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Jiang Ning had now returned to being that killing machine that could kill anything from humans to the gods as long as they stood in the way.

Even Huang Yuming felt his heart shudder when he saw the look in Jiang Ning's eyes and began to feel fearful even though he knew that Jiang Ning would not hurt him.

He felt like he was standing next to a ferocious beast. That sort of terror didn't disappear easily.

"Got it." Huang Yuming knew how Jiang Ning was feeling now, and knew what he could and needed to do.

The entire room was left with only Jiang Ning, and he just sat there quietly.

Nobody came in to interrupt him.

They all knew that he needed some time by himself.

He sat there for an entire hour without moving, as if he was a statue.

His eyes started to glow more and more brightly and looked more and more frightening. The murderous air that accumulated and swirled inside his eyes thickened and seemed to have solidified into an actual layer around him.

Jiang Ning finally stood up.

He walked out and seemed like a completely different person as his body exuded a

ferociousness.

Meanwhile.

Mount Zhongnan.

Everyone from the eight reclusive clans had gathered within the Fang house's main hall.

The expressions on the Senior Elders were a little different from before.

With the help of Jiang Ning's guidance, their understanding of martial arts had reached another level.

They weren't able to increase their actual ability in such a short time, but increasing their understanding was more valuable than increasing their ability, because it meant that increasing their ability in the future wouldn't be difficult.

They were like a container that could only contain one bucket of water. No matter how strong this container became, it could only contain one bucket of water.

But now, this container had been redesigned and reconstructed by Jiang Ning, so it could now take two or even three buckets of water!

"We've solved it," the Senior Elder of the Huangfu clan couldn't help but exclaim.

The image in front of them looked like a chessboard, but it looked more like an eight trigram diagram.

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Different etches appeared in various positions on the diagram.

“I can’t believe it’s really a map. But where is it pointing to?”

Fang Qiu had already contacted Butler Zhao, but even after searching through all the information they had and comparing all the satellite maps they had, they didn’t find any place that was shaped this way.

They combed the world for any information they could get, regardless of whether it was a tropical rainforest or some ancient mountain forest.

But they couldn’t find anything.

The only possibility left was that this map was pointing to a place that nobody in this world knew about.

Everyone looked towards Fang Qiu.

“I’m afraid this lies behind the mountain gate.”
Fang Qiu’s expression was stern.

They knew all about what happened to Lin Yuzhen and they also knew that Jiang Ning had to enter the mountain gate in order to save Lin Yuzhen. Nobody else could do anything to help.

Fang Qiu blamed himself and felt so guilty. When Jiang Ning needed someone, he was of no help at all!

He clenched his fists tightly.

“Sort out this map properly in the shortest time possible and hand it to my Master. That’s the only thing we can do now.”

“Don’t worry, we’ll get everything sorted and handed to Jiang Ning in one complete piece by today!” declared the Senior Elder of the Huangfu clan as he patted his own chest.

Fang Qiu nodded.

He got up and bowed deeply at everyone. He was going to leave this matter to the Senior Elders. Meanwhile, Jiang Ning had entrusted another mission to him.

There was one thing that Jiang Ning had to do before entering the mountain gate.

Deep within Mount Zhongnan.

A figure had been hiding here for several days now. He didn’t do anything besides just rest and recuperate.

San Hei was right here.

He wanted to return to the Salo castle to wait for another chance, but the clan had completely fallen apart because Jiang Ning had thrashed them to smithereens.

He knew that Jiang Ning was definitely headed for the mountain gate.

Without the antidote, there was no way Lin Yuzhen and his child would ever wake from their

coma.

“Ha, like I said, once you have a weakness, then it doesn’t matter how strong you become anymore.”

San Hei narrowed his eyes and took a deep breath. His physical wounds had not completely healed, but the pain from his body was nothing compared to the insult that Jiang Ning had given him.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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There were several men quite a distance from San Hei.

San Hei had been watching them for some time now. He knew that these people were holding pages of the Extreme Fist Technique Manual, and they had placed the manual exactly where the pages need to be.

He could tell that Jiang Ning was going to open the mountain gate soon!

San Hei hadn't revealed how to open the gate, but the cemetery caretaker wasn't dead, so Jiang Ning could get the method from the cemetery caretaker easily.

As long as Jiang Ning opened the gate, then he would seize this opportunity to go back!

This seemed to be the only chance he had right now.

San Hei quietly followed behind them and nobody discovered his whereabouts at all.

Probably only Jiang Ning was powerful enough to track him down since San Hei was at such a high level.

He still had a wound on his face and it looked like a terrifying centipede on his face.

But the most frightening part about this face was still his eyes. They were both greedy and crazed.

“As long as I can take the pages of the manual

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back, the sect will definitely reward me, and I'll be able to get so much more, so much more..." roared San Hei in his heart.

He had waited for this day for so long.

He felt that he was much smarter compared to Er Bai. He didn't believe in fate, didn't accept his destiny and he refused to believe that he and his siblings were nothing but sacrificial items who needed to remain as guardians outside the mountain gate.

Why should they suffer like that?

Why couldn't they enjoy the resources that the sect had? Why did they have to become like a lower class of people, to be ridiculed and disdained?

Why?!

Er Bai and the rest resigned to their fate, but San Hei refused to.

He had always treated this as a wonderful opportunity instead. If he remained outside the mountain gate, then he had the chance to obtain the Extreme Fist Technique Manual, and he could get that precious map!

This was a chance given to him by the gods!

He looked at those men from afar and remained quiet. He was like a spirit floating about and maintained a certain distance from them.

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After he had confirmed that all the pages had been placed in the right spots, he relaxed and headed for where the mountain gate was.

He was going to wait for the mountain gate to open, then he had to make sure Jiang Ning went in first. That way, he would have the chance to obtain all the pages of the manual and return to his sect.

As long as Jiang Ning was still out here, he wouldn't have the chance to do this.

"Put all the pages down in the correct spots as per Mr Jiang's instructions."

San Hei was careful and didn't dare to go too near in case he was discovered.

He just watched from afar and saw that everyone had come back to report to Fang Qiu.

All the pages had been placed correctly, and the last page was now in Fang Qiu's hands.

"Very good," said Fang Qiu as he nodded. "Once my Master enters the mountain gate, remove the pages and place them where I have arranged beforehand, don't let anyone find them."

"Yes, Master Fang!" replied everyone in unison.

Everybody immediately stood to one side and looked around them cautiously.

Fang Qiu stood right in the middle and placed the last page in the correct spot.

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San Hei could tell that Fang Qiu was making preparations in advance so that Jiang Ning could open the gate.

They actually dared to just bring the nine pages here like this?

“Impossible.” He frowned and became wary instantly.

Jiang Ning wasn't here?

Wasn't he going to enter the mountain gate now? Everything was already in place and the cemetery caretaker definitely already taught Jiang Ning how to open it. So what was he waiting for?

“I almost forgot! He probably isn't able to actually open the gate!” San Hei suddenly recalled something.

Since Jiang Ning didn't belong to the universe behind the mountain gate, then he wasn't allowed to open the gate even if he knew how.

If he wanted to open the gate, he would need the cemetery caretaker to help him.

But the cemetery caretaker was still recovering from his severe injuries and would need more time to become well enough to do this.

San Hei arrived at this conclusion almost immediately and rejoiced in his heart. “The heavens are helping me too!

Even the heavens were helping him!



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San Hei was instantly filled with energy and his eyes were sparkling with excitement.

He definitely wanted to kill Jiang Ning because Jiang Ning had humiliated him, so he wanted to skin Jiang Ning alive right now. But he wanted to return to his sect even more than that.

His eyes grew more and more sinister, and they started to look gleeful too.

It was the will of heaven!

It had to be the will of heaven!

Even the heavens were on his side.

He was now wondering how he could return to the sect with the pages. If he opened the mountain gate now, he would have a very short period of time to go in before the gate closed again, so this was impossible to achieve all by himself.

San Hei frowned and clenched his teeth. He was a little indignant about this.

If the Salo clan still existed, he might be able to think of a way to do this. But now he had to choose one or the other.

“I’ll go back!”

Having information on the manual alone was probably enough for him to get everything he wanted.

The sect could arrange for someone to get the

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pages themselves after that. He didn't care what they did with the information.

After San Hei made this decision, he didn't hesitate.

He carefully checked the surroundings and was sure that Jiang Ning wasn't around. He immediately made a decision and flew out towards Fang Qiu.

SWOOSH!

San Hei was like a typhoon as he flew at an astonishing speed.

Since Jiang Ning wasn't here, nobody could stop him!

"Punk!" he roared loudly like a ferocious beast that had suddenly appeared out of nowhere and brought a murderous air along with it. He continued to fly towards Fang Qiu and yelled, "Give me the manual!"

He laughed loudly and bared his teeth as he stretched one arm out towards Fang Qiu.

Fang Qiu stood there with a look of horror on his face as he quickly retreated, but his speed was nothing compared to a highly skilled fighter like San Hei.

No matter how quickly he tried to run, San Hei reached him in a matter of seconds.

His aggressive expression was filled with nothing

but murder. “Hand it over!”

Fang Qiu immediately shuddered at this shout and threw the page he had in hand on the ground before running for his life.

San Hei wasn't interested in killing Fang Qiu at all.

Once he saw that the page had been flung onto the ground, he reached out to catch the page.

It was his now!

Once he placed this page here properly, he could open the gate and return to his sect!

San Hei couldn't hold his excitement back and even his eyes turned red as he laughed maniacally so loudly and thunderously that Fang Qiu and his men just kept running for their lives. They didn't even think of getting those pages back anymore.

“I AM GOING BACK! MUAHAHAHA!” San Hei looked up into the skies and laughed loudly.

He then looked back down at the page in his hands and suddenly stopped laughing. His eyes widened and he looked as though he had just been struck by lightning.

This wasn't the Extreme Fist Technique Manual at all!

The paper was similar to the manual, but there was no diagram on the paper, and there was no map etched into the back either. There was only

one word on it, and San Hei almost lost his mind in anger when he saw it.

‘Dumbass!’

That was the only word printed on the paper.

You want to go back?” a voice rang from behind him. San Hei shuddered and slowly turned around. Jiang Ning had suddenly appeared under a tree and was staring at him right now.

“You...you laid this trap?”

“Maybe you’re not that dumb after all.”

Jiang Ning slowly walked towards him.

“I was thinking, I definitely have to open the mountain gate and go in, but there was one thing left that made me very unhappy.” He looked at San Hei. “I must kill you first.”

His tone of voice was calm, but it reeked of intense murder!

You think you alone can really kill me?”

“There’s still us!” Several figures walked out from the surrounding bushes. They were all elite soldiers who had fought countless battles!

Jiang Ning had called them over to help, and they were all armed to the teeth with the most modern firearms. Their gun barrels were all aimed at San Hei right now.

“The world of martial arts uses their arms and legs to conquer the world, but in this world, I think you ought to get a taste of this thing.”

Jiang Ning raised his arm and San Hei immediately paled.

He turned and wanted to escape, but he was already surrounded on all sides. As he looked at those black, icy and metallic gun barrels, he felt like his heart was already in his mouth!

“Send him on his way!”



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Jiang Ning gave the command and San Hei felt like his ears were about to burst.

The gunfire shot out rapidly at him and he immediately thought of escaping, but there was nowhere he could run to!

DA DA DA!

DA DA DA!

The rapid gunfire was so terrifying and San Hei was already surrounded, so there was no possibility of him escaping.

In the blink of an eye, San Hei had collapsed on the ground in a pool of his own blood as his entire body was riddled with holes.

All the bloodied holes in his body were bleeding and dyed the ground bright red. Even his face had become a bloody mess.

Everything quietened down after that. Jiang Ning waved his hand and everyone quietly disappeared into the distance as if they had never come here in the first place.

All of them were Jiang Ning's loyal followers and they had fought countless battles alongside this God of War!

Jiang Ning had left the scene, but he remained their Big Boss forever. As long as Jiang Ning called on them, they would rush over immediately.

Jiang Ning walked over and looked at the lifeless

San Hei on the ground. His bloodied face still looked indignant and in disbelief.

“So it’s not true that you’re immune to all weapons,” said Jiang Ning. “Did you think you could only kill with arms and legs?”

But San Hei couldn’t reply him anymore.

If he was still alive, he would have thought that even if Jiang Ning wanted to kill him, Jiang Ning would have come by himself to fight to the very end with him. He never expected...

“The one thing you did wrong was to hurt my woman.”

After that, Jiang Ning didn’t look at San Hei anymore. He had a million and one ways to kill humans. Use his own arms and legs?

San Hei wasn’t worthy.

Jiang Ning walked away and left that bullet hole riddled corpse behind him. His blood had flowed into the ground and even the air was filled with the strong stench of blood.

In no time, wild animals would smell the blood and be attracted to this corpse. This was a great feast to them...

Mount Zhongnan had quietened down.

But the eight reclusive clans remained vigilant and kept watch over the area where the mountain gate was and didn’t dare to be careless now.

Nobody knew when anything unforeseen might happen. This world was filled with unforeseen circumstances, and nobody could even think of them.

Right now, Jiang Ning was seated on an armchair without a shirt.

Behind him, a tattoo artist was tattooing some strange markings on his back as well as his chest.

“This can be washed off in future, right?” asked Jiang Ning.

“That’s right, Mr Jiang. I can guarantee that once it’s been properly washed off, your skin will look like it had never been tattooed before,” said the tattoo artist respectfully.

Being able to provide a service to Jiang Ning was the greatest honor of his life.

“Alright, wait for me to return then.” Jiang Ning nodded.

The tattoo artist nodded profusely and said that he would definitely be waiting in Donghai for Jiang Ning to return.

The map of the nine pages had already been carefully sorted out, and the message on it had also been decoded. So all this information was encrypted again and was now being tattooed on Jiang Ning!

He couldn’t bring the pages of the manual in, and

after thinking about it, he didn't want to bring them in either.

He wasn't very clear on the situation behind the mountain gate right now even though the cemetery caretaker had told him quite a bit. Jiang Ning could tell that the cemetery caretaker wasn't high ranking in the sect at all.

So the things he knew and the information he was privy to was limited.

Even though the scope was quite different, rules were the same anywhere. Jiang Ning knew this very well.

The tattoo was done.

Jiang Ning stood in front of the mirror and looked at the green lines all over himself that made him look like a ferocious monster, especially with that pair of eyes on his chest. This green monster seemed to come to life immediately!

"Yuzhen probably doesn't like this sort of thing. I'll wash it off once I'm back," he said to himself in the mirror.



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Jiang Ning was worried that Lin Yuzhen would dislike this and even feel afraid of it, but this was the best way at the moment for Jiang Ning to carry all the information from the manual in case of an emergency.

Jiang Ning left the actual pages back at the Extreme Martial Arts Academy in Donghai for Tan Xing and the rest to chew on.

No matter what happened, he had to at least increase the general skill level of the martial arts circle.

Jiang Ning took the clothes he left on the side and put them back on to cover the tattoos on his body well.

There was much preparation to be made before entering the mountain gate. Jiang Ning wasn't going to take risks rashly. He wasn't afraid, since the word 'fear' didn't exist in his vocabulary.

But his motive for entering the mountain gate was very clear. He needed to get the antidote and revive Lin Yuzhen.

Everything else had already been arranged, so the last thing he needed to do was to have a meal with his family.

He had to talk to them properly and bid them farewell properly. That should be the way.

Nobody knew whether the next day would come first or if an unforeseen accident would occur first.

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“These are all your favorites. When you come back, I’ll cook them for you again.” Su Mei’s eyes were all red and she didn’t want to say anything sad, so she kept a smile on her face as well. But she knew that this trip that Jiang Ning was taking this time round would be filled with great dangers.

She wanted to stop Jiang Ning, because if something terrible happened to Jiang Ning as well, then she wouldn’t be able to take it.

But she knew that Jiang Ning had to go.

He wasn’t going to let Lin Yuzhen just lie on the bed like this. He wanted to see Lin Yuzhen back as her energetic and lively self again, and he wanted to see his beautiful child be born, to bring even more joy and happiness to this house.

“Mum, you have to learn a few more dishes. Once Yuzhen wakes up, she’s going to be so hungry,” said Jiang Ning with a laugh. “Also, I heard that children need certain things in their diet as they grow older. There’s so much to consider and it really makes my head spin. I’ll have to leave this to you, Mum.”

“We’ve got to get ready in advance and do our homework first.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll take care of that. I’ll get everything ready and make sure your child is well fed and happy, ok?”

“Ok.” Jiang Ning nodded and focused on eating. When Su Mei was in the kitchen washing up, he left the house.

Several hours later.

Back at Mount Zhongnan.

They were back outside the mountain gate.

The cemetery caretaker stood there and looked at this familiar place where he had spent many years before and sighed.

“The move I taught you will be able to prove that you’re from the Qingshan Sect, you just need to display it when you need to,” he instructed. “I don’t know if the Extreme Fist Manual Technique is blessing or a curse, but once you reveal anything about it, some people might attempt to kill you, so you must be very, very careful.”

“Also, only the highest ranked people in the sect would have the antidote, so even if you manage to infiltrate Qingshan Sect, you still have to be careful. If anyone finds out your real identity, they’ll definitely kill you!”

Even though Jiang Ning was very powerful and extremely gifted, the universe behind the mountain gate was completely different. It was a martial arts world that was at a much higher level compared to the martial arts circle on this side of the gate.

The cemetery caretaker still had much reverence for that more superior martial arts world.

“Perhaps you know that the best fighters of the martial arts circle in this world eventually tried to enter this mountain gate. But after all these years,

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I've never heard of anyone who managed to survive the world inside and become successful. Do you know what I'm trying to say?"

Jiang Ning nodded.

He understood that.

It meant that survival was going to be the biggest challenge to him.

The best fighters back then were also extremely powerful.

All of them called the shots within the martial arts circle and were all mighty giants in their own right. But after they went in, there was no more news about them. Either they were dead, or they were barely surviving.

"I understand. I'll get the antidote and come right back."

Jiang Ning wasn't very curious about the world behind the gate and didn't dream of going there.

He just wanted to get the antidote and come home so that he could be by his wife and child's side. This was more meaningful than being some invincible warrior or being rich and powerful.

"Jiang Ning." The cemetery caretaker took a deep breath and looked at Jiang Ning seriously. There was a complicated look in his eyes. "I hope you come back alive."



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With that, the cemetery caretaker took a deep breath and stretched an arm out to slam it hard against the ground. In an instant, the entire ground started shaking!

The whole place shook violently as if an earthquake was happening.

He looked at the mountain peak not too far from them and yelled, "Go!

Jiang Ning did not hesitate as he tapped his foot on the ground and flew out like the wind.

The corner in the shadows looked like a gate that was opening, so he didn't hesitate and flew right into the shadows to disappear without a trace.

"Phew..." The cemetery caretaker's face was red and he instantly started coughing violently. Fang Qiu ran over to support him.

"I'm fine, I'm fine." He panted slightly. "Take all the pages back and hide them away."

He looked at the mountain gate with mixed emotions, because he didn't know what Jiang Ning would run into on the other side. The gate had been opened after all, and he just hoped that those demons wouldn't be able to come out.

Meanwhile.

On the other side of the gate, Jiang Ning felt that his vision was a little blurry when suddenly a strong light hit him and he raised his arms to block it.

“Why are you back?” a voice rang out beside him.

Jiang Ning opened his eyes and the first person he saw was a young man in a long robe. He looked very young and was possibly still in his teens.

Jiang Ning nearly asked if this boy knew him.

But he didn't say anything and just looked around him. He was still surrounded by mountainous forests, but it looked very foreign to him. And even the air seemed...different from the world outside.

The young man was sweeping the floor with a broom and made a face when he saw that Jiang Ning had just ignored him.

“We're all Sinners, so even though you might be a veteran around here, you don't have to be so arrogant, right?”

Sinners?

Jiang Ning frowned slightly. “What's your name.”

“My gosh, just because I said you're a veteran, you really think you're one?” The young man was instantly displeased by Jiang Ning's tone of voice and started to speak sarcastically, “You haven't been called back by the sect after so many years and you still dare to throw your weight around in front of me?”

PAK!

He flung the broom in his hand at the ground in front of Jiang Ning and scoffed. “You can sweep this area, make sure you don’t leave any of the leaves behind here, otherwise don’t blame me for punishing you severely!”

He continued to just glare at Jiang Ning, especially after he saw the mark on the back of Jiang Ning’s hand that signified his sentence as a Sinner, and smirked disdainfully.

There were differences between Sinners too.

He had only committed a small mistake and was relegated to this damned place. But once his sentence was complete, he could return to the sect. Meanwhile, this Jiang Ning had the mark of a Sinner who had been sentenced to life!

This fellow wanted to be arrogant?

Dream on!

“I asked, what’s your name?” Jiang Ning ignored the broom completely and continued to stare at the young man. “Answer me.”

“Enough of this nonsense!” The young man was instantly infuriated. This Jiang Ning really thought he was somebody around here? How dare he speak like this to him?

Didn’t Jiang Ning know what sort of status a Sinner like him had around here?

He reached out to push Jiang Ning, but Jiang Ning suddenly grabbed his wrist and exerted a

little strength. The young man instantly paled.

“Ah...ahh!! How dare you try to hurt me?!” he yelled and tried to pull his arm away to fight back, only to find that he couldn’t get his arm out from Jiang Ning’s iron grip.

PAK!

Jiang Ning slapped the young man hard across the face. “I’m asking you a question!”

This slap was fierce and Jiang Ning’s shout was terrifying. The young man was filled with horror and he nearly peed himself.

“You...you...my name...is Zhou Yun,” stuttered the young man. “Wh-what...are you trying to do?!”

“Zhou Yun.” Jiang Ning frowned slightly. “This name sounds repulsive.”

He let go of the young man and couldn’t be bothered to deal with him. Didn’t the cemetery caretaker say that everyone within the mountain was part of a sect and there were highly skilled fighters everywhere?

This young fellow wasn’t some highly skilled fighter at all and seemed more like a small time hooligan. He was even worse off than some of those gangsters who used to roam Donghai’s streets.

Zhou Yun rubbed his wrist. For a moment, he had really been afraid that Jiang Ning might exert a little more strength and break his wrist.



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Jiang Ning was so formidable, but he had been sentenced to become a Sinner and was being made to do menial work here.

He looked at Jiang Ning but didn't dare to say anything. He reluctantly picked up the broom he had flung to the ground again and swept the leaves while wondering exactly who Jiang Ning was.

There were only two types of people in the sect who would be relegated to this place. Besides Outer Court disciples like himself who were taken into the sect at an older age, the other group was...

He suddenly froze on the spot and gulped as he looked a little fearfully at Jiang Ning.

“Don't tell me...you're a senior from the Portico of the sect?!”

The sects here split the disciples into the Portico, Inner Court and Outer Court. He was someone from the Outer Court and wasn't eligible to be part of the Inner Court at all. Becoming a member of the Inner Court was something to be proud of.

As for the Portico, only the most gifted disciples were eligible to be members.

Zhou Yun had heard some time back about how more than ten members of the Portico had committed a huge mistake and were made Sinners. They had been sent to this secluded place and stayed here for a few decades!

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In fact, apparently two of them had already died too...

This fellow was pretty highly skilled, so could he have been one of those Portico disciples?

When he thought about it this way, Zhou Yun immediately put a smile on his face and looked ingratiatingly at Jiang Ning.

“Senior? Did you just return?”

Jiang Ning glanced at him and really didn't like this fair weathered sort of person.

He had no idea how he had gone from being a Sinner to a Senior.

It was clear that the cemetery caretaker had been outside for too many years and there were many things he didn't know about anymore.

“Just back,” said Jiang Ning coldly.

Zhou Yun was now sure that Jiang Ning was really one of the Portico disciples that had been sentenced to this place!

That made Jiang Ning a big shot to Zhou Yun. Zhou Yun was going to make friends with anybody with a higher status than himself, even if this person was only from the Inner Court.

Zhou Yun was even more eager and quickly bowed before Jiang Ning. “Senior, if you have any instructions, I'll get it done for you!”

NH

This guy changed his attitude faster than the weather.

Jiang Ning glanced at him and said quietly, "I want to return to the sect. Can you help me?"

Zhou Yun froze for a while.

Return to the sect?

Did that mean Jiang Ning had already been exiled from the sect and was no longer a Portico disciple?

This sudden change came too quickly for Zhou Yun.

He had just decided to become friends with Jiang Ning and to butter him up so that Jiang Ning could help him in the future. But it seemed like Jiang Ning was in a worse predicament than himself now.

Zhou Yun knew that once a disciple had become a Sinner, they would be punished for a few months or even a few years on average and that was it. But if one was exiled from the sect, then it would be hard to return to the sect.

The only way was to re-enter the sect and start from being an Outer Court disciple, then slowly work your way back into the Portico. That was ridiculously difficult!

His expression immediately looked a little awkward and he wasn't sure whether he ought to be polite to Jiang Ning or completely ignore him.

NH

Even if Jiang Ning managed to get back into the sect, his fellow seniors and juniors would despise him and would even secretly trip him over. After all, every additional member meant a fewer resources for everyone.

Nobody wanted to see that others were doing better than themselves. That was an unspoken sentiment among everyone in the sect.

“Hoho, Senior, you must be kidding. It shouldn’t be difficult for someone at your level to return to the sect,” said Zhou Yun with an awkward laugh. “You wouldn’t need my help.”

“I really do need your help,” said Jiang Ning.

He had just arrived in this place and wasn’t familiar with this universe at all, so he didn’t even know the rules of Qingshan Sect at all. He had to conceal his identity and find a way to infiltrate the sect and get the antidote from the highest ranks of the sect, so this looked like the only way.

“If you can help me to return to the sect, then I’ll owe you a favor,” said Jiang Ning as he looked at Zhou Yun. “If you need my help for anything in the future, you can just say the word.”

A favor?

It was easy to write a blank check.



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Jiang Ning didn't know why, but he felt disgusted when he heard Zhou Yun's name.

The two of them had only just known each other, yet Zhou Yun changed his tune three times. He was clearly someone who only sided with those in power.

Jiang Ning didn't trust people like him at all, so he didn't feel bad about using them.

Jiang Ning trusted his gut instinct.

Zhou Yun was instantly delighted to hear what Jiang Ning said. A favor?

He could tell Jiang Ning was rather capable. After all, he used to be a Portico disciple. So, how bad could his skills be?

If Jiang Ning returned to the sect as a Portico disciple, Zhou Yun was in luck!

"Even if my chances are slim, it still beats doing menial labor in the Outer Court for the rest of my life, right?"

Zhou Yun looked like he was in deep thought for a while, but he had already come to a decision and instantly knelt to say respectfully, "I am willing to do anything for you, Senior. I will even go to the ends of the earth!"

He looked so ingratiating that he resembled a dog wagging its tail.

Jiang Ning certainly knew what he was thinking in

his heart.

Jiang Ning had never been wrong when it came to judging another person's character.

He reached his hand out and patted Zhou Yun's head like a dog. "You won't regret your decision."

The moment he finished his sentence, hurried footsteps could be heard coming from afar.

Jiang Ning raised his head to see a middle-aged man walking over with an anxious look on his face. "Zhou Yun, what are you doing here? It's time to assemble!"

He seemed to have just noticed Jiang Ning, and frowned slightly. In his impression, he had never seen Jiang Ning here before. However, he noticed the mark on Jiang Ning's hand and decided that he might have gotten sent here before his time here.

"And you! Hurry up, come along!"

Many people were sent here as Sinners, so how could he remember all of them? Some of them had even come here before he had.

"This is the new Disciplinary Hall disciplinary master, Mr He," said Zhou Yun softly as he reminded Jiang Ning. "Don't offend him!"

Since Jiang Ning was sent here much earlier, he might not have met the new disciplinary master yet.

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Although a disciplinary master didn't mean much to Portico disciples, Jiang Ning was now a Sinner. He wasn't even considered an Outer Court disciple, so he couldn't offend the disciplinary master the moment he reported for duty.

“Mr He, what's going on? Why the huge rush? Did someone get punished again?”

“What punishment?”

Mr He glared at him. He clearly didn't fancy the likes of Zhou Yun very much. “All of you are needed, so hurry up and follow me!”

Then he turned and left.

Zhou Yun twitched his lips. He had been giving Mr He many things of late. Even though he couldn't bear to part with his collection of novelty items, he reluctantly gave up his stuff in the hope that he could live under better conditions or leave earlier.

“We'd better hurry. The only thing Mr He knows how to do is to lose his temper, so don't piss him off!” said Zhou Yun as he turned to look at Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning didn't say anything. He could tell what kind of person Zhou Yun was from the way he badmouthed the disciplinary master the moment he left.

Many people had gathered in a courtyard nearby.

These people were Sinners too. They were sent to do menial labor based on the severity of their

infractions.

Mr He was standing in front of everyone else.
“Quiet!”

The courtyard fell silent.

Jiang Ning stood among the people. He didn't draw too much attention to himself since everyone only cared about themselves.

“Third Miss needs a sparring partner!”

Mr He went straight to the point.

The moment he said that, everyone's faces instantly turned pale.

They thought it was going to be good news. Then again, why would they get any good news?



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Zhou Yun felt the same way. His throat felt a little dry from anxiety.

“Third Miss?”

He looked as though he had heard the name of a ghost and couldn't help exclaiming in shock. He quickly covered his mouth and instinctively stepped back to stand behind Jiang Ning.

“We don't need a lot of people this time. Just one.” Mr He said impatiently, “This is your chance to show how good you are. If Third Miss likes you, you don't have to serve your sentence here. You might even get the chance to be sent to the Portico and the Inner Court!”

Despite his shouting, no one believed him.

Everyone knew how Mr He said the same thing the last few times. But look what happened?

None of the people who went came back. It wasn't because Third Miss liked them and got them to stay, but because they all died!

Third Miss was violent by nature and a good fighter. Every time she was in a bad mood, she wanted to fight. Even Inner Court and Portico disciples took detours to avoid her. But since they were merely Sinners, nobody dared to say anything even if she beat them to death.

“This is a good chance. It won't always happen. If you don't offer your services, you might not encounter this opportunity again,” said Mr He loudly. “If you are interested, then step forward. I

won't decide for you!"

He was having such a hard time. Third Miss wanted to beat someone to death but insisted on someone good looking, highly skilled, and worse still, a willing party!

Who the hell would volunteer to die?

Mr He felt as though his head was swelling. If he could pick someone, he would have done it already. It didn't matter if they got beaten to death.

But Third Miss said he couldn't force them against their will...

She wanted to beat someone to death. Wasn't that considered forcing someone against their will?

Mr He scoured the place. He noticed everyone inching backward. They didn't dare to make eye contact with him out of fear he might single them out.

If he could do make the decision, he wouldn't have to waste his time here.

"Look, you might be Sinners, but you are still Qingshan Sect disciples. This is a rare opportunity and a stepping stone! This is your chance to move up the ladder. If you refuse, then all is lost! You won't get a second chance!"

Mr He did all he could to convince them, but no one stepped up.

Everyone was determined not to go. They looked as though they would rather spend their life here than die at Third Miss' hands.

"If we get taken there, we will definitely die."

Zhou Yun shook his head. "No one has ever come back alive."

"I will go."

Just as he was about to remind Jiang Ning to step back, a voice suddenly rang by his ear.

Zhou Yun was instantly stunned.

It was Jiang Ning!

Did he want to go?

He must be insane!

"Senior, Third Miss is..."

Zhou Yun felt anxious. Jiang Ning was his hope, but he was now recklessly sending himself to his death. He must be crazy, right?

"You?"

gestured for everyone to keep quiet, so Zhou Yun didn't dare to speak.

"Are you a willing participant? This is completely voluntary. Third Miss doesn't want to make things difficult for anyone. You have to know this."

He felt delighted that he finally found this dumbass. Now that his problem was solved, he could relax.

“Yup, I’m willing to go. I wasn't forced by Third Miss.”

Jiang Ning nodded. It sounded just like he always told Brother Gou to convince others by example and never force them.

“It is my honor to be her sparring partner.”

Jiang Ning was not about to let this perfect opportunity pass. If he continued staying here, god knew when he would make it inside the sect.

Lin Yuzhen didn't have that much time, and he didn't want to keep her waiting.

“You are very sensible!”

Mr He gave Jiang Ning a thumbs up and couldn't help praising Jiang Ning. But he sneered in his heart at what a fool Jiang Ning was. He was bound to regret this after he met Third Miss.

But it had nothing to do with him. The death of a Sinner meant nothing. He was just doing his job.

“What's your name?” asked Mr He. He was asking so that he could at least add Jiang Ning’s name to his own grave as a reward for his bravado.



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“Jiang Ning,” he replied calmly.

Jiang Ning’s name swiftly spread throughout the jail.

Everyone looked at him like he was some weirdo. There was pity and gloating in their eyes. Didn’t this goon know what sort of person Third Miss was?

She was the sect leader’s daughter!

Despite being the youngest, she had a volatile temper. She wanted to fight every time she was unhappy.

All the Inner Court and Portico disciples knew this and didn’t dare to spar with her. Fortunately, she was a reasonable person and never forced anyone.

She only fought with willing parties. However, someone had to fight her when she felt like it.

“You are pretty brave, young man. I have high hopes for you.”

Mr He nodded and acted impressed when he was actually looking at Jiang Ning like he was a dead man.

“Let’s go.”

Jiang Ning couldn’t be bothered to talk to him.

All he thought about was how to enter Qingshan Sect’s uppermost levels at the fastest speed to

obtain the antidote. He didn't care about anything else.

Mr He smiled profoundly as he glanced at Jiang Ning curiously before shaking his head.

He seemed to be looking at Jiang Ning with some pity and surprise.

How could anyone be so eager to die?

“Enough. Go back to your business, everyone.”

Mr He waved his hand before taking Jiang Ning with him.

Zhou Yun watched Jiang Ning leave and his mouth was still half open.

“He...he must be insane!”

Was he in a hurry to die?

Didn't he say he wanted to return to the sect? Why was he going on this suicide mission?

Zhou Yun finally found a perfect opportunity, but it disappeared before it could reap any fruit.

Mr He walked with his hands behind him. He led Jiang Ning up the mountain for some way before entering Qingshan Sect through its side entrance.

Jiang Ning said nothing and followed quietly behind Mr He.

He felt that Qingshan Sect was huge. The whole

mountain probably belonged to them. It was surrounded by high walls over ten meters tall and tall mountain trees, which gave off a quaint flavor.

The place resembled Mount Zhongnan yet differed greatly.

Jiang Ning didn't have the time to study the environment as Mr He was walking too quickly. He seemed worried about keeping Third Miss waiting and kept turning to hurry Jiang Ning.

After going through eight doors and making dozens of turns on the corridor, Jiang Ning detected a floral fragrance.

It was the smell of the Osmanthus flower.

A large space was in front of them with Osmanthus trees planted all around it. The strong smell of the flowers wafted through the air.

A girl stood at the center of the empty space with her back facing Jiang Ning and her hands behind her. She was dressed in her training gear with her hair done up in a ponytail and seemed particularly confident.

“Third Miss, he's here,” said Mr He after he stepped forward and bowed, “He volunteered to spar with you.”

He had to clarify that Jiang Ning was a volunteer, and he didn't defy her orders and force someone to fight.

“Okay, good.”

She turned her head to reveal a young and tender face. Despite looking somewhat green, she distinctly gave off an arrogant and smug aura.

Mr He waved, and Jiang Ning walked over.

She went into a daze when she saw Jiang Ning standing there. She seemed a little surprised when she saw Jiang Ning's face.

"Humph. You're quite good looking. What mistake did you commit? Why did you become a Sinner?"

She hadn't met anyone as handsome as Jiang Ning in the sect before. He wasn't a pretty boy and she couldn't put her finger on it, but she just felt that he was good looking.

He had a face that made her keep staring at him.

"Third Miss just asked you a question," reminded Mr He softly when Jiang Ning didn't reply.

"I don't feel like saying it," said Jiang Ning.

He was expressionless and seemed unemotional, so it was impossible to tell how he felt.

"You brat..."

Mr He instantly got anxious when he heard this.

How dare he show such an attitude in front of Third Miss?!



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Was he tired of living or something?

“If Third Miss wants to spar, let's get on with it now. I have to go back after we are done.”

Mr He was stunned.

Did he think he would get to go back?

Never!

Third Miss wanted to fight because she was in a bad mood. She had never lost a fight before.

Everyone who fought a winner like her either ended up dead or wounded. They could only consider themselves unlucky. But Jiang Ning thought he would be able to go back?

Sure, he'd go back horizontally to be buried.

“You seem to despise me.”

Third Miss' expression darkened when she heard this and she stared at Jiang Ning a lot more coldly.

She only wanted a human sandbag because she was in a bad mood and wanted to vent her steam. She didn't expect such an insensitive man to come.

“Certainly not. Aren't we just sparring? It's my honor.”

Jiang Ning reached one hand out while he placed the other one behind him. Then Third Miss' face

NH

started to redden in anger.

He must be joking, right?

Did he want to use only one hand?

He was definitely tired of living!

How could this Sinner have the confidence to look down on her like this? Even if her father criticized her for not practicing martial arts diligently, she was still undefeated in the Inner Court!

“You’re asking for it!” she shouted. Then she attacked Jiang Ning without giving him a chance to speak.

She was in a bad mood to begin with, so she took it all out on Jiang Ning.

Mr He hurriedly stepped back when he saw them fighting. He didn’t dare to offend this little demon.

Jiang Ning stood where he was as though he was startled and didn't know how to react. He let her hands come charging at him viciously without doing anything.

“Aren’t you going to dodge?”

Third Miss bit her lip and felt offended.

What did Jiang Ning mean by this? Wasn’t he obviously looking down on her?

How could he just stand there without dodging?

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Then he couldn't blame her for attacking!

BAM!

Her hand almost touched Jiang Ning's face when she attacked, but it suddenly halted in midair when she was just half a centimeter away.

Jiang Ning reached his hand out and placed her wrist in an iron grip. She was incapable of moving an inch!

"You..."

Her face flushed crimson. She struggled to break free, but her hands were in a pincer-like grip, and she was unable to free herself.

"Third Miss, your fists are too soft." Jiang Ning shook his head. "If this is how you spar, then it's rather boring."

His words instantly made her blush. A murderous air instantly swept through her eyes, along with a tinge of indignation

"You're waiting to get killed!" yelled Third Miss. She used her other hand to slap Jiang Ning on the face hard.

There were no martial arts involved since she simply wanted to slap Jiang Ning. However, her hands halted in midair as Jiang Ning grabbed them.

"You asshole!" Third Miss was exasperated. Since Jiang Ning was holding onto both her hands, she

NH

hurriedly attempted a kick. However, Jiang Ning was simply much too fast for her. He hooked her leg and she yelped before falling to the ground and groaning in pain.

Mr He stood by the side and witnessed the scene. He was so frightened that his mustache nearly stood erect, and his heart was in his mouth!

Was Jiang Ning trying to get himself killed?

How dare he hurt Third Miss?

“Stop!” shouted Mr He as he hurried over and pointed at Jiang Ning. “How dare you hurt Third Miss!”

He glared at Jiang Ning. “I will definitely punish you severely!”

Mr He hurriedly helped Third Miss up as he anxiously asked, “Third Miss, are you okay?”

He really got the shock of his life!

She was the Qingshan Sect leader’s favorite child. If she got so much as a scratch, Jiang Ning would probably get Mr He in trouble.

This dumbass turned out to have some pretty good moves. But why didn’t he know that he should give in to Third Miss?

“How could I possibly hurt her?” asked Jiang Ning calmly.



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Jiang Ning sounded calm as his face remained serious. He appeared completely harmless and honest.

“How could he possibly hurt me?”

Third Miss flung Mr He’s hand away and glared at him.

How could Mr He say Jiang Ning was going to hurt her?

She started to sulk because she was already in a bad mood and wanted to find someone to vent her anger out on, but ended up losing instead.

How could she allow that to happen?

Mr He nodded quickly. “Of course, of course. How can a Sinner be capable of hurting Third Miss? I have said the wrong thing.” He had an awkward look on his face.

Third Miss had such an odd temperament that he would rather serve the sect leader and face the sect elders than serve her.

Mr He looked at Jiang Ning as he struggled to make eye contact and signal him to stay sharp and not to provoke Third Miss.

“Since Third Miss wanted to share some pointers with me, I will naturally go all out.”

Jiang Ning was deliberately singing a different tune. “I am showing her respect. You mean I should purposely go easy on Third Miss?”

NH

Mr He was going insane. He was dying to slap Jiang Ning to death.

What was he saying?

Mr He could distinctly see Third Miss becoming angry. She looked like she was on the verge of blowing up.

“Then let's see how good you are when you go all out!”

She could no longer bear it and almost wanted to explode.

She wanted to go easy on Jiang Ning, considering how good-looking he was. But he turned out to be so infuriating. Every word he said seemed to strike her weakest points.

She was furious!

Third Miss raised her hand and attacked. Mr He hurriedly dodged to one side. In his heart, he was hoping she could beat this annoying Jiang Ning to death.

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

Third Miss was furious, so she attacked viciously without holding back. Her punches headed for Jiang Ning even more quickly than before.

However, Jiang Ning stood motionlessly as though he was scared out of his wits.

Mr He's eyes constricted. Since he was the overseer of the Disciplinary Hall, he was a good fighter too, and he could tell that there was something different about Jiang Ning.

Just as her punches were about to touch Jiang Ning's chest, he suddenly moved!

He used the same move and tactic!

CRAACK!

Jiang Ning swiftly reached his hand out and grabbed her wrist. In an instant, she couldn't move anymore.

"You..."

She felt humiliated after falling for the same stunt twice.

Third Miss was furious!

She struggled to wrest her hand free but it was futile.

She was incapable of hitting Jiang Ning, let alone teach him a lesson.

"Let go!" Her eyes turned red, and her heart was filled with indignation suddenly. "I told you to let go!"

Jiang Ning released her. Energy was still coursing

through her blow, so she hit Jiang Ning's chest with a thud, but he stood motionlessly.

Third Miss was stunned.

"Third Miss, you won."

Jiang Ning two steps back. He reached his hand out to shrug and admit to losing.

But Third Miss bit her lip because to her, Jiang Ning was clearly being patronizing and humiliating!

"Enough, enough. Third Miss, you've won," said Mr He quickly, "Why don't we call it a day, Third Miss..."

"Shut up!" she roared angrily.

Even her body trembled.

Mr He's words made her even angrier.

Did Mr He force Jiang Ning to lose?

She was the youngest daughter of Qingshan Sect leader, Liu Qing. How could she lose to a Sinner?

If word got out, she would be disgraced!

Mr He quickly shut his mouth when Liu Qing scolded him. He glanced at Jiang Ning angrily, thinking he had to kill him one day. Why did he have to offend this little demon king?

"What's your name?" asked Liu Qing.

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“Jiang Ning, his name is Jiang Ning,” said Mr He.

“Was I asking you?”



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Liu Qing scoffed. Mr He hurriedly covered his mouth with his hand and smiled apologetically. Then he took two steps back and stopped interrupting.

If he interrupted them again, then he must be the dumbest person in the world.

“Jiang Ning,” said Jiang Ning. “Third Miss, you’ve already won. Can I go back now?”

“Go back?” Liu Qing smiled coldly. “Do you think you can still go back?”

She waved her hand and turned to look at Mr He. “I’ll take him.”

Mr He still had his hand over his mouth. He shook his head in surprise.

Since Jiang Ning was a Sinner, he still had to be punished. He hadn't figured out how Jiang Ning became a Sinner to begin with, so he couldn't be released just like that.

It was one thing if he died from a beating. It wasn't the same if he were alive and well.

“Do you mean I can't have him?” Liu Qing frowned. “Do I have to ask my father?”

Mr He hurriedly shook his head again, then nodded before anxiously removing his hands from his mouth, “Third Miss, you can keep him if you want to. There's no need to tell the sect leader. It's just that he is a Sinner. What if he gets violent...”

“Would he have the guts?” Liu Qing shouted, “We are in Qingshan Sect and he is our Sinner. Would he dare make trouble in the sect?”

She walked up to Jiang Ning and looked up slightly as she deliberately stared at him. “Would you?”

Jiang Ning didn't respond.

Nothing he said now would be the right thing to say.

Jiang Ning had roughly figured out Liu Qing's personality during this short span of time.

Jiang Ning had seen his fair share of willful and entitled young women from prestigious families.

It was useless to agree with everything they said. Instead, it would be wiser to touch her sensitive points to infuriate her and make her indignant.

“Third Miss, you are right. We are in Qingshan Sect, so I doubt he will dare to try anything funny!”

Mr He deliberately glanced at Jiang Ning. He sounded harsh and threatening.

He didn't dare go on talking in front of Liu Qing. The more he spoke, the more mistakes he made. If he made her angry, she might just make him stay too, and that certainly wasn't good news to him.

Mr He turned to leave. On his way out, he instructed the bodyguards to watch Jiang Ning

carefully to make sure he didn't try anything funny.

Other than their bodyguards around the courtyard, only Jiang Ning and Liu Qing remained.

Liu Qing said nothing. She walked around Jiang Ning several times with her hands behind her back. Other than humming a few times, she didn't say a word.

She stood in front of Jiang Ning and narrowed her eyes slightly. "I don't care how you became a Sinner, or if you were a Portico or Inner Circle disciple. I want you to know that you offended the wrong person."

Liu Qing scoffed. She stepped forward and went close to Jiang Ning before she looked into his eyes. She suddenly felt a weird sensation but couldn't put her finger on it.

"Do you know what happens if you offend me?"

"All humans must eventually die," said Jiang Ning calmly. "You can die for causes as hefty as Mount Tai, or go out as light as a feather."

"Mount Tai?" Liu Qing was a little confused. "What mountain is that?"

Who on earth was this guy? Why did he sound so philosophical? She instantly went into a daze. Even though she didn't know where Mount Tai was, she knew what he meant.

"What I mean is, all of us will die one day. If we die

for great causes, then we would not have lived in vain.”

“So what do you mean? Weren’t you talking about how we end up? Is there something crueller than death?”


Jiang Ning looked at Liu Qing fearlessly. Since he was looking down at her from above, he appeared even more formidable than Liu Qing.


His calm eyes looked like a whirlpool. The more she looked at them, the more Liu Qing felt as though they were pulling her in!

Her heart palpitated suddenly and she only managed to compose herself after a long time. She hurriedly took two steps back, but her heart couldn't help throbbing.

What was this sensation?

Liu Qing stared at Jiang Ning and couldn't help thinking in her heart, “Does this man know magic or something?”

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“Third Miss, we can spar anytime. The day you win, I will go back,” said Jiang Ning calmly.

However, he seemed arrogant from Liu Qing’s perspective!

Liu Qing bit her lip gently as she scoffed in her heart. Then a wicked idea suddenly rose in her heart.

“Do you want to go back?” asked Liu Qing. “If you go back, you will just remain a Sinner. You might not even get summoned back to the sect. Also, who will let you go without my permission? I’m warning you, I’m seriously upset now. If I am unhappy, there’s no way you will have an easy time. Understand?”

She stared at Jiang Ning as she used her status to oppress him.

Liu Qing was hoping to see a look of fury and indignation on Jiang Ning’s face. But she saw none of it.

Jiang Ning remained calm. It felt as though he didn't hear anything she said. He was cold, distant, and seemed devoid of any expression.

Was he a stone or something?

“Humph. I don't like your reaction,” said Liu Qing.

Liu Qing stood with her hands behind her and felt a little angry. In the past, if anyone dared to annoy her, she would have ordered for him to be cut into pieces and fed to the dogs.

She inexplicably found him intriguing instead.

She didn't even know why she thought this was interesting.

Jiang Ning's sudden appearance was like a dense fog and felt oddly strange to her.

"From now on, you will stay with me and spar with me whenever I please. I will let you go when I win you," sneered Liu Qing, "You better not have any wise ideas. Or else..."

A murderous aura swept through the air!

In Qingshan Sect, her fury was even more severe than when the sect leader got angry. Everyone in the sect knew that.

"Don't worry. I won't have any wise ideas about you," said Jiang Ning.

The moment Jiang Ning said this, Liu Qing became so angry that she almost couldn't catch her breath. She was dying to get him executed.

Did he not have any wise ideas about her?

Was he trying to get her attention this way?

However, judging from Jiang Ning's expression, it seemed more honest than deliberate.

Liu Qing became even angrier.

She said coldly, "Come with me."

She turned and walked off. Jiang Ning said nothing as he followed behind her.

Jiang Ning had already observed such childishness in Su Yun before. However, Liu Qing wasn't a smooth talker like Su Yun, probably because Liu Qing led a pampered life.

Su Yun came from a humble family while Liu Qing was the Qingshan Sect leader's precious daughter, so their personalities ended up different.

Jiang Ning decided to break into Qingshan Sect's highest ranks through Liu Qing to get hold of the antidote.

His objective was clear and he wasn't in the mood to play with a kid.

Nothing was more important than Lin Yuzhen. Even if Jiang Ning had to play the villain to save her, he would do it without hesitation.

He followed behind Liu Qing without saying a word like a bodyguard.

Liu Qing didn't say anything either. She was contemplating how to get back at Jiang Ning. If she didn't seek revenge for the humiliation she suffered at his hands, she would become a laughingstock.

Liu Qing could tell that Jiang Ning was highly skilled. Or else he wouldn't have been able to subdue her so quickly.

She wasn't too bad herself and was an Inner Circle disciple.

Although she couldn't compare to those talented Portico disciples, she was not too bad. Since Jiang Ning was better than her, he was probably one of those Portico elders' disciples.

But she hadn't heard about any of those disciples becoming a Sinner.

But Liu Qing didn't care about all this now.

Even if Jiang Ning fell from the sky, she couldn't swallow the insult. She simply had to teach him a lesson!



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A bodyguard quickly ran over as Liu Qing left with Jiang Ning.

“Third Miss, the sect leader has a message for you.”

“Humph. Hasn’t he had enough of scolding me? Did he send someone to punish me too?” Liu Qing was even angrier. She glanced at Jiang Ning.

“While he’s at it, go ahead and make me a Sinner!”

“Third Miss, please calm down,” said the bodyguard respectfully. “The sect leader said if you don’t pass the next test, you will...”

“Then what?”

“Then you will be sent to the Outer Court and start with the basics to build your foundation,” said the bodyguard cautiously. Since it was the sect leader’s orders, he had to tell Liu Qing word for word.

He took two steps back and lowered his head. If Liu Qing wanted to hit him, she would be going easy if she only slapped him a couple of times.

Liu Qing didn’t say anything. She bit her lip hard resentfully but felt mostly indignant.

She had just gotten bullied by Jiang Ning, and now even her father was bullying her too. Was he going to demote her to the Outer Court if she failed the test?

Everyone in Qingshan Sect would laugh at her!

She would rather become a Sinner!

“It's just a test.” Before Liu Qing said a word, Jiang Ning shook his head mockingly. “It's a breeze for Third Miss to pass it. Go back and tell the sect leader that Third Miss is aiming higher than the Inner Court.”

The bodyguard was stunned.

Liu Qing was equally shocked. She looked at Jiang Ning in a daze and thought she heard wrongly.

What was he saying?

Didn't he know how hard the test was?

Even almost half the Inner Court disciples failed the test!

If Jiang Ning wanted to brag, he should have done it on his own instead of implicating Liu Qing.

Liu Qing almost wanted to cry.

“And you are?” asked the bodyguard instinctively.

“I am her sparring partner,” replied Jiang Ning. “You can say it to the sect leader word for word. She won't disappoint him.”

The bodyguard didn't believe Jiang Ning at all and just looked at Jiang Ning as though he was some monster. He didn't dare keep asking when he noticed Liu Qing's anger, so he quickly nodded and turned to leave.

After a long time, Liu Qing finally composed herself. She looked at Jiang Ning with a confused expression in her eyes.

“Do you know what you just said? You must have done it on purpose out of vengeance, right? Are you very disappointed that I didn't kill you?”

She wanted to bite Jiang Ning to death as she looked at him!

“Do you mean that you don't have any confidence at all?” said Jiang Ning calmly. “I don't think you will have any problem passing the test.”

“You think? What gives you the right to have an opinion?”

Liu Qing was going nuts.

Liu Qing was on the brink of tears. She would get banished to the Outer Court if she failed. Then her name would be synonymous with embarrassment.

This alone was bad enough. How could Jiang Ning make such bold promises? If her father believed Jiang Ning and harbored any hope, he would end up more disappointed when she failed. Then she would...

“You've gotten me into major trouble!”

Jiang Ning was going to get them both killed now.

“I will help you,” said Jiang Ning calmly in a nonchalant tone, “I meant it when I said you

would pass. It's very easy. You will breeze right through it.”

“You...”

“If I don't, you can kill me,” said Jiang Ning casually.

“If I heard him correctly, you have only one more month to go. Are you still going to waste time?”


He glanced at Liu Qing and waited for her reply.


Liu Qing pursed her lips. She felt as though she had suddenly walked into a trap but had no clue how she ended up here.


One month...

How much improvement could she make in a month? She didn't even pass this test the last few times, and that's why her father criticized her. Could Jiang Ning help her pass in a month?

Only in her dreams!

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Liu Qing looked at Jiang Ning as though they were sworn enemies!

She was dying to rip Jiang Ning apart.

Did this idiot want to perish together with her?

Liu Qing glared at Jiang Ning with her eyes red. She said angrily, "I really want to kill you right now!"

"Regardless of whether you can kill me, what difference would it make?" said Jiang Ning. "You should focus on passing the test. If you trust me, then listen to me, and I guarantee that you'll pass."

"Trust you?"

Liu Qing gritted her teeth. "Why should I trust you? How can you make such guarantees?"

Jiang Ning smiled and showed off his pearly whites.

"Can you find some Inner Court disciples? The ones who can pass the test."

"What are you trying to do?" asked Liu Qing.

She loathed the sight of Jiang Ning now and was dying to kill him.

"Just find them, and I will prove it to you," said Jiang Ning.

"What do you mean?"

Liu Qing looked at Jiang Ning warily. She was the Qingshan Sect leader's daughter and had far higher status than Jiang Ning, but she had a nagging feeling that she had fallen into a trap, and Jiang Ning was in total control of it.

Despite clearly having these feelings, she surprisingly walked in without any protest and had no intention of leaving.

"You will know when you get them to come over," said Jiang Ning.

He didn't offer any explanation.

The simplest solution tended to be the most effective at solving any problem.

Fortunately, Liu Qing was young and inexperienced, and might not even have left Qingshan Sect before. So her thinking was as simple as a piece of white paper.

These sort of girls were particularly easy to deceive.

Jiang Ning had a serious expression on his face. Liu Qing pouted and didn't know what to say.

She didn't seem to have any other choice now either.

A month wasn't a long time. If she failed the test again, her father would certainly chase her to the Outer Court this time.

Liu Qing had witnessed how stern he was before.

If the high and mighty sect leader's daughter got driven to the Outer Court to practice martial arts with mediocre disciples, how was she ever going to hold her head high again?

"I warn you. If I really get demoted to the Outer Court, I will kill you before I go!" said Liu Qing viciously.

Even if it came to that, it was all Jiang Ning's fault. If she failed the test...he was going to get it from her.

Jiang Ning only smiled quietly.

Very quickly, Liu Qing came with the people that Jiang Ning wanted.

She was the sect leader's daughter, so this wasn't a difficult task to her. But the five or six people didn't seem like willing parties and looked worried.

Liu Qing really had quite the reputation.

"Greetings, Third Miss!"

The group greeted her in unison.

"I asked you here because I want to spar with you."

The moment Liu Qing said those words, all of them paled.

They were uncomfortable about having to act like they couldn't surpass her even though they could.

Liu Qing's skills were honestly not as good as theirs. However, she was the sect leader's most beloved baby girl.

“Put away those expressions. I'm not the one you're sparring today.”

Liu Qing felt even more upset when she noticed their expressions. Was it that bad to spar with her?

She suddenly felt a little disappointed and conflicted when she realized that others didn't like her that much.

“Then who will we spar?” someone couldn't help asking.

“Him!” Liu Qing pointed at Jiang Ning. She wondered how she should introduce him. “He's my...my friend!”

She gritted her teeth and glared at Jiang Ning and didn't give him the opportunity to deny it.

“ He says you Inner Court disciples are just paper tigers with subpar skills.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Liu Qing's words instantly made their faces darken.

If Jiang Ning said this to some Outer Court disciples, they would even nod in agreement. However, none of these Inner Court disciples would hear any of it.

"The Inner Court disciples of Qingshan Sect are our pillars of strength. Although he is my friend, I'm offended that he said so."

Liu Qing sounded like she didn't treat Jiang Ning as her friend. "I don't like to just argue about it. I invited you here hoping you could tell him the truth with your fists and show him how good our Inner Court disciples are!"

With just a few words, Liu Qing triggered those Inner Court disciples.

Were their skills subpar?

Some of the women could still tolerate it, but not the men!

"Tsk. Which sect are you from? You sure talk big."

They didn't know who Jiang Ning was and didn't care that he was Liu Qing's friend.

In any case, Liu Qing certainly didn't sound like Jiang Ning was genuinely her friend.

Liu Qing didn't call them over for a friendly match. Instead, she wanted them to teach Jiang Ning unless a lesson!

NH

“You don't have the right to know,” said Jiang Ning as he glanced at them and acted disappointed.

Jiang Ning could tell that Liu Qing had purposely provoked them to make them target him, but he didn't care. That one phrase from him made the anger they had suppressed inside instantly explode!

They didn't have the right to know?

They were Qingshan Sect's Inner Court disciples. All of them became grandmasters at such a young age. Some of them rapidly reached advanced grandmaster level too. They were evidently talented.

But Jiang Ning said they weren't good enough to know his name?

He was simply too arrogant!

“You are way too arrogant!”

SWOOSH!

A silhouette stepped forward and bowed, “I am Zhu Qi. I would like to spar with you and see how powerful you are!”

Jiang Ning shook his head.

“What do you mean?”

Zhu Qi was at a loss.

“Are you afraid?”

NH

Jiang Ning reached a finger out and pointed at Zhu Qi before pointing at the others. "Attack together. Stop wasting my time."

Even Liu Qing was stunned.

He was too damned arrogant!

Who on earth was Jiang Ning?

Wasn't he just a Sinner?

Even if he used to be a Portico disciple, he shouldn't be so arrogant. The people she brought over were all outstanding Inner Court disciples and had already passed the test.

Jiang Ning...was asking to get killed!

Liu Qing bit her lip as she wondered whether she had gone overboard.

Although she hated Jiang Ning, it didn't seem right to stand on the sidelines and let them finish him off.

"Forget it! He deserves it for being so irritating!" Liu Qing scoffed and hesitated for a moment in her heart. But when she thought about Jiang Ning's arrogant expression, she didn't care about him anymore.

SWOOSH!

SWOOSH!

SWOOSH!

All of them stepped forward and surrounded Jiang Ning.

Since Jiang Ning asked for it, they weren't going to hold back!

If Jiang Ning kept a low profile and was more humble, they would go easy on him. But Jiang Ning was cocky and disrespected them, so he had no one to blame but himself.

If they didn't break Jiang Ning's legs, then these Inner Court disciples would have embarrassed the entire sect.

"Young man, you shouldn't act arrogantly. Or else, you might not be able to suffer the consequences." Zhu Qi looked at Jiang Ning. "If you kneel and beg for mercy, we will put an end to this right now. Otherwise...you probably won't be able to walk out of Qingshan Sect standing!"

He clenched his fists and decided that he would give Jiang Ning three seconds.

In three seconds, he would throw Jiang Ning onto the ground!

SWOOSH!

The moment he finished his sentence, Zhu Qi moved in on Jiang Ning. Despite his words, he had no intention of giving Jiang Ning the opportunity to admit defeat. How could he let him off without beating him up hard?



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NH

After all, Zhu Qi was an outstanding Inner Court disciple. Jiang Ning had to pay the price for despising him!

SWOOSH!

Zhu Qi was really fast. He was as fast as lightning!

The other five people reacted quickly. The moment Zhu Qi attacked, they instantly moved in from all sides at the same time.

The only thing on their minds was to maim Jiang Ning!

They were like a net suddenly closing in on Jiang Ning. There was no path to escape!

Liu Qing's chest instantly tightened. They were too vicious.

They were all from Qingshan Sect, so she could tell their moves at once.

Liu Qing had truly triggered these Inner Court disciples, and Jiang Ning had completely provoked them!

Jiang Ning would die!

Did he deserve to die?

In that moment, that thought flashed across Liu Qing's mind. Jiang Ning seemed deserving of death for being arrogant, condescending, and getting her into trouble.

NH

But he wasn't so bad that he deserved to die, right?

Liu Qing wanted to open her mouth and tell them to stop. However, Zhu Qi and the others had already come close to Jiang Ning at a frightening speed!

Jiang Ning stood there like an idiot without moving at all.

“Humph. So you are all talk.”

Contempt flashed from Zhu Qi's eyes as his fists gained speed. He wanted to go easy on Jiang Ning.

How dare Jiang Ning underestimate him?

Jiang Ning had to pay the price for doing so!

Zhu Qi threw his domineering punches viciously on Jiang Ning's face. In a second, this strikingly handsome face would get beaten to a pulp.

Zhu Qi could almost envision the scene.

But suddenly...

Jiang Ning moved!

Before Zhu Qi knew it, Jiang Ning suddenly disappeared.

“Watch out!”

A terrified voice could be heard.

NH

It was the sound of his friends shouting. Why did they sound so terrified like they had seen something scary?

Zhu Qi didn't have time to ponder. Wind swept by his ear. Then something exploded in the air.

BAM!

Despite seeing nothing, there was now a piercing pain in his chest. CRAACK!

Zhu Qi seemed to have broken some bones.

“AHHH!” screamed Zhu Qi as he flew out like a broken kite even more rapidly than the speed of his own attack.

The whole place instantly fell silent.

Liu Qing opened her mouth in shock so wide that an egg could fit inside.

Her face was filled with disbelief. The sight she had witnessed was inconceivable.

How...was this possible?

BAM!

Zhu Qi crashed onto the ground in the distance. He flipped over but was incapable of even standing. He opened his mouth and spat blood out with a crushing pain on his chest.

He looked at Jiang Ning in horror and couldn't get a single word out.

One move!

Did Jiang Ning defeat him in one move?

How could he have done that?

Zhu Qi found it inconceivable.

Zhu Qi was still in a daze and was incapable of composing himself. The rest of his friends who had witnessed the scene felt a rush of adrenaline and were all stunned.

Jiang Ning was the only person who remained calm as though he had done something trivial.

He looked at all of them. "If you won't make a move, I will."

BOOM!

BOOM!

BOOM!

At the drop of his voice, Jiang Ning moved in once again.

Jiang Ning was firm like a pine tree, but the moment he moved, he transformed into wind!

He was like a hurricane no less!

He was simply too fast!

He was so much faster than Zhu Qi and the others that he was completely out of their league.

NH

A shadow flashed before them, then came a few screams of agony. Finally, a few bodies flew into the air and crashed heavily onto the ground almost instantly.

Silence!

The whole place fell silent again!

Liu Qing's face instantly reddened. She covered her mouth with her hand and was so shocked that she nearly shouted out loud.

Oh my goodness!

How could this have happened?

Despite seeing this with her own eyes, she couldn't believe it!

How could...Jiang Ning be so incredible?

He defeated so many Inner Court disciples with a single move. These were even the same disciples who had already passed the test.

What...what on earth was going on?!



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Liu Qing's face turned red, and her heart palpitated so hard that she could hear it...

"That's it?"

Jiang Ning frowned slightly. He glanced around before looking at Zhu Qi and the others. "Is that it?"

His words made Zhu Qi and the others so embarrassed that they wanted to dig a hole and hide themselves.

Jiang Ning was actually somewhat disappointed!

He was surprisingly disappointed that he beat them in one move. How badly did he look down on Zhu Qi?

Zhu Qi's face flushed crimson, but he couldn't say a word. It felt as though there was something stuck in his throat and he didn't even know how to describe the complex feeling in his heart.

He was an Inner Court disciple!

He was even one of the people who had passed the test and stood a high chance of becoming a Portico disciple in the future.

But Jiang Ning defeated him with one move...just one.

"You can't even survive one blow."

Jiang Ning shook his head. "I didn't even use all my strength and you're already defeated."

Zhu Qi could sense his blood rising and almost wanted to vomit blood. He was so upset from hearing Jiang Ning's words that he rolled his eyes and passed out.

"Zhu Qi! Zhu Qi!"

Everyone hurried over and helped Zhu Qi up before pressing on his philtrum hard. After a long time, Zhu Qi finally regained consciousness. He pointed at Jiang Ning but simply couldn't finish his sentence. "You...you..."

Instead, Jiang Ning ignored him.

Jiang Ning turned to look at Liu Qing without saying a word. However, the look in his eyes was clearly asking Liu Qing, "Now do you believe me?"

Liu Qing felt as though her scalp had gone a little numb.

She had yet to gather her thoughts and had no clue how Jiang Ning did it.

The scene of what happened earlier kept playing back in her mind. Jiang Ning's punches carried an indescribable and mysterious feeling.

Despite looking like an ordinary fist technique, it was incredibly fast and domineering.

"Ahem, ahem." After a long time, Liu Qing composed herself. "It seems you weren't bragging."

She ignored Zhu Qi and the others. They had

shockingly suffered such overwhelming defeat after she called them over.

Liu Qing deliberately stiffened her face and acted as though she was upset about Zhu Qi and the other's defeat. "All of you are Inner Court disciples and are the pillars of Qingshan Sect. From the looks of it now, Qingshan Sect is still lacking in many areas."

Zhu Qi and the others instantly looked awkward and felt terribly embarrassed.

They had embarrassed Qingshan Sect!

In front of Liu Qing no less.

They used to act high and mighty, and they despised Liu Qing too. They felt that she only made it in to the Inner Court because she was the sect leader's daughter.

From the looks of it now, were they any different from Liu Qing?

"Third Miss..."

"Enough. Go back and rest."

Zhu Qi wanted to explain, but Liu Qing waved her hand with a cold and stiff expression on her face.

Zhu Qi didn't dare to speak. He glared at Jiang Ning hard and shook his head with indignation before the others helped him to walk away.

After they left, Liu Qing's attitude changed

immediately. She strode over to Jiang Ning and walked around him several times as she scrutinized him carefully.

“How did you do that?”

She couldn't believe that a Sinner could be so powerful. “Were you a Portico disciple before this?”

Although she was the sect leader's youngest daughter, it was her dream to become a Portico disciple.

Since Jiang Ning was highly skilled and could effortlessly defeat Inner Court disciples with a single move, he ought to be as good as a Portico disciple, right?

“A Portico disciple?” Jiang Ning slightly frowned as he shook his head. “Are your Portico disciples as good as me?”

Liu Qing was stunned.

She really wanted to pounce onto him and bite Jiang Ning to death!

He was too arrogant!

It was one thing to look down on Inner Court disciples.

But now, he even despised Portico disciples.

Who did he think he was? He was a Sinner!

Liu Qing gnashed her teeth and sneered as she looked at Jiang Ning half-convinced.

“Can you really make me pass the test in a month?”



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“Not only can I help you pass your test, but I can also turn you into the most outstanding disciple,” said Jiang Ning with a serious face.

Liu Qing appeared like she was looking at a monster.

She honestly didn't believe a single word Jiang Ning said.

Those lies might work on children. Did Jiang Ning really think she was dumb?

The most outstanding disciple?

She would count her lucky stars if he could make her pass the test!

“Do you know what you are saying?”

“You doubted me earlier too.” Jiang Ning shrugged. “And what happened in the end?”

Liu Qing called a few Inner Court disciples over, and Jiang Ning defeated them with a single move.

That was what happened when Liu Qing doubted Jiang Ning.

She stopped talking. She felt like two people were fighting inside her heart. One of them said to trust Jiang Ning since she had no choice.

And the other voice nodded profusely and told her to trust him!

Liu Qing saw his prowess with her own eyes.

For a moment, she suspected Jiang Ning bought Zhu Qi and the others over to help him put on an act.

Then she recalled Jiang Ning was a Sinner whom she had called over to spar with, so Zhu Qi didn't know him.

Even if they did, why would they put on an act?

Liu Qing was keenly aware that the only advantage she had was her status as the sect leader's daughter. In terms of fighting skills, she ranked at the bottom in the Inner Court, and everyone said she was in the Inner Court purely because of her connections.

If her father wasn't the sect leader, she would have been in the Outer Court.

And that was precisely why her father was angry with her. Her father felt upset from hearing all the gossip and scolded her for being a disappointment and took it out on her.

"If you can do it, I can release you," said Liu Qing as she looked at Jiang Ning seriously.

Those were the stakes she offered, and it was the only thing she could.

"It's deal," said Jiang Ning.

He remained calm and nonchalant the entire time.

Liu Qing was still half convinced. However, she could certainly trust Jiang Ning now that he had

displayed his powers.

But she was also curious. Considering how powerful Jiang Ning was, there were barely any other people in Qingshan Sect who were stronger than him.

Jiang Ning asked for some men, materials, and some other strange things. He was so blunt about his requests that he sounded like this was his own home.

Liu Qing did some calculations and realized he had utilized all the resources she could get her hands on.

“Hey, what are you trying to do? Are you building a house or something?”

She didn't even know what Jiang Ning wanted to do.

Wasn't he supposed to help her with her test? Why did he hire workers to make cement?

Jiang Ning ignored her. He asked for a small empty space that was big enough for Liu Qing to train in.

The training equipment was different from the ones used by Brother Gou and the others. Since Liu Qing was a girl, she couldn't compare to them in terms of strength. Instead, she needed to hone her agility and flexibility.

He wasn't going to focus on training up her strength.

After exchanging a few blows with Liu Qing, Jiang Ning had identified her characteristics in terms of speed and her habits, so he tailored the equipment for her based on that knowledge.

Liu Qing was really confused when she saw the strange things Jiang Ning asked for getting built.

She didn't know what the equipment was and had never seen it before.

Although she had undergone various training as a sect disciple, she had never laid eyes on the things Jiang Ning was building.

Was Jiang Ning going to use this for training and improve her skills?

Was he kidding?

After one day, Liu Qing's mind was filled with questions. She wanted to ask, but she knew Jiang Ning would ignore her.

She needed a favor from Jiang Ning, so she had to ask nicely.

She was the daughter of the sect leader! She never had to be so humble before!



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AHEM!

Jiang Ning sat on a chair and drank his tea calmly, but Liu Qing felt upset. "Don't tell me I can pass the test just using this?"

Jiang Ning took a sip of tea and smacked his lips. This tea wasn't as tasty as the one back home.

He raised his head to glance at Liu Qing and said randomly, "Demonstrate the contents of the test, so I can make final adjustments."

Liu Qing looked at him like he was some fool.

He did all this before knowing what her test was going to be about?

He must be insane!

No, she was the one who was insane. How could she trust him?

"But..."

"Stop wasting time," said Jiang Ning seriously.

He didn't have much time since he hadn't come to Qingshan Sect to help Liu Qing improve.

He had clear objectives.

Liu Qing felt a little indignant. In all her life, she had never been so humble. She barely knew Jiang Ning but had to do as he said without knowing what he was planning.

She couldn't help obeying Jiang Ning when she heard his voice and was incapable of retaliating.

“The test is about things like speed, agility and more. We are scored based on a combination of our abilities.” Liu Qing demonstrated once before looking at Jiang Ning angrily. “My agility isn’t very good, and my defense is poor, so I lose all the time.”

Even her father told her this was mostly about talent, and it wasn't easy to train. What could Jiang Ning do about it?

She could already envision herself failing the tests again and get driven to the Outer Court with her tail between her legs. She would become a laughing stock in Qingshan Sect.

Liu Qing felt sad thinking about it.

Jiang Ning remained expressionless. He watched intently as Liu Qing showed him the test before walking to the training grounds.

“Hey, stop being so serious. You were so confident when you first said you could make me pass. Have you lost confidence now?”

“Didn’t you tell me to believe you? What now? What’s with the attitude?”

“If you really can’t make me pass, I will just drag you under with me.”

Liu Qing talked nonstop, but Jiang Ning ignored her.

He stood at the starting point and suddenly moved!

He was like a panther the moment he ran!

SWOOSH!

He was as fast as lightning!

A sharp abrasive sound could even be heard when he stepped on the ground.

Liu Qing was stunned.

Jiang Ning instantly transformed into an agile monkey and was swift and nimble.

The strange apparatus suddenly came to life, and Jiang Ning was even more swift than them!

He darted about within the obstacle course with absolute agility.

“What on earth...”

Liu Qing was stunned. Even the bodyguards nearby stared with their mouths open.

A look of surprise, shock, and disbelief flashed across their faces and the shock on their faces became increasingly intense.

“Is...that possible?” murmured Liu Qing with her mouth open.

The image of Jiang Ning going through the obstacle course kept flashing through her mind

from the moment he started and ran at lightning speed to get past all the obstacles with great agility...

Jiang Ning had already come back with a slight frown on his face when she composed herself.

“More adjustments have to be made, but we are almost there. If you can finish it in eight minutes, you should have no problem passing the test.”

Liu Qing’s head spun.

Eight minutes?

Jiang Ning finished in about ten seconds, but he asked her to finish it in eight minutes?

He was looking down on her?!

Liu Qing bit her lip and glared at Jiang Ning angrily. “I don’t need eight minutes!”

Liu Qing sneered as she pulled up her sleeves and walked up to the starting point. She wanted to prove that she didn’t need so much time for something of this level. Jiang Ning kept looking down on her and she couldn’t stand it anymore.

After making that declaration, she dashed out. But after attempting the first obstacle...

“OW!”

An obstacle swept across horizontally and sent Liu Qing flying!



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Liu Qing was sprawled on the ground with dirt on her face. She finally spat dirt from her mouth after coughing hard a few times. She was on the brink of tears.

How...how was this possible?

It was just the first obstacle and she had already been hit out of the course!

What happened? She didn't even manage to see anything. How could she react in time?

Liu Qing felt like crying.

She had never been so embarrassed all her life.

“Stop looking!” yelled Liu Qing loudly. “Turn back, all of you!”

All the bodyguards hurriedly turned and pretended they saw nothing.

They didn't want to provoke Liu Qing and come to a bad end!

“What was that?” Liu Qing's face flushed red as she looked at Jiang Ning. “I wasn't even able to react in time.”

She almost forgot about how she was unhappy with the time limit Jiang Ning suggested and thought it was too easy. But now, she failed even the first obstacle.

“Exactly,” said Jiang Ning. “You failed the test because you don't even have the basic reflexes. If

you can't even react in time, what else can you do?"

"You..." Liu Qing's face flushed even redder.

Jiang Ning said the truth bluntly without considering her feelings.

"It seems I have asked too much of you." Jiang Ning glanced at the training equipment. "Shall I make it easier?"

Liu Qing's blushed crimson and was speechless. Jiang Ning was insulting her!

"It's fine!" she shouted.

She glared at Jiang Ning viciously. "How dare you look down on me? If you can do it, so can I."

Jiang Ning had completed the obstacle course very swiftly. Liu Qing knew that she had to practice very hard to reach his standard.

She might even never catch up to Jiang Ning's level.

His skills were insane!

A question flashed through her mind. Jiang Ning was so strong that even she could see it plainly. How did he end up being a Sinner?

Qingshan Sect wasn't like the other sects. If not for the special mission that was given to them and made their sect's standing pretty high in this place, Qingshan Sect ranked at the bottom in

terms of actual prowess.

All these years, her father kept trying to improve Qingshan Sect. He did his best to find talented disciples. However, Jiang Ning...

...had actually been made a Sinner.

Liu Qing only contemplated for a while and tossed it to the back of her mind, thinking it was none of her business.

She had to focus on passing the test!

Jiang Ning watched as Liu Qing sulked and walked back to the training grounds and got ready. He sat back onto the chair and waved his hand. "Bring some snacks over."

The bodyguard beside him looked upset.

He didn't like the way Jiang Ning scolded Liu Qing. It was simply audacious!

"Third Miss is tired and needs some food," said Jiang Ning.

The bodyguard had no choice. How could he say no since Liu Qing was hungry?

Very quickly, the tea and snacks arrived.

Jiang Ning sat down to drink tea and ate snacks. He watched Liu Qing as she rolled around on the ground because of the obstacles and got herself filthy.

“Still can't do it? Why don't you give up already? You are simply too slow .”

“Even the kitchen cook is faster than you. There's no way you can pass the test, so give up already.”

“Why are you so dumb? You can't even pass such a simple obstacle course?”

Liu Qing already slaughtered Jiang Ning 1000 times in her heart!

If she couldn't already sense minor changes in her and knew that Jiang Ning was only saying such awful things in order to agitate her and make her improve more quickly, she would certainly have bitten him to death.

After failing the same obstacle several times, Liu Qing finally figured it out. In that moment, she suddenly was suddenly inspired and was filled with great agility.

It never dawned on her before!



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The obstacle course seemed to have taken a life of its own and felt like a living and breathing enemy!

It was cunning, ferocious and violent, so Liu Qing had to treat each obstacle seriously!

It was simply amazing!

Liu Qing spent the entire afternoon going at it tirelessly. She kept trying again after many failed attempts. By the time she made it through the entire obstacle course for the first time, she was already drenched in sweat.

However, the joy that it brought her was indescribable!

“I made it!” Liu Qing smiled as she looked smugly at Jiang Ning. “Did you see that? I made it!”

“I saw it. You only finished the obstacle course once all afternoon. Do you think you're brilliant?” Jiang Ning shook his head calmly. “Even a granny is better than you.”

Liu Qing's initial joy was entirely doused by Jiang Ning's words in an instant.

She gritted her teeth and restrained her urge to bite Jiang Ning to death.

“I'll tolerate your words for now! I'm going to teach you a lesson after I pass the test!”

She sneered and told herself not to lower herself to Jiang Ning's level. She could deal with him

after the test.

At least for now, Jiang Ning's method was effect and she could already feel it.

Liu Qing kept looking at Jiang Ning while she rested. It felt as though looking at his face and feeling angry gave her more energy.

Jiang Ning calmly sat as he ate and drank. He was never one to treat himself shabbily.

Meanwhile.

Zhu Qi looked very angry after he had dressed his injuries.

Many of them remained astonished that Zhu Qi had actually been beaten up.

He was one of those disciples who were likely to get into the Portico!

"Senior? How did you get hurt?" asked someone.

Zhu Qi suppressed his anger and inhaled deeply. "I accidentally fell!"

That must have been one hell of a fall since he even broke some bones.

Zhu Qi returned to his quarters in low spirits and felt even angrier thinking about how Jiang Ning defeated him.

The moment he recalled Jiang Ning's arrogance, he felt extremely annoyed inside.

“That asshole!” snapped Zhu Qi furiously as he slammed the table.

The more he thought about it, the more indignant he felt. This unknown man defeated him effortlessly in front of Liu Qing.

None of them dared to speak. They agreed to keep it a secret since no one wanted the embarrassment. Even then, none of them could get over it.

“Zhu Qi!”

The door opened, and the other disciples who got beaten up by Jiang Ning came in together.

“We checked with the Disciplinary Hall. He is a Sinner, but we don't know why he is getting punished.”

“Humph. Only a few Portico disciples have been punished before and we know all their names. But we've never heard of this one!”

“We don't know where he's from! He must have infiltrated Qingshan Sect to get close to Third Miss! He must have an ulterior motive!”

All of them chimed in one after another.

Zhu Qi narrowed his eyes. “We don't know where he's from? Then he must have an ulterior motive! He's probably deceived Third Miss. We must do something about it!”

Zhu Qi instantly stood up. “Inform the Disciplinary

Master and tell him that someone has infiltrated Qingshan Sect and is endangering Third Miss!”

They took a few men and hurried over to Liu Qing’s quarters immediately.

So long as they could prove no one knew where Jiang Ning was from, it didn't matter whether Jiang Ning intended to harm Liu Qing. He would make Jiang Ning pay the price regardless!

Qingshan Sect was a very special place, and anyone who infiltrated the sect had to pay a hefty price.


A very painful price!


They notified the Disciplinary Hall to send men over while they marched to Liu Qing’s quarters menacingly without hesitation.


“What are you doing?”

The bodyguards stopped them at the door.

Zhu Qi sneered, “Get out of the way! Third Miss is in danger! How dare you stop me?”

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The bodyguards' faces altered instantly.

Third Miss was in danger?

The sect leader personally selected them to protect Liu Qing.

If anything befell her, they would be in trouble!

“Get out of the way!” Zhu Qi ignored them and charged right in.

The people behind him quickly followed him in.

The bodyguards glanced at each other.

“Isn't Third Miss training now? What danger is she in? Stand guard there while I check!”

Two bodyguards stood guard at the entrance while the rest hurried inside.

At the empty space.

Liu Qing was still training.

She didn't complain about hardship or fatigue, and Jiang Ning was particularly surprised.

Liu Qing did not complain or give up just because she was the daughter of the sect leader.

She was different from the other privileged disciples and expected a lot from herself instead.

Despite being a woman, Liu Qing trained hard with a look of determination on her face and left Jiang

Ning impressed.

She was just a teenage girl, but she was doing far more training than he assigned her.

Jiang Ning didn't stop her, even when she got covered in sweat and looked disheveled.

“Quickly now! Stop him. Don't let him run!”

A bunch of people suddenly charged in and pointed at Jiang Ning angrily from a distance.

Jiang Ning continued sitting where he was nonchalantly.

He was sitting with a teacup in his hand and appeared unbothered as Zhu Qi looked at him gloatingly.

“There's no escape!” Zhu Qi stood in front of Jiang Ning and pointed at him. “You aren't from Qingshan Sect! How dare you sneak in? Why are you here?”

Jiang Ning had completely no intention of running. His composure made Zhu Qi upset.

For a moment, Zhu Qi felt like a clown who kept jumping up and down in front of Jiang Ning. However, Jiang Ning didn't react at all and looked at him as though he were a fool.

This made Zhu Qi even angrier.

“Why am I here?”

NH

Jiang Ning glanced at them. He recalled these were the Inner Court disciples whom he defeated in the morning.

Did they come looking for trouble so quickly?

He merely defeated them. Did they have to hate him so much?

After all, there was no shame in being defeated by him since he had won and even killed plenty of people before.

“I don't know what you are saying.” Jiang Ning shook his head and sipped some tea. “I suggest that you do not disturb Third Miss. She has quite the temper. Don't you already know that?”

Zhu Qi looked worried.

He certainly knew that Liu Qing had a bad temper.

However, Jiang Ning was simply too irritating!

Especially when Jiang Ning just sat and drank tea and ate snacks while the rest of them stood around. Who did he think he was?!

“Enough of your nonsense! We have investigated, and you are not a Sinner! You are not from Qingshan Sect! So where are you from?” roared Zhu Qi angrily. The rest of them looked like they were ready to fight if any disagreement occurred.

Jiang Ning narrowed his eyes. He knew that he couldn't keep his identity secret for long.

NH

He wasn't from Qingshan Sect to begin with, so it was easy to blow his cover. It was impossible to keep it under wraps for long.

Jiang Ning needed the right identity to stay at Qingshan Sect and he was working on it now.

"Third Miss!" Jiang Ning couldn't be bothered with Zhu Qi. He raised his head and called for Liu Qing.

Liu Qing had lost herself in the training and was doing it like crazy.

It was unbelievable!

It was simply incredible!



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NH

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The training equipment felt incredible to her. After training nonstop, she found that she had made vast improvement.

In a short span of time, she had vastly improved her agility and flexibility and gained an awareness!

Since Liu Qing had practiced martial arts from a young age, she was keenly aware of how important this awareness was.

She was reveling in the training when Jiang Ning called for her. She raised her head somewhat unhappily and looked over to see a bunch of people there and couldn't help feeling surprised.

What did they want?

Liu Qing walked back from the training grounds with some displeasure on her face. She and glanced at Zhu Qi and the others before looking at Jiang Ning.

“What do you want?”

She still had training to do, and it wasn't time for her break yet. These people could forget about hindering her progress!

“They want to take me away, so I came by to tell you. You have to train on your own from now on.

Jiang Ning shrugged helplessly.

Liu Qing's heart throbbed uneasily. Did they want to take Jiang Ning away?

This had to be a joke.

She had only just experienced the joy of improving. If Jiang Ning left, how was she going to work on her problems?

What were Zhu Qi and the others doing?

“You want to take him away?” Liu Qing frowned as she looked at Zhu Qi. “Why?”

“He isn’t from Qingshan Sect,” said Zhu Qi. “Third Miss, he has ulterior motives for being friends with you. He must be up to no good. We have already learned that...”

Liu Qing gritted her teeth and scolded them harshly, “Who said he was from Qingshan Sect?”

Zhu Qi and the others were stunned to hear this.

So Liu Qing knew all along?

Also, from the sound of it...Liu Qing seemed angry with them.

“He’s a friend I invited. Didn’t I tell you in the morning that he is from some other sect?” lied Liu Qing. She glared at Jiang Ning and was shocked to hear that he wasn’t a Qingshan Sect disciple. “What sect was it? I forgot.”

“Extreme Sect,” said Jiang Ning.

He was impressed with Liu Qing’s swift reaction. It seemed the training had helped both Liu Qing’s physical and mental speed.

NH

“Did you hear that? He’s from Extreme Sect and not Qingshan Sect.”

Liu Qing glared at Zhu Qi and the others angrily.

“Extreme Sect?”

Zhu Qi frowned. He had never heard of this sect.

“Third Miss, I have never heard of such a sect. This kid must be lying to you. You mustn’t...”

“Are you quite done?”

Liu Qing had no patience for him and was fed up.

To begin with, she never liked Zhu Qi and his friends. Now they kept stirring trouble and affecting her training. They didn’t want her to pass the test, right?

That must be it. Zhu Qi wanted her to fail the test and get sent to the Outer Court!

What a jerk!

The more Liu Qing thought about it, the more she felt it made sense. Her expression darkened.

Before Zhu Qi and the others said a word, she said coldly, “I think you are the ones who are out to get me! You want me to fail the test, right? I’m training like mad to pass the test, but here you are making trouble. Zhu Qi, why do you hate me so much? I’m warning you, if I don’t pass, it’s all your fault!”

Liu Qing kept going on while Zhu Qi opened his mouth and wanted to speak but had no chance.

“Third Miss...”

“Get lost!”

Liu Qing pointed at the door and raised the pitch of her voice, “Get out, NOW!”

Zhu Qi and the others didn't dare to defy her. They left with their tails between their legs without saying a word.

Jiang Ning sat the entire time without getting up once. He didn't even put down the teacup.

He had already anticipated this a long time ago.

Brother Gou and the others couldn't resist the joy of succeeding after training hard. It was the best thing on earth. Moreover, Liu Qing needed to improve now.

“Humph!”

After Zhu Qi and the others left, Liu Qing's eyes landed on Jiang Ning. “Who on earth are you!”



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NH

Food was served. Before Liu Qing could say a word, Jiang Ning started to eat. He didn't try to be polite.

He behaved as if this were his own place.

He never let himself stay hungry if he could help it.

Liu Qing didn't say anything. She eyed Jiang Ning curiously as she ate.

Jiang Ning was a mystery.

He had been a mystery since he had first appeared.

She knew that she knew little about his origins and his mystery identity. He might be a spy who had infiltrated Qingshan Sect and who harbored ulterior motives. But she didn't want to think about that.

She could feel it. Jiang Ning did not harbor any ill intentions towards her. Her instincts felt strong and true.

“Hey.”

“I have a name.”

Liu Qing shrugged. “Jiang Ning, I'm curious. Who sent you to help me?”

“I told you. The time isn't right. Why are you still asking?”

NH

Jiang Ning continued eating. It didn't seem like he was going to answer her question.

"Can't you give a clue?"

"No."

Liu Qing was exasperated.

She had never been challenged by anyone like this before.

She was the Third Miss of Qingshan Sect, the one who had the worst temper. She was the one who pushed other people around. When had she ever bent to the will of someone else?

"Fine, I won't ask," she said in resignation. "Will that do?"

"Yes," said Jiang Ning.

He sounded distant, as if he had no emotions. The expressionless look on his face drove Liu Qing insane.

"What about my training? Do I continue to train like this tomorrow?" said Liu Qing in an attempt to continue the conversation.

"I don't think you've met the requirements that I've set." Jiang Ning looked up and eyed her. "There's less than a month to the test. You don't have much time left. Buck up and don't embarrass yourself."

He gave Liu Qing a onceover before shaking his

NH

head lightly. "You still have a long way to go."

Liu Qing nearly threw a tantrum.

She had only one thought in her mind then. *I'm going to kill him!*

That bastard. Couldn't he say something nice?

Would it kill him to not hurt her pride?

She was a girl! How could he bully a girl?

She glared at Jiang Ning with an accusatory look on her face and bit her lips. There was nothing she could say to him though.

Jiang Ning was right. She still had a long way to go. If she failed the test, she would be sent to the Outer Court and be mocked by everyone in Qingshan Sect.

Liu Qing took a deep breath and took her anger out on the food. She didn't say a word as she ate.

Jiang Ning basked in the undisturbed quietness. He finished his meal leisurely, then sat in a corner and began to contemplate in silence.

The world inside the mountain was clearly no longer the same world that the cemetery caretaker had remembered. Many years had passed since then, so this world must have changed drastically.

The cemetery caretaker and his brother had been away for too many years. The problem Jiang Ning

NH

had now wasn't their age, but the era that they had originally come from when they were still living in the mountain.

The antidote might not be as easily found now. That would be a problem.

"There is something special about Qingshan Sect after all."

The universe within the mountain was vast. Jiang Ning knew nothing about its lands or how they were carved up amongst the powerful. He did not have any opportunity to look for answers too.

His current guise wouldn't last long before someone found out who he was. In fact, Jiang Ning had not thought of hiding his true identity.

Doing so wasn't going to help him. It would hinder his actions.

Opportunity went hand in hand with danger. What would happen if someone were to find out that he had come from the world outside the mountain?

Jiang Ning believed that someone in Qingshan Sect already knew.

Extreme Sect. The sect certainly lived up to its name.

Some might think that it was simply a name. But to others, the namesake was burdened with meaning.

Jiang Ning sat as still as a statue. His silhouette

NH

lengthened under the moonlight. It was a mesmerizing sight.

Liu Qing sat some distance away and pouted. She could only watch from afar. She didn't want to talk to Ning Jiang. She didn't want to invite further insult by opening her mouth. Her confidence might not survive another blow!



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Jiang Ning just sat there. Liu Qing didn't bother him. She wasn't in the mood to bother him anyway.

She simply watched him quietly from afar, staring at his back as one would stare at a lovely view.

Somewhere at the Inner Court was Zhu Qi. He was stewing in resentment.

The Mr He's reprimand had him bewildered and incredulous.

It was obvious that Jiang Ning's origins were dubious. He must harbor an ulterior motive for infiltrating Qingshan Sect.

Anyone who had a brain could tell. Mr He was the head of the Disciplinary Hall. He must suspect as much too.

"He's afraid of incurring Third Miss' wrath, I'm sure of it. But what is he afraid of?"

"She's the sect leader's daughter but she is complacent and doesn't strive to improve herself. Look at her skills. She's not qualified to stay in the Inner Court."

"Have you heard? If she doesn't pass the test again this time, the sect leader's going to send her to the Outer Court."

A few of them were discussing fervently amongst themselves.

Zhu Qi sat there with a dark look on his face and

scoffed.

“She had it coming! She’s only allowed to be so arrogant and look down on the rest of us in Qingshan Sect because of her status.”

He couldn’t control his furious outburst.

“What should we do now, Senior?”

One of them looked at Zhu Qi and asked.

Zhu Qi was the one whom they all looked to for instructions. He called the shots.

It was easier to get things done when you had a leader.

“If we look at it one way, this only concerns Third Miss’s personal safety.” Zhu Qi scoffed. They didn’t care about Liu Qing’s safety. She deserved whatever that might happen to her.

“But if we look at it in another way, this concerns the safety of Qingshan Sect! This is a serious matter!” He slammed the table. “If Mr He doesn’t dare to intervene, we’ll simply have to speak to the sect leader himself!”

Zhu Qi’s face flushed lightly.

As Inner Court disciples, they weren’t qualified to speak to the sect leader.

Even Portico disciples who wanted to gain the sect leader’s attention had to be of sufficient competency.

They weren't qualified at all.

But if they were to prove themselves this time, they might be promoted directly to a Portico disciple. Such a promotion was an honor of a lifetime.

Zhu Qi's words had the others all excited.

All of them wanted to become a Portico disciple.

Becoming a Portico disciple meant a promotion in status and an increase in the resources that they could access. They had more opportunities to gain the sect leader and elders' attention and favor. Their chances of leaving the sect and making a name for themselves would increase exponentially.

Like a sudden flare of light, the explosive revelation lit their eyes up.

They exchanged looks with one another. They were still slightly hesitant.

"It doesn't seem right for us to demand to see the sect leader."

That would be challenging the authority of their immediate superiors. They should at least speak to the principal of the Inner Court. Bypassing him to speak to the sect leader wasn't exactly proper.

"You really think the principal of the Inner Court will incur the wrath of Third Miss for us when Mr He won't?" Zhu Qi said unhappily.

All these people in high positions were forgiving towards Liu Qing no matter how terrible she was because they didn't want to embarrass the sect leader.

Any other person would have been sent to the Outer Court ages ago.

It wasn't a fair fight. Some people had to work hard their whole life to earn their final place as an Inner Court disciple. Liu Qing, on the other hand, was born into the position.

The thought of it made one furious and indignant.

"Just this once!"

Zhu Qi rose to his feet. "I'm certain that Jiang Ning's hiding an ulterior motive. We just have to let the sect leader know. He'll investigate the matter and get to the bottom of things!"

"Our service to the sect will be recognized then."

The rest appeared slightly excited when they heard that. Someone swallowed their saliva in anticipation.

This was an opportunity. They wouldn't get another one if they missed it.

"I'm in!"

"Count me in too!"

"It's a golden opportunity staring us in the face. We can't let it pass!"

“So, we’ll be bypassing our superiors. So what?”

Everyone spoke in unison. No one wanted to let such an opportunity slip through their fingers.

Jiang Ning’s appearance was a gift from heaven. They would be wasting an opportunity that heaven had bestowed upon them if they were to let it slip by.

“I heard that the sect leader will be paying a visit to Third Miss to check on her progress. This is our chance...” Zhu Qi narrowed his eyes and an icy glint flashed within. “Everything will hang on what happens today!”



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Zhu Qi and the rest were decided. They did not hesitate as they came to a decision on the spot.

Zhu Qi wasn't one who acted rashly. He did his homework and paid quite handsomely to get information on Sinners from the Disciplinary Hall. He checked the list of Sinners and confirmed that Jiang Ning's name wasn't in it.

This was irrefutable evidence. Jiang Ning wasn't going to talk his way out of this!

Jiang Ning wasn't the only one who was going to suffer the sect leader's wrath when the sect leader found out about this. Liu Qing wasn't going to escape punishment too.

The thought made Zhu Qi feel a lot better.

He remembered how Jiang Ning had defeated him in a single move. He felt as though there was something lodged in his chest and he could do nothing about it. He felt terrible.

He stared at the night and couldn't wait for daylight to arrive. When the sect leader paid a visit to Liu Qing, they would turn up and tell the sect leader the truth!

This was going to be a long night.

Jiang Ning was seated on the ground with his legs folded. He was as still as an unmoving statue. He did not move the entire night.

Liu Qing couldn't be bothered with him. She had made arrangements and found him a place to

sleep. Jiang Ning was the one who didn't head for his accommodation. Was he worried that someone might break into his room in the middle of the night?

What was he thinking?

Dawn arrived.

Liu Qing woke up early that morning. She changed into her training attire and hurried to the training ground.

She didn't want to waste any time.

She saw Jiang Ning in the distance. He had woken up earlier than she had and had instructed the guards to prepare tea and some snacks. Seated in the rattan chair, he looked as if he had made himself at home.

Liu Qing was overcome by sudden annoyance at the sight.

This man certainly made himself at home!

Her lips parted and she appeared on the verge of saying something, but then decided against it after some thought. Sulking, she darted into the training ground and began training furiously as a way of venting her frustration.

"The intent shifts but not the form," Jiang Ning said as he sipped at his tea. "Why strike first when one can strike later?"

"That damn Jiang Ning. That stupid Jiang Ning.

What's up with the air of mystery? Can't he speak plainly?"

Despite her incessant mutterings of protest, Lu Qing diligently memorized the words that Jiang Ning had said and contemplated them seriously.

What Jiang Ning had said might seem simple but hidden within those words was an immense profundity. This man...

It was with the greatest reluctance and displeasure that Liu Qing admitted to the truth. Her instincts told her that Jiang Ning, undeniably, had a few tricks up his sleeve. In fact, she had a feeling that he was more powerful than her old man.

Was this just a delusion on her part?

Liu Qing funneled her attention and energy into her training. She was lost in her own mind. Jiang Ning's voice was the only thing that she heard. The numerous obstacles on the training ground were the only things she saw...

Jiang Ning simply sat there calmly. He observed as Liu Qing slipped into a state of intense concentration, then fell silent.

"Chief Liu!"

Upon seeing Liu Chuandao when they looked up, the guards at the gates addressed him hurriedly.

Liu Chuandao waved his hand to silence them. He didn't want to interrupt Liu Qing's training.

He stared at Liu Qing fixedly, watching her as she spun and danced on the training grounds like a monkey that had discovered its innate agility.

“Impressive,” Liu Chuandao couldn’t help but murmur.

He looked up. His eyes landed on Jiang Ning.

It was a man whom he had not seen before.

He was composed and calm. He had sensed Liu Chuandao’s presence as soon as Liu Chuandao had stepped onto the training grounds.

Nevertheless, no emotion appeared on Jiang Ning’s face. He did not deem Liu Chuandao worthy of his attention.

He had an unrestrained arrogance that was innate as well!

Liu Chuandao did not say a word. He simply frowned slightly as he stared at Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning turned and their eyes met instantly.

In that moment, it was as if a sudden electrifying current had traveled through the air and sparked something. A terrifying aura filled the training ground.

Even Liu Qing, who had been immersed in her training, felt something. She froze momentarily and was hit by a moving wooden dummy. The impact sent her flying.

“Ah!” Liu Qing howled in pain. She felt a pair of

hands catch her before she could crash into the ground.



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NH

Her heart skipped a beat. She was hardly in the right mind to look at the person who had caught her. She bit her lips lightly and blushed bashfully.

There was only one person who had been within proximity.

That man...had really sturdy, strong hands.

“Why are you blushing?”

Upon hearing a sudden, familiar voice, Liu Qing gasped out loud and turned her head hurriedly.

“Father!”

It was Liu Chuandao.

Liu Qing's face turned a brighter shade of red instantly. She had mistaken him for...

She turned her head and looked. Jiang Ning was still seated at the same spot. He didn't seem like he was planning on standing up any time soon. He looked relaxed, as if he had not witnessed her nearly falling.

“That asshole!” Liu Qing cursed secretly.

He didn't know how to take care of a lady at all.

She was a girl!

“Father, why are you here?”

Liu Qing was a little nervous. She had not expected Liu Chuandao to check on her so soon.

She had been lost in her training. She had not noticed when he had arrived and how long he had been watching her.

“How would I know how hard you’re working if I didn’t check on you? You worked so hard you nearly injured yourself.”

Liu Chuandao’s voice sounded gentle. Liu Qing was slightly taken aback. Was this the same man who had rebuked her for not working hard enough and criticized her on her slow progress?

She was momentarily dazed. She took another look to make sure that the stern man before her was Liu Chuandao, the sect leader of Qingshan Sect and her very own father.

This was too surreal.

“Father...”

Liu Qing’s eyes turned red. All throughout her life, she had heard only words of disapproval and criticism from Liu Chuandao. She couldn’t remember him ever uttering words of concern for her.

She was about to say something when she remembered that Jiang Ning was still sitting there.

This man was being utterly disrespectful towards her father. Her father was the sect leader of Qingshan Sect, for goodness’ sake.

The sect leader was here. How could he remain

seated and not rise to his feet?

Before Liu Qing could yell at Jiang Ning, she heard a sudden commotion outside the gates.

“We want to speak to the sect leader!”

“Let us in. We have an important matter to report to the sect leader. Don't stand in our way!”

“You won't be able to handle the consequences of holding us up!”

It was Zhu Qi and his gang.

This wasn't the time for Liu Chuandao to turn his attention to Jiang Ning. He turned towards the gates and frowned slightly.

Who was causing a scene?

It didn't take long for the guards to stand aside. They dared not stop Zhu Qi and his gang. Their threats had sounded serious and genuine. The guards couldn't possibly shoulder the consequences of something happening because they had stopped Zhu Qi and his gang at the gates.

“Chief Liu!”

Zhu Qi and his gang marched briskly towards Liu Chuandao. It wasn't every day that they could see Liu Chuandao within spitting distance.

Besides, they were about to make a fine contribution to the sect!

They gazed upon Liu Chuandao with anticipation in their eyes, then glanced at Jiang Ning. He was still sitting there. Their hearts filled with glee.

“That idiot is actually not making a run for it? The sect leader is here! Is he trying to get himself killed?”

“He won't be able to run when the sect leader gets into a rage later. He's dead meat!”

“We'll trample on that fool's corpse. He's going to be the stepping stone that'll send us into the Portico!”

Zhu Qi and his gang were trembling with excitement. They walked right up to Liu Chuandao and greeted him deferentially. “Greetings, Chief Liu!”

Liu Chuandao frowned.

He had seen the emblem on their clothes. They were merely Inner Court disciples. A dark look settled on his face.

Inner Court disciples should speak to the principal of the Inner Court if they had any dispute or grievances to address. They had barged into Liu Qing's courtyard instead. What was the meaning of this?

Did they think that Liu Qing was someone whom they could push around easily?

Liu Chuandao eyed Zhu Qi and his gang with a thunderous look on his face and his eyelid

twitched. Zhu Qi was gripped by a sudden wave of nervousness.

“Chief Liu, we have something to report to you. It’s...it’s something really important!” Zhu Qi lowered his head and said respectfully.

He tilted his face as he spoke and stared at the unmoving Jiang Ning, who had been sitting there all this while and his lips curled upwards smugly. With a few words, he was going to send Jiang Ning from his chair onto the ground and onto his knees!

Liu Chuandao caught Zhu Qi looking at Jiang Ning. He turned and stared at Jiang Ning too.

As soon as their eyes met, Liu Chuandao said suddenly. “You’re here.”



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Everyone in the courtyard froze instantly.

They thought their ears had played a trick on them. Liu Qing stood rooted to the spot, stunned for a long moment.

You're here.

The words that Liu Chuandao had just said reverberated in her head. What had he meant?

Whom had he addressed those words to?

Was it Jiang Ning?

That was impossible!

He didn't know who Jiang Ning was. Why would he say something like that to him?

"So I am."

Before Liu Qing could voice her confusion, Jiang Ning nodded calmly and replied this way.

Silence descended upon them anew.

Liu Qing gaped as she stared stupidly at Jiang Ning. She whipped her head and stared at Liu Chuandao, then turned and stared at Jiang Ning again. Her head was buzzing. She had no idea what was going on.

Had Liu Chuandao's words been directed at Jiang Ning?

Did they...know each other?

NH

Zhu Qi was stupefied. He stood there stupidly rooted to his spot. Life seemed to have drained out of him. His face felt numb and a sudden, stinging heat spread across his cheek.

It was as if someone had just slapped him hard on his face!

Did Jiang Ning...and the sect leader know each other?

From the sect leader's tone, they seemed to be old friends. In fact...they appeared to be talking to each other as equals.

This must be a joke.

Jiang Ning had remained seated while he had spoken to the sect leader. He had not risen to his feet.

Zhu Qi was utterly dumbfounded. The few disciples who had come with him were sweating buckets.

What was going on?

How did Jiang Ning know the sect leader? What worried them the most was the tone that Jiang Ning had used when speaking to the sect leader.

He had sounded calm and unfazed, as if he were chatting with an old friend whom he had known for years. He hadn't tried to be polite. He had sounded mild, as if he had been talking about the weather.

Liu Chuandao was unperturbed.

He didn't say anything else. He disregarded the looks of stupor on everyone else's faces and nodded lightly. Then, he turned away and looked at Zhu Qi. Zhu Qi's body had been overtaken by cold and numbness.

"You said that you have something urgent to report to me. Let's hear it then."

He didn't look very happy.

Bypassing one's direct superiors was a taboo that was heavily frowned upon in Qingshan Sect.

Liu Chuandao wasn't the only one who was displeased. If the principal of the Inner Court were to hear about what Zhu Qi and his gang had done, he would be livid.

Their actions showed a complete lack of respect for his authority.

"I...I... .."

Zhu Qi stammered. His lips were trembling. He couldn't piece together a full sentence at all.

His face was pale and his throat felt parched. His legs felt like jelly.

What was he to say?

What could he say?

Should he tell the sect leader that Jiang Ning

wasn't a member of Qingshan Sect? That he had infiltrated the sect and harbored unwholesome intentions towards Third Miss? Was he supposed to tell the sect leader that Jiang Ning was trying to harm Qingshan Sect?

He couldn't possibly tell the sect leader that!

Jiang Ning and the sect leader knew each other and they appeared to be old friends. What could he tell the sect leader? He would be risking his life!

“Speak!”

Liu Chuandao's voice boomed, terrifying Zhu Qi and sending tremors coursing through his body. With a loud thud, he fell to his knees.

The other disciples were petrified. They fell to their knees and lowered their heads. No one dared to utter a single word.

“You barged into the courtyard brazenly because you had something urgent to report to me, didn't you? Why aren't you talking?”

Liu Chuandao smiled mirthlessly.

“You Inner Court disciples think quite highly of yourselves, don't you? You think you are not bound by the rules of Qingshan Sect. Did the principal of the Inner Court fail to instruct you properly? Have I failed in instilling respect in my disciples?”

His voice boomed like thunder, reverberating

loudly in the ears of Zhu Qi and the other disciples and nearly deafening them.

“Do you not know the rules of Qingshan Sect?”

He stared at Zhu Qi. His voice sounded cold and was turning increasingly frostier. It threatened to freeze Zhu Qi alive.

Zhu Qi dared not say a single word. He kept his head down and felt exposed. Waves of cold invaded his body. He couldn't tell if he were alive or if he had died.

“Summon the principal of the Inner Court.”

Liu Chuandao eyed Zhu Qi. “Summon the Disciplinary Master as well. Someone seems to have forgotten the rules of Qingshan Sect.”



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NH

Liu Chuandao's deafening bellow sent Zhu Qi plunging into the abyss.

It was an abyss that was a bottomless pit.

He felt weightless as he fell through the darkness. There was nothing under his feet. He was on the verge of a breakdown.

What was going on?

He had no idea what was happening.

How had things turned out this way?

The disciples who had followed his lead were furious and terrified. They were furious at Zhu Qi for acting rashly when he had no idea what was going on.

Jiang Ning and the sect leader clearly knew each other. They couldn't believe he had the nerve to offend Jiang Ning.

Did he want to get himself killed?

He could do that on his own time. Why had he dragged them into this as well?

They weren't the only ones who were dumbstruck. Liu Qing was equally stupefied. She was utterly lost. She didn't know what was going on.

She knew that Jiang Ning wasn't a member of Qingshan Sect. She had spent her whole life in the sect and had never heard of him. How could her father possibly know this man?

This seemed impossible.

Was Jiang Ning really a member of Extreme Sect?
Did such a sect really exist?

She could suspect everyone, but she couldn't suspect her own father.

Silence filled the air. Liu Chuandao did not say a word. No one dared to breathe.

The principal of the Inner Court and Mr He arrived within no time.

They had not expected something like this to happen. They never expected Zhu Qi and his gang to have the nerve to do something so bold in Liu Chuandao's presence.

"Chief Liu," Zhang Heng, the principal of the Inner Court, greeted Liu Chuandao.

"I see you've been doing a good job at keeping the Inner Court disciples in line," Liu Chuandao scoffed.

Zhang Heng swallowed visibly. "Forgive me. I failed to perform my duties. I deserve punishment for my failures."

"I'm glad that you know that," said Liu Chuandao as a severe look settled on his face. "Mr He!"

"Yes, Chief Liu."

"What is the punishment for disobeying the rules of Qingshan Sect?"

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Mr He froze momentarily. This wasn't a joke. The sect leader was really angry.

He glanced at Zhang Heng and caught the pleading look in Zhang Heng's eyes, but he pretended that he didn't see it. He cupped his fists and said, "A demotion, seven days spent in solitude and penitence, and confiscation of a full year's worth of resources."

Zhang Heng's heart spasmed violently. Zhu Qi nearly collapsed to the ground.

Zhu Qi would pay for the punishment that had been inflicted on Zhang Heng.

This...was going to be the end of him!

Zhu Qi trembled violently. He felt hollow, as if his soul had fled from his body.

"Zhang Heng, do you agree that you deserve this punishment?"

Liu Chuandao narrowed his eyes.

"I do! I have neglected my disciplinary duties and failed to perform my duties. I deserve to be punished!" Zhang Heng declared loudly.

His eyes slid towards Zhu Qi. He had spat out his words. Each word had been torn out from him like how he wanted to rip the flesh off Zhu Qi, bite by bite.

Zhu Qi was stupefied. His hearing had fled him. So had his vision. He had fallen into a daze. All he

NH

knew was that he was done for...

...and that his death wasn't going to be quick or painless!

"Good. I hope to see improvement," Liu Chuandao said coolly. "Leave us."

"Yes, Chief Liu!"

Zhang Heng and Mr He dared not say anything more. It was rare of Liu Chuandao to get so furious.

They dared not say anything and fled the courtyard immediately.

Zhu Qi and the other disciples had no idea how they managed to make their way out of the courtyard. They had descended into a state of complete terror.

Silence lingered in the courtyard.

The guards had clustered together. None of them dared to utter a word. They dared not make a sound as they breathed as lightly as they could.

Liu Qing stood there silently too, afraid to say anything. She was still reeling. What had just happened? What was going on?

"So, the both of you..." She hesitated as she looked at Jiang Ning, then at Liu Chuandao. "... know each other?"

Jiang Ning didn't say anything. Neither did Liu

Chuandao.

They exchanged a look. This fleeting look seemed to speak volumes.



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Neither of them uttered a word. They didn't make a single sound.

"Train hard. I'll be there at your test."

Liu Chuandao didn't say anything else. He didn't say anything to Jiang Ning, leaving immediately after he had spoken to Liu Qing.

Liu Qing was stunned and stood there like an idiot.

What...was going on?

Jiang Ning had remained in his seat through it all. He hadn't moved a single inch when Liu Chuandao had appeared. He just drank his tea and ate his snacks.

It was clear that he was behaving as if he were Liu Chuandao's superior.

Liu Qing wasn't a fool. In the years that she had lived, she had not seen someone treat Liu Chuandao this way.

"Hey." Liu Chuandao had not answered her question earlier, so she turned and looked at Jiang Ning instead. "What is going on? How did you know..."

Something struck her suddenly. Her pupils contracted.

"You spoke of someone who asked you to help me out. Is that...that's impossible! Why wouldn't he instruct me himself? How did the two of you

get to know each other? What's this Extreme Sect? I've never heard of it. I've also never heard of..."

This was driving Liu Qing insane.

She felt as if she was being kept in the dark. She knew nothing and had looked like such an idiot in front of Jiang Ning and Liu Chuandao.

"You're still a kid. There are some things that you don't know," Jiang Ning said mildly. "You're not ready to know them yet. You know what I mean?"

This man was still trying to bullshit his way through!

Liu Qing didn't voice the thoughts in her head.

She stared at Jiang Ning, then bit her lips lightly. "You...are all assholes!"

Was he planning on humoring her this way?

She fumed and couldn't be bothered to talk to him anymore. Now that she knew that Liu Chuandao knew Jiang Ning, she had decided that she didn't care anymore.

Liu Qing turned away and returned to the training ground. Jiang Ning remained in his chair. The guards stood around him. The look in their eyes had taken on a hint of respect.

"There's no more tea," said Jiang Ning.

"Yes, Sir. I'll have a fresh pot of tea brewed for you

right away.”

A guard raced towards him and left with the teapot in his hands. He returned shortly and placed the teapot down carefully before taking a measured step back.

No one had expected Jiang Ning and the sect leader to know each other. Furthermore, they had not expected him...to share such a unique relationship with the sect leader.

In fact, Jiang Ning was the only person who knew that the both of them didn't know each other at all.

When Liu Chuandao had said “You're here”, he had been testing Jiang Ning. He had been confirming his identity.

Jiang Ning's reply had been swift and honest. In replying “So I am,” he had revealed his identity to Liu Chuandao.

He had been betting.

And he had won.

Qingshan Sect was indeed an extraordinary place. Liu Chuandao had known that he had come from the world outside the mountain but he had feigned ignorance.

It was clear that Liu Chuandao knew a great many things. At least, he was definitely aware of the world outside the mountain, the Extreme Fist Technique manual, and the significance of the

word “Extreme”.

“Things are becoming more complicated.”

The information that the cemetery caretaker had shared with him must be obsolete. Perhaps it did not paint the complete picture. It was of no use to him.

How many sects were there within the mountain? What were the dynamics amongst the various sects? Jiang Ning knew nothing of that.

He had arrived here with a blank slate. He had no clues and no information. It was going to be tough for him to survive like this.

“The antidote,” Jiang Ning thought to himself. “The rest doesn’t matter. My top priority is to find the antidote and save Yuzhen.”

Liu Chuandao’s attitude earlier indicated that getting the antidote wasn’t going to be that much of a problem.

He could simply ask Liu Chuandao directly when he met the latter again. The next time Qingshan Sect held its test was going to be the next time they met.



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Jiang Ning's status had taken a sudden bound.

The guards' attitude towards him wasn't the only thing that had changed. Liu Qing couldn't figure out whom Jiang Ning really was either. She wasn't sure what relationship he shared with her father.

From the way that they had spoken to each other, it seemed...like they were equals.

Liu Qing dared not ask too many questions. Jiang Ning wasn't going to tell her anything anyway. He might even rebuke her fiercely.

Something had become different in the courtyard.

Jiang Ning had risen suddenly to become the master of the place. Even Liu Qing had to obey his word. She trained the way Jiang Ning told her to without voicing a word of complaint.

During this time, Liu Chuandao had made his way back to his study. Within a few moments, Mr He arrived.

He had timed his arrival precisely, knocking on Liu Chuandao's door after Liu Chuandao's earlier anger had abated.

DOONG DOONG DOONG!

"Come in."

Mr He heard Liu Chuandao's voice in the study.

He smiled, pushed the door open and walked in.

“Chief Liu.”

“You timed this, didn’t you? You know I’m no longer as angry as I was earlier.”

Mr He smiled sheepishly. “You weren’t angry in the first place. That much, I do know.”

Liu Chuandao wasn’t angry earlier. He was just caught in a predicament as he was hesitant about what he should do about Jiang Ning, the man who had appeared without any warning. In fact, his mind might not yet be made up on the matter.

“So I am.” Jiang Ning’s reply had been brutally blunt. There had been no attempt at evasion or tact.

Jiang Ning’s reply had shocked Mr He too. Jiang Ning’s honesty had been brusque. He had left nothing hidden.

It had been excessively bold of him to utter those words.

“The one that the legend speaks of is here.”

“Chief Liu, are you certain that he is the one?”

“Are you suggesting that he isn’t?”

Mr He smiled and shook his head. He wouldn’t dare to contradict the sect leader.

He didn’t possess the ability to make that judgment.

There was something about Jiang Ning that felt different from others his age though. He seemed more candid. He was a Sinner who had appeared out of nowhere, and his friends must have helped him with the mark on his body.

Liu Chuandao started to pace the room. "Is it done?"

"Yes. He has no ties with Qingshan Sect currently. He is no longer a Sinner, only a guest at our sect," replied Mr He.

Liu Chuandao scoffed lightly before nodding in approval.

"You don't need me to say a word, do you? You know exactly what I want done. You're the only one who does."

Mr He smiled wordlessly.

He didn't have to say anything. Their relationship went beyond that of master and subordinate.

"If the legend is true, his arrival marks the beginning of change to the current situation in the mountain." The expression on Liu Chuandao's face was severe. He couldn't help but sigh. "It's been years and the current situation is a mess. If this continues, all of us...will be done for!"

He looked solemn and there was worry in his eyes. Should they pin their hopes on such a young man?

That sounded preposterous.

NH

“Come what may,” said Mr He. “All we have to do is to obey heaven’s will. The rest is not up to us.”

Liu Chuandao turned and looked at Mr He. He narrowed his eyes.

“You should be the sect leader instead.”

Mr He waved his hands frantically in refusal.

Anyone else would have thought that Liu Chuandao was angry and that he had spoken those words with the intention to mock and intimidate Mr He. But Mr He merely smiled without a hint of fear.

“No, not me. I’m not up for the job.”

“Humph.”

Liu Chuandao fell silent.

“How about Zhu Qi and the other disciples? I’m afraid they will start to suspect Jiang Ning’s origins,” said Mr He.

“Let Zhang Heng handle this.” Liu Chuandao snorted coldly.

He had meted out a harsh punishment to Zhang Heng, so Zhang Heng was going to do the same to Zhu Qi and his fellow disciples. This incident served as a warning to Zhu Qi and everyone against attempting anything untoward.

Mr He gave a nod of understanding and left Liu Chuandao’s study without saying another word.

NH

He had to announce the punishment that had been meted out to Zhang Heng immediately. That was the Disciplinary Hall's job.



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In the halls of the Inner Court, something was happening at the same time.

“Mr Zhang, we weren’t...”

“Silence!”

There was a thunderous look on Zhang Heng’s face. Fury and bloodthirst colored his eyes and they looked ready to tear into someone.

He glared at Zhu Qi and his gang.

“You’re really something, aren’t you? You barged into Third Miss’s courtyard brazenly and what made things worse is that you did it because you wanted to speak to the sect leader. So, what emergency had you demanding to speak to the sect leader directly instead of talking to me first? Is the Inner Court too small to accommodate your greatness? Do you think me unworthy of your attention? You had the audacity to disregard the rules of our sect and bypass your direct superiors. Am I dead to you?”

Zhang Heng’s palm slammed loudly on the table and sent the teacups on the table shaking violently.

Blood had drained completely from the faces of Zhu Qi and his fellow disciples. An icy cold had overtaken them. They couldn’t utter a single word.

They wouldn’t dare to voice a sound of protest even if Zhang Heng were to kill them out of fury now.

How could they have known that Jiang Ning and the sect leader had known each other all along? How could they have known that the two shared a relationship that seemed more than ordinary? Zhang Heng, the principal of the Inner Court himself, had been giving a verbal lashing by the sect leader.

Who were they in comparison? They were nothing!

“Speak!” Zhang Heng roared. “You certainly had your way with words just now, didn’t you? Why aren’t you saying anything? Is it because the sect leader isn’t here? Must the sect leader be present before you are willing to speak?”

Violent tremors coursed through Zhang Heng’s body. He was stuck serving a harsh punishment because of this unexpected disaster. What upset him the most was the fact that his very own subordinates had broken the rules of the sect flagrantly before the sect leader.

He had had no grounds to defend himself.

How could Zhang Heng not be furious?

Zhu Qi and the other disciplines remained silent. There was no way they could say anything because there was nothing for them to say.

What else could they say?

That Jiang Ning wasn’t a member of Qingshan Sect? It was true that he wasn’t, and the sect leader knew that all along and didn’t need them to

tell him that.

Perhaps they could argue that Jiang Ning harbored ill intentions towards Qingshan Sect. But this was someone whom the sect leader knew. It didn't matter if Jiang Ning harbored any ill intentions towards the sect. They were only disciples, so this was none of their business.

“Say something!” Zhang Heng bellowed. He rose to his feet. “I see. Alright. Fine. It seems that no one is talking. It seems that you don't have anything to say for yourselves. Guards!”

He couldn't be bothered to waste any more time on them. A dozen men marched into the hall as soon as he had called for them.

Zhu Qi and his fellow disciples were overcome with terror.

“Zhu Qi and his fellow disciples have broken the rules of the sect and caused offence to the sect leader. They have committed a grave offence!” Zhang Heng thundered. “In accordance with the rules of the Disciplinary Hall, these wretched creatures are to be marked as Sinners. Go, serve your sentence!”

“Mr Zhang! I...”

“It's too late to say anything now!” Zhang Heng roared in fury.

He did not spare Zhu Qi and the rest a single glance as the guards led them away.

They had been marked as Sinners. He knew the fate that awaited them. What made things worse was the fact that they had incurred the sect leader's wrath. Not even a Portico disciple could escape punishment for committing such an act.

"Mr Zhang! Mr Zhang! Please spare us! Please spare us!"

"This is all Zhu Qi's fault. We had nothing to do with it. We didn't..."

"Mr Zhang! Mercy, please!"

His disciples' voices gradually faded away. Zhang Heng stood rooted to the spot. His shoulders were heaving heavily and his breathing was uneven.

Even killing Zhu Qi and his gang wouldn't appease his anger.

"Mr Zhang, don't get upset. It's not good for you."

Zhang Heng looked up and saw Mr He making his way towards him with a smile on his face. Zhang Heng snorted.

"I wanted you to speak up for me, but you said nothing. I was humiliated in front of so many people!" snapped Zhang Heng unhappily

"What could I have said?" Mr He smiled. "The sect leader was angry. Nothing I say would help. Besides, your disciples were indeed foolhardy. They had the audacity to disrespect the sect leader and they broke the rules of the sect in front

of the sect leader. How was I to defend you? Should I say that this has nothing to do with you?”

“Humph,” Zhang Heng scoffed. He knew very well that there had been nothing that Mr He could say that would save him.

He turned and threw a glance at Mr He. “Is that why you’re here? To offer an explanation?”



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Both Zhang Heng and Mr He had known each other for many years and knew each other extremely well.

Mr He didn't have to explain himself to Zhang Heng. Zhang Heng knew that very well.

"Haha," Mr He laughed. "What do you think?"

He left Zhang Heng hanging, but Zhang Heng wasn't anxious. The punishment had already been meted out, so there was nothing more that he could say to change that.

But it had been rare for Liu Chuandao to get so angry.

Liu Chuandao wasn't exactly a well-tempered man but he rarely displayed outbursts of anger, especially to the elders in the sect and the principals of the courts.

Zhu Qi and his gang had incurred the wrath of the Liu Chuandao this time, and that had been unexpected.

Zhang Heng poured a cup of tea for Mr He and narrowed his eyes.

"Is it because of that young punk?"

A stranger had appeared in Liu Qing's courtyard suddenly without any explanation. Zhang Heng couldn't simply feign ignorance.

That had been the only thing that had changed. It was the only thing that could have caused Liu

Chuandao's outburst of anger.

Mr He gave Zhang Heng a thumbs up as soon as he heard that. The gesture was followed swiftly by excessive flattery.

"This is why you're the principal of the Inner Court. What astute observational skills. Nothing escapes you."

Zhang Heng snorted. He relished the flattery even though he knew that the other man was going out of his way to compliment him. It still made him feel good.

"You're right. It is because of him."

The expression on Mr He's face shifted faintly.

He could tell that Zhang Heng's interest was piqued. He looked around, then lowered his voice.

"Do you know who he is?"

Zhang Heng shook his head.

Why would he bother asking if he did?

"What do you think of him?" Mr He asked.

Zhang Heng froze momentarily. He didn't know the man and he knew nothing of where he had come from. How was he to judge?

"He seemed level-headed. His relationship with the sect leader seems to extend beyond the ordinary."

That had been what he had observed.

Jiang Ning had remained seated when Liu Chuandao had turned up. No one in Qingshan Sect would have dared to do that.

There was no question that this young punk wasn't a member of Qingshan Sect. In fact, he was probably someone important.

At the very least, he wasn't bound by decorum when in the presence of Liu Chuandao.

"Of course it does!" Mr He said seriously. He lowered his voice again. "Do you think he's a good match for Third Miss?"

Something flickered across Zhang Heng's eyes before a look of incredulity settled on his face, as if he had heard something unexpected.

"Are you saying that he's earned Chief Liu's favor and he's going to promise Third Miss' hand in marriage to him?"

Zhang Heng took a deep breath. He found that quite unbelievable.

Mr He raised his finger and placed it against his lips.

"Keep your voice down!" he said hastily. There was a secretive look on his face.

"You're not joking, are you?" A hint of panic flashed across Zhang Heng's eyes. "Where did you hear that from? Did the sect leader tell you?"

This punk...where does he come from?"

"Why would the sect leader tell me something like this?" Mr He rolled his eyes. "I wasn't suggesting anything. I was simply asking you if you thought that he was a good match for Third Miss. It was just a question. Don't get too paranoid."

Upon saying that, he leaned back, lifted his teacup to his lips and savored the tea. He blew lightly at the steaming liquid and took the opportunity to observe Zhang Heng. He seemed to be waiting for Zhang Heng to do something.

Zhang Heng had pursed his lips. He didn't say a word. There was a strange look on his face.

It was torn between faint panic and some degree of suspicion.

He eyed Mr He. "The sect leader should be the judge of whether the young punk's a good match for Third Miss, shouldn't he?"

Liu Qing was going to marry whomever her father decided that she would marry. She had no choice in the matter.

Mr He merely smiled without saying a word.

"Is he going to marry Third Miss to the young punk? Tell me, is it true?" Zhang Heng asked anxiously.

"What am I supposed to tell you? I'm in no position to confirm that," Mr He replied.

He placed his teacup down.

“Alright then. I dropped by because I was in the area. It was a casual question. Don’t think too much about it. That’s all.”

He stood up, turned and left without a word.



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Zhang Heng watched as Mr He walked away. He wanted to drag him back and question him further, but he didn't know what to ask him.

The man had made himself very clear.

The young punk wasn't a simple character. He had gained the sect leader's favor. He would have remained in the dark if Mr He had not told him.

"This won't do. If Third Miss does marry that young punk, then what about my..."

He frowned slightly. An icy glint flashed across his eyes, vanishing as quickly as it had appeared.

Nothing showed on his face. There was nothing but calm, and another icy glint flickered imperceptibly within his dark eyes.

Meanwhile.

Back at Liu Qing's courtyard.

"Brother Jiang, we just received these fruits. Try them."

A guard presented a basket of fruits to Jiang Ning. The fruits had been washed and cleaned. He smiled brightly. "Please let me know if you need anything else."

Jiang Ning nodded slightly. "It's alright. Focus on doing your job well. I have high hopes for you."

The guard's eyes lit up upon hearing the brief compliment and quickly clasped his hands

together with respect. “Yes, of course. Thank you, Brother Jiang, for your advice.”

Jiang Ning was the man who had spoken to the sect leader as an equal. He must be someone important.

They had served as Liu Qing’s guards for many years. They had never come across anyone who could make Liu Qing behave or anyone whom the sect leader had treated with as much respect.

Above all else, Jiang Ning was young and quite good looking. No one knew how far he would go in the future.

It wouldn’t hurt for them to make a good impression now.

Jiang Ning waved the guard away. The latter retreated to a corner immediately. He raised his chin and puffed his chest out. He seemed more alert than he had ever been.

“You’re too slow.”

Liu Qing was training fiercely in the distance. Her speed had increased visibly in the past few days.

She had found her own improvement miraculous.

But Jiang Ning still found her too slow. Her failure to meet his expectations was driving her crazy.

Honestly though, she still had a long way to go before she could reach the target that Jiang Ning had set for her.

“That cursed Jiang Ning. That stupid Jiang Ning. Where the hell did you come from? Did the gods send you here to make me suffer?” Liu Qing cursed secretly. She dared not voice a word of complaint though. “Humph. There’s nothing I can do to you, but there must be someone else who can!”

She didn’t know that there was only one person in this world who could do that and it wasn’t her.

“You’re still too slow. Are you trying to fail the test?”

“I’m going to wash my hands off you if that’s the case. You’re a disappointment.”

“You call yourself Third Miss when you can’t even get something so simple done? Who do you think you’re embarrassing? Not me, definitely.”

Jiang Ning wouldn’t stop talking. Liu Qing was ready to blow up, but she had to fight to keep her anger under control.

Control. Control. Control!

She couldn’t make him mad now. At least not now.

Liu Qing muttered secretly to herself, spewing curses at Jiang Ning in her head as she quickened her pace.

She was doing this because of the impending test. She wouldn’t be so accommodating otherwise.

She was the sec leader's daughter, so why should she listen to Jiang Ning? Why should she accord him any respect? He didn't deserve it.

Her fist shot forward and sent the sandbag flying across the training ground!

A female servant stood outside the gates. Panic and worry lined her face. She didn't want to disrupt Liu Qing's training. But if she didn't, something worse might happen.

"Third Miss!"

She decided to speak in the end. Her voice was fraught with anxiety.

Liu Qing turned and looked when she heard the servant's voice. She frowned slightly. She was in the middle of her training.

But she saw that it was the servant closest to her. This servant knew her temperament the best and wouldn't disrupt her training unless there was an emergency.

Liu Qing stopped in the middle of her training. She turned, gave Jiang Ning a look and feigned a look of anger. It seemed to be a hint. She was telling Jiang Ning that she was going to take a break now.

She walked up to the servant. "What is it? Hurry up and tell me."

"Third Miss, something terrible has happened. There are...there are rumors spreading outside.

They're smearing your good name!"



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Liu Qing frowned when she heard what her servant had said, but she remained calm.

She had suffered numerous slanders over the years. This wouldn't be the first time that someone had tried to sully her name.

When they weren't accusing her of enjoying undeserved privilege because of her status as Third Miss, they were accusing her of something else.

No one cared about how hard she worked. They were convinced that she had gotten to where she was now because of whom she was related to. She couldn't compare with her two elder brothers.

"They're saying..." Her servant's eyes reddened. "They're saying that Third Miss...has been duped by a scoundrel!"

Liu Qing's eyes widened.

Duped by a scoundrel?

This was the first time she had been slandered in such a manner. What scoundrel were they talking about? Where would she find such a man?

She froze momentarily, then whipped around and stared at Jiang Ning, who was just sitting there.

"That's utter nonsense!"

Who was going around spreading this rumor? Wasn't he worried that he might be caught and dismembered?

Liu Qing flushed. “Who started it?”

“I don’t know. It’s spreading across the entire Inner Court. Mr Zhang is looking into the matter,” said the servant. “I don’t know which horrible person is doing this, but Third Miss, you have to get the sect leader to look into this. The assholes who started this should be killed!”

In Qingshan Sect, Liu Qing appeared to be both an important and unimportant figure at the same time.

She was an important figure because she was the sect leader’s daughter, and was also the youngest and the most favored child of the sect leader, even though...everyone knew that Liu Qing and Liu Chuandao did not share blood relations, Liu Qing was still named as his daughter.

Regardless of her status, rumors continued to turn up from time to time.

“Let them say whatever they want to,” Liu Qing snorted as a sudden calm descended upon her.

After so many years, she had gotten used to this.

What could she do to the perpetrators if she caught them?

Should she kill them like how she had done so in the past?

How would that help? There would always be rumors. They were baseless and puzzling, and seemed to target at her deliberately. No matter

what she did or did not do, these rumors followed her everywhere.

“Third Miss...”

“It’s alright. Let them talk. I need to train. Let’s stay out of this.”

Liu Qing took a deep breath. She was undeniably resentful and angry. But she would be walking right into someone’s trap if she were to waste her time and energy on those rumors.

They wanted to see her fail the test, be sent away to the Outer Court by her father and become the laughing stock of the sect.

They wanted to see her fall into the abyss. She wasn’t going to let them get what they wanted.

Liu Qing didn’t say anything. She turned away and returned to the training grounds. Then, she began her training anew.

She seemed a little crazed and a little furious. Her aura had changed.

A couple of dummies shook violently after suffering a punch from her and nearly fell apart.

“Hah!” Liu Qing shouted as her fist smashed into a wooden training post. She didn’t seem to feel the slightest pain as she vented her anger through her punches.

A flurry of punches reverberated throughout the training ground. Jiang Ning looked up. He could

sense the anger in Liu Qing's punches. They felt different.

He gestured at Liu Qing's servant. The young girl saw his beckoning and approached him immediately.

"Brother Jiang."

"Why is Third Miss upset?" asked Jiang Ning.

The girl hesitated momentarily before spilling what she had heard to Jiang Ning.

"Third Miss may be the Sect leader's daughter, but they don't share any blood relations. That's why there are always people who try to hurt her maliciously. She never speaks about it though."

The servant's eyes were red. She felt terrible for Liu Qing. "They've gone too far! They're trying to distract Third Miss from her training. They just want to see her embarrass herself during the test. They're really awful!"

Jiang Ning nodded.

"Don't worry. She's not going to embarrass herself. She's going to make sure that they never speak of her that way again."

He waved his hand and sent the servant away.

He wouldn't have been able to tell that Third Miss, with her devil-may-care attitude, had been secretly carrying such immense stress. That explained why she was constantly looking for a fight. She

needed an outlet for her anger.



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Jiang Ning rose to his feet and walked to the front of the training ground. He watched as Liu Qing went through a flurry of moves.

“You can stop now.”

Liu Qing didn't seem to hear him. She continued throwing a series of punches, weaving between the wooden training posts and moving faster and faster.

BAM!

BAM!

BAM!

She was like a feral leopard who longed to rip everything apart.

SWOOSH!

Jiang Ning moved suddenly, charging straight into the training ground and appearing right before Liu Qing in a blink of an eye.

He was incredibly fast.

Before Liu Qing realized what was going on, she saw someone's hand grip her wrist. In the next moment, her wrist froze. She couldn't move her wrist at all.

It was as if something had pinned her down. Her limbs and her torso were frozen in place.

Liu Qing was stunned.

“What are you doing?”

She stared dumbly at Jiang Ning as she was overtaken by waves of shock.

She had made such great progress. Yet, she stood no chance against Jiang Ning at all. Why?

If Jiang Ning were her enemy, it would take him only a second to kill her.

“I’m going to teach you one move,” Jiang Ning said. “A move that will hold your enemy in place.”

Liu Qing’s training had borne fruit. Her speed, her power and her reflexes had improved drastically. This move was going to be a fitting final move.

“A move that will hold my enemy in place?”

Liu Qing’s heart spasmed violently. Like how Jiang Ning was holding her in place right now?

“This is meant to be a final move. Use it when the time is right,” Jiang Ning said. “Your foundational skills are barely passable, so when you’re in a fight with someone more powerful than you, an unexpected move will turn the odds in your favor. But you can only use this once. Remember that, alright?”

Having said that, he didn’t waste time on further talking and showed her instead.

Liu Qing fell into a dazed stupor.

She watched as Jiang Ning demonstrated the

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move in detail. She was still a little dazed. She couldn't think of anything else. The only thing that occupied her mind was the words that he had said. A move that will hold her enemy in place...

She was going to win the fight. She had to.

She was going to show the people who had tried to hurt her out of malice.

During this same period, Liu Chuandao was in the great hall. He looked at the people seated before him, then glanced at the generous gifts that had been placed at one side of the hall.

"This is unexpected," he said honestly and without much tact. "Neither I nor my daughter expected this."

"Chief Liu, our young master has admired Third Miss for many years. The two of them have been friends since their childhood days. You may think that this is unexpected but truly, this is something that has been in the making for a long time," Liu Chuandao's visitor smiled and replied politely. "I believe that Third Miss shares the same view."

"That's right." Zhang Heng was seated next to the guest. He smiled and continued. "Chief Liu, Third Miss isn't that young anymore. It's time she got married."

Liu Chuandao frowned slightly. He eyed Zhang Heng silently and then ignored what he had said.

"I have to think about this," he said mildly.

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Before any of the guests could say another word, he decided to change the subject.

“You’ve come all the way here, so you should stay for a few more days, since it’s been a long time since you last came. Qingshan Sect is going to hold a test in a few days, so you can stay and watch.” He glanced at the group briefly. “If you have any pointers to share, do speak with me freely.”

“Of course. We’re delighted to do as you’ve requested.”

“I’m afraid that we’ll be imposing on you for the next few days.”

Liu Chuandao nodded and smiled. He didn’t spare a look at the gifts. Instead, he instructed someone to lead the guests to their rooms.

He returned to his study alone. The look on his face was solemn.

DOONG DOONG.

Someone knocked on his door after some time.

“Come in,” said Liu Chuandao.

The door slid open. Mr He walked in and shut the door. There was a sly smile on his face.

“See? I told you they’d panic, didn’t I?” he said with a smile.

“Of course they’d panic. Zhang Heng’s even more

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anxious than they are,” Liu Chuandao scoffed. “It’s up to Jiang Ning to stir up some trouble now.”

“If he doesn’t, that would mean that he’s not the one,” said Mr He.



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The two of them exchanged a look. Liu Chuandao didn't say anything and merely snorted.

Mr He snickered like a wily fox.

They knew very well that Qingshan Sect was a unique sect. But it was on the decline and its standing had been steadily falling over the years. Many people were eying it hungrily.

The guests that Zhang Heng had invited to the sect had come on the pretext of seeking Liu Qing's hand in marriage. But their true intention was to infiltrate Qingshan Sect and carve a place for themselves in the sect before anyone else could.

"He," Liu Chuandao suddenly sounded serious. Mr He stopped smiling too as a solemn look appeared on his face. "Qingshan Sect cannot fall. That is our duty."

He said "our" and not "my". This wasn't a responsibility that was solely shouldered by the sect leader.

If Qingshan Sect were to fall and fail to perform the purpose it had been created for, a devastating calamity was going to befall them.

"I know," Mr He nodded. "Don't worry. I'll keep it standing. Even when I'm dead, I'll help you and the generations of sect leaders that follow to keep the sect standing."

His voice was filled with certainty and determination.

Liu Chuandao wasn't the one who called the shots in Qingshan Sect.

There were few in the Inner Court, Outer Court, and even amongst the elders, who were truly loyal to Qingshan Sect. How could Liu Chuandao not know?

On the surface, everyone appeared to be cordial to one another. But they had secretly allied themselves with other sects and entities a long time ago. As soon as the opportune moment struck, they would reveal their true colors without hesitation.

The only person whom Liu Chuandao could trust was Mr He.

"If I fail to protect the sect," Liu Chuandao took a deep breath before continuing, "I'll die here. My bones will stay in the sect."

Mr He didn't say a word. His eyes reddened slightly.

Qingshan Sect had weakened considerably. Without its former reputation and unique status, it would have been taken over by others ages ago.

Mr He pursed his lips. After a long moment of silence, he nodded. "My bones shall remain here too."

They exchanged a long look and neither said a word.

Liu Chuandao gathered his thoughts, then waved

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his hand. “Alright, we’ll carry out the plan that we have made. We’ll do what we can. The rest is up to the heavens.”

Perhaps it wasn’t up to the heavens. Perhaps it was up to Jiang Ning.

But Liu Chuandao dared not believe that the outsider would truly bring change.

The test was going to take place tomorrow.

Every disciple in Qingshan Sect was filled with nervousness.

Inner Court and Outer Court disciples weren’t the only ones who had to take the test. Portico disciples had their own test to take as well.

But to a typical Portico disciple, this wasn’t a difficult test. They had the ability to pass it effortlessly. After all, a Portico disciple was gifted with talent and skill.

The same couldn’t be said for Inner Court and Outer Court disciples.

Those that surpassed the rest would catch an elder’s eye and be made a Portico disciple. Those who failed the test would be demoted to the rank below their current rank.

Outer Court disciples who failed the test would be expelled from the sect. That was a fate worse than being marked as a Sinner.

After all, Sinners were still considered as

disciples. They still belonged to the sect, so they were a member of Qingshan Sect.

As for Liu Qing, this test meant something different for her.

She was aware that her reputation was at stake. If she were to lose again, Liu Chuandao would be utterly humiliated.

Liu Chuandao was the sect leader of Qingshan Sect, but the elders in the sect weren't characters to be trifled with either. Liu Qing was well aware of that fact.

"Hah..."

There was no training today. Liu Qing took a stroll in the courtyard and in the training ground.

She stared at the oddly shaped devices on the training ground. She had shattered some of them. Some of them had been bent out of shape. They no longer looked like what they had looked like at first.

"Did I do that?" Liu Qing was amazed by herself. "Do you think I can pass the test?"

She turned and looked at Jiang Ning.

She had improved drastically within a few weeks. She couldn't believe how much she had improved.

"That's a question you have to ask yourself," said Jiang Ning.



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Jiang Ning had done all that he could.

He couldn't take the test on Liu Qing's behalf. But of course, if he did that, no test would pose a challenge to him.

He was born to be a champion.

"I can," Liu Qing said instinctively and nodded. "There's no question about it!"

Time sped by.

It was time to take the test.

Except for a subtle hint of restraint coloring the look on her face, Liu Qing seemed like her usual self.

But Jiang Ning knew that she had been holding her emotions back for a very long time. All she needed now was an outlet.

The thunderous pounding of the war drums filled the field. Tension filled the air instantly.

Members from the various factions had arrived in troves.

Numerous disciples from the Inner Court, the Outer Court and the Portico had come to help their elders survey and pick out gifted participants.

This was their opportunity to identify potential talents. It was also the Inner Court disciples' chance of rising to the next level. Everyone

treasured this opportunity dearly.

Liu Chuandao had arrived!

The crowd got excitedly instantly. Everyone started cheering for the sect leader.

He raised his hand, gesturing for the crowd to calm down, then beckoned to Zhang Heng. The latter approached him immediately.

“We should start soon.”

“Understood,” replied Zhang Heng.

As he turned away, he gave the person seated next to Liu Chuandao a look. The other man understood what he was trying to tell him instantly and nodded.

Everyone sat down.

Liu Chuandao eyed the disciples on the field. They were buzzing with excitement. He seemed composed and it was hard to tell what he was feeling or thinking.

He was actually secretly sighing.

Every year was just getting worse.

Few young people chose to join Qingshan Sect nowadays. Year after year, the few who had done so had shown less talent than the previous batch.

The current batch of Portico disciples was no match for the Portico disciples from other sects.

Qingshan Sect had occupied a unique position since it had been established and that was why the other sects remained cautious of Qingshan Sect. Without its unique status, it would have been destroyed a long time ago.

“Chief Liu, I heard that Third Miss is participating in the test today,” said the man seated next to him with a smile.

“That’s right. I hope she won’t disappoint me this time,” replied Liu Chuandao as he nodded.

“That won’t happen. Third Miss is extremely talented. In my young master’s eyes, she’s the perfect lady,” the man added. “We’ll treat her as a princess if she were to marry our young master.”

Liu Chuandao laughed. “You might be in for a surprise. She’s failed the test a few times.”

“She’s going to pass this time,” the man said. “Besides seeking Third Miss’ hand in marriage, we’ve also come to witness her growth. I have faith in her. She won’t disappoint you.”

Liu Chuandao didn’t say anything. He pointed at the field and instructed the participants to get ready. The test was going to start anytime now. The crowd’s attention shifted onto the field immediately.

Meanwhile.

Liu Qing was seated on the field and took deep breaths. She didn’t look nervous, but she was indeed feeling a little nervous.

This was her last chance.

If she were to lose this time, she might have to get married. It would be to an asshole whom she had always disliked. Plus, she would be an embarrassment to her father.

“If I lose...”

“You won’t.”

Jiang Ning interrupted her before she was done talking.

“You’re not going to lose. I’ve taken a look.” Jiang Ning’s eyes swept the field and paused on the faces of the other Inner Court disciples. “They’re too weak. Many of them aren’t even fit to be your rival.”

“But...”

“There are no ‘buts,’” said Jiang Ning. “I trained you. I can tell you confidently that they’re not your match.”

Such encouraging words!

It did seem like Jiang Ning was praising himself instead of her though.

“Got it. I’m going to win!”

Liu Qing nodded seriously and took a deep breath. In that instant, she felt brave and sure of herself.

She turned and surveyed the field. She caught

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Zhang Heng speaking to a few people in the distance. Those seemed to be the strongest disciples in the Inner Court.

Were they going to participate in the test too?



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NH

Hadn't they passed the test ages ago?

Liu Qing froze.

"What's wrong?" Jiang Ning asked when he caught the look on Liu Qing's face.

"Those people over there..." Her eyes stared at the disciples standing in front of Zhang Heng.

They were nodding profusely but she had no idea what they were talking about. She stared at their moving lips and managed to figure out that they were going to take part in the test today too.

"They've already passed the test. In fact, I'm quite sure they've earned a place in the Portico. Why are they taking the test again?"

She didn't quite understand what was going on. Then, it struck her.

They didn't want her to pass the test!

This was a test not only of ability but of luck.

Only the top three participants in the whole batch would be recognized as winners. These three disciples were clearly more powerful than she was.

Their participation in this test...

Liu Qing took a deep breath. Fury surged within her. She wanted to march right up to them and demand to know what they were trying to do. Why had they signed up for the test?

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“It doesn’t matter whom your opponent is. You’re not going to lose,” Jiang Ning said mildly as she took a step forward. “Their participation will turn out to be in your favor. It’s going to be so much better if you beat them up and prove yourself.”

Liu Qing turned and stared at Jiang Ning for a long five seconds.

She gradually calmed down, then nodded. Her eyes had grown brighter and the light within glowed with a fierce determination.

Meanwhile, on the opposite side of the field, Zhang Heng looked at his most competent students and nodded.

“Do you know what to do?”

“Yes, Mr Zhang. This is going to be a piece of cake. We’ll win the top three positions and show them what the Inner Court is made of.”

“That’s right. This batch of juniors aren’t very strong. We won’t let ourselves turn into the laughingstock of the sect. We’ll do our best!”

“Please rest assured. We won’t embarrass the Inner Court.”

The three disciples looked at the spectators in the stands. They clearly didn’t want their guests to look down on the Inner Court.

The presence of visitors meant that their performance was going to not only reflect on the Inner Court but on Qingshan Sect as well.

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“Alright, I have faith in all of you,” Zhang Heng nodded with a smile and gave them another dose of encouragement. “Show them how gifted the young generation of Qingshan Sect disciples are.”

“We will!” the three disciples shouted in unison.

Having said that, they left to prepare themselves for the test. Zhang Heng stood there with his eyes narrowed and a wide smile on his face.

With the three of them participating in the test, Liu Qing wouldn't be able to get into the top three positions even if she were to pass the test. Her passing the test would be meaningless then.

A girl who was talentless, who had no future in the sect and didn't even share blood relations with the sect leader had no value beyond being married off and exchanged for resources.

His current efforts would pay off if Liu Qing was successfully married so that one of his own could be given legitimate status in the Qingshan Sect.

The other elders were likely watching and waiting. Everything was going to change if this move succeeded.

“Qingshan Sect has had its moments of glory, but it's struggling to survive now.” Zhang Heng shook his head. There was a look of scorn and disdain on his face. “The mountain gate will only open if Qingshan Sect falls. The world beyond the mountain...”

Greed colored his eyes. The depth of his hunger

was one that no one had ever witnessed before.

They had never seen the world outside the mountain. But they knew from various legends that the world outside was filled with treasures. Invaluable resources that drove one mad with lust could be found everywhere...

If not for the mountain gate, no one could stop them from entering that world.

Zhang Heng turned and took a look at Liu Qing.

She was the first step to their way out.

DOONG DOONG DOONG!

The war drums sounded again.

The test had officially commenced.

Liu Chuandao didn't waste any time at all. He told Mr He and his men to make the necessary preparations while he sat there and entertained his guests.

Mr He stood in the arena. He and Liu Chuandao exchanged a look and nodded at each other. His voice rang out clearly. "Let's begin!"

The first team got into the arena.

Qingshan Sect's test was a simple one. It consisted of a foundational examination as well as an actual match.



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It was the simplest and most straightforward manner of assessing one's ability.

The foundational examination was extremely simple. Most people could pass it. But an actual match required actual fighting and actual skill. One also required luck.

The opponents that Liu Qing had been paired with previously had all been extremely powerful. She had suffered a thorough defeat every time.

She had protested to Liu Chuandao previously. He had known that they had targeted her and allocated her overpowering opponents, but he had never said a word about that. All he had done had been to rebuke her for not working hard enough and for not being strong enough.

Now, Liu Qing finally understood some of the reason behind her father's actions.

BAM!

The first match ended swiftly.

The outcome of the match was revealed within a few exchanges after the two fighters had gotten into the arena.

The crowd gasped. Their eyes were filled adoration and envy as they stared at the person in the arena.

"Senior Luo is simply too powerful. He didn't have to take this test at all."

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“That’s right! Senior Luo and his fellow disciples have been guaranteed a place in the Portico. They’re participating in the test so that the visitors from outside our sect can see what the Inner Court is made of!”

“But the rest of the participants won’t stand a chance against them. What a pity!”

Everyone around Liu Qing were in heated discussions. She merely frowned but didn’t seem affected at all.

She stared fixedly at the man in the arena. She knew that she was going to have to fight him and his fellow disciples sooner or later.

She was going to defeat them all!

Jiang Ning sat next to Liu Qing. There was no hint of emotion on his face. He had remained composed since the test had started. It was as if he was the audience to a group of children fooling around with one another.

He didn’t pay any attention to Liu Qing.

He took a look at Luo Heng in the arena and shook his head.

“Is this all that the people inside the mountain have got to show for themselves?”

Jiang Ning had previously guessed that the fighters inside the mountain should be relatively powerful. The cemetery caretaker had told him that there were many powerful and skilled fighters

residing within the mountain and that the extent of their fighting prowess was unimaginable.

It was clear that these disciples were of a different league from those powerful fighters that the caretaker had referred to.

They could probably qualify as advanced grandmasters and make a name for themselves in the world outside the mountain. But they still had a long way to go before they were Jiang Ning's match.

Of course, they weren't a match for Jiang Ning now, who was a master of the Extreme Fist Technique. But their standards were so low that they wouldn't even beat Jiang Ning before he had learned the Extreme Fist Technique.

"The next team. Liu Qing versus Liu Fang!"

Mr He announced Liu Qing's name loudly.

Liu Qing trembled slightly. It was her turn!

Finally, her turn had come.

She clenched her fists, then turned and looked at Jiang Ning.

Jiang Ning held a cup out and poured her a cup of tea. "It's a little hot. Drink it when you're done with this match."

Liu Qing's eyes reddened slightly.

Her past hardly mattered now. During the brief

time that she had spent with Jiang Ning, the man had never lost faith in her. He had never stopped encouraging her. He had taught her to be confident of herself.

He had never said that she wouldn't be able to make it. He had always believed from the very beginning that she would not lose.

She bit her lips and made her way slowly into the arena. Standing across her was Liu Fang. There was a smile on his face and he seemed relieved.

His opponent for his first match was Liu Qing, so his first victory should come easily. It wouldn't matter if he were to lose to Luo Heng or the other two stronger disciples later since there was no shame in losing to them.

"I'm in luck," Liu Fang said softly. "Dear junior, don't take this too hard."

Liu Qing didn't say a word. She simply stood there. She gave Liu Fang a look, then raised her arms gradually and got into position.

Liu Fang paused at the sight of her composure. He had a feeling that he wasn't being taken seriously as an opponent and his face darkened.

"Humph," Liu Fang snorted. He slammed his foot into the ground and dashed forward. "Dear junior, here I come!"

His fist shot forward in a fierce, powerful punch!

He showed no mercy. His first attack was also his

most powerful.

He knew very well Liu Qing's weakness. She wasn't going to be able to dodge his attack.

She was going to be defeated by this attack.

SWOOSH!



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