

Half a month later.

It was an important day for the Nangong family.

This was the day that they would be hosting high-profile members of the top community.

Nangong Boling gathered the family at the break of dawn and personally made the trip to the airport.

Every member of the Nangong family was in attendance because this event was of colossal importance to Nangong Boling.

The Nangong family held all the power on their small island nation so watching them scuttle about nervously had shocked and terrified the other inhabitants. *Who is it that could turn the haughty Nangong family upside down like so?*

A lone plane landed on the runway, and out of it stepped two people, one old and the other young.

The elder was highly advanced in age but his charismatic prowess was mighty enough to draw

awe from anyone who had the privilege of crossing his path. He seemed to glide instead of walk, each step graceful and controlled. Even Nangong Boling appeared rather diminished in comparison.

The young man was charmingly polished and tall. He gazed at the Nangong family as though they were ants. However, it was this arrogant demeanor that reduced the women of the Nangong family into a swooning mess. Even Nangong Liuli was not spared.

“If I could just have one night with that handsome glass of water, I’d probably be satisfied for the rest of my life,” she said wistfully.

Nangong Boling fixed his shirt and marched over to the elder man, then bowed and greeted him with a voice that oozed respect. “Good morning, Sir, I am the head of the Nangong family, my name is Nangong Boling.”

“It was a long trip and I need to rest,” the elder said unblinkingly, his voice hollow.

“Of course. I've already arranged for a place for you to rest. Please climb into the car,” Nangong Boling stated politely.

When the young man noticed the effect that he was having on the women, he smirked devilishly. He had an exciting night ahead of him. He liked women who threw themselves onto him, because those were the easiest to dominate without fear of repercussion.

The accommodation that Nangong Boling prepared was in the Nangong family castle. Although the island had a luxury hotel, Nangong Boling felt that putting the pair up there lacked sincerity. If they stayed in the castle, he would be able to tend to their every need and cultivate a bond.

When they arrived at the Nangong family castle, Nangong Boling personally ensured the pair was settled in before turning to Nangong Yan. “No matter what they want, we get. Everything has to be perfect,” he instructed.

“Grandfather, please rest assured. I will take care

of everything,” Nangong Yan smiled.

In the room, the old man perched on the sofa as the young man gave the room a once over.

“Teacher, this Nangong family sure is rich. They probably control all the financials of the island from behind the scenes,” the young man named Gong Tian said to his teacher, Zhuang Tang. Both of them came from the elite aristocracy so commoners were just lesser beings to them.

“If not, why would we be giving them this chance?” Zhuang Tang said.

“Teacher, there's one part that I don't understand. Given the power of Apocalypse, money is no issue, so why are we bothering with these insects?” Gong Tian asked, flummoxed.

Apocalypse was a secret organization for the gentry - the “upper class” or “top community” that Yan Qiong referred to. It was unknown to the majority, and even people like the Nangong family were unaware.

“Apocalypse exists not for money but to fulfill a

higher purpose. All we have to do is dangle some casual benefits in front of people like this family and they'll be throwing buckets of money our way. Why bother trying to gather the money ourselves?" Zhuang Tang explained.

Gong Tian nodded. "That's true. Why exert ourselves when they're so willing to give us the money. Do they really think that they'll be able to get into Apocalypse this way? They're so desperate that it's pathetic."

"The might be losers but they have their uses," Zhuang Tang smirked.

Gong Tian snickered. "We need these losers to do crap like sweeping the floors."

"Go and rest up in your room. We'll give them a taste of what you're made of tomorrow. If no one in the Nangong family can even put up a fight, there's no need for us to waste any more time here," Zhuang Tang said.

Apocalypse had a straightforward style. They never leave empty-handed but whether they

accept anyone new would depend on the Nangong family's performance.

If they were unable to even put up a fight, Zhuang Tang would have reason to reject them. If a prospective person turns up, that person would be a useful asset to bring back to Apocalypse as well.

It did not matter whether they were able to find a new recruit, but either way, they would be leaving with a significant portion of the Nangong family's fortune.

The people of Apocalypse may belong to a higher species, but they were still humans who required sustenance. Since earning money was not one of their priorities, their source of finance came from the prominent commoner families such as the Nangong family.

Gong Tian nodded and returned to his room.

During the Nangong family's reception, Gong Tian had noticed quite a few pretty girls and now that he was alone, he could not help but itch with

friskiness. How could he fall asleep in this state?

He was preparing to seek out Nangong Yan when someone rapped at his door.

When he opened the door, he found Nangong Liuli standing there, a bashful flush staining her cheeks.

Gong Tian chuckled and wrapped his arms around her, pulling her into an embrace. He did not need to ask to know the reason behind her uninvited appearance.

Nangong Liuli was far from the innocent angel that she was playing. She was putting on this act in front of Gong Tian because she was all too familiar with what men like him wanted.

In Nangong Boling's study.

He stared at the surveillance footage of the dungeon, his expression grim.

The person he had been waiting for had finally arrived yet he was unable to ascertain his family's

ascension to the higher class.

Zhuang Tang's arrival meant that the Nangong family was about to lose a vast sum. But if that was what it cost for Zhuang Tang to collect someone from the Nangong family and raise the clan's status, that would be priceless.

Although Nangong Boling had high hopes for Nangong Yan, he felt that Han Jingru would be the one to turn his dreams into reality. The power displayed by Han Jingru was clearly at a level that greatly surpassed any other member of the Nangong family. He stood the best chance of attracting Zhuang Tang's attention.

“I never thought that I would need to rely on your grandson. You must hate me for expelling you from the Nangong family all those years ago. But who am I to argue with fate?” Nangong Boling muttered.

Nangong Shuxian was not alone. In order to reach their goal of moving up to the higher classes, many had gone out to sow and pollinate all across the land. Even Nangong Boling did not

have a hold on the full scope of it. But now, he had Nangong Shuxian and Han Jingru etched into his heart.

The next day was Nangong Yan's chance to fight for the position of head of the household. As long as Cheng Feng could be acknowledged by Zhuang Tang, no one would be able to stand in his way from then on. Despite this, his spirits remained low, and worry hounded his mind.

There was no guarantee that Cheng Feng had what it took to be recognized by Zhuang Tang. If he failed, he would not only lose a prime opportunity but it might also allow Nangong Sun to swoop in with the victory. Nangong Sun had Han Jingru after all, and this was the reason that Nangong Boling had spared Han Jingru's life.

“Do you know what will happen to me if you fail?” Nangong Yan warned Cheng Feng.

“Even if I lose, Han Jingru can't be allowed to win, right?” Cheng Feng answered. He understood Nangong Yan's concerns and knew that Nangong Sun was backed by Han Jingru, so

that was where they needed to aim at.

“If both of you are unsuccessful, Nangong Sun would no longer pose any risk to me but if you fail and he succeeds, I will never be able to be the head of the family. Do you get what I'm saying?” Nangong Yan said, his tone sinister.



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“But you can't kill Han Jingru,” Cheng Feng reminded coolly.

Nangong Yan burst to his feet and spat out, “Watch your attitude!”

“He's sitting in the dungeon now. It would be child's play to slit his throat.” Cheng Feng did not fear Nangong Yan for he knew that despite his ambition, his bark was worse than his bite. Cheng Feng despised people like him.

“It's not easy to mess with Grandfather's plan. Since he had placed his last hope on Han Jingru, if I kill him now I'll be screwed!” Nangong Yan barked exasperatedly. Every fiber of his being was begging him to end Han Jingru's life, but what choice did he have? He did not dare to cross his grandfather because the consequence would be nothing short of hellish.

Nangong Yan knew that Nangong Boling had been waiting for this chance for the longest time. He was clear that his grandfather would remove any obstacles that came his way without a second thought.

He might be Nangong Boling's favored one for the time being, but in the grand scheme of things that meant virtually nothing.

“There's another option. We don't kill him but we take away his power. If we attain the same result, you and Nangong Sun's roles would stay the same,” Cheng Feng proposed.

“What do you have in mind?” Nangong Yan asked as his eyes lit up with interest.

“He's still a man that needs to eat and drink,” Cheng Feng pointed out.

Nangong Yan's mind clicked. However, the dungeons were being watched and any attempt to send food to Han Jingru would be promptly intercepted by Nangong Boling. They needed to find a scapegoat.

Nangong Yan went to Nangong Liuli's room. He was armed with the knowledge of all her dirty secrets and so she was his usual person of choice for such assignments.

After knocking multiple times, not even a pin drop could be heard. Frustrated, Nangong Yan kicked open the door.

He found the room empty and his teeth gnashed together in rage.

“Nangong Liuli, you slut. I can't believe you threw yourself at him so quickly,” Nangong Yan sneered. If he knew anything about this woman, she had already made her way to Gong Tian's room. Now, he could not use her.

Even a portion of courage could not incite him to bother Gong Tian.

Nangong Yan was on the way back to his room when he bumped into Nangong Sun.

“Where are you headed, Brother?” Nangong Yan asked.

“I was planning on paying a visit to Han Jingru in the dungeons but it turns out that Grandfather had added security and no one was allowed in. It looks like Grandfather is really concerned about

Han Jingru's safety," Nangong Sun said, grinning. Nangong Yan was not the only one who could guess why Nangong Boling chose to keep Han Jingru alive.

Nangong Yan gritted his teeth. If what Nangong Sun said was true, his plan would be spoiled. How could he poison Han Jingru if no one was allowed into the prison or near Han Jingru?

"Nangong Yan, why do you think Grandfather did what he did? Do you think he thinks that Han Jingru has what it takes to be recognized by Zhuang Tang?" Nangong Sun asked in mock puzzlement.

Nangong Yan scoffed haughtily. "A loser like Han Jingru stands no chance. Only Cheng Feng has what it takes to meet Zhuang Tang's standards."

Nangong Sun nodded, still grinning like a Cheshire cat. "He is a loser, a loser that killed a man with one punch. Cheng Feng didn't even have the guts to enter the arena so who's the real loser?"

Nangong Yan ground his teeth even harder. His brother's indirect insult of Cheng Feng was blatant.

However, it was true that he had stopped Cheng Feng from entering the arena, so he had nothing to rebuke.

“Watch out. When I become the head of the family, I'll kick your ass out of the Nangong family,” Nangong Yan responded threateningly.

“Brother, no need to be so serious. Have some mercy and I'll see you tomorrow. Who knows? I might become the next family head and make you regret saying these words,” Nangong Sun said with hidden malice.

Nangong Yan was fuming. If he continued talking to Nangong Sun, he was afraid that he would burst a blood vessel so he turned tail and trotted away briskly.

Nangong Sun beamed in delight. However, that smile faded once his door closed safely behind him. It was easy to fantasize but he was worried

that Han Jingru would not even have the chance to compete.

He knew the consequence of losing the position of the family head. After years of internal sparring, the two that failed to attain the position could only expect to meet their doom.

His only hope was that Han Jingru could rise above the odds. But, now that he could not even see Han Jingru, how could he not be worried?

After a night of tossing and turning, Nangong Sun was exhausted. However, he forced himself to get out of bed at the crack of dawn for this was the day that his fate could change forever.

In Gong Tian's room, Nangong Liuli's face had a deep flush, courtesy of a night of wild abandon. She was currently entwined intricately with Gong Tian.

Gong Tian did not expect that under Nangong Liuli's angelic appearance lay a passionate shrew. If he were any other man, he might not have had the energy to depart the bed.

“Don't you like morning exercise?” Nangong Liuli whispered sultrily into Gong Tian's ear.

Gong Tian pushed her away. “I have important matters to attend to today. We'll resume this tonight.”

Nangong Liuli smoothly wrapped a sheet around her naked self, looking dismayed. “Was this just a one-time thing? Can I look for you in the future?”

Gong Tian laughed contemptuously. How could a commoner ever hope to be attached to a man like him?

“What right do peasants like you have to stand by my side?” Gong Tian hissed in derision.

Nangong Liuli's eyes glinted with a flash of ire but she quickly collected herself. “What's so special about you that makes Grandfather care so much?”

Gong Tian frowned and icily stared down Nangong Liuli. “Are you trying to find out my identity?”

He was right that this was one of the things Nangong Liuli was curious about. She was motivated not only by her own needs but also because of her inquisitiveness. She had heard Grandfather talk about the so-called top community for all her life so she was dying to find out as much about it and the people in it as possible.

Nangong Liuli nodded. "Can't you grant this small wish of mine?"

Gong Tian's expression turned stony, an unrecognizable man from the gentle and giving lover she experienced the night before. Before she could react, his hands had closed around her neck. "Peasants like you have no right to know anything about me. Be grateful that I graced you with any contact at all," He warned viciously.

Nangong Liuli's expression turned into one of sheer panic. She did not predict that her curiosity would draw such a reaction from Gong Tian. She could feel murderous intent seeping out from him in waves.

"I'm sorry. I'm sorry," Nangong Liuli hurriedly apologized.

Gong Tian shoved Nangong Liuli aside. "Get lost. I have no more interest in you so don't come looking for me again."

Nangong Liuli threw on her clothes and fled Gong Tian's room as fast as her legs could carry her.

"Commoners like you don't deserve to know about Apocalypse," Gong Tian said with a cavalier attitude.

By the time Nangong Liuli reached her room, some of the fear had dissipated. Earlier, she was genuinely frightened for her life. She now felt as though she had just escaped from Hades.

"Apocalypse?" When her hands stopped shaking, Nangong Liuli pulled out a jade pendant with the same word carved onto it. She recognized the words but had no idea what they meant.

As she was deep in contemplation, someone

knocked at her door and yanked her back to reality. She frantically tucked the jade pendant away and opened the door.

“Grandfather,” she greeted with slight astonishment. Why would Nangong Boling come to see her so early in the morning?

“Go to the dungeons and check on Han Jingru,” Nangong Boling commanded.

Nangong Liuli was apprehensive. Han Jingru was stuck in the dungeons with no route of escape; why did she need to go down there to check on him?



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When Nangong Liuli was brought to the dungeon, she found herself locked in the same cell as Han Jingru.

This arrangement shocked Nangong Liuli. It also puzzled Han Jingru. *Have I done anything wrong to deserve this? Otherwise, why is Grandfather locking me up here?*

“What happened?” Han Jingru started probing Nangong Liuli.

In fact, Nangong Liuli didn't have a clue about how this had happened.

She couldn't understand why Nangong Boling asked her to see Han Jingru. *Even so, why must I be locked up alongside him?*

“I have no idea. Grandfather asked me to keep an eye on you. I don't understand why I'm being locked up instead!” Nangong Liuli said in fear. She was worried that Nangong Boling was punishing her for something she had done. But until then, she had not done anything culpable. She also doubted it had anything to do with her

rather messy private life; otherwise, she would have been locked much earlier.

Han Jingru frowned. To him, it just did not make sense to let Nangong Liuli watch over him.

Han Jingru was already detained without any chance of escape. *You let a lady watch over me here? That would be too foolish of you.*

“What shall I do? Is my grandfather punishing me for some wrong I have done? Tell me what I have done wrong,” asked Nangong Liuli in panic.

Han Jingru quickly surveyed the prison cells around. There were dozens of similar cells in the dungeon, some of which were vacant. Even if she had committed a crime, there was no reason to lock them up together.

An idea suddenly flashed across Han Jingru's mind, but he shot it down at once for its absurdity. *As Head of the Nangong family, Nangong Boling could not have resorted to something like this.*

Before long, Han Jingru noticed something was amiss.

Nangong Liuli's face suddenly blushed. Her stare at Han Jingru started to become lustful.

"I feel terribly hot," said Nangong Liuli.

Martial Arts Hall.

After the entire Nangong family had gathered, Zhuang Tang and Gong Tian turned up fashionably late. These two latecomers looked very arrogant and domineering but no one present would dare complain about this. Even Nangong Boling kept quiet in front of them.

"Before I came here, I told Nangong Yan what I wanted. I am sure you are clear about this, right?" Zhuang Tang put it to Nangong Boling bluntly.

Nangong Boling nodded and said, "Yes, Master Zhuang, I am clear about that. Believe me, the Nangong family will not let you down."

Zhuang Tang smiled indifferently. He had heard

too often promises like this. He didn't take Nangong Boling's words seriously.

To Zhuang Tang, many so-called "world-class" expert fighters were hopeless losers; they simply failed to measure up to his standards.

"If so, let's start at once. Don't waste time," said Zhuang Tang as he looked around for a resting place. Obviously, he was only interested in the outcome, not the process.

Gong Tian was standing beside the boxing ring. He made a sudden leap to get onto it. Many ladies admired his agile move. To them, Gong Tian was like a warrior sent to Earth by God: he was hopelessly attractive.

"Where is your fighter? Is he too frightened to come up here?" jeered Gong Tian as he paced round the boxing ring.

Nangong Yan stared at Cheng Feng and reminded him, "Make sure you go all out in this fight. Otherwise, I will kill your entire family."

Cheng Feng looked serious with anxiety. He knew he needed to give his best at it, and that Nangong Yan meant to carry out the death threat.

“Don't worry,” said Cheng Feng as he walked towards the boxing ring.

“Well, let me tell you again here. Don't blame me if anyone dies in the fight,” said Zhuang Tang to Nangong Boling.

Naturally, Nangong Boling had no objection. He was the man who wouldn't even care about the lives of his son and grandson, not to mention the life of others such as Cheng Feng.

Once Cheng Feng got onto the boxing ring, Gong Tian sized him up with disdain and said, “I'll tell you what, a hopeless loser like you should feel proud for having a chance to fight with me.”

Cheng Feng remained calm in face of Gong Tian's derision. He knew they came from different worlds. He had already thought of Gong Tian as superior to him. With this frame of mind, he could swallow the scornful words justifiably.

“I am ready to learn from you,” said Cheng Feng as he bowed respectfully with one hand grasping his clenched fist.

“Well, well. You certainly look ready for a fight,” laughed Gong Tian as he continued, “If so, I give you the privilege to make the first attack. Come on!”

Without any ceremony, Cheng Feng directed his punches at Gong Tian with all his might. The latter kept dodging in simple footwork that enabled him to avoid getting hit.

Despite having much room to mount an aggressive attack, Cheng Feng failed to land any of his forceful punches on Gong Tian.

By now, Cheng Feng was becoming anxious. He knew if he continued with the same strategy, his energy would be depleted very quickly. At the same time, Gong Tian had by now skillfully set the pace for Cheng Feng to follow.

“Gong Tian is reserving his energy for the moment Cheng Feng gets tired and becomes

vulnerable. Grandpa, I think it is better to get Han Jingru to replace him," Nangong Sun earnestly suggested to Nangong Boling before the fight was over.

"Nangong Sun, take it easy; the fight is not over yet," snapped Nangong Yan as he gnashed his teeth.

In fact, both brothers were equally impatient with the ongoing fight in the boxing ring.

What Nangong Sun feared that once Cheng Feng had won the recognition of Zhuang Tang, Han Jingru would lose his chance to showcase his prowess for such recognition. If this happened, Nangong Sun would find himself becoming subservient to Nangong Yan.

As for Nangong Yan, he wanted very much to see Cheng Feng win the fight as soon as possible. If victory was subsequently secured by Han Jingru instead, his current position vis-a-vis Nangong Sun would reverse. Nangong Boling would then prefer Nangong Sun to himself.

“Nangong Yan, I think we should not keep Master Zhuang waiting. It's time to field Han Jingru to take over the fight,” insisted Nangong Sun.

Nangong Yan had a wicked look. Even if he failed to seize the opportunity this time around, he would not want to see Han Jingru take over the fight. He was careful not to show Nangong Boling his selfish motive.

Nangong Boling was known for his determination to pay any price to reach his goals, even to the extent of sacrificing his loved ones.

Though Nangong Yan was clear Nangong Boling thought the better of him over Nangong Sun, the former must be careful not to share his thought on this matter with Nangong Boling. Otherwise, he might risk getting himself sent to the dungeon.

“Grandpa, I believe Cheng Feng. I am sure he can do it,” said Nangong Yan to Nangong Boling.

As if to add fuel to the fire, Nangong Sun said, “Grandpa, Gong Tian is dodging all the while. He

has yet to fight back. When he fights back, I am sure Cheng Feng will be defeated. The point is, why must we place our bets on Cheng Feng only?"

Nangong Yan's immediate reaction was an intense urge to kill his brother. Nangong Yan clenched his fists so firmly that his hands were trembling.

Nangong Boling watched the fight in the boxing ring with great concern. It would be great if Cheng Feng could win. But the progress of the fight thus far was not promising.

"Why are you two still arguing over this? Don't tell me you can field someone else who can defeat my disciple," said Zhuang Tang with a laugh. He judged every fighter by referencing the standards set for an Apocalypse member; in his view, anyone who failed such standards was a hopeless loser.

"Master Zhuang, may I know what conditions you have set for the fight?" asked Nangong Boling.

Zhuang Tang raised his eyelids slightly and said tersely, "Gong Tian, it's enough already. Don't waste time anymore."

On hearing that, Gong Tian cast a pitiful stare at Cheng Feng and said, "When you go to hell, remember to make friends with some wild ghosts to keep you company. And if you ever have a chance to meet Hades, do remind him of me."

As soon Gong Tian finished his line, he launched a powerful attack. His every move was fast and it mesmerized the spectators.

No one except Zhuang Tang could perceive how Gong Tian did that.

There was first a loud noise, and then Cheng Feng was seen being thrown off the boxing ring. His body slammed onto the floor some 10 meters away.

Cheng Feng struggled for a while and then became motionless. Blood kept pouring out of his mouth. The result of the fight was clear.

“There is only one condition: You must be able to withstand a powerful punch from my disciple,” said Zhuǎng Tang, unenthused.



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Nangong Yan's face now looked pale. Never did he expect Cheng Feng to suffer defeat in such a terrible state.

Just one punch!

He died after one punch from Gong Tian.

This scene looked faintly familiar.

Nangong Yan recalled seeing Han Jingru defeat a challenger fielded by Nangong Feng. Han Jingru also won with one punch.

Don't tell me Han Jingru is the only hope for the Nangong family now.

Nangong Yan was frustrated with the situation.

After years of hard work, Nangong Yan couldn't accept getting defeated by Nangong Sun in this way. Defeat would mean the loss of his right to become Head of the family. Even worse, he might end up being banished.

“As I see it, no one in the Nangong family

deserves my respect," Zhuang Tang got up to his feet and said disdainfully.

Bowing reverently at Zhuang Tang, Nangong Boling said, "Master Zhang, please give my family another chance. I will go and get another fighter immediately."

As Head of the Nangong family, his bow signified great decorum. Though reluctant to delay the matter anymore, Zhuang Tang knew he must reciprocate the respect given to him. After all, he was expecting to take away a lot of money from Nangong Boling.

"Okay, I will give you another chance," said Zhuang Tang as he sat down.

"Thank you very much, Master Zhuang." Before leaving, Nangong Boling gave clear instruction to Nangong Yan and Nangong Sun. "Both of you stay back here. I am going by myself."

Nangong Boling took it upon himself to attend to such a simple errand which any subordinate could do. Nangong Sun was glad about its

implication.

“Nangong Yan, can't you see? Grandpa is personally going to get Han Jingru. See how much he values Han Jingru? Let's wait for confirmation of your defeat later, okay?” said Nangong Sun with pride.

Nangong Yan was livid but he had to accept the fact that his grandfather thought the better of Han Jingru. *Otherwise, Grandpa won't go to get him personally.*

“This is not the time for you to celebrate. We are not sure whether Han Jingru will win Master Zhuang's recognition,” said Nangong Yan as he gnashed his teeth.

No doubt, Nangong Sun knew the situation well. He purposely wanted to show off so as to make Nangong Yan feel bad.

“At least there is still a chance. Unlike in your case, with Cheng Feng already dead, all you could do is watch what will happen next,” said Nangong Sun with a snicker.

Nangong Yan managed to give a disdainful glance and said no more.

In the dungeon...

When Nangong Boling arrived in front of the prison cell, he frowned. Nangong Liuli was lying on the floor, obviously unconscious.

“Nangong Boling, I never thought you would resort to this kind of dirty trick,” remarked Han Jingru coldly. Judging from Nangong Liuli's actions, she must have been drugged. Her aberrant behavior in the shared prison cell clearly illustrated Nangong Boling's nasty scheme.

Nangong Boling wanted to make use of Han Jingru. In order to make sure Han Jingru obey his orders, he devised a simple plan: First, get Nangong Liuli drugged. Next, let her seduce Han Jingru in the prison cell. He could then use Nangong Liuli's influence to secure Han Jingru's obedience.

Given we're related by blood, Nangong Boling should have known better than to treat Nangong

Liuli his way. He is insane!

“Since you have guessed what's on my mind, you know you don't have any choice, right?” said Nangong Boling.

Han Jingru smiled indifferently. Obviously Nangong Boling did not know how Nangong Sun had threatened Han Jingru; otherwise, Nangong Boling would not have done something so needlessly. In a way, Han Jingru regarded the absence of Nangong Sun as good news.

“I can help, but on my conditions,” said Han Jingru.

“Just let me know what they are,” said Nangong Boling without a smile, thinking Han Jingru was such a docile man without principles. He instantly regretted having involved Nangong Liuli in his plan.

“I want to avenge Nangong Kai,” said Han Jingru.

Nangong Boling's face became tense.

To avenge Nangong Kai? Doesn't this mean having to kill Nangong Feng and his mother? Nangong Boling realized the implication at once.

Though Nangong Boling considered Nangong Feng to be the most hopeless grandson, he was reluctant to let Han Jingru have his way.

“Impossible.” Nangong Boling was firm in making clear his refusal at once.

“How much time have you got to keep bargaining with me here?” asked Han Jingru with a nonchalant smile. Nangong Boling had come personally because of the urgency of the matter. Clearly, the ball was in Han Jingru's court.

“Check your own credentials. Do you really think you are in a position to bargain with me? Just do what I order you to do,” ordered Nangong Boling in a steady voice.

“I now realize how very important this matter is to you. You went so far as to involve Nangong Liuli in your nasty plan. I am sure it will be

disastrous for the Nangong family if you miss this chance. Am I right?" said Han Jingru calmly as he sat inside the prison cell.

All along, Nangong Boling exercised utmost caution in everything he did. This included making Nangong Liuli his pawn. However, this was precisely the flaw that fell prey to Han Jingru. As Han Jingru was uncompromising, Nangong Boling conceded. Clearly, he knew time was not on his side. Han Jingru would not be able to help once Zhuang Tang left.

Nangong Boling took a deep breath and caved in. "Okay, I will give you the chance to avenge Nangong Kai. But if you fail to deliver on your promise to me, I will kill you."

"Even if I fail to deliver, you will have to comply with my conditions now. Don't you agree? Why are you giving me a death threat like that?" sneered Han Jingru with a laugh.

Nangong Boling gnashed his teeth. Han Jingru's meticulous thinking greatly exceeded Nangong Boling's expectation. The latter even reckoned

that Han Jingru far excelled Nangong Yan, whom he had considered his family's most outstanding member.

Nangong Boling took out his mobile phone and ordered his subordinate to bring Nangong Feng and his mother to the dungeon immediately.

The pair arrived shortly.

Nangong Feng looked bewildered. His mother gave Han Jingru a smile. It was not clear why she was in a good mood.

“Grandpa, why do you want to see me here?” asked Nangong Feng.

“It was you who killed Nangong Kai's mother.” Nangong Boling accused Nangong Feng's mother.

Nangong Feng's mother was shocked and quickly explained, “Father, how could it be me? I swear I have nothing to do with it.”

Hmm... came Nangong Boling's immediate reactio

n before he said, “Whatever that happens in the Nangong family cannot escape my attention. Do you seriously think I don't know anything about that matter?”

Shocked, Nangong Feng's mother fell to her knees. The murder happened so many years ago; she thought no one would remember it. After all, Nangong Kai had died. But now Nangong Boling brought up the matter to confront her.

“Grandpa, let bygones be bygones,” said Nangong Feng.

Nangong Feng's words enraged Han Jingru. *How can you be so lenient and forgiving? Don't tell me you can pretend as if nothing has happened when in fact she had committed murder!*

“Nangong Feng, while your mom killed Nangong Kai's mother, you yourself killed Kai. Both of you must pay the price for what you did,” said Han Jingru sternly.

In retort, Nangong Feng scolded Han Jingru, “Shut up, you hopeless loser! What right have

you got to say anything at all?”

At this juncture, Nangong Boling opened the door of the prison cell and said to Han Jingru, “I am waiting for you outside. Make it fast.”

As soon as he finished his line, Nangong Boling headed towards the exit of the dungeon.

Nangong Feng started to panic.

“Grandpa, what are you doing?” yelled Nangong Feng nervously.

“You must pay the price for what you did,” replied Nangong Boling without looking back.

Nangong Feng stood in horror. His grandfather had agreed to let Han Jingru deal with him and his mother.

Oh my God! This is the crazy guy who killed my guy with one punch! Nangong Feng shivered.

“I was the one who sabotaged Nangong Kai’s plan, and I am to blame for seeing him die with

regret. Since he did not live to seek revenge for himself, I will take it upon myself to do that for him,” explained Han Jingru calmly.

Nangong Feng stared at Han Jingru in terror.

But his mother rose to her feet and said to Han Jingru in a haughty manner, “You are an outsider; get lost immediately. If you dare harm me and my son, I will have you chopped up into pieces.”

“How dare you threaten me! Didn't you see Nangong Boling's attitude a while ago? Clearly, he has agreed to let me decide whether you get to live or die,” Han Jingru pointed out.

“Bullshit! How could Father have agreed to let an outsider harm us? I warn you, you...”

Before she could finish her line, Han Jingru had already dashed in front of Nangong Feng and lifted him up by gripping the latter's neck.

Seeing her son struggling for survival, the mother rushed over. She wanted to help by punching at Han Jingru but her feeble attempt was in vain.

Han Jingru kicked her away and said mercilessly to Nangong Feng, “You killed Nangong Kai by beating him with a stick. I am only strangling you to death. Surely, you will suffer less pain. When you arrive in hell, remember to apologize to Nangong Kai.”

Nangong Feng's face bloated with blood; his lips turned purple from asphyxiation. Finally, his legs stopped kicking.

Seeing this, Nangong Feng's mother went dull with shock.

When Han Jingru walked towards the lady in shock, she instinctively knelt to kowtow in front of him. She said, “Please forgive me and let me go. I shouldn't have killed the lady. I shouldn't have killed her!”

“Why did you do that?” asked Han Jingru calmly.

“All because she was pregnant. I was afraid she would steal the limelight from me. I had no choice but to do what I did,” explained Nangong Feng's mother.

Those words banged in the mind of Han Jingru.

One dead body, but two lives!

She killed Nangong Kai's mother just because the latter was pregnant!

How cruel is she!

Enraged beyond control, Han Jingru pulled her head down by the hair. Her face straightaway knocked against his knee, which he lifted forcefully.

Nangong Feng's mother screamed in excruciating pain. She covered her face with both hands. Blood gushed from her face incessantly.

Consistent with his character, Han Jingru had never bullied any lady. However, at this point, he felt compelled to make an exception.

This murderer and her victim were both mothers. Han Jingru wondered how she could have brave herself to kill a pregnant lady without mercy.

“You cruel beast! I just cannot think of a better punishment for you.” Han Jingru dashed to the front of Nangong Feng's mother and crippled all her limbs.

“I want you to die in front of their graves, and I want you to confess to your crime before all the members of the Nangong family. Don't worry, you won't have the benefit of a quick death. I will make sure you die only after undergoing the ordeal I just mentioned,” said Han Jingru as he gritted his teeth in fury.

Nangong Feng's mother fainted from the intolerable pain.

Deep down, Han Jingru remained calm. Instinctively, he touched his trousers' pocket and then walked out of the dungeon.

There was a piece of jade in Han Jingru's pocket. When Nangong Liuli became sexually stimulated

by the drug and started to undress before him, the jade piece fell out. Han Jingru knocked her unconscious and kept the jade.

“I have already met your demand. I hope you won't disappoint me,” said Nangong Boling to Han Jingru.

“This lady is not dead yet; I won't let her go just like that,” replied Han Jingru calmly.

Nangong Boling frowned and warned, “Don't overdo it, Han Jingru. This is the Nangong family; you cannot do whatever you like. I have made the greatest possible concession by giving you the chance to take their lives.”

“Listen carefully, Nangong Boling. From now on, the Nangong family will have to look up to me and rely on me. I don't like your attitude; have you got that?” said Han Jingru calmly.

Nangong Boling got a shock. If Han Jingru went on to win Zhuang Tang's recognition, the Nangong family would rely on him to lead its future development. The troubling fact was that

Nangong Boling was unwilling to accept such an unruly person as his family's leader.

Nangong Boling had a bad omen. He suddenly regretted the decision to field Han Jingru for the fight.

Martial Arts Hall.

Gong Tian was already getting impatient. He wouldn't mind the wait if he could fight someone of comparable skills. He thought no way Nangong Boling could find someone like that.

“Master, do we still have to wait? They are all a bunch of hopeless losers, so why waste time over them? Isn't it better we take the money and go off?” said Gong Tian to Zhuang Tang in a low tone.

“I think it is worth the while to wait. After all, the Nangong family is very wealthy. The longer they keep me waiting, the more money I will be able to take away from them,” said Zhuang Tang calmly.

Gong Tian laughed as soon as Zhuang Tang finished his line. At first, he thought the wait was in deference to Nangong Boling. In fact, Zhuang Tang had a better plan - to make sure that Nangong family would fork out more.

“How clever the plan you have put in place, Master! There is so much I have yet to learn from you,” exclaimed Gong Tian.

“Yes, and that's because you are still young. There are many things that you must pick up,” Zhuang Tang responded with a hearty laugh.

Every one or two seconds, Nangong Sun would look at the main door of Martial Arts Hall. Every ticking second seemed long enough to torment him.

“Don't tell me Han Jingru is too afraid to turn up here. Nangong Sun, this guy you have picked must be very smart,” said Nangong Yan as he seized the opportunity to poke fun at his brother.

“No way,” rebuked Nangong Sun. He was sure Han Jingru's obedience to him was a reliable

ransom.

“Maybe he has heard about Cheng Feng's death and is now too afraid to come forth. It's nothing unreasonable. If the outcome is certainly death, no one would still expect him to engage in a fight like that,” jeered Nangong Yan.

Nangong Sun would very much like to rush over to the dungeon. If Han Jingru was found to be too timid to come forward, Nangong Sun would threaten him by putting Han Xiang's life at stake. But Nangong Sun remembered Nangong Boling had earlier warned him to stay back so he dared not go against his grandfather's order.

Just then, Nangong Boling and Han Jingru turned up at the door of the Martial Arts Hall.

Nangong Sun at once laughed heartily and said to Nangong Yan, “It's pity after so many years of hard work, you still lose out to me in the end. Don't worry; I won't make your life more miserable after I become the head of the Nangong family.”

Nangong Yan's face turned gloomy, wondering what Nangong Sun meant by not making his life "more" miserable. However, he considered Nangong Sun's words as not worthy of serious attention.

Going by Nangong Sun's character, he would in all probability just banish Nangong Yan from the family.

"Han Jingru, you'd better not disappoint me. Otherwise, you know what the consequences will be," warned Nangong Sun bluntly in a low voice.

Han Jingru drew a deep breath. He knew Han Xiang was in the hands of Nangong Sun as ransom. Since he could not extricate himself from Nangong Sun's manipulation, he still had to obey the latter.

"Don't worry, I will give it my best to win the fight. But if I fail, I don't know what else I can do," said Han Jingru.

On seeing Han Jingru coming forth, Gong Tian scrutinized his new opponent with disdain. He

regretted having waited so long for someone who failed to impress him as a true rival.

“Is this your guy to fight with me? Do you know you have wasted our time?” said Gong Tian to Nangong Boling disrespectfully. He wanted to show Nangong Boling that the delay would result in more serious consequences.

“Let's start now; I can't afford to wait anymore,” said Zhuang Tang impatiently with his eyes closed. He meant to warn Nangong Boling. And he also hinted at Gong Tian to conclude the fight right as early on as possible.

Gong Tian jumped up to the ring in the same elegant movement that had earlier captured the admiration of all the lady spectators.

Han Jingru did nothing impressive like that. He merely walked up the stairs leading to the elevated boxing ring.

“Can you see that guy down there? I killed him with just one quick punch. You will meet the same fate shortly,” Gong Tian jeered at Han

Jingru.

In fact, on entering Martial Art Hall, Han Jingru had already noticed Cheng Feng's corpse. This scene, however, did not make him worry for his life. To him, he could do the same thing to his present opponent.

Of course, Han Jingru knew he needed to be careful.

Since Nangong Boling showed great respect to Zhuang Tang and his disciple, Han Jingru knew they must be superior in some ways.

He recalled Yan Qiong saying that people in the so-called upper class were true superiors. All his life, Yan Qiong had not had the chance to meet these people. Obviously, the master and disciple belonged to the top community, thus Han Jingru must treat them with greater caution.

“Come on,” said Han Jingru calmly.

“You hopeless loser. If you want to die fast, I will help fulfill your wish,” said Gong Tian as he

assumed an attacking posture by raising his right hand with the fist clenched firmly.

On seeing the display of power by Gong Tian, Han Jingru gave a calm laugh. Clash of powers was exactly what he expected. It was only in this way that he could fight with Gong Tian.

On the other hand, Gong Tian was enraged by Han Jingru's laugh. He perceived it as a jeer from the latter. This unpleasant feeling triggered Gong Tian to enhance the strength and speed of his punch.

Almost everyone in the Nangong family was holding their breath as they watched the fight that was about to begin in the boxing ring.

Even the usually calm and steady Nangong Boling became nervous. His forehead started to perspire.

Zhuang Tang decided to close his eyes during the fight. From the moment Gong Tian went up to the boxing ring, Zhuang Tang had predetermined the outcome. To him, Han Jingru would die. The fight would be boring and not worth watching.

“Can he really do it?”

“He is now our family's only hope.”

“If he loses, we will never get another chance to ascend the top community.”

Everyone vocalized what was on their minds. For those not interested to become Head of the family, it would be great if Han Jingru could win. Such a victory would benefit the entire family and enhance the credentials of each family member when they came into contact with outsiders.

However, Nangong Yan was the only one wishing Han Jingru would die in the fight. Only then would Nangong Yan and Nangong Sun be able to resume their competition for the patriarch position.

At this critical moment, Gong Tian started to attack and Han Jingru also waved his fist in the direction of his opponent. A clash of brutal forces would ensue.

When Gong Tian noticed Han Jingru's unmistakable intention, he laughed with contempt. Never did he expect that the hopeless loser before him would dare engage in direct, fist-to-fist contact.

“With this punch, I shall cripple your right hand,” roared Gong Tian.

In a flash of powerful impact between two fists, time and space seemed to have crystallized momentarily.

The eyes of every spectator were glued to the ongoing fight in the boxing ring. All were anxious to know the outcome.

But the two contestants looked as if both had frozen; they stood motionless.

Even though it was just a couple of seconds, to

anxious members of the Nangong family, this fleeting moment felt like a century-old torment.

This was especially true for Nangong Boling, who felt those few seconds as equivalent to the passage of a good chunk of his life.

When the atmosphere became so serene and quiet, Zhuang Tang immediately sensed the rather unusual ambience. He opened his eyes out of curiosity.

Seeing the status of the fight in the boxing ring, Zhuang Tang frowned.

Judging from the contenders' respective postures in the boxing ring, Zhuang Tang knew they must have engaged in a fist-to-fist fight.

But Han Jingru was still standing inside the boxing ring - a fact Zhuang Tang considered as unbelievable. This was because in his estimation, the burst of power from Gong Tian's punch would have pulverized Han Jingru's right hand upon impact.

How could he be standing up there as if nothing had happened? Did Gong Tian go soft on him?

Just then, Han Jingru took one step back, with Gong Tian still standing at where he was.

A backward step here would be construed to mean Han Jingru had lost the fight.

At this juncture, Han Jingru was stunned. After being blessed with his superhuman power, he thought no one would be able to compete with him in this regard. However, Gong Tian was not only able to withstand his force, he could also repel his punch.

Han Jingru wondered what kind of unusual power could have enabled Gong Tian to do that.

True enough, the top community as mentioned by Grandpa Yan is something out of the ordinary.

While Han Jingru was shocked, the same could be said of Gong Tian, who had thought he could destroy Han Jingru at once. But the latter retreated by merely one small step without

suffering any severe injury.

Gong Tian could not accept the outcome. Before the fight started, he belittled Han Jingru. And now, Han Jingru was only slightly inferior to him. *How is this possible?*

“Gong Tian, haven't I told not to waste time? Get it done quickly!” Zhuang Tang sounded rather impatient. Because he did not see the actual progress of the fight, this unexpected turn of events made him suspect Gong Tian did not go all out against Han Jingru.

Gong Tian got Zhuang Tang's message loud and clear.

But he knew he did go all out against Han Jingru.

It was just that he had failed to kill Han Jingru despite having exerted all his might.

“What are you waiting for? Don't you know how precious my time is?” Zhuang Tang scolded Gong Tian.

Gong Tian drew a deep breath. His right hand felt numb after the fist-to-fist impact.

“I didn't expect this. You really gave me a surprise,” said Gong Tian to Han Jingru. He knew he had to win, otherwise he might cease to be Zhuang Tang's disciple.

“You surprised me, too. Apparently, I have not taken you seriously. I should have gone all out,” replied Han Jingru calmly.

Han Jingru's words enraged Gong Tian. They sounded very condescending to him.

“You should feel grateful for staying alive. Now, you must die,” Gong Tian said as he immediately launched a second round of attack.

Han Jingru stood firmly, ready to take on Gong Tian.

This time, Zhuang Tang kept his eyes open as he wanted to know what actually happened just now.

Going by the contestants' exchange of words, it

seemed Gong Tian had indeed gone all out, albeit without success. That completely baffled Zhuang Tang. *powerful attack?*

“Show me your best. Let me see you going all out against Gong Tian,” muttered Zhuang Tang with a fiery stare at Han Jingru.

Han Jingru did not belittle Gong Tian at any time. He uttered the disdainful words just to instigate Gong Tian to resume the fight soonest possible, so that the latter would not be able recover his stamina in time.

Though Han Jingru's right hand was suffering from the fist-to-fist impact, the retreat he made did help him ease off Gong Tian's powerful thrust. With this maneuver Han Jingru was now in a better position than Gong Tian. He knew he must take advantage of this situation in order to secure a better outcome.

Gong Tian's attack in the boxing ring was very aggressive. To the spectators, Han Jingru had failed to fight back at all.

Nangong Yan secretly rubbed his hands, happy to see the progress of the fight. How he wished Gong Tian could kill Han Jingru straightaway, thereby helping him get rid of the latter.

Nangong Boling's forehead became sweaty, as if he just exited the sauna room. At this critical juncture, he took extra care to monitor his breathing. Perhaps this was the most nervous moment in his life.

On the other hand, Zhuang Tang did not feel as relaxed and comfortable as before. He had grown quite tense.

On the face of it, Gong Tian did have the upper hand. However, this advantage was misplaced.

As soon as the fight started, Gong Tian should have killed Han Jingru there and then. However, Han Jingru survived and was able to carry on.

Zhuang Tang also noticed what others had failed to perceive.

Gong Tian looked impressive when Han Jingru

kept dodging without fighting back. The latter's defensive strategy went against Gong Tian's urge to win fast.

Gong Tian kept on wasting his stamina; his attacks failed to harm Han Jingru at all.

In contrast, Han Jingru preserved his energy to stay in top form. He is waiting for the chance to knock out his opponent.

Based on his own analysis, Zhuang Tang finally realized what had happened. Gong Tian did not enjoy any advantage over Han Jingru.

“What kind of person are you? How could you have such massive power?” wondered Zhuang Tang as he murmured to himself in a low voice.

Though rare, an ordinary human being could become powerful like a member of the Apocalypse after undergoing rigorous training.

But the fact was, as a human being, Han Jingru did put up a good fight with Gong Tian with no training by the Apocalypse.

Zhuang Tang suddenly came up with an idea.

If Han Jingru is allowed to become an Apocalypse member and receive professional training, what would become of his power? By then, would Gong Tian still be able to dominate Han Jingru?

Zhuang Tang shook his head. *Gong Tian doesn't have a chance at all.*

“Hey, obviously he will lose in the end. He isn't even fighting back.”

“He has raised false hope with us. We are foolish to think he would win.”

“I heard he is the grandson of Nangong Shuxian. He is a hopeless loser just like his grandmother; we should not place any hope on him.”

Many in the Nangong family saw Han Jingru dodging under constant attack and failed to perceive the purpose of his defensive strategy. They thought he was losing and started to mock him.

“Shut up, you all,” shouted Nangong Boling in rage. He was angry with those pessimistic family members. They should have cheered Han Jingru to victory.

In response, the jeering and mocking ceased at once. Yet many still thought Han Jingru would lose - an outcome Nangong Boling was most reluctant to accept.

“Don't worry, Grandpa,” said Nangong Yan, “I will think of a way.” He purposely came forth to draw attention to himself because he wanted Nangong Boling to know he was now the Nangong family's only hope.

Unfortunately, the timing of Nangong Yan's move was wrong. It only served to enrage Nangong Boling, who still placed high hopes on Han Jingru.

“I want you to shut up now and be quiet,” said Nangong Boling as he gnashed his teeth in frustration.

“Brother, you are not cursing Han Jingru to lose,

are you?" suggested Nangong Sun on the spot.

Of course, Nangong Yan immediately denied what was precisely on his mind. He felt compelled to lie in front of Nangong Boling.

"Nangong Sun, why do you think I am such a narrow-minded person? It would be best if Han Jingru wins, so that our family can elevate to the upper class. But as you can see, Han Jingru's chances are so slim. That's why I am trying to come up with something," explained Nangong Yan.

"He hasn't lost the fight yet," said Nangong Sun in a cold voice. "Why do you even bother to think like that."

Nangong Yan nodded and kept quiet at once. *Just wait and see who wins in the end.* Nangong Yan knew it was pointless to argue with Nangong Sun. Deep down, he believed the outcome would be a slap on his brother's face.

Han Jingru retreated to the ring ropes. He tried to evade Gong Tian's successive punches and

persisted with his defensive strategy.

Han Jingru was clear. He must wait patiently and watch out for the one chance to make his knockout punch.

Of everyone present, Zhuang Tang was the only one who saw through Han Jingru's purpose. He became anxious.

Han Jingru's self-restraint was simply amazing for a human being. Under normal circumstances, one would break loose and start fighting back. However, he managed to suppress such an urge.

In fact, Zhuang Tang could rightly stop the fight because Han Jingru had already won his recognition. Still, he wished to know whether Han Jingru could eventually find a chance to fight back and defeat Gong Tian.

“Why are you not fighting back? Why? Don't tell me you are so hopeless, are you?” murmured Nangong Boling. He was standing right beside the boxing ring, burning with anxiety.

Nangong Boling could not stand watching Han Jingru keep retreating under constant attack.

Just then, Han Jingru made a sudden change in his footwork.

Nobody except Zhuang Tang noticed this move.

“Here it comes!” Zhuang Tang subconsciously blurted out.

Han Jingru suddenly attacked Gong Tian.

By now, the fight had sapped Gong Tian of much of his stamina. Han Jingru's attack had taken him by surprise. When Han Jingru hit Gong Tian's chest, the latter lost his balance and retreated two steps backwards.

Before Gong Tian could pull himself together, Han Jingru launched his second round of attack.

This time, Han Jingru hit Gong Tian's abdomen with a forceful blow.

Gong Tian was reduced to becoming Han Jingru's

punch bag. He was helpless.

“Are you surprised?” asked Han Jingru without slowing down his fierce attack on Gong Tian.

Gong Tian finally realized that earlier in the fight, Han Jingru had deceived him into wasting his stamina while watching out for a chance to fight back.

Given the contestants' disparity in stamina, Gong Tian regretted his vulnerability. *How could this be possible! How could I lose to such a hopeless man?*

It was a pity this surge of strong emotion was unable to transform into energy for Gong Tian.

Gong Tian had already retreated to the side of the boxing ring when a powerful blow was about to hit his head. Upon impact, it would render him unconscious and make him the loser in the fight.

He heard the hiss of the punch about to strike his head. He knew his fate was sealed at this critical moment. Helpless, he closed his eyes.

The decisive blow, however, still hadn't come to him after a few seconds. *What happened?* Gong Tian wondered why he was still conscious.

Gong Tian opened his eyes rather awkwardly. Han Jingru stopped short of hitting his temple.

“What is this?” Gong Tian asked, puzzled.

Han Jingru pulled back his fist and said calmly, “I don't feel like killing you.”

All of a sudden, Gong Tian clenched his fists firmly. When fighting with ordinary people, he was always the one killing his opponent. But now, he had lost to Han Jingru, who was prepared to spare his life.

Everyone in the Nangong family was speechless in witnessing this outcome. Some even thought the scene before their eyes was just their hallucination.

Gong Tian had attacked Han Jingru until the latter had no chance to fight back. However, when Han Jingru suddenly changed his tactics, he

defeated Gong Tian. Not only that, he was willing to spare the loser's life.

“Huh...” Zhuang Tang drew a deep breath.

Even though Zhuang Tang had realized Gong Tian's weakness earlier on, he never expected his disciple to be defeated in this manner. He believed Han Jingru could have killed Gong Tian by one powerful punch if he had wanted to. *This guy is already so powerful without being a member of the Apocalypse. What will happen if he becomes one?*

“Even I myself cannot imagine how powerful he can become,” marveled Zhuang Tang in a low voice. He did not expect this result at all. His trip to the Nangong family gave him a big surprise.

“Did he win?”

“He has even defeated the guy from the upper class!”

“Han Jingru. You are great, man!”

It was not clear who first shouted Han Jingru's name. What followed was a resounding echo of praises and congratulatory remarks in the Martial Arts Hall.

Nangong Sun also started chanting Han Jingru's name. He had every right to be so excited. His initial hope was for Han Jingru to win Zhuang Tang's recognition. However, the outcome had far exceeded his expectation.

In contrast, Nangong Yan's face turned pale. His legs became rickety and he collapsed on the floor. This seemed to mark the lowest point of his life.

Han Jingru had dashed Nangong Yan's hope of vying for the position of the Head of the family. The latter knew he would cease to be a favorite in his family. Worse, Nangong Boling would now ignore him completely. *Will the family fall into the hands of Nangong Sun?*

“Grandpa, he won. He won!” exclaimed Nangong Sun, reminding Nangong Boling on purpose.

Nangong Boling looked calm. Deep down, he

was actually going ecstatic, but as Head of the family he needed to maintain his composure.

Nangong Boling walked in front of Zhuang Tang. "Master Zhuang," bowed Nangong Boling with respect, "Are you satisfied with his performance?"

Zhuang Tang said nothing in response. He walked out of the Martial Arts Hall with a poker face.

Spiritless, Gong Tian came down from the boxing ring. He had all along been very proud of himself. The defeat was a great blow to him - he simply could not tolerate losing to an ordinary person.

Still hearing loud cheers for Han Jingru, he dragged himself out of the Martial Arts Hall. Instinctively, he looked back with bitterness.

"Han Jingru."

"Han Jingru."

“Han Jingru.”

...

The audience only ceased hailing Han Jingru when Nangong Boling raised his hands.

Nangong Boling said to Han Jingru with a smile, “Starting today, you are a member of Nangong family. You can enjoy all the privileges of a family member. If you are willing, you may also change your name to Nangong Jingru.”

“I am not willing to do that,” said Han Jingru calmly.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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The entire Nangong family knew why Nangong Boling made the offer to Han Jingru.

It showed that Nangong Boling valued him greatly. The change of surname would give Han Jingru the chance to become Head of the family.

Nangong Sun's heart sank when he heard the offer. All along, he had exploited Han Jingru to help him become the patriarch. However, if Han Jingru chose to act on the offer now, Nangong Sun would become subservient to him. Such a twist of event was wholly repulsive to Nangong Sun.

Nangong Sun had even thought out how to make Han Jingru drop out of the race to be Head of the family.

Han Jingru's outright rejection of the offer came as a surprise to everyone.

“Did he reject the offer?” someone was heard murmuring to himself in disbelief.

“Han Jingru, what do you mean?” asked

Nangong Boling, obviously unhappy with the rejection.

“I won't change my surname,” replied Han Jingru, again calmly.

Everyone was now unmistakably clear about Han Jingru's rejection.

All of a sudden, the Martial Arts Hall reverberated with comments of disbelief. No one would expect Han Jingru to refuse such an offer.

The Nangong family had assets worth hundreds of billions. Anyone would want to lay claim to it if given the chance. However, Han Jingru was completely indifferent.

Nangong Sun laughed coldly. *Looks like he knows what he is doing; this is because Han Xiang is in my hands.*

Nangong Sun had made a big mistake in thinking so. In fact, Han Jingru did not bow to his threat. He was just not interested in the Nangong family's money at all.

To Han Jingru, money had never topped his priorities. He believed great wealth would inevitably cause fierce rivalry among family members, and he knew better to avoid this.

Nangong Boling looked cold. He made the offer to Han Jingru for fear of not being able to control the latter, and was completely taken aback when he heard the rejection.

“Do you know the net worth of the Nangong family? Even though we are not on the Forbes' rich list, I can tell you those on the list are nothing compared to us,” said Nangong Boling in a cold voice.

Though Nangong Boling sounded rather boastful, the Nangong family's net worth in fact rightly justified his claim.

Han Jingru was clear there were many wealthy people out there who did not find pride in getting onto the rich list.

So what?

He preferred to dedicate his entire life to Su Yimo and Han Xiang than to get messed up with money.

“To me, money is meaningless,” said Han Jingru calmly.

Such a view made some people despise Han Jingru for being hypocritical. *Surely no one in this world would not want to possess more and more money.*

“Are you sure you are not accepting my offer?” asked Nangong Boling for confirmation.

At this point, Nangong Sun hurried to the side of Nangong Boling and whispered to him, “Grandfather, if he is not willing, don't force him. He will follow my orders. There is no need to worry that he will ignore us after winning Master Zhuang's recognition.”

Nangong Boling turned round to look at Nangong Sun.

It was true that Nangong Sun roped in Han

Jingru. However, Nangong Boling doubted whether Nangong Sun still had Han Jingru at his disposal.

Sensing Nangong Boling's hesitation, Nangong Sun held his head high and spoke to Han Jingru, "I believe you haven't forgotten your status as my lapdog, have you? I am your master, am I not?"

Everybody was stunned by what Nangong Sun had just said. Having proven his capability, Han Jingru had no doubt acquired an unusual status in the Nangong family. It was shocking to hear Nangong Sun denigrating Han Jingru as his lapdog.

Even Nangong Boling was surprised. *What have you got to talk to Han Jingru like that? Don't tell me you have something in your hands against him?*

Nangong Sun became excited when everyone's focus fell on him. This was the day he felt so proud of himself - the day he when his status in his family would see a drastic upgrade.

Han Jingru knew what was on Nangong Sun's mind. If he refused to go along at this point, Han Xiang would be in danger.

“Yes,” answered Han Jingru.

“That's right,” laughed Nangong Sun heartily and said, “Grandfather, did you see that? So, you don't have to worry that he won't work for our family. As long as I am around, he will do as I say.”

As long as I am around.

These few words shamelessly exposed Nangong Sun's motive. He wanted everyone present to know his aim was to become Head of the family.

“But there is one pressing thing I must attend to now,” said Han Jingru. His priority now was to avenge the death of Nangong Kai. The death of Nangong Feng was far from adequate for that purpose.

“Han Jingru, how dare you talk to me like that?” said Nangong Sun coldly.

Han Jingru stepped down from the boxing ring and approached Nangong Sun. "I can make you feel proud in front of these people," whispered Han Jingru, "but you must also help me achieve my goals. Otherwise, between you and I, nobody wins."

Nangong Sun's jubilant heart dropped to a low all at once. Though he could use Han Xiang's life to manipulate Han Jingru, Nangong Sun knew he needed Han Jingru's help in his race to become the Head of his family. He concluded it would be wise to opt for a win-win situation.

"What do you want?" Nangong Sun sounded annoyed.

"Where is the grave of Nangong Kai's mother? I want Nangong Feng's mother to pay for her own crime there," said Han Jingru.

"No way!" Nangong Sun blurted out. He knew nothing of what happened in the dungeon, including the death of Nangong Feng. That was why he had expected Nangong Boling to object to Han Jingru's absurd request.

“Bring him there,” said Nangong Boling all of a sudden.

Hearing this, Nangong Sun looked hopeless.

“But Grandfather, he wants to have Nangong Feng's mother killed! Are you sure?” asked Nangong Sun incredulously.

“Years ago I have already heard Nangong Feng's mother killed Nangong Kai's mother. I did not pursue the matter because I did not bother to find out what actually happened. But today, on her admission, she must pay the price for what she did,” said Nangong Boling loudly, making sure everyone had heard him.

“One more thing: Nangong Feng has died. Arrangement is being made for his funeral,” announced Nangong Boling as he walked out of the Martial Arts Hall.

Nangong Feng was dead! Everyone in the hall was stunned as they learned of this fact.

Nangong Feng was the eldest son in the Nangong

family. Even though he was not as capable as Nangong Sun or Nangong Yan, he was entitled to all the incidental privileges, whether or not he would become Head of the family.

But he had died a sudden death.

Everyone looked in the direction of Han Jingru. Though they knew nothing about what had actually happened, they were sure of one thing: Nangong Feng's death was inextricably linked to Han Jingru. In keeping his words to Han Jingru, Nangong Boling had to hold Nangong Feng's mother responsible for murder.

Everyone seemed to share the same thought.

Even though Han Jingru was not a member of the Nangong family, no one would dare ignore his presence.

It dawned upon everyone that they'd better not offend Han Jingru; otherwise, their lives would be at risk.

“Han Jingru,” said Nangong Sun snobbishly, “I

truly respect your capability. You can make Grandfather care nothing about the death of Nangong Feng and his mother.”

“Don't feel threatened. I am not interested in anything concerning the Nangong family,” Han Jingru told him calmly.

“You'd better keep it that way. Otherwise, I will definitely harm Han Xiang,” threatened Nangong Sun.

“Fine, I won't kill you for as long as I live,” said Han Jingru. Deep down, however, Han Jingru resented the threat and had already planned to torture Nangong Sun for the rest of his sorry life.



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Nangong Sun didn't take Han Jingru seriously. Instead, he laughed at the latter with contempt. To him, Han Jingru's words were a testament to his incompetence. Han Jingru compromised as he couldn't take his revenge on him.

But what Han Jingru meant was that he wanted Nangong Sun to live in such torment that he would hope to die.

Nangong Sun didn't understand what Han Jingru meant, so he didn't understand the severity of the issue. When he finally did, it was already too late.

They found the cemetery where Nangong Kai's mother was buried by navigating a map.

It was in ruins, and the grass was overgrown. It took a lot of time and effort to find that tombstone where the weeds thrived. Clearly, since the day she was buried there, the Nangong Family never visited her.

Even though Nangong Kai was still alive, he wasn't allowed to visit his mother because he was acting dumb. If someone found out, it would

blow his cover.

Han Jingru could empathize with the sacrifice and humiliation that Nangong Kai had suffered, so he felt that he had wronged the man.

When Han Jingru cleared the weeds from Nangong Kai's mother's grave, Nangong Sun condescendingly said, "Do you waste your time like this? If you have all this time, why don't you think of ways to help me inherit the head position of my family as soon as possible?"

"Nangong Kai should clear these weeds. I think that he must've hoped to come here sometime," Han Jingru said.

Nangong Sun was displeased at Han Jingru's response, but he couldn't press the latter any further. Instead, he took a deep breath and stayed at the cemetery.

"I think that at the moment she passed away, the reason she looked at Nangong Kai not for him to exact revenge for her. I believe she wanted Nangong Kai to leave the Nangong family and

that accursed place. As a mother, she died thinking of how protecting her son,” Han Jingru continued.

Nangong Sun wasn't interested in affairs like this.
Who cares if they're dead?

“Where's Nangong Kai's corpse?” Han Jingru suddenly turned and asked Nangong Sun.

“My people found it, and they will deliver it immediately. I heard that it has been chewed on by rats, so I don't know if you can handle it,” Nangong Sun laughed as he said.

Han Jingru nodded slightly and stopped talking.

After he finished maintaining Nangong Kai's mother's grave, Han Jingru dug another grave beside it.

Not long after, Nangong Kai's corpse was delivered. He was beaten badly by rods, and his corpse was in a state of disarray. Bruises, marbling skin, bloodstains, rotting. Every element was there to upset one's appetite.

Nangong Sun took one look at it and threw up.

Han Jingru only sighed. He was remained unmoved, even against the putrid smell.

“I didn't know that speaking the truth would hurt you, but don't worry, I've already taken revenge on your behalf. If you still think that it is not enough, you can just come and find me at night. I will definitely fulfill your every wish,” Han Jingru murmured before he took off his clothes.

“What are you doing!” Nangong Sun asked Han Jingru in confusion, *Is this guy having perverted thoughts? That is a rotting corpse!*

“I want him to go on his way looking more presentable,” Han Jingru said.

He changed Nangong Kai into his clothes and eased the corpse into the grave.

Nangong Sun watched Han Jingru with contempt. He even thought the latter was mentally handicapped.

“The guy is already dead. What is the use of giving him any clothes? You're nuts.” Nangong Sun couldn't understand Han Jingru's behavior. To him, this was a manifestation of his mental disease.

But there was no use in persuading someone who wasn't on the same wavelength as him, so Han Jingru didn't explain himself to Nangong Sun.

After he filled the grave, he knelt down and said to Nangong Feng's mother, who was already driven to distraction a long time ago, “Come here. Kneel and kowtow. Apologize to the mother and son.”

“You're not even from the family; you don't have the right to command me.” Nangong Feng's mother was scared out of her wits, but she subconsciously felt that Han Jingru was lesser than her, so he didn't have a right to talk to her like that.

Han Jingru just approached Nangong Feng's mother and grabbed her by the hair to the graves. He then broke her legs, so it was impossible for

her to not kneel.

Nangong Sun felt a bit sympathetic listening to Nangong Feng's mother's cries of pain.

He was obedient when he was threatened. However, he could be cruel if he needed to be.

Nangong Feng couldn't help but worry. What would Han Jingru do to him if they didn't have Han Xiang as a bargaining chip?

He felt he needed to arrange for more men to be around Han Xiang. Even if she was still a baby, her existence was of the utmost importance. Nothing must happen to her.

“If you admit your mistakes, I will let you have a painless death,” Han Jingru told Nangong Feng's mother icily.

The woman was in so much pain that she had already lost her mind. She started swearing at Han Jingru.

Han Jingru beat her up again. She realized that

vilifying him wasn't doing herself any good, so she would kneel at the grave and ask for forgiveness.

“I helped you so much already. It's time for you to help me,” Han Jingru told Nangong Sun.

The latter's eyes twitched; he had a bad feeling. “What do you want me to do?”

“Kill her,” Han Jingru said.

“No,” Nangong Sun rejected the proposition without even considering it. Even if he had killed before and he wasn't afraid of killing again, it was Nangong Feng's mother they were talking about. He even had to call her 'Aunt'. how could he do it?

“Is there anything you wouldn't do to get the position of the head of the family?” Han Jingru flatly asked.

Nangong Sun was confused. “What does killing her has anything to do with that?”

“Of course. Whether I feel pleased is very important. It is already insufficient if you keep threatening me with Han Xiang,” Han Jingru said.

“What do you mean?” Nangong Sun frowned and asked. Han Xiang was their biggest bargaining chip. How would she be insufficient?

“I wouldn't ruin myself over a child,” Han Jingru flatly said.

Nangong Sun laughed condescendingly. “Han Jingru, don't pretend like you don't care. Do you think that I will believe it? What is the use of your acting if your expression has already betrayed you? To you, Han Xiang is of utmost importance; she is your daughter after all.”

Han Jingru sighed inwardly. It was impossible to fool Nangong Sun into thinking that he didn't care about Han Xiang using such foolish a method. After all, Nangong Sun wasn't that gullible.

“Nangong Sun, you must understand how

important I am to you? It might only take one word from me to determine if you can inherit the head position of the Nangong Family. If she doesn't die, you definitely won't inherit it," Han Jingru said as he turned away and left. Nangong Feng's mother was left there to Nangong Sun.

Nangong Sun clenched his teeth. Any obstacles didn't matter to him, let alone Nangong Feng's mother. She couldn't stop him from achieving what he wanted.

"Aunt, I'm sorry. You have sinned too much, and now karma has caught up to you. Nangong Feng is already dead. It's time for you to accompany him." Nangong Sun approached Nangong Feng's mother.

His aunt begged for mercy, but Nangong Sun had already decided. It didn't matter how much she pleaded for forgiveness.

After he beat the woman to death, he threw her corpse into the bushes. The scavengers would definitely help to destroy any trace of the crime.

But after this incident, Nangong Sun realized that threatening Han Jingru was the same as being threatened himself. That was an immutable fact because he needed Han Jingru's help to become the head of the Nangong Family. But even if it couldn't be changed, it could be improved. He needed to at least raise his position in their relationship such that he was superior to Han Jingru.

“It looks like I need to teach you a lesson so you will be more obedient to me,” Nangong Sun clenched his teeth and said before he called his subordinate.

After Han Jingru returned to the room in the Nangong castle, he received a video. In the video, Han Xiang seemed to be very uncomfortable; she kept crying, and she had a pained expression.

He heard a man's voice saying, “Wow, she really is fragile. I just beat her lightly and now her bones are broken. Do you think I should send her to the hospital?”

Han Jingru's rage bubbled, and veins popped in his forehead. Han Xiang's every cry of pain was torture to him. He wished he was the one getting hurt.

He knew that Nangong Sun was warning him.

But he understood that compromising will make Nangong Sun even more callous, and he might do something worse to Han Xiang.

“Don't hurt her anymore,” Han Jingru clenched his teeth and said.

The man on the other side of the phone sounded smug, and he said, “Go kneel in front of Nangong Sun. Then maybe, I will consider sending her to the hospital. I think you don't want to see this little kid suffer since she is your daughter.”

Han Jingru inhaled sharply, hung up, and walked toward Nangong Sun's room.

Nangong Sun had been waiting for Han Jingru in his room since he returned to the castle with a pleased expression.

To him, this would definitely bring Han Jingru to his senses and make him obedient. He was already looking forward to seeing Han Jingru kneel for forgiveness in front of him and wag his tail like a dog.

When he heard the knocking, Nangong Sun knew that Han Jingru had arrived. But he deliberately waited for a while before opening the door. He needed the man anxious and realized who was the boss.

After he opened the door, Nangong Sun said flatly, "What urgent matters do you have with me?"

Han Jingru didn't speak when Nangong Sun asked a question he already knew the answer to. Instead, he let his actions speak for him.

He grabbed Nangong Sun by his neck and said thunderously, "Call your subordinates immediately and send Han Xiang to the hospital."

This was completely different from the image that Nangong Sun had in his mind. He never

thought that Han Jingru would be that aggressive.

“You better f***ing let me go, if not I'll kill Han Xiang immediately!” Nangong Sun said furiously.

“Don't you dare? If you kill her, what else do you have to threaten me? If you can't threaten me, how can you inherit the head position from your family? Han Jingru asked icily.

Nangong Sun didn't actually dare to kill Han Xiang; he never even thought of it before. She was an indispensable bargaining chip to him, so he needed her to be alive to threaten Han Jingru.

He hurt Han Xiang to teach Han Jingru a lesson and to make him obedient, but if he compromised now, his plan would backfire.

“I'll give you one last chance; let go of me,” Nangong Sun clenched his teeth and said.

Han Jingru didn't let go. Instead, he grabbed him even harder.

Nangong Sun flushed red instantly, and the amount of air he could breathe was getting less and less by the second.

“If I kill you and your subordinates kill Han Xiang, your life still can't be revived. Are you sure you want to make a trade like this?” Han Jingru's icy determination was like a splash of cold water to Nangong Sun.

Nangong Sun grabbed Han Jingru's hands subconsciously, but his strength was negligible. He knew for a fact that if he didn't compromise right now, he would be dead.

He nodded slightly to Han Jingru; it was the biggest movement he could do at that moment.

Han Jingru let Nangong Sun go, and he breathed greedily. He felt that his life was finally returned to him. Besides that, he knew now that threatening Han Jingru this way wouldn't benefit him in any way.

“Are you really not scared that I would kill Han Xiang?” Nangong Sun asked indignantly; he

originally wanted Han Jingru to bow down to him, but now he got the short end of the stick. Nangong Sun felt helpless at the outcome.

“You wouldn't dare because I know exactly what you want. Please don't do useless things like this in the future, if not I will actually kill you,” Han Jingru said flatly.

Nangong Sun inhaled sharply and said, “If so, let's come to a compromise. I will ask my men to take care of Han Xiang properly, and you will do everything to help me get what I want. If I become the head of the Nangong Family, I'll release Han Xiang. How about that?”

Han Jingru shook his head. “From now on, I get to see Han Xiang whenever I want to. Tell your subordinates to always be ready to accept my video call.”

“Han Jingru, don't go overboard,” Nangong Sun said.

“Don't you want to be the head of the family?” Han Jingru asked flatly.

Nangong Sun regretted everything; now he clearly understood what it was like to lose more than what he bargained for. He gained nothing from hurting Han Xiang. Han Jingru had something to threaten him with instead.

He knew why he could be threatened, but he still couldn't ignore the head position of the family.

“Alright. I agree,” Nangong Sun said.

“Tell him quickly. I want to see go into the hospital.” Han Jingru then left.

After he went back to his room, Han Jingru made a video call. The other person picked up without hesitation. But the latter didn't speak; his pleasure just now had turned into indignance.

Han Jingru looked at Han Xiang. She was crying very softly. It was the only way she could express her pain.

Han Jingru's eyes were filled with tears. He only hung up after he oversaw the whole process of sending Han Xiang to the hospital.

Meanwhile, in another room in the castle.

Zhuang Tang looked gloomy, and he didn't speak for a long time while Gong Tian stood aside in fear. He couldn't tell Zhuang Tang about how he lost to Han Jingru. He was afraid that the latter would ask him to take responsibility for it.

“Master, I'm sorry. I let my guard down,” Gong Tian lowered his head and said.

Zhuang Tang inhaled sharply; his grimness wasn't from his anger toward Gong Tian. It was from how he couldn't determine Han Jingru's fate with how strong he was right now.

As a member of the Apocalypse, Zhuang Tang had an unsurmountable position in the face of a prominent family like the Nangong Family.

But within the Apocalypse, he was just a minor character. Otherwise, he wouldn't be running errands like this.

Zhuang Tang didn't understand how prominent was the organization that stood above the rest,

but he knew that he couldn't decide how to deal with Han Jingru in his current position.

If he informed the higher-ups, he wouldn't be able to curry any favor from the Nangong Family, and that was a huge loss to him.

Hide it?

The thought manifested in his mind. He was scared even before he did it because there was only one outcome if he was exposed — death!

“Gong Tian, between life and money, which is more important?” Zhuang Tang asked.

Gong Tian frowned, clearly not understanding what Zhuang Tang meant.

If he had to choose, it would definitely be his life. After all, money didn't matter if you didn't get to live to enjoy it.

“Master, of course, our lives are more important; if we died, we can't even spend the money we have,” Gong Tian said.

“You can get the money 100% of the time, but you only have a 50% chance of losing your life. Now, how would you choose?” Zhuang Tang continued to ask.

“I will still pick my life. Living in fear is torture, too,” Gong Tian said.

Zhuang Tang nodded. “Actually, many people are the same in Apocalypse, they only like money. Those people always denounce the fight for money as a childish game, but who wouldn't want to enjoy a luxurious life? No one wants to live an ordinary life. As the messenger between the Apocalypse and the masses, I am more deserving to enjoy the luxuries that money brings, but unfortunately, I am subject to more restrictions as well.

Gong Tian was confused. He didn't know what Zhuang Tang was lamenting about, and he didn't know that the conundrum Zhuang Tang faced was because of money.

“Master, how is the real Apocalypse like?” Gong Tian asked curiously. As Zhuang Tang's disciple,

he had only lived outside of the premises of the Apocalypse. All he knew was it was secluded from the rest of the world. He had never seen what the Apocalypse looked like in person.

“You will not know its true face for the rest of your life, because I'm not very sure myself, but he might climb even higher than us in the Apocalypse,” Zhuang Tang lamented.



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