally broke over her frowning face, "Of course I will stay with you guys."

Then, she turned around and gave Chen Fan a sidelong glance. "Please let my mom know that I will be late when you get back."

She had made her decision, and Chen Fan knew he wouldn't be able to change her mind.

Zhang Yumeng slapped Jiang Churan's shoulder and gave her a hug. She kissed her on the cheek and cheered, "I love you, bitch!"

Zhang Yumeng then gave Chen Fan a contemptuous glare, "What are you waiting for? Do you want me to point you to the door?"

Zhang Yumeng's scathing words had made everyone burst out laughing. They sneered at the dorky loser who dare rise up to challenge the popular kids.

"No one wants you here, dork! Even Jiang Churan had ditched you. Get out!"

Xu Rongfei nudged Jiang Churan's elbow, but the latter wasn't going to change her mind.

Jiang Churan would be lying if she said she didn't feel the slightest remorse for Chen Fan. However, if she changed her mind and left with Chen Fan, Zhang Yumeng and Yang Chao would never forgive her for it. She knew that staying was her only choice.

Chen Fan stood still amidst the jeers and sneers. He shook his head in resignation.

It is what it is; he can't fix stupid.

Even as he was about to turn around and head for the exit, he felt a strange sensation inside of him, so he paused. The feeling was a mixture of curiosity and satisfaction.

“what the heck, I am already here anyways. Might as well figure out what will happen to them.” He thought to himself.

Meanwhile, the middle-aged man pushed opened the door of the emperor’s hall; he was panting heavily and bursting with anger.

The Imperial Hall was spacious with luxurious interiors: Persian Carpet, 60inch LED TV and Italian leather sofas.

Sitting in the middle of the sofa was a man in a suit.

Everyone else sat around the man in a suit; it was evident that he was the center of power and wealth in this room.

The man in the suit was startled when the fat middle age man stormed into the room.

“Boss Zhang, what the hell is going on?”