

“The Piaomiao Sect,” Zhantai Liuyue replied with an indifferent look on her face. She had announced her sect in hopes of scaring them off so she wouldn’t have to kill anyone, but the group of men simply burst out in laughter after hearing that.

“You sure are a funny one, lady! If you’re the leader of the Piaomiao Sect, then what does that make me? The freaking Emperor? Hahaha!”

“You know, we probably would’ve believed you if you’d mentioned a less powerful sect! Come on, as if the leader of the Piaomiao Sect would bother coming over to a place like this?”

“Enough talk! Let’s just tie her up and take her away already! I’m dying to get myself a piece of her!”

Han Jingru let out a sigh when he heard that. *Zhantai Liuyue was clearly going to spare them, but they’re too ignorant to realize that... Looks like a fight is inevitable, then.*

“In that case, I guess I’ll have a cup of tea before

continuing my journey.” Han Jingru sat down and began pouring himself some tea while Zhantai Liuyue glared at him in disbelief.

Is he seriously not going to help out at all? Sure, I don't need his help in taking these guys out, but he's a man for goodness sake! Does he not have any sense of responsibility?

“Your thirst sure has an impeccable timing, Master Han!” she said angrily.

Han Jingru let out a chuckle and called out to the group of men in front of him, “Make sure to show your sincerity when you beg her for forgiveness later, or she won't let you off the hook so easily!”

The men rubbed their palms with glee when they saw him sipping on his tea.

They had been dying to get their hands on Zhantai Liuyue, and Han Jingru not interfering gave them the perfect opportunity to do so.

“Grab her! Whoever rips her clothes off gets to

go first!”

Hearing that riled them all up, and they cried out in excitement as they charged at her.

Han Jingru looked the other way and continued to sip on his tea while their cries of anguish and the sounds of bones cracking filled his ears.

“Man... these poor b*stards really should learn to pick their targets better...”

Zhantai Liuyue steamrolled them all with her strength as an Eighth Stage Cultivator, and the fight had ended as quickly as it started.

A gruesome sight greeted Han Jingru’s eyes as he turned around. Every single one of those men were either knocked unconscious or rolling on the ground in agony.

“You lot really are all brawn and no brains, huh? You should’ve believed her when she told you she’s the leader of the Piaomiao Sect!” he let out a helpless sigh as he said that.

Zhantai Liuyue rolled her eyes at him. *His sarcastic remarks have come in impeccable timing too...*

“Perhaps now you will believe that I’m Zhantai Liuyue, eh?” she called out to the group of men.

The one leading the group nodded profusely in response. He had never imagined that he would one day suffer such a humiliating defeat, and at the hands of a woman too.

He knelt down before her and begged for forgiveness, “We’re terribly sorry for our actions, Madam Zhantai! Please forgive us!”

“I’m so sick of this.” Han Jingru let out a sigh. *How many times have I seen this sort of thing now? There’s no point in it at all! Scumbags like these are everywhere, and what happened today will repeat itself countless times in the future!*

“Sick of what?” Zhantai Liuyue looked at him in confusion.

“Nothing. So, are you gonna kill them? If not, we should continue on our journey.”

The men tensed up immediately upon hearing that and knelt down before Zhantai Liuyue in hopes that she would spare their lives.

Fortunately for them, she wasn't a bloodthirsty sadist and didn't find them worthy of her killing.

“Get lost!” Zhantai Liuyue ordered coldly.

“Thank you, Madam Zhantai! Thank you so much!”

The group of men ran off with their tails between their legs, and the two continued their journey towards the Dragon Emperor Palace.

Zhantai Liuyue was unhappy about Han Jingru not helping her out earlier, but kept her thoughts to herself as she had gotten used to his antics.

“We'll be arriving at the Dragon Emperor Palace soon. Are you sure about this?” she asked.

“Sure about what?”

“Once we enter the palace, your fate will be entirely in the Emperor’s hands. Aren’t you afraid? You are a huge threat to the Imperial Court, you know?”

I wouldn't have decided to come here if I was worried about that. If the Emperor tries to kill me, I shall respond in kind!

“If that happens, you’ll have the opportunity to witness the Emperor’s might with your own eyes. You should be thanking me for this!” Han Jingru said with a chuckle.

He's still in the mood for jokes? Does he not fear death at all?

“What on earth are you?” Zhantai Liuyue asked. She had noticed something unusual about Han Jingru ever since she first saw him, be it the way he spoke or the way he carried himself.

“I’m a man, duh! Isn’t that obvious?” Han Jingru said matter-of-factly.

Zhantai Liuyue let out a helpless sigh. “You’ll receive no help from me if the Emperor decides to kill you!”

“There isn’t much an Eighth Stage Cultivator like you can do anyway,” Han Jingru said casually.

“You...” Zhantai Liuyue was furious. *I’m the leader of the Piaomiao Sect! No one has ever dared show me the slightest sign of disrespect, but this guy doesn’t even give a damn about me! Well... Okay, given his Stage and capability, I suppose he does have the right to say that... After all, he did shock the Imperial Court by defeating the Elite 28!*

“I’ll make sure to keep my eyes peeled when you get killed by the Emperor!” Zhantai Liuyue shouted through clenched teeth.

Han Jingru smiled to himself. *We haven’t even gotten there and she’s already cursing at me. Women really are terrifying once you offend them...*

The Dragon Emperor Palace was not as grand or magnificent as Han Jingru had imagined. On the contrary, it looked like a small town and was even smaller than Fengshang City. However, those who were allowed in there were, without a doubt, on a whole different level compared to everyone else outside.

The sheer amount of high-level Beastmasters and fighters in there was what set it apart from every other town or city.

“This place looks a lot different from what I had expected,” Han Jingru exclaimed.

“It may be a small town, but it is the core of the Imperial Court. The Spiritual Energy is very concentrated here, which really helps Cultivators in their training. That’s why a lot of them choose to join the Imperial Court,” Zhantai Liuyue explained.

“I can see why it attracts a lot of Cultivators, but there are still quite a lot of people who refuse to join the Imperial Court. Why is that?” Han Jingru was confused.

Not every powerful Cultivator chose to join the Imperial Court, and Zhong Qishan who used to serve Ximen Chang was a prime example of this. Although the Ximen family was a very powerful family and could provide its Cultivators with lots of wealth and power, the Imperial Court's ability to help them improve their cultivation made it a lot more enticing.

“Different people are after different things in life, and that results in different choices. Joining the Imperial Court means swearing absolute obedience and loyalty to the Emperor, so it's only natural for those who hate being constrained to reject that idea.”

Han Jingru nodded in response.

At that moment, a familiar figure appeared at the town gate.

Fei Ling'er? W-What is she doing here?

Han Jingru was shocked. He had found it strange when she left Xixiang City back then, so running into her at Dragon Emperor Palace left him even

more confused.

Fei Ling'er walked up to him with a smile on her face. "Are you surprised to see me?"

"How could I not be when I see a beggar here in the Dragon Emperor Palace?" Han Jingru replied calmly.

"You've already had your doubts about my identity, so how about you spare me the sarcasm?"

"Sarcasm? Oh, I wouldn't dare! I don't wanna end up losing my head for disrespecting a member of the royal family or something, you know?" Han Jingru's tone was filled with disdain.

Fei Ling'er let out a helpless chuckle. She hadn't expected her true identity to be revealed in this manner. "I can tell you who I really am if you'd like..."

"There is no such need." Han Jingru cut her off. "I'm not interested in you, so your identity is of no importance to me."

“Who would’ve thought that the leader of the Jingru Sect was such a petty man, eh?” Fei Ling’er’s tone grew cold.

“Oh? Am I a petty man, Madam Zhantai?” Han Jingru asked as he turned towards Zhantai Liuyue.

Although she didn’t know who Fei Ling’er was, she found their little banter amusing. However, she didn’t feel comfortable being dragged into it.

“I’m not sure about you being petty, but you certainly don’t strike me like a man!” Zhantai Liuyue said.

Fei Ling’er burst out into laughter and raised an eyebrow at him as she asked, “What did you do to Madam Zhantai to make her doubt your masculinity?”

Han Jingru ignored her insult and got straight to the point. “If you’re waiting for me here, then the Emperor must know about my arrival as well. Go on, lead the way.”

“Are you really not curious about my identity? Not even in the slightest?” Fei Ling’er asked.

“Are there a lot of people named Fei who are authorized to see the Emperor?” Han Jingru responded to her question with another question.

Zhantai Liuyue tensed up when she heard what he said.

Fei? There are tons of people in Xenos named Fei, but not many that are authorized to see the Emperor...

Fei Ling’er chuckled. “Do you really think that I’m a relative of Fei Lingsheng?”

Han Jingru sneered. “Pinnacle Masters possess the Rejuvenation ability. Did you really think I haven’t figured out who you are, Fei Lingsheng?”

He used to think that Fei Ling’er was related to Fei Lingsheng by blood, but it would take more than that to be authorized to see the Emperor. That coupled with the fact that Pinnacle Masters were able to reverse their aging allowed Han

Jingru to easily deduce her true identity.

Although somewhat surprised, he was more curious as to why a Pinnacle Master would bother disguising herself as a beggar.

Fei Lingsheng felt a little disappointed at having her cover blown so soon as she had wanted to hold him in suspense for a little longer.

“If you’re so smart, why didn’t you figure it out sooner?”

Han Jingru felt his stomach churn in disgust when he saw her pouting. *I don’t know what she actually looks like due to the Rejuvenation effect, but I bet she’s an old lady acting all coquettish like a young maiden... Ew!*

“How much longer till we see the Emperor? I bet he must’ve been waiting a long time to see me,” he asked.

While Fei Lingsheng was waiting for them by order of the Emperor, she was held in high regard and had the freedom to take as long as she liked.

“Why did you come to the Dragon Emperor Palace?” To her, there was no way Han Jingru could possibly know about the incidents in the Dark Forest.

“You’ll find out what you want to know when I meet the Emperor,” Han Jingru replied.

“Aw, come on... can’t you tell me first?” Fei Lingsheng asked.

“I can, but you have to tell me why you approached me pretending to be a beggar. What was the point in doing that?” he asked. *If Fei Lingsheng wants an answer, she’ll have to give me something of equal value first!*

“I simply wanted to see how powerful you were. You must understand how boring life can be for Pinnacle Masters like me. It’s really rare for us to encounter someone powerful, so it was only natural that I got curious about you.”

“That’s it?” Although Han Jingru saw no reason for Fei Lingsheng to lie as her identity had already been exposed, he still found her

explanation hard to believe.



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Fei Ling'er nodded wholeheartedly as she was genuinely curious about Han Jingru's Stage as well as his origins.

“Of course, why else do you think I did it? To fight you?”

Han Jingru frowned. *Am I really just overthinking things here? She didn't have to disguise herself as a beggar if she simply wanted to know about my Stage! It sounds absurd that the most powerful person in the Imperial Court would stoop this low!*

“The beggar part was unnecessary if you simply wanted to know about my Stage though...” Han Jingru eyed her suspiciously.

“What was I supposed to do? Just waltz up to you and blatantly ask you about it? There's no way you'd tell me the truth!” Fei Ling'er held her head high as she continued, “Now, tell me, what's your Stage?”

Han Jingru rolled his eyes at her. Even he was unsure of his Stage as the leveling system in

Xenos didn't apply to him at all. On top of that, he had yet to find his Unique Weapon.

“How about you take me to the Emperor so we don't keep him waiting any longer?”

“See, this is why I had to disguise myself as a beggar!” Fei Ling'er began leading the way after saying that.

Zhantai Liuyue had been completely silent the entire time as she walked alongside Han Jingru. She didn't expect to encounter someone as powerful as Fei Lingsheng before entering the Dragon Emperor Palace. In fact, most people have lived their entire lives without ever coming across anyone of such caliber.

“Are you afraid of her?” Han Jingru chuckled when he noticed how nervous she looked.

Zhantai Liuyue shook her head. She had no reason to be afraid of Fei Lingsheng as there were no grudges between them, but that didn't stop her from feeling nervous in the presence of a powerful individual.

“She’s a Pinnacle Master as well as the strongest individual in the Imperial Court! I think it’s perfectly normal for me to feel a little nervous around her.”

Han Jingru let out a snicker when he heard that.

Nervous? What’s there to be nervous about? She doesn’t even look remotely scary! In fact, we don’t even have the slightest clue as to how she really looks! For all we know, she could be an old hag with her face full of wrinkles and barely any teeth left! If that’s the case, then this world truly is terrifying! Sure, we’ve got editing software like Photoshop on Earth which could make even the ugliest people look like sexy celebrities, but that lie will be exposed once you see them in person! With Fei Lingsheng, you can’t tell how she actually looks like even if you see her in person! Now that is scary! I can’t even imagine the number of women on Earth who would kill to have such an ability!

“What is it?” Zhantai Liuyue asked when she saw how quiet Han Jingru had become.

“N-Nothing.” He was thinking about the amount of money he could make if he were able to replicate the age reversal effects on Earth, but such thoughts were pointless as money no longer mattered to him.

The three of them soon arrived at the Dragon Emperor Palace.

Despite being the core of the Imperial Court, the exterior of the Dragon Emperor Palace is surprisingly underwhelming... Heck, even the Chen residence in Longyun City is fancier than this!

“Looks like the Emperor is quite the pauper, eh?” Han Jingru said jokingly.

Zhantai Liuyue was surprised that he still had it in him to crack jokes when her nervousness was practically driving her insane.

“Shhh! The Emperor will have you beheaded if he hears that!”

“Nah, I don’t think he’s that petty!” Han Jingru

casually brushed her off.

Zhantai Liuyue glared at him in disbelief. *The more time I spend with him, the more I am unable to figure him out... he'd even disrespect the freaking Emperor!*

“Fine, don’t say I didn’t warn you that insulting the Emperor is grounds for capital punishment!”

Han Jingru nodded in acknowledgement, only to ask her moments later, “How old is the Emperor? Is he ugly?”

Zhantai Liuyue felt like her heart was going to jump out of her chest at that point. *How on earth could he say such things? The Emperor’s appearance is none of his business anyway!*

“Will you please keep those questions in your head? Unlike you, I want to keep mines on my shoulders!”

Han Jingru saw how scared she was and decided to stop teasing her.

The smug grin on his face disappeared the moment they set foot into the palace. He could feel an unusual energy in the air which didn't appear strong, but it seemed to shroud the entire palace.

Han Jingru had once wondered how the Dragon Emperor Palace was able to suppress Pinnacle Masters within its grounds, and now he figured it must have something to do with that strange energy.

“Wait here.” Fei Lingsheng instructed them as they arrived at an empty throne room.

Han Jingru sneered. *Huh... the Emperor has clearly been waiting a long time for me, and yet he's still trying to put on airs by having me wait?*

“Sure, I have no problems with waiting if he wishes to stall. However, keep in mind that the incident in the Dark Forest will wait for no one.”

“What do you know about it?” Fei Lingsheng couldn't help but ask out of curiosity.

“I know what you know. What, you think you’re the only one who has access to that information?” Han Jingru said with a chuckle.

Fei Ling’er clenched her teeth. *This b*stard... his tongue is just as formidable as his Stage!*

“Your Majesty, I’m sure Your Majesty has long since heard of my arrival here at the Dragon Emperor Palace. I also know you’ve been waiting for me ever since so why bother wasting both of our time like this? How much longer are you going to have me wait before seeing me?” Han Jingru raised his voice all of a sudden.

Zhantai Liuyue’s face was as pale as a sheet. *No one has ever dared display such insolence in the Dragon Emperor Palace! The Emperor has already planned on killing him, to begin with, so his rude behavior would only be providing the Emperor with a perfect excuse to do so! What the hell is wrong with this guy?*

“Watch your tongue, Master Han!” she quickly reminded him.

To her dismay, Han Jingru ignored her and continued, “Are you still not going to see me, Your Majesty? Should I perhaps come back again some other day?”

Zhantai Liuyue kept her head down as she trembled all over. Han Jingru’s boldness had completely surpassed her imagination.



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Zhantai Liuyue was about to go crazy from panic when the Emperor finally appeared.

“Master Han, you’re younger than I thought. Despite that, your power seems to be on par with Fei Lingsheng, am I right?” the Emperor said with an evil grin.

He had been boasting about his power to Han Jingru, but the latter did not seem intimidated by it at all.

Han Jingru grinned. Instead of answering the Emperor’s question directly, he said, “Your Majesty, there’s something I need your permission for.”

“I didn’t bat an eyelid even after you killed my subordinates from the Imperial Court. Aren’t you taking things a bit too far now?” the Emperor asked in a cold tone.

“I think you’ll be happy to hear about my request, Your Majesty,” Han Jingru said. “After all, I have nothing to gain from this. It’s all for the sake of Xenos’ prosperity.”

“You think I’ll go easy on you just because of that?” the Emperor snickered.

Zhantai Liuyue shivered when she heard that. *What the hell was Han Jingru thinking? He’s just giving the Emperor an excuse to kill him!*

“The Qilin will kill me before you do, Your Majesty. What’s the difference?” Han Jingru asked calmly.

The Emperor’s eyes widened as he glanced at Fei Lingsheng, convinced that the latter had been the one who let the cat out of the bag.

Fei Lingsheng shook her head vehemently, prompting the Emperor to train his eyes on Zhantai Liuyue.

She must have leaked something to him!

Zhantai Liuyue could feel the suffocating aura surround her when the Emperor looked at her, even though she had been avoiding his gaze. Her face paled immediately.

Han Jingru rushed over and blocked her from the Emperor's view. "We have a common enemy, Your Majesty. There's no need to start a civil war right now."

"Civil wars don't exist here, Master Han," the Emperor said, glaring at him fiercely. "We kill anyone who tries to create trouble."

Han Jingru's face remained expressionless, though a sharp-eyed person would have spied the slight fluttering of his clothes. "Well, Madam Zhantai was indeed the one who told me about the Qilin, but it had just been a wild guess at that point in time. Judging by your reaction, Your Majesty, it seems that we were right all along."

Han Jingru managed to checkmate the Emperor with those words. The Emperor had given Han Jingru the answer he needed without even realizing it, and that was all Han Jingru needed.

If the Emperor were to punish Zhantai Liuyue in any way, it would make him look like a massive hypocrite.

“It’s true that the Qilin of the Dark Forest has awoken, Master Han,” the Emperor said.

“However, I don’t think anyone is able to stop it, even if the three nations of Xenos were to unite.”

“We need to learn more about it in order to defeat it, Your Majesty. Would you be willing to give me a chance to get close to it?” Han Jingru asked.

The Emperor was not sure what his request entailed, and that made him hesitant. “What chance?” he asked.

“I’m sure you have records on the Qilin hidden amongst your archives, am I right? May I take a look at them?” Han Jingru asked.

The Emperor glowered at Han Jingru, enraged by his blatant disregard for his status. *Who do you think you are? Someone like you will never gain access to the archives of the Dragon Emperor Palace!*

Even Fei Lingsheng could tell that Han Jingru was pushing his luck with his requests.

“Hmph!” the Emperor huffed. “How dare you, Master Han! I’m the only person who has the authority to read those records! Are you trying to challenge my throne?”

The Emperor’s domineering aura grew as he spoke, pressing Han Jingru and Zhantai Liuyue into the ground.

Zhantai Liuyue collapsed onto the ground, unable to withstand the pressure. When she felt like giving up and succumbing to fate, Han Jingru gave her hand a reassuring squeeze, which calmed her down.

She looked up to meet his eyes with a light gasp, noticing just how unfazed he looked despite the threats the Emperor was throwing him.

Fei Lingsheng grinned. *I can’t wait to watch the drama unfold!*

I wonder what’s going to happen to Han Jingru after this...

The Emperor was stronger than the Pinnacle

Masters, but no one knew why.

Fei Lingsheng had a feeling that she would be the first to learn the reason, and she looked forward to it.

“Aren’t you afraid that I’ll kill you?” the Emperor growled.

Han Jingru shook his head. “You would have done that long ago if you really wanted to kill me, Your Majesty. I’m sure you’re not interested in killing me.”

“Why are you so sure of that?” the Emperor scoffed.

“Killing me won’t contribute to the defeat of the Qilin, but keeping me alive would,” Han Jingru said calmly.

“Are you threatening me now?” the Emperor snapped, his temper flaring.

“No. I’m just saying that you aren’t qualified to kill me,” Han Jingru said before laughing

arrogantly.

Even as the air thickened with tension, Han Jingru seemed completely unaffected and unfazed.

The Emperor took a step back in shock. *Did he come prepared?*

He had considered the possibility of Han Jingru being stronger and braver than he had imagined, but he had never expected it to come true.

Is he stronger than the Pinnacle Masters or even above them?

The Emperor had no choice but to swallow his words. As the head of the Dragon Emperor Palace, he had no problem assassinating the Pinnacle Stage fighters, but not someone from the legendary Alpha Stage.

Fei Lingsheng piped up all of a sudden. “Your Majesty, you should think before you act. We can’t afford to start a civil war when the Qilin’s on the loose.”

Fei Lingsheng was trying to save the Emperor from embarrassment, though it was rather unnecessary of her to do so. Even so, it would not be worth it for the Emperor to have a head-on clash with Han Jingru or reveal the secrets of the Dragon Emperor Palace in front of Fei Lingsheng.

“Fine then. I’ll let you off this time, Master Han,” the Emperor said, letting Han Jingru go from the suffocating pressure he had been inflicting upon him.

Han Jingru’s face remained expressionless, though he was glad that the weight was finally lifted off his back, which was already soaked in sweat. If not for the Holy Chestnut he had the foresight to consume beforehand, he would have been crushed within seconds.

It made sense to him why the Pinnacles Masters feared the Emperor. The power he demonstrated just now did not seem to be at its full extent, after all.

Han Jingru kept his thoughts off his face, and no

one could tell what he was thinking about, including the Emperor himself. Everyone was too busy trying to figure out if Han Jingru was indeed as strong as he said he was.

“I’m sure you’re aware that I’m the only person who can enter the Imperial Archives,” the Emperor said.

“I understand. However, desperate times call for desperate measures. You have the authority to bend the rules in the Imperial Court and the Imperial Archives, Your Majesty,” Han Jingru said politely, as though he was trying to sweet-talk the Emperor.

It worked surprisingly well. The Emperor could not help but agree with what Han Jingru said.

The Qilin’s out of the Dark Forest, and it’ll be really difficult to deal with it. I’ve read all the scriptures in the Imperial Archive, but I’m still clueless as to how I should go about defeating the Qilin. Maybe he’ll come up with a plan if I let him take a look at the scriptures?

However, he felt reluctant to give Han Jingru permission to read the scriptures, considering that they just had a huge falling out.

“I’ll think about it,” he said in the end.

“I hope to hear from you as soon as possible. The Qilin won’t wait around for us to come up with ways to defeat it,” Han Jingru emphasized.

Fei Lingsheng glanced at Han Jingru disapprovingly. *Haven’t you had enough? Can’t you tell that the Emperor is going to give in to your request?*

“No worries. The seals in the Dark Forest will restrain it for a period of time, so it won’t be able to escape just yet. Besides, it’ll take some time for it to regain its strength after waking up from such a deep slumber,” Fei Lingsheng explained.

“Regain its strength?” Han Jingru repeated, his eyes widening. “This is the perfect opportunity to strike then, Your Majesty!”

Fei Lingsheng had wanted Han Jingru to go easy

on the Emperor, but it ended up having the opposite effect. However, his suggestion seemed reasonable, so Feng Lingsheng decided not to oppose him.

“I’ll inform you of my decision soon,” the Emperor said. “You may take your leave now.”

Han Jingru had no choice but to leave the Imperial Court after that, but he did not have any qualms about the Emperor’s final decision. Knowing the Emperor, he would not consider a suggestion unless he was going to agree with it.

As they walked out of the throne room, Fei Lingsheng turned to Han Jingru and bowed. “You’re the first person I’ve met who had the guts to challenge the Emperor head-on and survive!”

“He’s an intelligent man, and he knows that the situation is dire, that’s why,” Han Jingru said with a grin.

“Why are you praising him now? I don’t think he’ll go easy on you even after we defeat the

Qilin,” Fei Lingsheng reminded him.

Han Jingru nodded with a sigh. His relationship with the Emperor was already strained, and the fall of their common enemy would only bring about the Emperor’s wrath on him.

As the head of the Imperial Court, no one had the authority to threaten or disrespect the Emperor.

The fall of the Bailing family served as a warning.

However, Han Jingru did not seem to care about it.

War was inevitable if he wanted to unite the Three Nations, and the disagreements he had with the Emperor could be the perfect excuse.

Han Jingru had wanted to pave the way for his future endeavors, though he desperately needed to get rid of the Qilin first.

“I didn’t know you could be so calm despite being under so much pressure,” Fei Lingsheng

said, trying to gauge the true extent of Han Jingru's power. "Looks like I've underestimated you."

"You've stayed in my residence for quite some time back then, Fei Lingsheng," Han Jingru said. "You're the host now, so can't you act like one for once?"

"Stop beating around the bush! You just wanted to pay my home a visit, didn't you?" Fei Lingsheng scoffed.

Han Jingru chuckled and turned to Zhantai Liuyue. "Let's go and take a look at a Pinnacle Master's residence, shall we? It'll be a pretty eye-opening experience for you."

Zhantai Liuyue remained silent. Even as the Master of the Piaomiao Sect, she did not have the guts to speak up against a Pinnacle Master like Fei Lingsheng.

To Zhantai Liuyue, getting a chance to stay in Fei Lingsheng's residence would have been unimaginable just a few days prior, and she saw it

as a chance to improve the Piaomiao Sect's reputation amongst the other sects.

“Thank you!” she exclaimed, bowing to Fei Lingsheng.

“No need to thank her. She basically leeches off me back when she pretended to be homeless,” Han Jingru scoffed.

Fei Lingsheng pretended to hear him. She would have lost her temper if it had been anyone else, but Han Jingru was on a completely different level compared to her. Considering all the lies she had told him, she felt that she did not have the right to get mad at him.

When they arrived at Fei Lingsheng's residence, Han Jingru immediately noticed Yi Qingshan's absence. *Did she kick him out or something?*

Meanwhile, at the Dragon Emperor Palace...

After Han Jingru and company left, the Emperor turned to his trusted aide and asked, "What do you think of him?"

"Reckless! Arrogant!" his trusted aide said in a straightforward manner. If not for the Qilin crisis, his trusted aide would have stabbed Han Jingru right there and then.

"Even more so than Fei Lingsheng, it seems," the Emperor said with a sigh. "I can't even figure out what stage he's at!"

As the head of the Dragon Emperor Palace, the Emperor was stronger than any Pinnacle Master, but Han Jingru was much stronger than he thought. Even though he did not go all out to make Han Jingru suffer, his nonchalant expression was enough to prove his sheer power.

"Your Majesty, you're not going to let him into the Imperial Archives, are you?" his trusted aide asked as he was concerned. They may be facing a crisis, but the Imperial Archives had its rules.

Han Jingru was nothing but a Master, and he would never compare to the Emperor in terms of authority.

The Emperor grimaced, visibly troubled by the dilemma. The awakening of the Qilin would indeed bring about chaos to Xenos, and he could not afford to make a wrong decision.

Xenos had almost collapsed the last time the Qilin woke up from its slumber, and even after a thousand years of rest and recuperation, Xenos was still not ready for yet another crisis. If the Qilin was to leave the Dark Forest, this whole place would be doomed.

Compared to that, letting Han Jingru into the Imperial Archives seemed like an insignificant matter.

“I’m sure you’re aware that there’s nothing the Three Nations can do against the Qilin, even if we joined forces,” the Emperor said.

“Aren’t you concerned about the ulterior motives he might have, Your Majesty?” he trusted aide

exclaimed. “What if he’s after the top-secret training guides?”

“It doesn’t matter. I need him to find a solution to the crisis. I wouldn’t be able to deal with it myself, and there might be things that I missed out back when I read through the archives. This is a matter of life and death; hence, I have to give way to certain rules and principles,” the Emperor said in a heavy tone.

He would have rejected Han Jingru’s request outright if he did not agree with it, so telling him that he would consider his request would mean that he was ready to accept it.

His trusted aide nodded with a sigh. After all, nothing else would have mattered when one’s life was on the line.

“We need to keep this a secret, Your Majesty. I don’t think other people would be very happy to find out about this,” his trusted aide whispered a reminder.

The Emperor nodded. There were many capable

fighters in the Dragon Emperor Palace, and most of them had their eyes on the throne and the top-secret archives stored within the Imperial Archives. If anyone else was to hear of Han Jingru's venture into the forbidden place, it would spell certain doom for the reputation of the Dragon Emperor Palace.

“Send word for Han Jingru to come to the Dragon Emperor Palace tonight,” the Emperor ordered.

“Yes, Your Majesty.”

That night...

The Dragon Emperor Palace was eerily quiet. As most of the Cultivators trained at night, the Dragon Emperor Palace imposed a curfew on the people in the city to reduce the noise level at night. The central court itself did not have any nightlife amenities.

The silence should have made falling asleep easier, but Han Jingru found it strangely difficult to do so. A feeling of dread sat heavily in his

stomach as he tossed and turned.

“Did something happen in Yun City?” he muttered, sitting upright to clear his thoughts. He could not think of any other situation that would make him lose sleep.

No way... Yun City is in good hands. I've consolidated all the powerful organizations, Mo Lan is in charge of the day-to-day matters and the economy should be thriving under the leadership of Nangong Boling. Everything should be fine...

Before he left, Han Jingru had requested for Zhuang Tang and his disciple to protect Su Yimo and Han Xiang. Consuming the Holy Chestnut had made them much stronger than before, and it would be near impossible for anyone from the Apocalypse to hurt Su Yimo and Han Xiang.

Han Jingru took a deep breath and exhaled slowly, but it did nothing to calm his racing mind.

Suddenly, he sensed a sliver of a strong aura appearing at Fei Lingsheng's front door that went straight for him.

Frowning, he got off his bed and walked out of his room to take a look.

When he noticed that it had been the Emperor's trusted aide, he sighed in relief.

“Apologies for disturbing you at this hour, Master Han,” the trusted aide said, though there was not a hint of regret in his voice. As the trusted aide of the Emperor, he did not need to act humble in front of others.

“Has the decision been made?” Han Jingru asked.

“We can't afford to let anyone know of this. I hope you understand, Master Han,” the trusted aide said.

Han Jingru nodded. The Imperial Archives was supposed to be out-of-bounds to everyone other than the Emperor, and if word got out that he received special permission to enter the Imperial Archives, the Emperor would have a lot of explaining to do.

“You may take your leave. I'll make sure to keep

quiet about this,” Han Jingru said.

Suddenly, a voice rang from the corner of the room. “You think you can keep this a secret from me?”

Han Jingru whirled around to see Fei Lingsheng huddled in a corner and grinned. *She must have sensed this guy’s presence before I did!*

“Senior Fei, the Emperor has made it clear that you may tag along,” the trusted aide told her.

Fei Lingsheng nodded with a satisfied smile. She leapt off the platform she was perching on and walked over to Han Jingru. “It’s all thanks to you, Master Han!”

“And how would you like to repay me for giving you such a wonderful opportunity?” Han Jingru teased.

Fei Lingsheng glowered at him. “I’m just saying that as a courtesy. Don’t tell me you take it seriously?”

“Did I say something wrong? You’re more reasonable than this, Senior Fei,” Han Jingru said.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Fei Lingsheng would never compare to Han Jingru when it came to getting on other people's nerves with words, and she dared not challenge him head-on. Thus, she decided to keep quiet and play along.

Han Jingru, on the other hand, felt that she deserved it. *How dare she lie to me!*

The Emperor's trusted aide glanced at the two of them as he panicked on the inside.

Fei Lingsheng was a Pinnacle Master who even the Emperor dared not provoke, but Han Jingru did not seem to care. In fact, he kept taking jabs at her, which seemed a little unusual.

The trusted aide furrowed his brows. *Was Han Jingru so strong that even Fei Lingsheng dared not challenge him?*

I have to tell the Emperor about this!

When Fei Lingsheng appeared alongside Han Jingru at the Imperial Court sometime later, the Emperor did not seem surprised at all.

“Follow me,” he said before leading the way to the Imperial Archives.

To Han Jingru’s disappointment, the building that housed the Imperial Archives was shabbier than the rest of the Palace.

In fact, if he had not known that it was the Imperial Archives, he would have thought that it was nothing but an abandoned warehouse with an unnecessary number of security guards roaming around it.

“I’m sure you’ve never set foot in such a place, have you?” he asked Fei Lingsheng with a grin.

Fei Lingsheng could tell that he meant something else. “Yeah, thanks a lot. I’ll make sure to return the favor someday.”

Han Jingru chuckled. “You don’t have to. I have a request for you, though.”

Fei Lingsheng looked up with a start. *Not again with the requests...I need to be careful!*

“What request?” she asked.

“I don’t know. I’ll tell you when I have one,” Han Jingru said.

Fei Lingsheng huffed. “Dream on.”

“Don’t worry, I won’t force you to break the law or anything. I’m just a regular citizen, after all,” Han Jingru said.

They arrived at the Imperial Archives just moments later, and the Emperor turned around to address the two of them. “We’re here. I hope what happened today stays between the three of us.”

“Do not worry, Your Majesty. I’ll make sure to take this secret to the grave,” Han Jingru said. “If word does get out about it, rest assured that it will not be my doing.”

Fei Lingsheng gritted her teeth. *Who’s fault would it be then? Mine?*

“What the hell do you mean, Han Jingru?” she

growled.

“Exactly that,” Han Jingru said without bothering to sugarcoat his words. He had not forgiven Fei Lingsheng for appearing before him as a homeless vagrant, and he was not going to go easy on her.

When they walked into the Imperial Archives, their chins almost touched the floor upon seeing its interior. Simply put, the Imperial Archives was a library filled with records meant for the Emperor’s eyes only, and that in itself made the records more precious than they seemed.

“Where are the records on the Qilin, Your Majesty?” Han Jingru asked.

The Emperor led the two of them to a row of shelves and said, “The ancient scriptures on the Qilin are all here.”

Han Jingru nodded and picked up one of the scriptures, losing himself in its contents immediately.

Fei Lingsheng followed suit as curiosity got the better of her, knowing that this might be the first and last time she got a chance to read through the archives in this forbidden place.

The Emperor, having read through every scripture in this place, stood by patiently as they flipped through the records.

As Han Jingru continued to read the scriptures, an unwelcomed guest emerged from the shadows on Mount Phoenix.

Yi Qingshan had slipped out of Dragon Emperor Palace just to kidnap Jiang Yingying and force Han Jingru to give up his Holy Chestnut in exchange for her.

He knew that the awakening of the Qilin would spell certain disaster for Xenos, but the lure of the Holy Chestnut blinded him completely. The reason why Han Jingru went to the Dragon Emperor Palace was the last thing he cared about.

So what if the Qilin has awoken? I just want to gain more power and get to the Alpha Stage! I'll find my way to the Dimensional Tunnel and leave this place when the fight breaks out between t

he Qilin and all the residents in Xenos.

Getting stronger was the only thing he cared about.

“Who are you?” the guard asked the moment he arrived at the foot of the mountain.

“Go away!” he yelled at the kid guarding the door.

“This is the Jingru Sect. No trespassing allowed! I’d suggest you-”

Yi Qingshan rolled his eyes and stuck out his hand before the kid could finish his sentence. With a loud crackle of thunder, the kid exploded into a million pieces of flesh, leaving nothing but a bloody mess on the floor.

Everyone else standing around fell to the ground in horror, but Yi Qingshan was not done yet.

“What makes you think becoming Han Jingru’s disciples make you undefeatable? You’ll never become Cultivators!” he yelled, turning yet

another kid to dust.

He did not even bat an eyelid after vaporizing two young kids in a row.

“Listen up, Jingru Sect! It’s time to die!” he yelled. He knew that Han Jingru was not around, and he did not see the point in checking every room to search for Jiang Yingying. Getting her to come out on her own accord was the best course of action.

His voice shook the entire Mount Phoenix to the core, startling Huang Xiaoyong and the others out of their slumber.

Huang Xiaoyong sprang out of his bed and rushed over to the foot of the mountain, only to fly into a rage when he saw what happened to the two kids guarding the door.

“It’s you!” he shrieked, jabbing a finger into Yi Qingshan’s face. *Isn’t he Fei Ling’er’s brother? Why is he committing murder here?*

“Tell Jiang Yingying to come out if you don’t want anyone else to turn to dust!” Yi Qingshan declared.

“Why are you looking for Yingying?” Huang Xiaoyong asked as his heart raced. *What stage is this guy at? He killed two disciples the moment he came! We might not be able to defeat him without Master around...*

“You waste any of my time and I’ll paint the walls with your blood!” Yi Qingshan bellowed. He no longer cared about avoiding bloodshed, since killing two of Han Jingru’s disciples would warrant his wrath. He had his eyes on the Holy Chestnut, and he was determined to get it at all cost.

By then, the entire Piaomiao Sect and few other curious onlookers have gathered at the foot of the mountain.

“How dare you disrespect Jingru Sect! Do you know who’s their Master?” Yan Qinghua yelled, clenching her fists at the sight of the two dead bodies of young kids on the ground.

With Han Jingru's reputation, no one in the right mind would even dare to challenge him.

Yan Qinghua could not help but wonder if Yi Qingshan had yet to hear about how Han Jingru had battled The Elite 28.

"You're from the Piaomiao Sect, aren't you?" he scoffed, pointing at her. "I'd suggest that you stay out of this, or else the Piaomiao Sect shall no longer exist!"

"Hmph! What makes you think you'll be able to defeat us?" Yan Qinghua asked, raising her hands to get ready for battle.

However, before she could make a move to attack, she found herself shackled to the ground by an invisible force.

Could this mean that...he's at a much higher stage than I am?

That's the only explanation for this!

She felt anxious all of a sudden. *What if he's from the Ninth Stage? We won't be able to defeat him without Master Han around!*

“I think I’ve made it clear that you should stay out of this,” Yi Qingshan snickered.

“Who are you?” Yan Qinghua demanded through gritted teeth.

“I’m Yi Qingshan, a Pinnacle Master from Xia Nation. You’ve heard of me before, haven’t you?” he answered with an arrogant smirk on his face. He loved being the center of attention, and he never bothered to keep a low profile. The shock and fear on people’s faces when he revealed his identity fed his massive ego, and he loved this feeling greatly.

“Y-You’re Yi Qingshan?” Yan Qinghua exclaimed, her face paling rapidly.

He’s a Pinnacle Master!

Even Master Han won’t stand a chance against him...

However, there was one thing Yan Qinghua

struggled to understand. As a fighter from Xia Nation, there was no reason for Yi Qingshan to appear at the Imperial Court. Besides, as a newly-established sect, Jingru Sect did not have any enemies just yet.

“What did the Jingru Sect ever do to you?” Yan Qinghua asked in confusion.

“I’m here to take Jiang Yingying away!” Yi Qingshan declared out loud. “I’ll kill whoever dares to stop me!”

“Fine then,” a voice rang from behind. “Let’s see if you’re actually capable of that.”

The voice belonged to Jiang Yingying, and it made Huang Xiaoyong jump in shock.

“Yingying, he’s not a nice guy! You shouldn’t be here!” he whispered to her.

Jiang Yingying pushed him aside gently and stared straight into Yi Qingshan’s eyes. “She’s from Piaomiao Sect, so she has nothing to do with this. Let her go.”

“I’ll let everyone go if you’re willing to come with me,” Yi Qingshan said.

“Do you really think Jingru is the only person strong enough to fight you?” Jiang Yingying asked calmly. “Is that why you only come here when Jingru isn’t around?”

The truth was, Yi Qingshan feared Han Jingru, but he did not seem interested in keeping that a secret. “You are not wrong. I don’t want to get in a fight with him. Now that he’s not around, killing all of you won’t even come close to being a challenge!”

“You’ll pay for your arrogance,” Jiang Yingying growled.

Yi Qingshan froze for a second before bursting into laughter.

He had seen her fight during the battle with The Elite 28, but her contributions were meager at best. As a Pinnacle Master, he saw no reason why he should fear a woman like her.

Fei Lingsheng was an anomaly, but there could only be one Fei Lingsheng in the whole of Xenos.

“Wow, you’re pretty brave for a woman, huh?”
Yi Qingshan scoffed. “Looks like I’ll have to prove my power to you!”

Jiang Yingying knew that she was in for a difficult fight, but she was not going to give up so easily.

Wait...I can't afford to fight him here. I'll destroy the whole of Mount Phoenix and Jingru Sect!

“Bet you can’t keep up with me!” Jiang Yingying chirped as she leapt out of the way and into the darkness.

Yi Qingshan’s heart skipped a beat, and he set off after her, trying his best to catch up to her.

“Yingying!” Huang Xiaoyong yelled, only to be met with silence. He stomped his foot in desperation.

“No...this won’t end well...he’s a Pinnacle

Master, for goodness' sake!" Huang Xiaoyong muttered as he paced around. To him, Pinnacle Masters were like gods, and Jiang Yingying would not stand a chance against someone like Yi Qingshan.

"We need to let your Master know of this," Yan Qinghua said.

"It's too late..." Huang Xiaoyong sighed.

Yan Qinghua grimaced. Getting word to Han Jingru would take a long time, and it would take even longer for him to rush over and save Jiang Yingying. However, Yi Qingshan was way too strong for them to handle on their own, so they were left with no other choice.

"It's the only way," Yan Qinghua said. "Be quick. Your familiar might be able to speed things up for you."

Huang Xiaoyong closed his eyes and summoned his Manticore, and it emerged from the clouds just seconds later.

With his flying familiar, he would be able to reach the Dragon Emperor Palace in much shorter time.

“I’ll leave the rest up to you, Madam Yan,” Huang Xiaoyong said as he mounted his Manticore and took off.

Yan Qinghua took a deep breath and turned to her disciples. “Bury the bodies first. When you’re done, tell the others to stay put and avoid coming out.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Huang Xiaoyong barreled through the clouds at full speed on his Manticore, hoping and praying that Jiang Yingying would be alright.

After a full day of flying, he finally arrived at the Dragon Emperor Palace.

That was the first time he visited the Palace, and he knew nothing about it besides its location. The mere act of riding his Manticore was already against the rules, but he was completely ignorant of it.

Unfortunately, that tiny mistake landed him in jail before he could even get a chance to meet Han Jingru.

Huang Xiaoyong was only a Fifth Stage fighter, and he was in no shape to challenge the fighters in the Dragon Emperor Palace.

He resorted to screaming his head off in the end. "Let me out!" I'm Han Jingru's disciple! I need to meet him!"

However, no one bothered to answer his calls,

and Han Jingru remained absorbed in the scriptures in the Imperial Archives.

The Dragon Master was briefly mentioned in one of the scriptures, but it was too insignificant to catch his eye. Instead, another issue piqued his interest.

Han Jingru had taken an interest in the Dimensional Tunnel after going to Apocalypse and learning of the Tunnel in the Restricted Area, and he finally found his answer in a scripture named The Skybreaking Tales.

According to the scripture, the Tunnel was created when a fighter rammed his sword into the void between two dimensions, creating a tunnel that allowed people to pass through. Although it had been an accident, the fighter was later sentenced to death as punishment.

In fact, the scripture seemed to suggest that the Dimensional Tunnel had the power to warp time, similar to a time machine. When Han Jingru saw that, his eyes widened in surprise. *Could I utilize it to go back in time?*

“What’s wrong?” Fei Lingsheng asked upon seeing his surprised expression.

“It is recorded here that the Dimensional Tunnel was created when a fighter rammed his sword into the void between two dimensions. What kind of power does it take to open a tunnel between dimensions?” Han Jingru asked.

Fei Lingsheng had heard rumors about the Dimensional Tunnel too, but she did not believe in any of them.

“You should be looking for ways to defeat the Qilin, instead of wasting time on useless tidbits on the Dimensional Tunnel!” Fei Lingsheng chided.

Han Jingru nodded as he committed the line on time warping to memory. After that, he picked up another scripture and continued his hunt for ways to defeat the Qilin.

The Emperor stood by and watched, having read through every single scripture in the Archives. Suddenly, a loud knock on the door startled him

out of his trance.

His trusted aide never looked for him at this hour, and he began to wonder if something had gone wrong.

Did something happen in the Dark Forest?

“What’s wrong?” he asked upon walking out of the Imperial Archives.

“It’s the Manticore rider, Your Majesty,” his trusted aide said.

The Manticore?

“Are you talking about Han Jingru’s disciple?” the Emperor asked.

“That is right,” his trusted aide affirmed. “He came to Dragon Emperor Palace on the back of the Manticore, which is against the rules. He’s in jail now.”

The Emperor’s eyes glinted dangerously. Even the Ninth Stage fighters and Fei Lingsheng

steered clear of breaking the rules, but Han Jingru's disciples did not seem to care.

Like master, like disciple!

“No need to report to me then,” the Emperor said. “He needs to be punished.”

“I thought so too, but he seemed desperate to meet Han Jingru. Do you think we should inform Han Jingru of this?” his trusted aide asked.

The Emperor furrowed his brows. He was usually unforgiving of people who blatantly ignore the rules, but Huang Xiaoyong's status as Han Jingru's disciple made him hesitate. After all, he was in a temporary truce with Han Jingru, and his usual torture tactics did nothing to make Han Jingru suffer.

However, Huang Xiaoyong had broken the rules, and letting him go would make him look like a coward in front of the others.

“Leave him in jail for a few days first,” the Emperor said.

“Yes, Your Majesty,” the trusted aide said, albeit a little reluctantly. He did not have the right to disagree with the Emperor’s orders, after all.

Han Jingru took three days to finish reading the scriptures in the Archives, but to his disappointment, he did not manage to find anything useful in them. Too many people have died in the last battle against the Qilin, and what was left from the battle was simply too little to be written into the scriptures.

Han Jingru raised a hand to his head and rubbed his brows in frustration. *This is going to complicate things...the Qilin is way too strong!*

“Looks like we’ve wasted another three days, Master Han,” the Emperor scoffed from where he stood.

Han Jingru sighed. “We need to find another way, Your Majesty.”

“You should get some rest first. We’ll discuss this after that,” the Emperor suggested.

Han Jingru still had the energy to continue, but he figured that he needed a break to clear his mind.

After he returned to Fei Lingsheng's residence, he locked himself in his room to have a quiet moment to himself.

He did not fear death, but dying meant that Su Yimo would lose her husband and Han Xiang would lose her father. He needed to stay alive for their sake.

However, the situation was dire, and he was almost certain that he would not survive it.

The silver lining was that the Dimensional Tunnel seemed to be on Mount Xenos in the Dark Forest, and he could make a quick escape back to Earth if things went out of hand. That would mean abandoning the people of Xenos and leaving the Qilin to wreak havoc across Xenos, but it would also prevent another clash between Earth and Xenos.

It was a cruel idea, but it was also his last resort.

Even so, a bad feeling about the future sat heavily in his stomach. A tiny voice in his mind seemed to be warning him of something, but he could not figure out what it was no matter how hard he tried.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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There was a knock on the door. Before Han Jingru could jump out of his seat and open the door, Fei Lingsheng had pushed it open by herself and stepped into the room.

“You really treat this place as your own house, don’t you?” Han Jingru observed calmly.

Fei Lingsheng looked at him as though he had suddenly grown two heads. “It is my own house. Do I have to be so uptight around here?”

“Aren’t you afraid that you might see me naked one day if you keep barging into my room like this?” Han Jingru asked helplessly.

“I’ve already seen you naked before. What’s there to be afraid of?” Fei Lingsheng replied, looking extremely nonplussed.

If another woman had said these words, Han Jingru wouldn’t have batted an eye at all. However, he found it preposterous that it was Fei Lingsheng who had said them. In Xenos, only girls who had been born in the brothels dared to be so bold with their words—most of the other

women, especially female fighters like her, were conservative to the point of being labeled as prudes.

“Why are you looking for me anyway?” Han Jingru asked.

“Do I need a reason for that?” she demanded. “I’ve always preferred the silence—in fact, I’ve never really liked to talk to people. However, if I don’t chat with you now, I might never get another chance to do it again.”

He could tell from her words that she had resigned herself to her fate. However, Fei Lingsheng was a Pinnacle Master! How could she adopt such a defeatist attitude?

“Fei Lingsheng, you’re the best fighter the Imperial Court has ever known. How could you say something like this?” Han Jingru demanded.

A rather woebegone expression flashed across Fei Lingsheng’s face. “The Qilin is an Alpha-stage familiar. I daresay even the best Alpha Stage fighters won’t be able to defeat it. By going

up against it, I'm subjecting myself to certain death—it's just a matter of time."

She didn't want to die, of course, but she didn't have a choice in this matter. If they simply stood by and allowed the Qilin to break out of the Dark Forest's formation, Xenos would turn into a hellish, post-apocalyptic landscape, its very air tainted with the stench of blood.

A sudden image of mutilated corpses lining the streets of Xenos as she stood helplessly by and watched the slaughter popped into Fei Lingsheng's mind.

"People like you are probably more afraid of death than anybody else. It took you so much effort to reach the Pinnacle Stage and to attain the ability to reverse your ageing process. People always say that those who can live the longest are also the most afraid of death. Would you really sacrifice your life for this?" Han Jingru asked doubtfully. Although he had never experienced it for himself, he could understand why people might be more afraid of death than others if they had the ability to live longer lives.

Besides, which immortal would choose to die if they could retain their youth and beauty during the entire duration of their long lives?

“Who said it took me lots of effort to reach the Pinnacle Stage?” Fei Lingsheng snapped crossly. “Besides, I don’t need to reverse my ageing process yet.”

Han Jingru raised an eyebrow. What did she mean by that? Was she saying that this was how she truly looked like?

Han Jingru couldn’t help but shake his head. No, that wasn’t possible. He had only managed to gain his powers through eating a lot of Holy Chestnuts mixed with the body tissue of dead fighters. Nobody else could have gotten their hands on those supplements. Besides, it was impossible for Fei Lingsheng to become a Pinnacle Master on her own at such a young age.

“Why do you feel the need to lie about that? Everyone already knows about it,” Han Jingru said casually. Was she really so self-conscious about her age and her actual looks?

However, that was a possibility. After all, society dictated that a woman's worth lay in her age and her looks.

Refusing to admit that they had aged, women routinely spent huge amounts of money to buy skin products to preserve their youth and beauty.

“Oh, yes, I have tricked everyone—that’s for certain. They all think I’m very old, but actually, I’m not even thirty yet! Even the Emperor is in the dark about this,” Fei Lingsheng said. She had been the only person who knew her secret, but she was letting Han Jingru into it now. This meant that Fei Lingsheng had truly resigned herself to her fate—otherwise, why would she let such a big secret out of the bag?

“Wait, you’re actually serious?” Seeing Fei Lingsheng’s serious expression, a stricken look appeared on Han Jingru’s face. He couldn’t help but doubt his previous assumption—after all, Fei Lingsheng had no real need to lie to him.

However, it would be quite the shock if she were telling the truth. All the Pinnacle Masters whom

Han Jingru had met before were very, very old—they had spent most of their natural years in cultivation in order to reach such a high stage. Yet, Fei Lingsheng had managed to become a Pinnacle Master before she was even thirty years old!

“Do I look like I’m joking? I became a Pinnacle Master when I was only twenty-five,” Fei Lingsheng said.

“How did you manage to do that?” Han Jingru asked, his curiosity getting the better of me. Without the help of the Holy Chestnut or the bones of the dead fighters, Han Jingru would probably be a nobody now. Hence, he had no idea how Fei Lingsheng had managed to do what she had done.

“If I told you that I was raised by a familiar in the Dark Forest, would you believe me?” Fei Lingsheng asked.

Raised by a familiar?

This sounded like a preposterous claim, but it

wasn't entirely impossible.

There were often stories of feral children who had been raised by wolves. They were an uncommon occurrence, but Han Jingru had definitely heard of them before.

However, the familiars on Xenos were usually wild, untamed beasts who took great pleasure in feasting on human flesh. It would have been quite a miracle for Fei Lingsheng to survive under that sort of circumstances.

“The Dark Forest is where the Holy Chestnut grows. I know you might not regard the Holy Chestnut as a particularly valuable item, but back in the day, I used to eat them like apples,” Fei Lingsheng said.

Eat them like apples?

That meant Han Jingru had been through the same thing as her. However, he had only eaten those Holy Chestnuts to save himself from starvation.

“Did the familiar raise you on a diet of Holy Chestnuts?” Han Jingru asked, intrigued.

Faced with Han Jingru’s innocent curiosity, Fei Lingsheng felt a little confused. Whenever she told someone else about her childhood, they always seemed to react in shock and fear. However, Han Jingru was merely curious.

As she had expected, he wasn’t the average person.

“Not entirely. Aside from Holy Chestnuts, I feasted on all sorts of wild meat. Ever since I could recall, I would wake up to find an assortment of wild rabbit and chicken meat lying next to me. My diet consisted mainly of raw meat, and when I got sick of meat, I’d find some plants and berries to snack on,” Fei Lingsheng explained.

“Your childhood was certainly quite an interesting one! I can’t believe you feasted on raw meat and wild plants. However, since you grew up in the Dark Forest, how did you manage to leave? Besides, since you were raised by a

familiar, how did you learn to talk?” Han Jingru asked, smiling.

“One day, the familiar ventured out to help me look for Holy Chestnuts, but it never returned. That was when I knew it must have met with some sort of trouble. Without it to take care of me, I felt extremely scared, so I left the place I had always called home. After walking for a long time, I finally emerged from the Dark Forest and saw a different world in front of my eyes. Maybe it was fate, but I fainted at the entrance of a sect house, and those people saved me,” Fei Lingsheng replied.

“So you learned to speak while under the sect’s care, and they introduced you to cultivation?” Han Jingru could already guess what had happened after that. Fei Lingsheng had probably started her new life with the sect.

“Within one year of arriving at the sect, I had learned how to talk and interact with other people. That was when I learned that I was a human and that I wasn’t born of the familiar—of course, that led me to the realization that my birth parents had probably abandoned me in the Dark Forest.” Here, something flickered dangerously in Fei Ling’er’s eyes. Evidently, this had been a sore point for her for many years.

Han Jingru, who was a father himself, could understand her feelings. As the saying went, even the most vicious tigers wouldn’t eat their own cub. What sort of parents would’ve abandoned their own child in the dangerous Dark Forest? They must have left her for dead.

“What happened after that?” Han Jingru was very curious. Her life story was simply too interesting—he had never heard of anything like this before.

Besides, Fei Lingsheng had used to snack on Holy Chestnuts the way people might snack on apples. Once she started on cultivation, her skills would exceed most other people’s at once. Back when Han Jingru was at Apocalypse, he had

nearly scared the other fighters to death. Fei Lingsheng must have done the same.

“A year after that, they introduced me to cultivation. That was when my life underwent a drastic change. Overnight—and I mean overnight—I went from a newbie cultivator to a fighter of the Fifth Stage,” Fei Lingsheng said.

She had reached the Fifth Stage in one night alone!

Han Jingru’s heart skipped a beat. This sort of breakthrough must have scared the living daylights out of the sects men! It was an achievement so unthinkable that no one had ever considered it before.

“Did your life take off after you startled them like that?” Han Jingru asked curiously.

Fei Lingsheng shook her head. “They were, indeed, very startled. I didn’t understand what was going on, but I could tell that their eyes were full of fear whenever they looked at me. I had seen that look before when I helped Aotian with

the hunting—the animals looked at us with fear as they struggled desperately to free themselves. Aotian always got injured because of that.”

Aotian was probably the familiar that had raised Fei Lingsheng in the Dark Forest. She had probably given it that name afterwards.

However, when Han Jingru finished listening to her, a horrible realization dawned on him.

‘Looked at us with fear’, and ‘struggled desperately to free themselves’?

Fei Lingsheng had grown up in an awful environment—she probably saw the gory results of Aotian’s hunting everyday. Besides, she had probably developed some sort of trauma at a young age from watching Aotian get injured numerous times by the animals.

Hence, when she saw those terrified looks again, she must have acted on her instincts and killed them just as Aotian had done.

Han Jingru took a deep breath before he asked,

“So what did you do?”

“I killed everyone in the sect. That was the only way I would feel safe,” Fei Lingsheng said without any expression.

Han Jingru sighed in disappointment. This was the ending he had guessed at, but hearing it from Fei Lingsheng’s mouth lent it another layer of tragedy and sadness.

Assumptions were usually very far away from the truth.

“You were only at the Fifth Stage, weren’t you? How did you manage to kill off everyone in that sect? You can’t tell me that there wasn’t a single master among them,” Han Jingru said in disbelief.

“While I was killing them, I continued to progress on to a different stage. By the time I was through, I had already reached the Eighth Stage,” Fei Lingsheng explained.

Han Jingru cursed loudly.

It was crazy enough that Fei Lingsheng had managed to reach the Fifth Stage in the course of one night. However, it was quite impossible to believe that she had made it past another three stages while killing off the other sects men. Nobody would believe her if she told them.

“As I looked at the corpse- and blood-covered ground, I suddenly felt a sense of safety. It was as if Aotian was back and protecting me again. From then on, I realized what my extraordinary abilities boded for me and the people around me,” Fei Lingsheng continued.

“So you remained at the sect house and only left after you reached the Pinnacle Stage?” Han Jingru guessed that Fei Lingsheng was a person with an extreme lack of security—she probably wouldn’t have left the sect immediately. After all, Aotian’s death had already become a source of trauma for her. The only reason she would leave was because she had reached the Pinnacle Stage, when she would be nearly unrivaled in power.

“Yes, that’s right. I only managed to reach the Pinnacle Stage after a few years. That was when I

finally felt that I was safe,” Fei Lingsheng said.

“You must have killed lots of people in the meantime,” Han Jingru said, crestfallen. Lots of people must have visited the sect, and Fei Lingsheng must have killed them all so she could keep the sect’s mass murder a secret.

“Precisely six hundred and thirteen of them,” she confirmed.

Han Jingru smiled bitterly. “You certainly remember that very well. What happened after that? After you became so powerful, did you ever go back to the Dark Forest?”

Aotian had raised Fei Lingsheng, after all, so it must be the closest thing she had to a relative. Although Aotian had probably died a long time ago, Fei Lingsheng was obligated to return and find its remains.

“Yes, I did, but not because I wanted to look for Aotian. By the time I returned, it had already become a part of the food chain,” Fei Lingsheng said.

“If you didn’t return to look for Aotian, did you go back for the Holy Chestnuts?” Han Jingru asked. Although Fei Lingsheng had already reached the Pinnacle Stage, that wasn’t necessarily the highest stage. There was another stage above that—the legendary Alpha Stage. If Fei Lingsheng wanted to reach that stage, she had to nourish herself with more Holy Chestnuts.

“You’re smart! Sadly, looking for a Holy Chestnut isn’t as easy as you think. Usually, there will be a familiar guarding it nearby. This meant I had to return empty-handed many times. I sustained lots of injuries while I was at it, too,” Fei Lingsheng said.

Here, Han Jingru took another deep breath. Even someone as powerful as Fei Lingsheng had gotten injured—this meant the Dark Forest truly deserved its reputation as a dangerous place. Not only did the Qilin live there, but so did other familiars. This information came as a huge blow to Han Jingru.

It was difficult enough as it was to defeat the Qilin. Adding a bunch of familiars to the mix

certainly didn't help things.

“We're dead for sure. Other than the Qilin, there are still lots of familiars that even you can't defeat in a fight. When the formation around the Dark Forest breaks, the end of the world would have come,” Han Jingru said.

“No, it won't. After the Qilin wakes up from its hibernation, it needs to find something to eat. The bigger and more powerful a familiar, the tastier it seems to the Qilin. By the time it is able to leave the Dark Forest, all the familiars in the Dark Forest would have already become its dinner,” Fei Lingsheng explained.

“This...is pretty good news, I suppose,” Han Jingru said, laughing bitterly. Under this sort of circumstances, that was the only way he could comfort himself.

Fei Lingsheng suddenly turned to look at him. “If I can reach the Alpha Stage, we might actually stand a chance.”

Han Jingru froze for a moment, a smile appearing

on his face. He wasn't completely stupid—he finally understood why Fei Lingsheng was pouring out her heart to him.

“You aren't trying to get the Holy Chestnut from me, are you?” Han Jingru asked.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Fei Lingsheng had spoken for so long and narrated her entire life story to him, spilling practically all her secrets to him in the process. Of course she had a motive—she wanted to get her hands on the Holy Chestnut.

To Fei Lingsheng, getting the Holy Chestnut was the only way she could ever hope to reach the Alpha Stage. When she reached the Alpha Stage, she would finally stand a chance against the Qilin.

When all was said and done, Fei Lingsheng had no wish to die at all.

“This is the only way we can defeat the Qilin. Don’t you want to give it a try?” Fei Lingsheng retorted.

Han Jingru shook his head immediately. He didn’t have many Holy Chestnuts left, and he couldn’t afford to give them out like candy anymore. Besides, it had taken him lots of effort to get his hands on them, and they helped him out a lot in cultivation. He couldn’t just give it to anyone.

Back in the throne room, he would never have withstood all that force from the Emperor while keeping a blank expression if he hadn't eaten a Holy Chestnut before that.

Now that he had figured out how powerful and valuable Holy Chestnuts were, he wouldn't give one to Fei Lingsheng so easily, even if she were going to use it to defeat the Qilin.

“Still a no from me,” Han Jingru said firmly.

By spilling out her secrets to him, Fei Lingsheng thought she might gain Han Jingru's trust. However, all she had gotten from him was a stubborn ‘no’.

“Well, then, are you going to stand by and watch as the Qilin goes on a killing spree around Xenos?” Fei Lingsheng snapped angrily. “Are you going to watch as millions of people die because of it?”

“I will come up with another plan. Maybe I'll give one of my Holy Chestnuts to you when we're left with no other option, but now's not the

time,” Han Jingru said quietly.

However, his words failed to appease Fei Lingsheng. It would take some time before her body could fully absorb all of the power of the Holy Chestnut. During that time, she would slowly rise up to the Alpha Stage. Hence, it was impossible for her to reach the Alpha Stage immediately after swallowing the Holy Chestnut.

If she only ate the Holy Chestnut at a critical moment, there wouldn't be enough time for it to take effect.

“I'm afraid it'll be too late by then,” Fei Lingsheng said coldly.

“Fei Lingsheng, what's the point of saying this? The Holy Chestnut will only be yours if I give it to you. If I refuse to do that, you have no chance of getting your hands on it no matter how many times you ask me for it. Now, go and rest,” Han Jingru said.

Fei Lingsheng had thought of snatching it from him. However, if she used that method, a full-

blown battle might explode between the two of them. This was something Fei Lingsheng feared—under the present circumstances, there was no way this could be allowed to happen.

Fei Lingsheng took a deep breath before she sighed and said, “Here’s something else for you to chew on. If you think this is a useful piece of information, I hope you’ll give this matter another thought.”

Seeing the obstinate look on Fei Lingsheng’s face, Han Jingru just smiled.

However, he had been quite pleased to learn more about Fei Lingsheng’s mysterious past. After all, he didn’t have to pay a price for it—that was something he could decide for himself.

“Tell me about it! I wonder if I’ll find it interesting,” Han Jingru said.

“Your disciple has arrived at the Dragon Emperor Palace, and he seems to be in quite a rush. I think something must have happened to the Jingru Sect. Anyway, he broke the rules of the palace,

and they threw him into jail,” Fei Lingsheng said.

Disciple?

Isn't that Huang Xiaoyong?

What is he doing at the Dragon Emperor Palace?

“Where did you get that information from? That’s something I haven’t even heard about,” Han Jingru said suspiciously.

“I hear a lot of things while I’m at the Dragon Emperor Palace. This is completely factual. If you don’t believe me, go and investigate it yourself. He entered the city on the back of the Manticore—lots of people saw them,” Fei Lingsheng said.

As soon as he heard this, Han Jingru turned and left immediately.

If Huang Xiaoyong had truly entered the city on Manticore’s back, many people must have seen him. Han Jingru could easily accost someone on the streets and ask them if Fei Lingsheng was

telling the truth.

After asking several people, he finally got a definite answer. Someone had indeed seen a person riding into the city on Manticore's back. Although they had no idea who the person was, the Emperor had ordered him to be arrested and thrown into prison.

The feeling of dread in Han Jingru's heart grew even stronger.

Before he left, he had warned Huang Xiaoyong to stay at the Jingru Sect and take care of the sect on his behalf. His sudden arrival at the Dragon Emperor Palace meant that something was wrong.

Han Jingru didn't know what could have happened, so he had no choice but to find Huang Xiaoyong and ask him.

However, since he was now locked up in prison, Han Jingru had no choice but to beg the Emperor for help.

Han Jingru arrived at the throne room once again. As soon as he saw the Emperor, who had shut his eyes to meditate, he said, “Your Majesty, have you locked up my disciple in jail?”

“Who’s this disciple you are talking about?” the Emperor asked, puzzled.

Han Jingru’s expression was cold as ice. He knew Huang Xiaoyong’s character very well—this guy would’ve surrendered his personal information immediately and told the Emperor that he was Han Jingru’s disciple. How could the Emperor not recognize him then?

Was the Emperor feigning ignorance now in order to use Huang Xiaoyong against him?

“Your Majesty, I’m a loyal servant of the Imperial Court for now. I hope you won’t make me change my mind,” Han Jingru said blandly.

He might be loyal to the Imperial Court now, but it didn’t mean his loyalties wouldn’t change.

Han Jingru was probably the only person who

would say something as bold and traitorous as that. If anyone else said that in the Dragon Emperor Palace, they might have been executed on charges of treachery immediately.

Although the Emperor had guessed that Han Jingru would question him about the matter afterward, he never expected him to say something so blasphemous.

A look of fury appeared on his face. Trying to control his boiling temper, the Emperor said, “Master Han, do you know what you’re saying?”

“Of course I do. Does Your Majesty know what you’re doing? My disciple broke the rules of the Dragon Emperor Palace, and he deserves to be punished. However, he only barged in because of an urgent matter. Could you please pardon him in light of that?” Han Jingru said.

“I will let him go once he serves his time,” the Emperor said.

Han Jingru’s eyes turned even colder. It would take ages before Huang Xiaoyong finished

servicing out his sentence. By then, it might be too late for Han Jingru to do anything about the matter Huang Xiaoyong had arrived from thousands of miles away to report on.

“I’d like to see him for a while. I hope you’ll be able to give me that opportunity.” Han Jingru bowed. This was as polite as he could be—normally, he never bowed down in front of anyone.

This made the Emperor a little less infuriated. He appreciated the respect that Han Jingru was showing him—at least he could still keep his dignity as the emperor.

Truth be told, the Emperor didn’t have any plans to lock Huang Xiaoyong up for a long time. After all, he was Han Jingru’s disciple. As the saying went, a dog was only as important as its owner—the Emperor felt obliged to preserve Han Jingru’s honor.

“Since it’s the first time your disciple is here and he might not know the rules, I’ll let him off once. However, once you take him back, please guide

him well. The Dragon Emperor Palace isn't a place where he can simply behave as he pleases," the Emperor said.



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The Emperor's words were meant not only as a reminder, but also a nasty criticism.

Although he seemed to be criticizing Huang Xiaoyong's poor behavior, he was mocking Han Jingru for teaching him poorly.

However, Han Jingru couldn't care less at the moment. Since the first time he had stepped into the Dragon Emperor Palace, he had never wanted to appear in front of the Emperor as his servant.

Besides, Han Jingru didn't have much affection for the Imperial Court. Even if he had a huge quarrel with the Emperor, Han Jingru would simply leave for Xia Nation or Chongye.

"Thanks," he said.

Soon after, he arrived at the jail under the close watch of the Emperor's trusted aide.

He finally spotted Huang Xiaoyong. He had been beaten up pretty harshly and looked very weak. This made a ball of anger rising up within Han Jingru.

The trusted aide explained, “He barged into the Dragon Emperor Palace and refused to cooperate with our guards, we had no choice but to use physical force on him.”

Han Jingru’s face was expressionless. He didn’t say anything.

The trusted aide knew how angry Han Jingru must be inside, and his explanation was meant to calm him down. However, it didn’t seem to have fulfilled its intended purpose.

The trusted aide couldn’t help but sigh deeply. He had worked for the Emperor for several years now, but this was the first time he had seen someone who dared to disrespect him like that. Han Jingru was truly one of a kind! Yet, even if the Emperor felt infuriated by his words, he dared not show it for fear of retaliation.

Fighters who had reached a certain stage invited a certain sense of fear and respect from anyone, including the Emperor.

The trusted aide opened the door to Huang

Xiaoyong's cell. Han Jingru walked in and hoisted him onto his shoulders immediately.

Before they left, Han Jingru turned to the aide and said coldly, "Relay my thanks to the Emperor, and let him know that I'll remember this."

As the aide watched him leave, he smiled helplessly. Was this a warning to the Emperor? What a brave and reckless soul!

When the aide returned to the throne room, he told the Emperor everything that Han Jingru had said without missing out a single word.

The Emperor's face was grim as he listened to what the aide had to say. However, he couldn't help but feel as though his hands were tied.

"I knew this person would be hard to control, but he's causing me more trouble than I could ever have imagined," the Emperor sighed.

"This man will certainly pose a threat to you in the future. Your Majesty, shall we use this

incident with the Qilin to do away with him?" the aide asked.

The Emperor's expression was complicated. The aide wondered what he was thinking.

When Han Jingru finally returned to Fei Lingsheng's house with Huang Xiaoyong, she gasped loudly when she saw how badly injured he was.

In her opinion, Huang Xiaoyong deserved to be thrown into jail by the Emperor, but the Emperor had gone overboard by having his men beat him up so badly.

"The Emperor must have been mad at you and directed his anger at your disciple," Fei Lingsheng observed.

"I'll make him pay for this," Han Jingru said coldly.

Make the Emperor pay for this?

Han Jingru was probably the only person in the

world who dared to say something so irreverent.

“Your disciple is going to need some time to recover,” Fei Lingsheng said.

She was right—it would take some time before Huang Xiaoyong’s injuries healed completely. However, this meant Han Jingru couldn’t find out immediately what he had come to the Imperial Court for. He couldn’t stand the torture of waiting.

As Fei Lingsheng watched in jealous shock, Han Jingru fished out a Holy Chestnut from his pocket and stuffed it down Huang Xiaoyong’s throat.

Aside from helping fighters in their cultivation journey, Holy Chestnuts could also help to heal injured fighters. This was partially the reason why it was regarded so highly by most people.

“What are you doing?” she yelled. “I can’t believe you used a Holy Chestnut to heal him immediately when he would only need a few more days to recover! You’re wasting a great treasure!” Fei Lingsheng looked extremely

envious. What a waste of a perfectly good Holy Chestnut!

“The Holy Chestnut belongs to me, I believe. I have the final say over its worth. Don’t get too ahead of yourself,” Han Jingru said icily.

Steam was nearly billowing out of Fei Lingsheng’s ears. In order to get her hands on one of the Holy Chestnuts, she had spilled her guts out to Han Jingru. In the end, however, he had turned down her request. On the contrary, Huang Xiaoyong had suffered some injuries that he would only take a few days to recover from! To her chagrin, Han Jingru had used the Holy Chestnut on him anyway.

“If he ate the Holy Chestnut under normal circumstances, it could’ve helped him reach the next stage of cultivation! How could you waste it on helping him recover from his injuries?” Fei Lingsheng demanded angrily.

“If I want to help him reach the next stage of cultivation, I’ll give him another Holy Chestnut when he recovers. Now, mind your own

business,” Han Jingru said.

This infuriated Fei Lingsheng so much that she nearly coughed up blood. This guy was so generous to Huang Xiaoyong, but acted like the greatest miser on earth towards her! She couldn't understand what he was thinking in his mind.

“I can't talk any sense into you!” she snapped in frustration.

A while later, Huang Xiaoyong finally woke up. When he saw Fei Lingsheng peering at him, a look of horror overcame his face.

“What—what are you doing here?” Huang Xiaoyong exclaimed in fright.

Han Jingru looked extremely confused.

Fei Lingsheng looked even more perplexed. Why was he looking at her as though he had seen a ghost?

“This is my house! Why shouldn't I be here?” Fei Lingsheng replied, worrying for his mental state.

Huang Xiaoyong grabbed hold of Han Jingru's hand and said urgently, "Master, it's her...it's her brother! He killed everyone in the Jingru Sect and has engaged Yingying in a full-blown battle. I think he wants to take her away!"

Her brother?

Wasn't that Yi Qingshan?

Before this, Han Jingru had been confused about why Yi Qingshan hadn't followed Fei Lingsheng around like he had used to. As it turned out, he had gone to the Jingru Sect instead!

Was Yi Qingshan going to kidnap Yingying and demand ransom in the form of the Holy Chestnut?

Han Jingru turned to Fei Lingsheng and said in a voice full of hatred, "You had one last trump card to play, after all."

Fei Lingsheng's expression didn't change. This had nothing to do with her at all, so there was nothing for her to feel guilty about.

In fact, she had felt puzzled too when Yi Qingshan decided to leave her. Now, she finally understood what he had gone to do.

“If I said his whereabouts have been a mystery to me, would you believe me?” Fei Lingsheng asked.

Han Jingru stalked over to her and said in a murderous tone, “Why should I believe a word you say? You wanted to get your hands on the Holy Chestnut, so Yi Qingshan decided to kidnap Yingying and force me to hand it over! Aren’t the two of you in cahoots with each other?”

Jiang Yingying had come with him to Xenos, and Han Jingru was determined that nothing should happen to her during their time here. Otherwise, how was he supposed to answer to Ho Ting when they got back to Earth?

“He isn’t my brother at all. In fact, we aren’t even family to begin with. He has always kept me in the dark about his plans, and I never knew he was going to look for your sister,” Fei Lingsheng replied.

“Tell me where he is right now,” Han Jingru said coldly.

Fei Lingsheng shook her head and said, “I must tell you that he was a Pinnacle Master back in Xia Nation. I can’t stop him from doing whatever he wants to do. Besides, I never knew he was going to do this, so I’m afraid I can’t answer your question.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Han Jingru looked at Fei Lingsheng with flames dancing in his eyes. He gazed intently at her face, willing those dark orbs to tell him whether she was lying.

However, she looked steadily back at him without a single trace of guilt on her face.

“Are you going to sit here and continue to suspect me, or are you going to look for Yi Qingshan first? He probably wants to kidnap your sister to get his hands on your Holy Chestnuts, so don’t worry, she won’t be harmed in any way,” Fei Lingsheng said.

“Master, Yingying refused to surrender and insisted on fighting it out with him. I don’t know what’s happening, but you should go and look for her now,” Huang Xiaoyong said.

Han Jingru turned to him and said, “Rest here first. When your body recovers, come back to the Jingru Sect at once. Do not stay on at the Imperial Court—I do not wish for you to become leverage they can use against me.”

“Oh, right. Bring Zhantai Liuyue along with you when you leave, too.”

Although Huang Xiaoyong didn't understand the politics and didn't know what had happened between Han Jingru and the Emperor, his master's words were like the imperial edict to him. He was obliged to carry out whatever orders Han Jingru had.

“Master, you must save Yingying!”

“Do I need you to tell me that?”

Just as Han Jingru was going to leave the room, he suddenly stopped in his tracks.

Yi Qingshan was a Pinnacle Master, after all. Rescuing someone he was holding hostage and making sure that Yingying emerged without a single injury was going to prove particularly difficult, even for someone as skilled as him.

He turned to Fei Lingsheng and said quietly, “You were the one who told Yi Qingshan about my stash of Holy Chestnuts, weren't you?”

Fei Lingsheng had, in fact, mentioned this in front of Yi Qingshan before. However, she had no idea that Yi Qingshan would one day use it against Han Jingru.

Fei Lingsheng immediately understood the point behind Han Jingru's question.

“Don't worry, I'll go with you. Since I'm responsible for this as well, I won't stand by and watch as he carries out his campaign of terror,” Fei Lingsheng said.

The two of them left the Dragon Emperor Palace immediately.

When the Emperor heard of this, he looked extremely confused. Something huge must have happened for the both of them to leave the palace together.

The Emperor called his trusted aide to his side and asked, “Any news from the Jingru Sect?”

“Yi Qingshan went on a killing spree at the Jingru Sect, and tried to kidnap Han Jingru's

younger sister,” the aide replied. He had only just received this information. Thank goodness they had assigned someone at the Dragon Emperor Palace to keep tabs on the happenings in Jingru Sect, or nobody would’ve known what was going on.

“Why does he want to kidnap Han Jingru’s younger sister?” the Emperor asked, frowning.

The aide wasn’t particularly sure about this either. He merely replied, “We’ve already sent several of our men there to investigate this matter. If we discover anything, we’ll report it back to you immediately.”

“Keep a close eye on this matter. If anything happens, I want to know immediately,” the Emperor said.

Han Jingru and Fei Lingsheng rushed back to the Jingru Sect. Fei Lingsheng had to admit the difference in skill level between the both of them—Han Jingru was much faster than her. Although this didn’t necessarily mean he was more skilled than she was, it did say something about his

extraordinary abilities.

They arrived back at the Jingru Sect less than a day later.

Two of the disciples' bodies had already been buried by Yan Qinghua. When she told Han Jingru about the events that had transpired, he exploded with rage immediately.

The disciples of the Jingru Sect came from poor families, but Yi Qingshan didn't even spare them nor leave their bodies in one piece for a decent burial! Han Jingru cursed loudly.

Han Jingru took a deep breath and asked Yan Qinghua, "Do you know where they are?"

Yan Qinghua didn't know where exactly they had gone, but she pointed in a general direction and said, "They went that way. Your sister wants to fight to the death with him, but I don't know what has happened."

Han Jingru was quite clear about his younger sister's abilities. She was still at the Ninth Stage,

which meant she would most certainly lose in a battle with a Pinnacle Master. After all, Jiang Yingying had only absorbed the energy of the skulls—she hadn't experienced a breakthrough in her abilities yet despite eating all those Holy Chestnuts.

Han Jingru had gained his extraordinary powers through a mixture of the skull's energy and that of other food. This point wasn't up for contention.

“How long have they been fighting?” Han Jingru asked.

“Three days.”

Hearing this, Han Jingru gritted his teeth. They had been fighting for three whole days! Jiang Yingying had definitely lost to Yi Qingshan by now—he wondered how she was doing, and whether she was injured.

Fei Lingsheng asked, “Is your sister Yi Qingshan's match?”

“She hasn’t reached the Pinnacle Stage yet,” Han Jingru said glumly.

Although Fei Lingsheng had expected this, she couldn’t help but breathe a sigh of relief when she heard it from Han Jingru’s mouth. If Jiang Yingying had reached the Pinnacle Stage too, Fei Lingsheng would be extremely perturbed. After all, Pinnacle Masters were rare, and she would find it difficult to accept the fact that two had appeared overnight.

“She must have fallen into Yi Qingshan’s clutches. Don’t bother looking for Yi Qingshan now—he’ll come and find you sooner or later,” Fei Lingsheng said.

Han Jingru understood why she had said that. However, playing the waiting game would make him feel even more anxious. After all, Jiang Yingying was in mortal danger—how could he wait patiently for Yi Qingshan to look for him and do nothing in the meantime?

“Will Yi Qingshan return to Xia Nation?” Han Jingru asked.

Fei Lingsheng thought for a while before she shook her head. “Yi Qingshan is too fond of living—how could he ever think of returning to Xia Nation. You know how difficult it is to navigate the Dark Forest.”

“Well, we can’t just wait here and do nothing!” Han Jingru said, gritting his teeth.

Fei Lingsheng desperately wanted to come up with a plan for Han Jingru, but she couldn’t tell what sort of tricks Yi Qingshan had up his sleeve. Besides, she didn’t even know where Yi Qingshan could be.

“Just wait. I believe he’s going to show up very soon. Since all he wants is the Holy Chestnut, he won’t harm a hair on your sister’s head,” Fei Lingsheng said.

Yan Qinghua, who had been listening quietly at the side, suddenly felt a little confused. Had Yi Qingshan kidnapped Jiang Yingying because he wanted to get his hands on the Holy Chestnut? But hadn’t Han Jingru already given his Holy Chestnuts to Zhong Qishan? Everyone knew

about this—besides, Zhong Qishan had swallowed the Holy Chestnut in front of an audience to prevent any unnecessary trouble from those who wanted to steal it from him.

Did Han Jingru have more Holy Chestnuts?

“Master Han, didn’t Madam Zhantai return with you?” Yan Qinghua asked.

“She will return with Huang Xiaoyong—don’t worry about that,” Han Jingru said.

Yan Qinghua nodded and didn’t ask any more questions.

However, she suspected that the matter wasn’t as simple as Han Jingru made it seem.

As soon as Han Jingru and Fei Lingsheng left the Dragon Emperor Palace, the Emperor immediately sent people to surround Fei Lingsheng’s house. He needed a way to make sure that they would be back, and holding two of their friends hostage seemed like the perfect plan.

“Yi Qingshan, this is your punishment for daring to threaten me. You’ll be the very first real fighter I’ll murder in Xenos.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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When Han Jingru said this, the people around him looked rather shocked, including Fei Lingsheng.

He didn't look as though he was joking. Besides, he had made that statement so confidently. Didn't that mean that Han Jingru's cultivation stage had already surpassed that of a Pinnacle Master?

Many of the fighters in the Imperial Court had their own theories regarding Han Jingru's stage. However, none of them knew for sure what stage he had actually reached.

Some people argued that he was a Pinnacle Master, while others were more inclined to believe that he had surpassed that stage and gone on to the legendary Alpha Stage. Even if he wasn't at that stage yet, they said, he had to be pretty close to it.

However, if he had the confidence to defeat Yi Qingshan in a battle, he had probably reached the Alpha Stage already.

Fei Lingsheng sighed loudly and said to Han

Jingru, “You really consider Pinnacle Masters to be beneath you, don’t you?”

Han Jingru looked in the direction that Jiang Yingying had left for with his eyes blazing. He didn’t know what it would take for him to kill Yi Qingshan, but if he harmed Jiang Yingying in any way, he would kill him no matter what the consequences were.

“Madam Yan, please help me keep an eye on the surrounding situation. Let me know immediately if something happens,” Han Jingru said to Madam Yan. After that, he retreated back into his room.

Yan Qinghua felt a little confused. They were at the Jingru Sect, which was Han Jingru’s territory. Why would he put her in charge of the place when she was nothing more than an outsider?

Yan Qinghua turned to Fei Lingsheng and asked puzzledly, “What does Master Han mean by this?”

Yan Qinghua still didn’t know what Fei

Lingsheng's true identity was. If not, she wouldn't have been able to summon up the courage to address her at all.

“There is no one else that the Jingru Sect can trust around here. The other sect elders here are people whom the Emperor have sent down to keep an eye on Han Jingru,” Fei Lingsheng explained. The only two people that Han Jingru trusted were Jiang Yingying and Huang Xiaoyong, but Jiang Yingying was missing in action and Huang Xiaoyong was still recuperating at the Dragon Emperor Palace. Han Jingru had no choice but to entrust Yan Qinghua with the care of the sect.

However, Fei Lingsheng didn't understand why Han Jingru was hiding out in his room now. Wouldn't it put him at ease more if he observed the nearby situation himself?

Yan Qinghua nodded, feeling a little happy. Han Jingru didn't trust many people, and she was one of them! She felt as though they had become closer to each other overnight.

Truth be told, Yan Qinghua had a little crush on Han Jingru. The recent developments made her heart leap in joy.

When Fei Lingsheng noticed the foolish smile on Yan Qinghua's face, she couldn't help but sigh to herself. Why did so many women fall for this guy?

Yan Qinghua wasn't the only one. Even Zhantai Liuyue, the sect leader of Piaomiao Sect, always had a slightly lovesick expression on her face when she looked at him.

When Han Jingru returned to his room, he produced the leg bone he had recently acquired. The skulls he had absorbed back then had allowed him to reach the next cultivation stage easily. If he wanted to be sure that he could defeat Yi Qingshan, Han Jingru needed to eat this leg bone now to increase his skill level.

Han Jingru had put this off for so long because he was afraid that eating a leg bone might come with its own set of negative consequences.

However, he didn't have a choice now. Yi Qingshan had kidnapped Jiang Yingying, and Han Jingru needed a way to rescue her. He had promised Ho Ting to keep her daughter safe, and he couldn't make the poor woman lose her daughter like this.

Han Jingru took a deep breath and said to the leg bone, "I don't know who your owner is, but I'll make sure you have a renewed purpose within my body. This is a pretty good resting place for you, don't you think? Let's hope that we'll work well together."

The leg bone looked exactly like a normal piece of decaying bone. However, Han Jingru could feel that the leg bone contained a rather special sort of power within it. When he focused his energy on the leg bone, it suddenly underwent a huge transformation.

The decaying bits disappeared, and was replaced by a glowing light that sent shockwaves rippling across the room.

Han Jingru frowned. Back when he was

absorbing the energy of the skulls, he hadn't experienced this sort of energy. Could it be possible that the energy of this leg bone was even greater than that of the skulls?

"I hope my mortal flesh can withstand your great energy." As soon as he finished speaking, he slapped the leg bone against his calf. The bone melded into his flesh as his body slowly absorbed it.

The pain Han Jingru experienced throughout this was gut-wrenching. In fact, he felt as though he might pass out from the agony.

Unfortunately, his constitution was so strong that he couldn't faint so easily anymore. Han Jingru had no choice but to endure the pain of absorbing the leg bone into his body.

However, as time passed, the pain only grew worse. Han Jingru felt as though someone was stabbing him repeatedly with a steel pipe.

At that moment, an image of Yun City appeared in Han Jingru's mind. He couldn't help but think

of Su Yimo and Han Xiang—the thought of those two were enough to carry him through the pain.

What was a little pain to him if he could see them again in this lifetime? Even if he were put through the tortures of the Eighteen Levels of Hell, Han Jingru would grit his teeth and bear with it.

It was no easy feat to endure this sort of pain while he was fully conscious. However, Han Jingru was smiling—the cold shivers that were running down his spine didn't make a dent in his desperate ambition to return to earth.

“My wife and my daughter, wait for me! Even if I have to turn this world upside down, I'll make my way back to the both of you,” Han Jingru said through gritted teeth.

After what seemed like an eon, Han Jingru finally felt the pain start to subside. This meant that the bone absorption had been successful.

Han Jingru panted heavily, congratulating himself for succeeding. At that moment, however, an

excruciating pain ran through his entire head. Han Jingru clutched his head with his hands and rolled around the floor in agony. This pain was at least ten or a hundred times worse! No, even a thousand times!

Han Jingru was in so much pain that the thought of killing himself entered his mind. However, he remembered the way Han Xiang used to smile at him.

Han Jingru knew that he couldn't die, or Su Yimo would lose a husband and Han Xiang would lose her father. This was something he couldn't allow to happen.

“Come on, come on! I'd like to see how much pain you can put me through. If I can't withstand a tiny bit of pain like this, my name isn't Han Jingru!” A shiver ran through Han Jingru as he curled up on the floor in pain. As he spoke, a renewed surge of energy was coursing through his head and his calf, where the bone had been absorbed.

Han Jingru didn't see this, but he could feel the

flow of energy in his veins. The skull and the leg bone probably belonged to the same person, and they were now acting up in the strangest of ways.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Outside the room.

Detecting powerful shock waves coming from the room, Fei Lingsheng couldn't hold her curiosity in anymore, and she wanted to break into the room. As much as she wanted to see what Han Jingru was doing, she was afraid she would irritate the latter by barging into the room without his permission.

Han Jingru must be increasing his power to beat Yi Qingshan.

He must've eaten the Holy Chestnut. Fei Lingsheng grew anxious as time passed by. She had set her eyes on the Holy Chestnut and wanted it for her own ascension. *If Han Jingru ate all the Holy Chestnuts to go up against Yi Qingshan, there goes my goal of ascending into the Alpha Stage.*

“The shock waves are so strong. How much did you eat? Did you eat them all?” Fei Lingsheng murmured as she wore a worried look on her face. She wanted to break in so badly and snatch every Holy Chestnut from Han Jingru, but the

energy waves were so dangerous, as if it was giving her a warning, so she didn't dare to take action.

What if this enrages Han Jingru? He'll fight against me, and I'll only suffer major losses.

After a long while, the energy became stable in the room. Fei Lingsheng knew that Han Jingru's power had gone up significantly.

Han Jingru was unfathomable from the start, but Fei Lingsheng guessed he could've ascended to the Alpha Stage. She was envious of him, as she had been stuck at the Pinnacle Stage for a long time, unable to grasp anything beyond.

In the room.

Han Jingru finally calmed down as he sat cross-legged on the ground. After the pain vanished, he could feel the energy accumulating in his body like a volcano which was ready to erupt at any time.

What he had to do now was to control this power.

After all, he felt unused to the burst of energy he gained in such a short period of time.

Moreover, there was a strand of energy connecting the skull and leg bone, and this made Han Jingru slightly worried.

They belonged to the same owner. If I gathered all the bones, will they take over my body? And will I become the vessel for their owner's reincarnation?

It seems I'll have to refrain from this to strengthen myself. It'll be too late if they really ended up controlling my body.

After spending one day and one night, Han Jingru finally grew used to the energy inside his body, and he could control it as he pleased.

Han Jingru looked like a commoner and had nothing out of the ordinary. This was an indication that Han Jingru had reached the highest level possible, and the stronger he was, the simpler he appeared in front of others.

When he walked out the room, Fei Lingsheng got her mindset ready to welcome a powerful fighter. To her disappointment, Han Jingru appeared as an ordinary man in front of her, and she was caught off guard.

“What happened to you?” Fei Lingsheng looked at Han Jingru in disbelief. *Why did he seem like he got weaker? Is this because of him eating too many Holy Chestnuts at a time, making him unable to fully absorb the energy from the chestnuts? Maybe the power of the Holy Chestnut way too powerful that he got injured in the process.*

Han Jingru asked curiously, “Are you here for long?”

Fei Lingsheng nodded subconsciously. She kept staring at Han Jingru because she found it hard to believe, as she was there the whole time Han Jingru was undergoing changes in his powers.

Fei Lingsheng furrowed her brows and asked, “You ate the Holy Chestnut, but why didn’t you become stronger? It felt like you’ve become

weaker.”

Han Jingru smiled indifferently. He, too, noticed it was easier to conceal his chakra than before. So, he gave off an impression that he had become weaker, but only he knew how strong he was now.

Han Jingru felt that he could defeat Fei Lingsheng, now that he had grown stronger, and he didn't have this kind of confidence in the past.

Han Jingru asked, “Is there any information about Yi Qingshan?”

Fei Lingsheng walked to Han Jingru's front, sizing him up. She was so focused on observing him that it was as if her eyes were penetrating into his soul.

Fei Lingsheng stared at him with a doubtful look. “Do you think you can be Yi Qingshan's opponent with your powers now?”

“Mind your own business.” Han Jingru chuckled.

He's laughing now?

Fei Lingsheng felt a hint of fury rising in her heart. *If he can't beat Yi Qingshan, how does he plan to save his sister? And Yi Qingshan will kill her if he doesn't get the Holy Chestnut.*

Fei Lingsheng scolded, "Why are you still laughing? Yi Qingshan won't spare Jiang Yingying's life if he doesn't get the Holy Chestnuts from you."

"You think I can't win against Yi Qingshan?" Han Jingru looked at Fei Lingsheng and let out a faint smile. *Taking him on will be a piece of cake.*

Fei Lingsheng asked in return, "Could it be that you're not self-aware?"

Just as Fei Lingsheng had finished her words, Han Jingru released his chakra all at a time. It was so strong that it caught Fei Lingsheng off guard, and she almost collapsed to the ground.

"You... You..." Unable to form any words, Fei Lingsheng's eyes were full of shock and terror.

At that moment, she felt powerless in front of the immense strength Han Jingru showed.

Even a Pinnacle Master couldn't resist his power. *What does this mean?*

Han Jingru smiled. "What do you think? Did I become weaker? Or perhaps, stronger?"

Fei Lingsheng's pants gradually became heavier. *Han Jingru must've ascended to the Alpha Stage, as I can't stand against the pressure he released.*

Staring at Han Jingru, Fei Lingsheng was gob smacked as she stumbled on her words. "You... You've ascended to the Alpha Stage?"

Han Jingru had never seen a fighter on the Alpha Stage before, so he didn't know the power one possessed on the legendary Alpha Stage. Even he himself was unsure of his current stage.

However, if being stronger than someone on the Pinnacle Stage was considered as the Alpha Stage, then he was stronger than Fei Lingsheng,

so he could really be on the Alpha Stage.

Han Jingru's Alpha Stage was different from the true Alpha Stage because he only became stronger with the help of the bones, and not because of his own power. Technically, he could only be on the simulated Alpha Stage.

Fei Lingsheng couldn't hold her curiosity in as she continued asking. "You actually broke through the Pinnacle Stage in such a short period of time. How many Holy Chestnuts did you eat?"

Is she worried that I won't leave some for her?

Han Jingru chuckled and said, "I'll give you if you want the Holy Chestnut."

With that, he took out a Holy Chestnut and gave it to her. Han Jingru valued the Holy Chestnut because it would help in ascensions, but now that he had become stronger, he didn't need them anymore. To him, Holy Chestnut was flimsy and no longer the deciding factor of increasing his power.

“What do you mean?” Fei Lingsheng looked at Han Jingru in disbelief. *I poured my heart out for him to trust me and maybe giving me the Holy Chestnut. He didn't agree in the past, but now, he's giving it to me with no concern. What's going on?*



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Raising his brow, Han Jingru said, “You don’t want it? I’ll take it back then.”

Opening her eyes wide, Fei Lingsheng hurriedly snatched the Holy Chestnut from his hand subconsciously. Although she didn’t know why Han Jingru was willing to give her the Holy Chestnut, she took it because it was too rare of an opportunity to miss out.

Looking at the Holy Chestnut in her hands, Fei Lingsheng felt more at ease. She continued to ask, “Why did you change your mind? You can easily defeat Yi Qingshan without my help.”

Fei Lingsheng’s thought regarding the whole matter was clear. She knew Han Jingru didn’t give her the Holy Chestnut to ask for her help in defeating Yi Qingshan because Yi Qingshan was obviously weaker than Han Jingru then.

He explained, “You said it before. You can help me fight against the Qilin. I wish to live, so you must become stronger. Maybe this will increase my chance of surviving.”

Of course, this wasn't the main reason. Han Jingru didn't trust Fei Lingsheng fully, and was always observing her.

The main reason was that Han Jingru wasn't desperate for the Holy Chestnut anymore. He had reached the point that Holy Chestnuts were useless in increasing his powers, so there was no point in keeping so many Holy Chestnuts.

Fei Lingsheng looked at him in doubt. "Why did you change your mind?"

Han Jingru warned, "Stop asking, or else I'll take back the Holy Chestnut." He didn't wish to explain it to her because he didn't have the patience to treat a woman he didn't like very much.

His patience was only be reserved for Su Yimo and Han Xiang.

Hearing his words, Fei Lingsheng's heart started racing, and she did something out of impulse.

She swallowed the Holy Chestnut directly. *Now, Han Jingru can't do anything.*

Fei Lingsheng said in a very serious tone, “I’ve eaten it. You can’t do anything.”

Han Jingru smiled helplessly as he looked at Fei Lingsheng’s behavior. *She doesn’t seem like an old hag who had lived for a long time. Maybe the story she told me was real.*

“If one isn’t enough, get more from me,” Han Jingru said with ease, while Fei Lingsheng froze in place.

Not only did he change his mind. He’s even willing to give me as many Holy Chestnuts if I request more!

Is he out of his mind? It’s impossible for a person to have such a vast change so suddenly.

Fei Lingsheng furrowed her brows as she stared at the man in front of her. “Han Jingru, what happened to you? You’re not like this in the past.”

“Do you even know how I was like in the past? Do you know me well enough?” Han Jingru left as soon as he finished his sentence because dragging on the conversation with Fei Lingsheng was no different from wasting time.

When he went to the foot of the mountain, Yan Qinghua was on duty. She didn't dare to let her guard down one bit to complete the task assigned to her.

“Master Han.” When Yan Qinghua saw Han Jingru, she jogged up to him.

Han Jingru asked, “Still no movement?”

“He hasn't moved until now. But I bet he'll show up soon since he wants to get his hands on the Holy Chestnut.” When Yan Qinghua was saying her words, she sneaked a peek at Han Jingru with her peripheral vision. Before her encounter with Han Jingru, she had never felt so worked up. Her heart raced every time she was with him, so she knew she had fallen for him.

Han Jingru took in a deep breath. Although he

knew Jiang Yingying's life wouldn't be in danger as long as Yi Qingshan wanted to use her as a bargaining chip to get the Holy Chestnuts.

However, Han Jingru was worried that Yi Qingshan would lay his hands on Jiang Yingying.

He didn't wish to see Jiang Yingying getting injured, not even to lost a strand of hair.

Yan Qinghua asked, "Master Han, when will Madam Zhantai come back?"

"Soon. Once my disciple recovers, they'll set off." Han Jingru had instructed Huang Xiaoyong to do that before he left, and his injuries would heal in no time under the Holy Chestnut's effects.

At that moment, Fei Lingsheng's voice rang out. "I bet they can't return for now."

Both of them turned to look at Fei Lingsheng, while Yan Qinghua wore a doubtful yet disdain expression. *Who's this person? What does she have to doubt Han Jingru's words? Is she more powerful than him?*

Han Jingru's thoughts differed completely with Yan Qinghua's. *Fei Lingsheng has spies in the Dragon Emperor Palace, so she must've known something that I don't.*

He asked, "Why?"

Fei Lingsheng explained, "The Emperor locked them up because he wanted you to return to the Dragon Emperor Palace. You'll have to get them out yourself."

Yan Qinghua looked at her in disbelief. "How do you know?"

Fei Lingsheng smiled indifferently. "Because I'm Fei Lingsheng. It's a piece of cake for me to know these."

Just as Yan Qinghua was about to retort her, a thought flashed across her mind.

S-She's Fei Lingsheng, the Pinnacle Master of the Imperial Court!

Yan Qinghua immediately lowered her head,

showing respect to the Pinnacle Master, while regretting her actions that might offend Fei Lingsheng.

Han Jingru said indifferently, “He’s using them to threaten me? It seems we will not coexist in peace.”

Listening to his words, Fei Lingsheng couldn’t help but burst into a fit of laughter. “If he knows which stage you’re at right now, he’ll regret his actions deeply.”

Both the Emperor’s and Han Jingru’s chakra were on par with each other when they clashed. But now that Han Jingru had gotten stronger, it was possible for him to surpass the Emperor, and even if the Emperor gave it his all, he wouldn’t win against Han Jingru. So, the Emperor had lost all of his advantages to force Han Jingru into becoming one of his allies.

Han Jingru said in a flat tone, “If it wasn’t for the Qilin, he could’ve lost his position as the Emperor.”

Fei Lingsheng's eye twitched when she heard his outrageous words. *Is he planning to banish the Emperor?*

Just as Fei Lingsheng wanted to inquire more about Han Jingru's declaration, she felt a familiar chakra from the front, so she turned to gaze in that direction.

While Han Jingru too, looked in the same direction.

A figure was slowly approaching them.

It was Yi Qingshan. He was smiling smugly as he showed himself.

Han Jingru was trying his best to suppress his urge in killing Yi Qingshan. "You finally show yourself. Where's Yingying?"

Yi Qingshan appeared alone after hiding Jiang Yingying. To retrieve the Holy Chestnut and leaving unscathed, he would need a plan.

Yi Qingshan demanded, "Don't worry. She's safe

for now. Give me the Holy Chestnut, and I'll tell you where she is.”

“What if I don't?” Han Jingru hated to be threatened, and he was the type of person to resist rather than silently submitting to others' threats.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Hearing what Han Jingru said, Yi Qingshan wasn't worried in the least. In his opinion, even though Han Jingru was stubborn now, he would compromise sooner or later, because he knew very well the importance of Jiang Yingying to him. In this world, she was the person Han Jingru cared about most. Hence, there was no way he would stand by and watch as she walked toward her death.

“Han Jingru, don't be so sure. You spent a lot of effort looking for her back then, so I know how important she is to you. Are you really going to disregard whether she lives or dies, just for the Holy Chestnut?” Yi Qingshan said with a grin.

Han Jingru's face seemed to be covered in a layer of frost as he replied, “It seems like you know me quite well. You probably spent a lot of time on plotting this, didn't you? But since you know how important she is to me, how dare you use her to threaten me? Haven't you thought about the consequences?”

This made Yi Qingshan burst into a fit of laughter. *Consequences?*

He was a fighter at the Pinnacle Stage, so why should he worry about the consequences? And the reason he was using Jiang Yingying to threaten Han Jingru was because he did not want to have to fight in the Imperial Court.

Of course, one of the reasons was because he feared Han Jingru, but it was in no way the main reason.

Even if Yi Qingshan had overestimated his opponent, he did not think that he would lose too badly against him.

“As a matter of fact, she only has two days. If you can’t find her within this time frame, she’ll die, and she’ll die very, very miserably. So, I strongly suggest that you hand over the Holy Chestnut before it’s too late, because all the regret in the world will be useless by then,” Yi Qingshan said.

“What have you done to her?” Han Jingru asked in a dangerous undertone.

“Just a little trick. The force I left in her body will

slowly erode her flesh. If no one helps her, her corpse will be reduced to a pool of blood. Even if you're lucky enough to find her, you'd only find a pool of blood, so handing over the Holy Chestnut is your only option," Yi Qingshan replied.

Hearing that, Fei Lingsheng bellowed furiously, "Yi Qingshan, you better hand her over right now. Don't forget, this is the Imperial Court and not Xia Nation. Even if you get the Holy Chestnut, do you think you'll be able to get away?"

Seeing the visibly anxious Fei Lingsheng, Yi Qingshan smiled blandly. Although he had long since taken a liking to this woman, when it came to the Holy Chestnut, nothing else mattered.

For a fighter at the Pinnacle Stage like him, power was the ultimate pursuit in life. Women were only passersby who could change with time.

"I have you to thank for this, Fei Lingsheng. If you hadn't told me that he possessed many more Holy Chestnuts, I would never have captured

Jiang Yingying. Don't worry though. After I ascend to the Alpha Stage, I'll be sure to share its secrets with you," Yi Qingshan promised.

Fei Lingsheng gritted her teeth. She had unintentionally divulged that knowledge. She never wanted to tell Yi Qingshan, nor did she want him to make trouble because of it.

It was evident that he was trying to sow discord between her and Han Jingru by saying that.

"Yi Qingshan, I'm giving you one last chance. Release her, and I'll spare you," Han Jingru warned. He wasn't in the mood to care about what happened between these two. Even if there was something up with them, it did not concern him. Rescuing Jiang Yingying was his primary concern. After that, he would slowly deal with Fei Lingsheng after that.

Yi Qingshan's face turned cold. Jiang Yingying was currently in his hands, but it seemed like Han Jingru did not know his place, and he even had the guts to threaten him.

“Han Jingru, you are in no position to threaten me,” Yi Qingshan sneered with disdain.

“Is that so?” Han Jingru’s eyes gleamed. Before his leg healed, he wasn’t absolutely confident that he could defeat Yi Qingshan, but now, he did not see Yi Qingshan as a threat at all.

In his eyes, a Pinnacle Master was but an ant beneath his boot.

Even if he were only at the simulated Alpha Stage, he was leagues above someone at the Pinnacle Stage.

“You’re the one who didn’t appreciate the chance given to you, so don’t blame me for what comes next.” The moment Han Jingru finished speaking, he vanished from his spot.

Even Fei Lingsheng and Yi Qingshan, both Pinnacle Masters in their own right, were unable to catch Han Jingru’s movements.

Fei Lingsheng was standing beside him, but she did not know how he did it, nor did she detect

any power ripples as a result of his movements.

At that moment, she realized the difference in power between Han Jingru and herself. It was just like comparing an ordinary person to a Cultivator. An ordinary person would never be able to sense what a Cultivator did.

“Where is he?” Yi Qingshan showed a fearful expression when Han Jingru abruptly disappeared.

“Fei Lingsheng, where is he?” he roared.

“Looking for me?” Han Jingru’s voice came from behind him.

Yi Qingshan swiveled around in terror, but saw nothing.

Han Jingru was like ghost that could not be captured.

“How... How have you done this? How is this possible? Just how?” Yi Qingshan was completely panicking because he knew that Han

Jingru was just beside him, but due to his insane speed, the naked eye could not detect him.

But Yi Qingshan was a Pinnacle Master, so it was impossible that he couldn't detect Han Jingru's movements.

Hence, fear crept up his heart, because based on this alone, he could feel the gulf between him and Han Jingru.

He who was initially brimming with confidence received a huge blow. He thought that he stood a chance against Han Jingru, but now, it seemed like that was only wishful thinking.

Fortunately, Yi Qingshan still held Jiang Yingying's life in his hands. This was his last bargaining chip.

“Yi Qingshan, did you really think that you had glimpsed my full potential?” Han Jingru's voice once again sounded.

This scene was indeed a peculiar one, because no one could see him, but his voice was crisp for all

to hear.

“Master Han’s powers may have already surpassed that of everyone in Xenos,” Yan Qinghua said in a low voice upon seeing this. At the same time, her admiration toward Han Jingru deepened.

“I’m afraid your chances of winning are slim to none this time, Yi Qingshan. After living for so long, I never expected that you’d die this way, suffering the consequences of your own actions,” Fei Lingsheng commented blandly. Pinnacle Masters had a life span of thousand years. As long as they could find a way to ascend to the Alpha Stage, they would achieve immortality. Fei Lingsheng knew that this was Yi Qingshan’s goal, but his methods in doing it were grossly wrong.

From the moment the idea to threaten Han Jingru with Jiang Yingying took form in his mind, death loomed over him.

Although the Imperial Court and Xia Nation were at odds with each other, Fei Lingsheng and Yi Qingshan were considered old friends, and the former did not want to watch her friend die like this.

“Yi Qingshan, it’s still not too late for you to surrender, otherwise, only death awaits you.” This was the last piece of advice Fei Lingsheng had to offer her old friend. If he was willing to back down, perhaps there was hope for him yet. On the other hand, if he refused to acknowledge his mistakes, there was nothing she could do.

“Han Jingru, I don’t believe you’d dare to lay a finger on me. Don’t forget that your sister is still at my mercy. If I don’t tell you where she is, you won’t even have a body to bury.” He had already gotten this far. To Yi Qingshan, there was no turning back anymore, and he was certain that Han Jingru wouldn’t dare to harm him. Jiang Yingying was his close relative, so there was no way he would be able to watch her die.

“After you get a taste of death, you will be begging to tell me where she is.” With that, Han

Jingru finally materialized behind Yi Qingshan.

When he grabbed his neck, the stubborn instinctively tried to resist, but a powerful force abruptly poured into his body, suppressing his own energy and rendering him completely immobile.

“Your methods are indeed quite effective, but let me warn you, you’ll only die quicker if you resist. Once my power detonates like a bomb in your body, you’ll be reduced to ashes.” An eye for an eye. Han Jingru was letting Yi Qingshan taste his own medicine.

Yi Qingshan’s expression changed drastically. He knew that Han Jingru was not joking. He could almost picture what would happen to himself once the latter’s power filled every space in his body.

“Don’t try to intimidate me. If I die, so will Jiang Yingying. With her as a company, I won’t be so lonely walking down the path toward the afterlife,” Yi Qingshan pushed the words through gritted teeth.

“Reaching the Pinnacle Stage must have been a difficult feat for you, I presume?”

“You have a thousand-year life span, it’d be a waste if you died now.”

“If you die, all your skills would be gone and all your efforts will be in vain. Yi Qingshan, can you really accept this as your fate?”

Han Jingru’s voice kept lingering beside his ear.

For a fighter like Yi Qingshan, death was his biggest fear. Otherwise, he would never have run away upon encountering the Qilin in the Dark Forest.

The higher the stage, the more difficult it was to face death, because no one would want all their efforts to go down the drain.

That was especially the case for Yi Qingshan. He had a life span of a thousand years, and he had only lived for a few hundred years. He was even more reluctant to accept death.

“Stop intimidating me. Let me give you a piece of advice. Don’t do something you’ll regret. You won’t be able to find the place where Jiang Yingying is being held that easily. Furthermore, she only has two more days to live.” Yi Qingshan was afraid to die, but he was still unwilling to compromise at this point in time. He was betting his life on Jiang Yingying. If he gave up now, everything he did would have gone to waste.

“Have you ever felt what it’s like to fall from the highest stage to the lowest? Now, I will let you have a taste of being downgraded from the Pinnacle Stage to the Ninth Stage. You will feel yourself becoming weaker, and all the effort you put into training back then will be gone, just like that,” Han Jingru said casually.

“Hahahaha. Just give up trying to scare me into surrendering. Do you think you can actually strip me off my stage?” Yi Qingshan did not believe Han Jingru and only thought he was saying that to scare him.

But soon, Yi Qingshan’s face blanched.

When he felt the energy force in his body being engulfed by Han Jingru's, he utterly and thoroughly panicked.

At this rate, he might really be demoted to a lower stage. Just like that, the power obtained upon reaching the Pinnacle Stage would be destroyed in the hands of Han Jingru.

Although he did not know how Han Jingru was able to do this, he could truly feel his power being drained from his body.

“What are you doing? Stop! Stop right now! I order you to stop!” Yi Qingshan began to yell manically, unable to remain composed anymore.

Fei Lingsheng's expression took a drastic turn as well. This seemed impossible to her, but Han Jingru had indeed done it; he had reduced a Pinnacle Master back to the Ninth Stage.

And since he could do that, he could most definitely pull Yi Qingshan even lower than that, and perhaps even turn him into an ordinary person.

Fei Lingsheng sucked in a sharp breath. Her eyes filled with terror when she glanced at Han Jingru. Because if he could do this to Yi Qingshan, it meant that he could do this to anyone.

The Emperor!

If Han Jingru and the Emperor have a falling out, what would become of the Emperor?

Would his ultimate trump card in the Dragon Emperor Palace become Han Jingru's too?

“Demon. You really are a demon. This is a fate even worse than death for Yi Qingshan,” Fei Lingsheng mumbled to herself. To force a fighter to descend stages was beyond cruel because a lot of effort had been spent to become a fighter. Taking away a fighter's stage, was even more difficult to accept than taking away his life.

“You still have a chance. Tell me where Jiang Yingying is,” Han Jingru said to Yi Qingshan.

At that moment, Yi Qingshan's Pinnacle Stage was wavering. He might very well fall from

power and become someone at the Ninth Stage. Once that happened, he would age rapidly and won't be able to reach the Pinnacle Stage again in this lifetime.

On the peak of Mount Phoenix.

Several sect elders, who were watching this scene from a distance, had already paled with fear.

Rather than calling them sect elders, they were more suited to be called the Emperor's spies. After all, their purpose in coming to Jingru Sect was to monitor Han Jingru on behalf of the Emperor.

At that moment, Han Jingru's power and cruel methods made these spies shudder with fear. They couldn't imagine what would happen if he decided to turn his sights on them instead.

Before this, they had felt a strong sense of superiority in Jingru Sect. After all, they were sent by the Emperor himself, so they completely disregarded everyone else. Even Han Jingru was beneath them.

But now, they did not dare to think like this anymore, nor did they dare to underestimate Han Jingru.

“I never expected that he’d be this powerful. Even a Pinnacle Master is no match against him.”

“I think we should leave Jingru Sect as soon as possible. We might very well lose our lives if we stay.”

“Why don’t we leave right now? I don’t want to get on the bad side of this demon.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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After the sect elders discussed amongst themselves, they decided to leave at once out of fear for Han Jingru.

Moreover, they had a good reason to leave and head back to the Dragon Emperor Palace now. As long as they reported about Han Jingru's methods in dealing with Yi Qingshan, the Emperor would let them off the hook.

However, Jingru Sect was not somewhere someone could just come and go as they pleased.

Han Jingru had killed the Emperor's subordinates in Longyun City before, so he had no qualms killing a few more right now.

Although Han Jingru's attention was trained on Yi Qingshan, it did not mean that he wasn't paying attention to his surroundings.

Just as they were about to sneak down the mountain, Han Jingru's voice stopped them in their tracks. "Do you really think you can leave Jingru Sect whenever you please?"

When these elders heard him, their faces completely drained of color.

“Master Han, we are the Emperor’s subordinates. What do you think you’re doing?” one of them retorted.

They used to talk bad about Han Jingru behind his back, but now, they had subconsciously addressed him as ‘Master Han’. It seemed like Han Jingru’s actions had really scared the living daylights out of them.

Fei Lingsheng grew slightly puzzled at this. *Isn’t Han Jingru trying to force Yi Qingshan to tell him Jiang Yingying’s whereabouts? Why does he care where these few minions are going?*

“Fei Lingsheng, kill them for me,” Han Jingru ordered her.

Fei Lingsheng was taken aback for a while. Killing them would be a piece of cake for her, but she did not want to become enemies with the Emperor because of this. After all, these people were personally sent by the Emperor. If they died

in Jingru Sect and the Emperor found out that she was the one responsible for it, she would have no way she could explain herself.

In the split second Fei Lingsheng hesitated, those people suddenly exploded and died before having the chance to react whatsoever.

All of a sudden, Fei Lingsheng felt something had brushed past her, causing her stomach to drop.

“What’s the meaning of this?” Fei Lingsheng questioned Han Jingru.

He paid her no heed. At first, he had wanted to win her over to his side, but her hesitation made him dismiss that idea.

If it had been Huang Xiaoyong, even when he knew the opponent was stronger than him, he would have acted nonetheless. This was loyalty, which Fei Lingsheng failed to show.

“Yi Qingshan, this is your last chance. Bring me to Jiang Yingying, or your whole life’s worth of

cultivation will be destroyed,” Han Jingru warned.

Yi Qingshan was already in a state of utter despair. Needless to say, he did not want to fall from power. Before this, he never expected Han Jingru to be so powerful. If he continued to be stubborn, not only would he fail to obtain a Holy Chestnut, but his powers would also be stripped from him.

More importantly, he was afraid of death. If death indeed came knocking on his doorstep, he would not have the courage to continue challenging Han Jingru.

Regret overwhelmed Yi Qingshan, and he had only himself to blame for oversimplifying things. He thought he could gain the upper hand by threatening Han Jingru with Jiang Yingying, but he had overlooked the fact that Han Jingru had the ability to kill him.

With death breathing down his neck, Yi Qingshan had no grounds to negotiate with Han Jingru.

“She’s on Mount Lulu, a hundred miles away from here. There’s a cave on the mountainside. That’s where I’m keeping her.” Yi Qingshan finally relented. He had no choice but to do this. Falling from power absolutely frightened him. It was a reality he could not accept, so he could only give up his desire to obtain a Holy Chestnut.

Han Jingru could not confirm if Yi Qingshan were telling the truth, but he wouldn’t believe this cunning old fox this easily. He turned to look at Yan Qinghua and said, “Madam Yan, please help me make a trip there.”

Yan Qinghua did not miss a beat. “Master Han, don’t worry, I’ll head over there right now.”

Just then, Fei Lingsheng’s heart plummeted even more, because Han Jingru could have entrusted her with this matter. After all, she was much more powerful than Yan Qinghua. She could reach Mount Lulu much faster and rescue Jiang Yingying even sooner.

Surely Han Jingru is aware of this, so why didn’t he ask me to carry out this task instead?

Fei Lingsheng knew that she had missed an opportunity, but she could not specifically put her finger on it.

“Han Jingru, I’m telling you the truth. Can you let me go first?” Yi Qingshan spoke to him in an almost imploring tone.

However, Han Jingru did not intend to let him off. During his time on earth, he had come to understand something. An enemy must never be given the chance to retaliate. Otherwise, history would only repeat itself.

“When I’m sure she’s there, then I’ll let you go,” Han Jingru answered in a monotonous voice.

Fei Lingsheng shook her head in silence. *Yi Qingshan has already crossed Han Jingru’s bottom line. Under these circumstances, it’s not possible for him to escape unscathed.*

From the ruthless way Han Jingru had exterminated the Emperor’s subordinates just now, it was apparent that Yi Qingshan would suffer a similar fate.

After being given the order, Yan Qinghua pushed forward with everything she had, not daring to waste another second. This was out of respect for Han Jingru's power, and also because she hoped to make a good impression on him.

Although Yan Qinghua knew the gulf between Han Jingru and herself was wide, and that it was very likely that she wouldn't be able to get what she wanted, there was still hope in her heart. Han Jingru was after all a powerful man and could be considered a rare specimen. If she missed this opportunity, there wouldn't be another one in this life of hers. Hence, she wanted to seize this opportunity and use it to her best advantage.

"Why didn't you let me go? I can bring you sister back sooner." Fei Lingsheng finally mustered up the courage to ask Han Jingru.

"I'd rather place my trust in Yan Qinghua," Han Jingru answered.

Fei Lingsheng gnashed her teeth together. Even though she had lied to be beside Han Jingru, she had been nothing but truthful to him from then

on. She had even revealed her biggest secret to him, but what she received in return was his distrust.

Is it just because I didn't act immediately just now?

Just because of my hesitation, he has completely changed his views of me?

“Because I didn’t kill those people just now?” Fei Lingsheng probed further.

Han Jingru remained silent.

Fei Lingsheng refused to give up. “Am I not allowed to even hesitate?”

“A split second of hesitation is enough to set the two of us apart. I will not keep a threat by my side. Leave now, and don’t ever show up again. Otherwise, you will die by my hands,” Han Jingru said in a cold tone.

Fei Lingsheng inhaled sharply, as she could tell that he wasn’t joking from the solemn expression

on his face.

But Fei Lingsheng could not accept this, because only by remaining beside Han Jingru could she stand a higher chance to ascend to the Alpha Stage.

She found it even harder to accept that her brief moment of hesitation was what ruined her relationship with him.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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“I’m not going anywhere.” Fei Lingsheng looked at Han Jingru with resolve gleaming in her eyes. She would never leave now because she knew very well that only one Holy Chestnut would not be enough for her to reach the true Alpha Stage. Thus, she had to stay.

Han Jingru’s lips lifted into a faint smile. “Your response came very quick now. It’s a pity that it’s useless now.”

Fei Lingsheng wasn’t sure about anything, but she was determined to stay right now, so she did not care what Han Jingru said.

Meanwhile, Yan Qinghua reached the place Yi Qingshan had described just before darkness fell.

Yi Qingshan turned out to be speaking the truth. She found an unconscious Jiang Yingying in a cave on the mountainside.

She knew that Yi Qingshan was the cause of this and that she did not possess the power to awaken Jiang Yingying. Thus, she wasted no time, carrying her on her back as she once again raced

back.

To her, this was no easy feat. After all, she had not reached a stage where her power could be utilized limitlessly. The extra weight also slowed her down significantly as she had to expel more energy.

However, no matter how tired Yan Qinghua was, resting never once crossed her mind. All she wanted was to bring Jiang Yingying back to Han Jingru as soon as possible. Only then would her mission be completed, and with it, her opportunity to get closer to Han Jingru.

If Fei Lingsheng had half of her persistence, perhaps Han Jingru would see her in completely different light.

“When will you let me go?” Yi Qingshan asked Han Jingru who was still suppressing him. He felt troubled as he thought about the consequences of threatening Han Jingru. He was worried that the moment Jiang Yingying came back, Han Jingru would kill him.

Never in a million years did Yi Qingshan expect to be subdued by Han Jingru so easily, so it proved that his plans were faulty. If he knew this earlier, perhaps he would never have gone down this path.

“What’s the rush? It’s useless to be scared now,” Han Jingru said.

Release Yi Qingshan?

Impossible!

Yi Qingshan was already a dead man to Han Jingru. The moment the latter saw Jiang Yingying with his own eyes, he would kill Yi Qingshan without hesitation.

On earth, Han Jingru learned that a b*stard like Yi Qingshan could not be allowed to live, because only the dead would rest along with all the troubles.

Moreover, this was not earth and its rules did not apply here. Hence, Han Jingru could kill without much restraint.

“Are you going to kill me?” Yi Qingshan asked.

“What do you think?” Han Jingru replied with a question.

Sweat beaded on Yi Qingshan’s forehead upon hearing this. *Han Jingru has never said that he’d let me go outright. Doesn’t this indirectly mean that he’s going to kill me?*

“Han Jingru, I didn’t hurt your sister. All I wanted was a Holy Chestnut. I’ve realized my mistake now, so let me go and I’ll be your slave,” Yi Qingshan started to beg, because this was the only thing he could do at this moment.

Watching this scene, Fei Lingsheng couldn’t help but lament in silence. *A Pinnacle Master is now reduced to someone who has to beg to keep his life.*

In the past, Pinnacle Masters were supreme beings, but because of Han Jingru’s appearance, this position was no longer what it once was.

“Yi Qingshan, what goes around comes around,

didn't you know that?" Han Jingru's tone was nonchalant.

Yi Qingshan felt bitterness surge in him. *How would I have dared to offend Han Jingru if I had known this would happen?*

It was precisely because he did not see this outcome that he dared to use Jiang Yingying as a bargaining chip to threaten Han Jingru.

"Han Jingru, he's Xia Nation's Pinnacle Master and holds a very important position there. If you really kill him, I'm afraid Xia Nation won't let you off," Fei Lingsheng spoke up. She thought that her words served as a gentle reminder. After all, facing the vengeance of a whole country would be difficult for anyone. However, she forgot that Han Jingru did not care about all this. Her words did not gain her Han Jingru's favor. Instead, it only made him look at her with more disdain.

"If Yingying is hurt, I won't let Xia Nation off either." Han Jingru's lips curled.

It was a simple sentence, but it brimmed with arrogance. *Does he mean to challenge an entire country on his own?*

Han Jingru was very powerful; this was a fact Fei Lingsheng could not deny. But when he said such arrogant words, she could not help but brush them off as a joke.

“You’re currently in a situation where even the Emperor wants to kill you. If you provoke a whole country, do you really think you’ll be able to get out of this place alive? Once both rulers want you dead, your days in Xenos will be numbered,” Fei Lingsheng reminded.

If Han Jingru wanted to rule over all of Xenos, one way or another, he would have to fight a bloody battle with the Three Nations. He had originally planned to defeat them one by one, but now, he did not care if he offended both countries at the same time. Jiang Yingying was like sister to him. If he could not protect her, what was the use of having so much power in his body?

Han Jingru was currently being irrational, but this

was the real him, someone who thought with his heart.

“Since you’re scared, just leave quickly. This is my business so you won’t be implicated,” Han Jingru replied.

Fei Lingsheng gritted her teeth. She was not afraid of being the consequence, but she had said that for Han Jingru’s own sake. However, he did not appreciate her thoughtfulness at all. She hoped that she could change his mind about her by showing kindness, but it seemed like it completely backfired on her.

Although Fei Lingsheng was not like the other Pinnacle Masters who had lived for hundreds of years, she was very knowledgeable and had seen all kinds of people. However, this was the first time she came across such a stubborn person such as Han Jingru.

Is it really necessary to offend an entire nation just for a woman’s life?

“Han Jingru, why are you so arrogant?” Fei

Lingsheng clenched her jaw.

Arrogant?

Han Jingru asked himself. *Am I?*

Compared to the spoiled heirs on earth, I'm actually considered low-key. During my days on earth, I've always practiced forbearance and only attacked as a last resort.

But now, I'm being called arrogant?

Perhaps, I am. But on Xenos, isn't power prized above everything else?

Since I have great power, what's wrong with being a little arrogant then?

“You will get the chance to see the truly arrogant side of me. When that happens, you'll realize how low-key I am now,” Han Jingru countered.

Fei Lingsheng could not fathom Han Jingru's words at that moment, because she did not know about his intention to conquer the Three Nations

at all. If she did, she would no doubt think he was crazy.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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The next day when dusk approached.

Yan Qinghua finally returned to Mount Phoenix with Jiang Yingying. At that moment, she had almost exhausted all of her energy. Her complexion was pale and her body was soaked with sweat all over. Not to mention, she was trembling slightly. It was clear that she had maxed out.

“Master Han, mission accomplished. I brought your sister back.” After saying this, Yan Qinghua immediately slumped to the ground, depleted of the strength to move.

Yi Qingshan was about to beg for mercy when he suddenly felt a huge energy force invade his body, causing him to pale.

Before he could utter a word, his whole body exploded into smithereens.

This marked the demise of a renowned Pinnacle Master.

Fei Lingsheng’s breathing quickened as she

watched this scene unfurl. She never expected Han Jingru to be so decisive, leaving no room for negotiation whatsoever.

If the ruler of Xia Nation knew that Yi Qingshan died by Han Jingru's hands, he would never spare him.

At the same time, this served as a warning to Fei Lingsheng. Yi Qingshan was a Pinnacle Master just like her, and he had died just like that. This showed that if she were to go against Han Jingru, this would also be her fate.

Han Jingru walked to Yan Qinghua and took out a Holy Chestnut, feeding it to her before saying, "Have a good rest. From now on, anyone in Piaomiao Sect is a friend of mine. You can come to me whenever you need help. I will never turn you away."

"Master Han, what... what is this?" Yan Qinghua asked in her dazed state. She only knew that she had eaten something, but she could not tell what it was.

“A Holy Chestnut,” Han Jingru replied casually.

Holy Chestnut!

When the half-conscious Yan Qinghua heard those two words, the fog clouding her mind immediately cleared slightly and she stared at Han Jingru with disbelief.

She could hardly believe how easily Han Jingru had given her such a valuable item.

The presence of a Holy Chestnut could incite violence amongst fighters.

Take Fengshang City’s Holy Chestnut auction for example. This had shaken the entire Imperial Court. Masses of people had flocked to Fengshang City to get their hands on a Holy Chestnut.

But now, Han Jingru had offered such a precious item to her without a second thought.

“Master Han, I can’t accept such a generous gift,” Yan Qinghua protested.

Han Jingru smiled faintly and said, “You’ve already eaten it. How are you going to return it to me? Just have a good rest.”

With that, Han Jingru hoisted Jiang Yingying onto his back and walked toward his own room.

As Fei Lingsheng watched his retreating back, she couldn’t help but sigh. *Even though I have tried so hard to get a Holy Chestnut, I never succeed. However, Yan Qinghua did nothing more than making a slightly laborious round trip but her effort was worthy of receiving such a generous gift.*

And it doesn’t seem like Han Jingru treasures the Holy Chestnuts at all, since he gave one away so easily. Doesn’t he care at all?

Even if he’s really reached the Alpha Stage and the Holy Chestnut no longer serves any purpose to him, it’s impossible for anyone in the right mind to give away such a precious item so casually.

Fei Lingsheng could not understand Han Jingru.

To him, no matter how precious something was, it was worthless in his eyes.

The Holy Chestnut could indeed help fighters to ascend and was indeed a rare item in the whole of Xenos, but what did it matter? When something no longer served a purpose to Han Jingru, he would treat as nothing more than rubbish.

Back in his room, Han Jingru carefully inspected Jiang Yingying's physical condition.

Jiang Yingying was in a coma because Yi Qingshan had inflicted an energy force to seal her consciousness, and the negative effects of this force would magnify with time. Once this force wreaked havoc in Jiang Yingying's body, her bodily functions would be completely destroyed.

“That vicious man deserved worse,” Han Jingru gritted through his teeth. Killing Yi Qingshan was his plan all along, but now, he felt that he had died too painlessly after doing this to Jiang Yingying. If he had known, he would have let him get a taste of her agony as well.

Based on the stage Han Jingru was currently at, it was not difficult to help Jiang Yingying dispel Yi Qingshan's energy from her body, he could even absorb that energy directly.

To make sure he wouldn't harm Jiang Yingying, Han Jingru was extremely careful when doing this, for fear of any undesired outcome.

Fortunately, Han Jingru had absolute control over the process of dispelling the force. He managed to absorb Yi Qingshan's energy without harming her at all.

Shortly after, Jiang Yingying regained consciousness.

The first person she saw upon opening her eyes was Han Jingru, prompting the edges of her lips to tug upwards into a smile.

"You almost died and you're still in the mood to smile?" Han Jingru felt at a loss. He was slightly upset at her for taking Yi Qingshan on alone, because she must have known she was no match for him but put on a tough front anyway.

“Jingru, with you here, I knew I won’t die,” Jiang Yingying stated.

“Yi Qingshan was a Pinnacle Master. Didn’t you know that you weren’t his match?” Han Jingru grumbled.

“Jingru, our sect comprises of children from poor families and they’re not Cultivators yet. I was worried Yi Qingshan would hurt them, so I had to lure him somewhere else,” Jiang Yingying explained. She wasn’t acting tough, since there was no need for that. The main reason for her actions was because she didn’t wish for the members of Jingru Sect to get hurt in the crossfire.

The horrible deaths of their two gatekeepers was already unacceptable to Jiang Yingying. She refused to see other people be subjected to Yi Qingshan’s cruelty.

“Weren’t you afraid that Yi Qingshan would kill you?” Han Jingru asked in an accusatory tone.

Jiang Yingying shook her head and said, “He

came to cause trouble while you were away. This showed that he didn't have the guts to face you head-on. Besides, he came specifically for me. I guessed that he wanted to use me to threaten you, so I knew that he wasn't going to kill me."

Han Jingru sighed in defeat upon hearing her explanation. It was fortunate that he had gotten his leg fixed in the Ximen family's secret room. Otherwise, dealing with Yi Qingshan would not have been so easy and rescuing Jiang Yingying would be even more difficult.

Jiang Yingying's trust in him was unparalleled, and it was because of this that Han Jingru vowed to keep her safe.

Since he was the one who brought her to Xenos, he had to safely bring her back to earth.

"By the way, where is Yi Qingshan?" she asked as she was curious.

"I have killed him together with all the sect elders as well. From this moment forward, Jingru Sect and the Dragon Emperor Palace are enemies.

Even if the Qilin really exists, I don't think it'd make a difference in the Emperor's intention to kill me," Han Jingru stated. He did not expect things to turn out this way, but he wasn't afraid. He would roll with the punches. In fact, he was already mentally prepared for whatever was coming his way.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Meanwhile, at the Dragon Emperor Palace.

The Emperor had been paying close attention to Jingru Sect's every movement, but when the latest news was not sent back, it made him slightly anxious.

“Aren't we supposed to be receiving the latest news by now? What's going on? Why haven't I heard anything after a whole day?” The Emperor asked his trusted aide. The spies at Jingru Sect had always kept in contact with his trusted aide, because the Emperor himself would never personally get involved in such trivial matters. However, his curiosity got the better of him this time, and he could not wait a moment longer.

His trusted aide also felt that something was amiss. *The news about such a huge incident at the Jingru Sect would have been gradually transmitted to us. Why wasn't there any news after such a long time?*

“Your Majesty, perhaps they met an accident?” His trusted aide speculated. Under normal circumstances, it was impossible for there to be

complete radio silence. Hence, something could have happened to those spies they sent.

But could Han Jingru have dared to do anything to them?

Back then, even if he knew that those sect elders were spies sent by the Dragon Emperor Palace, he could only accept it. This showed that Han Jingru still feared the Dragon Emperor Palace.

“Do you mean that Han Jingru killed them?” the Emperor asked coldly.

“That’s one of the possibilities, but in my opinion, it’s more likely that he has imprisoned them. Han Jingru probably isn’t so bold as to kill them,” the trusted aide replied.

The Emperor nodded. Imprisonment would make more sense. Han Jingru could not possibly be so bold as to give them a death sentence when he knew that they were the Emperor’s subordinates, because that would mean he was blatantly challenging him.

“Your Majesty, his disciple is still at the Dragon Emperor Palace, so he will definitely come back. Don’t worry,” his trusted aide reassured him. Even if they did not know what happened, sooner or later, they would, as long as Han Jingru came back to the Dragon Emperor Palace.

The Emperor nodded, thinking that it was fortunate he made sure to have leverage over Han Jingru, so the latter would return to the Dragon Emperor Palace no matter what.

At Fei Lingsheng’s home.

Besides Huang Xiaoyong, Zhantai Liuyue was also trapped here.

Both of them were currently at the pavilion, with helpless looks on their faces. Ever since they found out that they were trapped here, they did not try to escape, because they knew that this was the Dragon Emperor Palace, which was crawling with the Emperor’s subordinates. Even if they wanted to escape, they would not be able to do that under their watchful gazes.

However, this wasn't such a bad thing for Huang Xiaoyong. After all, being able to spend time with a stunning beauty such as Zhantai Liuyue was an extremely rare opportunity.

Even though he genuinely had feelings for Jiang Yingying, it was completely normal to be fickle-hearted for someone who was born and bred in Xenos. Hence, there was nothing to stop Huang Xiaoyong from taking an interest in Zhantai Liuyue.

However, he was still sound-minded. He knew that only his Master was worthy of a woman like Zhantai Liuyue, so he wasn't that ambitious.

“Madam Zhantai, do you think my master has managed to rescue Yingying?” Huang Xiaoyong asked in a worried tone.

Zhantai Liuyue had already learned from Huang Xiaoyong about what happened at the Jingru Sect. Even though she didn't know who the opponent was, she was certain that no matter how serious the matter was, Han Jingru would be able to handle it. After all, he had stood his own in a

match against the Emperor.

“Don’t worry, there’s nothing that can’t be resolved once your master puts his mind to it,” Zhantai Liuyue reassured.

Huang Xiaoyong nodded with pride shining in his eyes. “That’s true. There’s no problem my master can’t solve.”

“Instead of worrying about your master, don’t you think you should be more concerned about our current predicament?” Zhantai Liuyue said with a helpless look on her face.

Huang Xiaoyong shook his head. He did not care about this matter at all. Although he lost his freedom, it was only temporary, because he was confident that Han Jingru would come and save him soon.

“Don’t worry, Madam Zhantai. Once Master has resolved the trouble at the sect, he’ll definitely come here to rescue us,” Huang Xiaoyong said.

Zhantai Liuyue shook her head in response after

seeing that Huang Xiaoyong was being too naïve. With Han Jingru's hot temper, he and the Emperor might get into a dispute. When that happened, the matter involved would not be this simple but escalate and become more complicated.

“What's wrong? It's not like we'll be locked here for the rest of our lives, right?” Huang Xiaoyong chuckled.

“Why do you look so happy?” Zhantai Liuyue frowned at him.

Huang Xiaoyong quickly shook his head. Indeed, he did not think his current predicament was that bad, but he knew better than to get his hopes up when it came to Zhantai Liuyue.

“No. Of course not. What's there to be happy about being locked up here for the rest of our lives? I just wanted to say that this is impossible. How could my master allow the Emperor to keep us hostage forever? Besides, since he brought you to the Dragon Emperor Palace, he will definitely get you out safely. I'm sure you're well aware of

what kind of person my master is,” Huang Xiaoyong explained.

Zhantai Liuyue seemed to have something she wanted to say. Han Jingru could indeed get her out of here. However, if the Emperor held a grudge against him, but did not dare to retaliate outright, Piaomiao Sect could very well become the Emperor’s punching bag.

Han Jingru’s ability to go against the Emperor did not mean Piaomiao Sect was entitled to do the same.

Once the Emperor targeted Piaomiao Sect, their entire sect would be in danger of being wiped out.

“Madam Zhantai, what’s wrong? You look worried. What’s on your mind?” Huang Xiaoyong asked in puzzlement. Even with a frown between her brows, Zhantai Liuyue still looked as pretty as ever, but she was the most charming when she had a smile on her face.

Zhantai Liuyue shook her head. The worries

hounding her were only based on speculations, so she did not see the need to share them with Huang Xiaoyong.

“Nothing,” Zhantai Liuyue answered.

Huang Xiaoyong did not probe further. Zhantai Liuyue was after all a Sect Leader, and he was but an insignificant person who wasn't qualified to be privy to her thoughts.

Huang Xiaoyong heaved a sigh all of a sudden and muttered to himself, “I wonder if master will kill that guy. If he had the nerve to harm Yingying, death would be the only option.”

“Do you know who he is?” Zhantai Liuyue asked curiously. She had made her own speculations before. With Han Jingru's current influence, not just anyone would go looking for trouble with him.

Han Jingru fought against the Ximen family's Elite 28 and became a nightmare to many. Hence, causing trouble for him while aware of the power he wielded was practically

suicide.

“He is Fei Ling’er’s younger brother. I think his name is Yi Qingshan or something,” Huang Xiaoyong answered.

Fei Ling’er and Fei Lingsheng were one and the same. Zhantai Liuyue knew this already.

But since when did Fei Lingsheng have a younger brother? She had never heard about this before.

And the name ‘Yi Qingshan’ sounded very familiar as well.

“Yi Qingshan? Why does this name sound so familiar?” Zhantai Liuyue racked her brain trying to remember where she had heard it before.

“Do you know him, Madam Zhantai?”

As if Zhantai Liuyue recalled something, her face blanched with horror.

Zhantai Liuyue was incapable of leaving the Imperial Court on her own. However, she was familiar with Yi Qingshan's name. He was Xia Nation's most famous powerhouse who had an incredible influence upon the Imperial Court.

Yet, Zhantai Liuyue could not believe her ears when she heard that Yi Qingshan had caused trouble with the Jingru Sect.

Why did Yi Qingshan suddenly appeared at the Imperial Court? Why did he find fault with Jingru Sect?

“Did something happen between your master and Yi Qingshan?” Zhantai Liuyue asked curiously. *If there weren't any grudges or resentment, a powerhouse fighter like Yi Qingshan would not pick a fight with Han Jingru.* She thought to herself.

Huang Xiaoyong shook his head. His time of discipleship with Han Jingru was short. Hence, it would make perfect sense if he were not aware of the “beef” between them in the past.

“I’m not sure. Master had never mentioned this man to me,” Huang Xiaoyong replied.

Zhantai Liuyue couldn’t help but let out a sigh. *Things would be less complicated for Han Jingru if it were someone else. However, it was Yi Qingshan, a Pinnacle Master; in other words, fighting him off wouldn’t be an easy task.*

Zhantai Liuyue could not imagine Xia Nation’s number one fighter was killed in the hands of Han Jingru.

“What is it? Is this Yi Qingshan a bigshot?” Huang Xiaoyong was worried when he noticed Zhantai Liuyue sighed. After all, she would have more knowledge regarding other fighters in the city unlike him, who was a nobody in Longyun City.

“Indeed.” Zhantai Liuyue smiled bitterly. “He is Xia Nation’s number one Pinnacle Master. I guess you know what does a Pinnacle Master stands for, right?” she asked.

“Pi-...Pinnacle Master!” Huang Xiaoyong went

blank. The Pinnacle Masters were God-like existence to him. These fighters were invincible. How could he have beef with my Master!

“I believe now you understand how complicated things are,” Zhantai Liuyue added.

Huang Xiaoyong was stunned before he shook his head slowly, “This is impossible. How could this have happened? Why did Xia Nation’s number one fighter appeared at the Imperial Court?”

“Perhaps they carry the same name coincidentally?” Huang Xiaoyong suggested hopefully.

Zhantai Liuyue had the same thought at first. After all, there are hundreds of millions of people in the world. She changed her mind after much consideration as chances of coincidences like that were very unlikely. Furthermore, Han Jingru held a prominent status that no commoner would dare provoke him, let alone kidnap his sister.

Everyone was amazed by his powerful strength

during The Elite 28 war. His powerful abilities would have sent his opponent fleeing in no time. Who would dare to challenge him?

Moreover, according to Zhantai Liuyue's knowledge of the fighters in the Imperial Court, none of these people carried the same name. Therefore, the chances of that Yi Qingshan's whose identity was Xia Nation's number one fighter was unmistakable.

“The chances of your speculations are very unlikely. I can't think of anyone else who'd dare to mess with your Master beside him. You should know how prominent your master's status had become after the war with The Elite 28,” Zhantai Liuyue responded.

Huang Xiaoyong nodded his head subconsciously. A hint of pride was written across his face at the mention of his master's status.

“Of course. That war had made my master so popular that countless clans were trying to win him over in secret. Yet, he dismissed them as he

wasn't interested in any of them," Huang Xiaoyong said.

"So, could this Yi Qingshan be someone else besides holding the title of Xia Nation's powerhouse fighter?" Zhantai Liuyue questioned.

Huang Xiaoyong let out a sigh. He had high hopes for Han Jingru in the beginning. However, he began to feel uneasy after he had confirmed the opponent's identity. His master was undeniably the best fighter, but to go head to head with a Pinnacle Master meant that things were going to get ugly. After all, Pinnacle Stage fighters were incomparable to any other fighters.

"There's no need to be discouraged. She must have gone to the Jingru Sect. If she's willing to lend a helping hand, perhaps your Master wouldn't have to worry about Yi Qingshan," Zhantai Liuyue comforted.

"Who is this her that you're referring to?" Huang Xiaoyong was puzzled.

"The fake beggar who's with your Master,"

Zhantai Liuyue replied.

“You mean Fei Ling’er? She’s merely a pretty vase. What help can she be?” Huang Xiaoyong asked.

Zhantai Liuyue knew Fei Lingsheng had hidden her true identity from Huang Xiaoyong and the others. Hence, it made sense for him to make such remarks against her. Yet, he certainly would not have said so if he knew who Fei Ling’er truly was.

“Her real name is Fei Lingsheng. Perhaps you have not heard of Yi Qingshan, but I believe you would know who Fei Lingsheng is,” Zhantai Liuyue said.

“Of course, I have heard of Fei Lingsheng! Isn’t she...” Suddenly a thought registered in Huang Xiaoyong’s mind as shock flashed across his face. *That beggar’s real name is Fei Lingsheng? She is actually a Pinnacle Master at the Imperial Court!*

“You...you, what did you say? Her...her name is

Fei Lingsheng?” Huang Xiaoyong stuttered. He felt a sense of guilty conscience at the thought of his attitude towards Fei Ling’er in the past.

“That’s true. She admitted it herself to your master. Besides, she went with us when we met the Emperor. The Fei Ling’er you’re referring to is Fei Lingsheng.” Zhantai Liuyue confirmed.

Huang Xiaoyong almost peed his pants. He hadn’t cared much about that little beggar. In fact, he once had naughty thoughts about that woman and she turned out to be Fei Lingsheng!

At that moment, Huang Xiaoyong was on the verge of breaking down when he thought of the mean words he had once said to Fei Lingsheng. She could have taken his life if she wanted to with her status and he would have easily died a thousand times.

“I’m so done for.” Huang Xiaoyong panicked. He couldn’t remain calm when he recalled the times when he offended the Imperial Court’s number one fighter. He would be a dead man if Fei Lingsheng held any grudges against him.

Judging from Huang Xiaoyong's frightened reaction, Zhantai Liuyue guessed that he must have mistreated Fei Lingsheng in the past.

However, that woman would not simply retaliate with Han Jingru around. Therefore, Huang Xiaoyong was overthinking things.

“Don't worry about it. Fei Lingsheng won't kill you as long as your master is here,” Zhantai Liuyue assured him.

“Yeah, you're right. I still have my master with me and he'll certainly be on my side.” Huang Xiaoyong mumbled nervously as he tried to calm down.

He was worried that Fei Lingsheng would not let him off.

Zhantai Liuyue figured that Yi Qingshan would not go against Han Jingru as long as Fei Lingsheng was with him.

Yet, her assumptions had proved her wrong. Not only was Yi Qingshan dead, but even Fei

Lingsheng's status was not worth a hair to Han Jingru.

The first fighter of the Imperial Court had now become someone who seeks the favor of Han Jingru.



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Fei Lingsheng has to please others?

She would have become a laughing stock if this news were spread.

As the first fighter of the Imperial Court, Fei Lingsheng didn't have to please others. Even the Emperor was wary of her due to her well-respected status.

However, turning a blind eye to the truth didn't mean that it'd become false rumors.

Fei Lingsheng was indeed trying to win Han Jingru over. She had to find a way to stay by Han Jingru because she was determined to acquire more Holy Chestnut.

She had a perfect opportunity to gain Han Jingru's trust. However, the chance had slipped through her fingertips due to her hesitant attitude.

With that, Fei Lingsheng had to think of something else to make up for this matter.

When Jiang Yingying's condition had stabilized,

Han Jingru met Fei Lingsheng when he was on his way to visit Yan Qinghua.

Their encounter was not a coincidence as Fei Lingsheng had been waiting for him for a long time.

“I’ve told you to leave the Jingru Sect,” Han Jingru said coldly. Han Jingru did not intend to go easy on an untrustworthy person like her.

The older folks had always told us to keep our guard up, especially when one was in a foreign country. As for Han Jingru, his situation was much complex than being in a foreign country. He was in a completely different world. Thus, he was more cautious than usual.

Fei Lingsheng was on the Emperor’s side and Han Jingru would eventually become their enemy. Hence, he believed a friend of an enemy was also an enemy.

“What can I do to make it up to you?” Fei Lingsheng asked. She had stooped so low in front of Han Jingru as she said those words.

How could a dignified Pinnacle Master stoop so low?

Yet, Fei Lingsheng had no choice.

First of all, Han Jingru killed Yi Qingshan. It meant his stage had surpassed the Pinnacle Stage. His power had made Fei Lingsheng fearful of him but respect him at the same time.

Secondly, her hope to break through from the Pinnacle Stage to the Alpha Stage depended on Han Jingru. Therefore, she believed humbling herself before Han Jingru was the right thing to do as she needed his help.

“Fei Lingsheng, have you forgotten your identity? You’re a Pinnacle Master. How could you humble yourself to an average Master of a Sect Leader like me.” Han Jingru pointed out.

“I’ve been pursuing the legendary Alpha Stage for years. I used to think my goal was nothing but illusory because no one knew for sure if this stage exists. But it was you who has affirmed my yearning desire to achieve the Alpha Stage. You

have also proven its existence, so I believe only you can help me break through my current stage.” Fei Lingsheng stated her motive openly. She had daringly revealed her true intentions as she knew Han Jingru was not a fool. He had known her desires even before she said so.

“Why should I help you become an Alpha Stage fighter? I am now the strongest in the world. Why should I create an opponent for myself?” Han Jingru asked faintly. Based on his current abilities, he was the king of the world, besides the Qilin from the Dark Forest. Thus, he had no reason to help Fei Lingsheng advance to the next stage.

After all, no one would want to do something so stupid especially helping to create a strong contender for themselves.

Even a fool wouldn't have done such a thing.

Han Jingru was certainly not a fool. *I have yet to become a true Alpha Stage fighter. The reason behind my power enhancement was entirely dependent upon the abilities of my bones.*

If I turned Fei Lingsheng into an Alpha Stage fighter, I can't guarantee if I'd be more powerful than her.

Fei Lingsheng couldn't refute Han Jingru's words because she had no way to prove her everlasting loyalty to Han Jingru. Thus, it was logical for him to have such worries.

Fei Lingsheng was willing to pay any price as long as she was able to experience the mysterious Alpha Stage. Her life would be meaningless if she could not achieve her only goal in life.

“Don't you have a contract that you've created yourself? It could be used on humans, right?” Fei Lingsheng lowered her head and suggested.

Han Jingru furrowed his eyebrows as he was surprised by her words.

The contract was meant for familiars to remain loyal to their master while obeying his every order.

Han Jingru needed to have better control over

Zhong Qishan in the past. Hence, he had made some modifications to the contract so it would apply to humans.

Yet, he had never thought that Fei Lingsheng would willingly surrender to his control.

Nevertheless, the contract had its irreversible consequences. Once she signed the contract, she would be nothing but a puppet. She'd require Han Jingru's permission to perform any actions. Besides, he could claim Fei Lingsheng's life if he wished after she signed the contract. So, what was the point even if she became stronger under such condition?

“You must be joking. Why would you want to be my puppet?” Han Jingru asked dubiously. He thought he was hallucinating when he heard her request.

“No, I'm not. I'm being very serious right now,” Fei Lingsheng replied sternly.

Han Jingru took a deep breath and thought to himself. *Has she gone mad?*

Why does a Pinnacle Master want to become my puppet?

This thought had never occurred to Han Jingru. However, it seemed that he could make it happen if he agreed.

“Why do you want to do this?” asked Han Jingru. Fei Lingsheng must have a purpose to be willing to pay such a price. He knew her motive was not as simple as surpassing the stage. Hence, he had to deal with this matter carefully.

“I wish to break through my current stage. I want to know what’s it like to become an Alpha Stage fighter,” Fei Lingsheng explained.

Han Jingru was still skeptical even though she had come clean with her intentions. But after much consideration, he realized he was overthinking things. She would be under his control once she became his puppet. That also meant that he had nothing much to worry about even if she plans to go against him.

However, Han Jingru needed time to consider as

this incident had caught him off guard.

“You should know that no matter how strong you are, the contract cannot be suspended unilaterally. Hence, you can’t escape my control even if you’ve become stronger,” Han Jingru warned. It was his last reminder to confirm Fei Lingsheng’s attitude towards her decision. He wanted to emphasize the price of signing the contract to her.

“I am aware,” Fei Lingsheng replied without hesitation.

Han Jingru sighed heavily before saying, “I’m going to visit Yan Qinghua now. I’ll come to you when it’s time, so return to your room for now.”

“Yes.” Fei Lingsheng lowered her head down and left. Her actions resembled an obedient servant responding to her master’s orders.

Han Jingru sighed in exclamation. *I can’t believe how crazy the world has become! What has gotten into people these days? Why does someone as powerful as Fei Lingsheng be willing to be my puppet? Why was this Alpha Stage so alluring to them?*