

On the day of the hunting, a huge crowd had gathered outside the North gate of Longyun City.

They were all participants, mainly consisting of Cultivators in the First and Second Stage who were hoping to tame a familiar and get themselves a position in the Imperial Court.

Even taming a One-Star familiar was enough for one to qualify as an Imperial Court official, which would still bring a significant amount of change to their social statuses and lives.

“I didn’t think there’d be so many participants... Do we even have that many familiars in Longyan Mountains?” Han Jingru muttered to himself as he stood next to Chen Yanran.

“You think they’re all gonna succeed in becoming Beastmasters? Longyun City has thousands of participants every year, and yet none of them have managed to tame a single familiar after so many years...”

“Are familiars that hard to find?” Han Jingru asked in confusion.

“Most of the people here are in the lower Stages, and they’re not willing to risk hunting deep within the Longyan Mountains. The number of familiars on the outer parts of the mountain has drastically decreased since dozens of years ago. You’d be lucky to even find one, let alone tame one.” Chen Yanran explained.

With the Hunting being held annually, it was only a matter of time before the familiars in the area were wiped out. Fortunately, these guys are only hunting in the Outer Circle of the mountains. If the high-level Beastmasters from the nearby cities were to join in, we probably wouldn’t find any familiars in the inner parts either!

“I don’t suppose you’d be wasting your time on the Outer Circle, would you?” Han Jingru asked.

Chen Yanran is a very ambitious person. There’s no way she’d settle for the Outer Circle like everyone else here!

Chen Yanran shot him a faint smile. “That’s a rather stupid question, don’t you think?”

Han Jingru shrugged. *But she’s only in the First Stage, so how is she any different from the others? Sure, she may be the daughter of the Chen family, but the familiars aren’t going to just surrender themselves because of her social status!*

“Oh, that’s right... You’re the great Ms. Chen! the familiars might just bow down before you!” Han Jingru said with a chuckle.

Chen Yanran glared coldly at him. She knew he was being sarcastic as her social status in Longyun City meant nothing to the familiars.

“You might wanna take a look in the mirror before insulting me, Han Jingru.” She said through clenched teeth.

Han Jingru kept quiet. *A gentleman allows a lady to maintain her fictions, especially an egotistical and arrogant one like Chen Yanran.*

At that moment, Huang Xiaoyong casually arrived at the scene on his horse. Having ascended to the Fourth Stage, he was greatly admired by everyone wherever he went, much to his delight.

He was already high up on the social ladder due to his status as the governor’s son, but the power he gained from it was nothing compared to this.

“Long time no see, Chen Yanran. You know, I’ve finally realized something.” Huang Xiaoyong said as he walked up to her.

“Oh? What did you realize?” Chen Yanran looked straight ahead, avoiding eye contact with him out of guilt and fear.

Back then, she used to look down on him as his father, Huang Houyi, was nothing but a puppet to the three major families.

However, things were different now that Huang Xiaoyong had ascended to the Fourth Stage.

“That I shouldn’t waste my time on you. Once I make my way into the Imperial Court, I’ll have tons of beautiful women to keep me company!” Huang Xiaoyong said with a smug grin on his face.

*This b*stard dares mock me now?*

Chen Yanran snorted. “You think the Imperial Court will take you in just because you’re in the Fourth Stage? Dream on!”

Huang Xiaoyong simply smiled back at her and said, “What makes you think I can’t go further than the Fourth Stage?”

Chen Yanran frowned. *He’s right... If he was able to ascend by two Stages in a row like that, what’s to say he won’t be able to do it again? He might achieve something far greater than any of us!*

“With my current strength, I can go deeper into Longyan Mountains, which will increase my chances of finding and taming a familiar. What do you think the Imperial Court would have to say then?”

Chen Yanran went pale. *I'll be damned if I rejected his advances only to have him end up becoming a Beastmaster!*

"You're in no position to look down on me anymore, and I no longer have any feelings for you either." With that, Huang Xiaoyong climbed back onto his horse and made his way towards the front of the crowd.

Han Jingru struggled to hold in his laughter after witnessing all that. *Huang Xiaoyong sure is something! I bet Chen Yanran's so pissed right now!*

Chen Tiexin noticed the look on her face when he came up to her. "What's wrong, Yanran?"

He then glared menacingly at Han Jingru before she could even say anything. "You b*stard! Did you piss her off again?"

Han Jingru was bewildered as he didn't even say a word the whole time.

Out of curiosity as to how far Chen Tiexin would go to avenge his sister, he told him, "Hey, don't look at me. It was Huang Xiaoyong who did it! You got a problem? You take it up with him!"

Chen Tiexin froze upon hearing that. *Back then, I would've been able to confront Huang Xiaoyong and make him apologize to her. But now, he's reached the Fourth Stage and could easily destroy me in the blink of an eye!*

Han Jingru chuckled when he saw his reaction. *So he really is all bark and no bite, eh?*

"Aren't you gonna avenge your sister?" He taunted Chen Tiexin.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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“You’re in no position to talk!” Chen Yanran shouted coldly.

She knew how terrible her brother felt about Huang Xiaoyong’s ascension, so Han Jingru’s taunts were like salt on his wound.

“I thought your brother was gonna avenge you, but it seems he doesn’t have the guts to. Oh, well... Forget I said anything, then.” Han Jingru shrugged.

Chen Tiexin turned around and grabbed him by the neck. “I’ll kill you!” He shouted with bloodshot eyes, but Han Jingru was completely unfazed.

Even Huang Xiaoyong wouldn’t dare kill in public, let alone Chen Tiexin! Besides, if he were to really try and kill me, it’ll just give me a legitimate excuse to finish him off sooner!

Despite not being at his full strength due to the Ruby-eyed Python’s venom, Han Jingru was still capable of taking out a weak Second Stage cultivator like Chen Tiexin.

“You wouldn’t dare attack me in front of everyone here, hurling death threats is all you can do.” Han Jingru said nonchalantly.

Killing someone in public is practically asking for trouble, and I’m not about to ruin my future like that! As furious as Chen Tiexin was, he let go of Han Jingru in the end.

Chen Yanran on the other hand, was determined to kill Han Jingru and planned to do so during the hunting.

As the governor of Longyun City, Huang Houyi showed up shortly after to announce the start of the hunting.

“All right, I’ll make this brief so as to not keep you all

waiting any longer. I wish all of you good luck in your hunt today! Now, move out!”

The crowd started running frantically towards the mountains as soon as they heard the command. Given the dwindling amount of familiars in Longyan Mountains, they might not find any if they didn't hurry.

At that moment, Chen Tiexin was no longer acting all high and mighty like he usually did. Instead, he had joined the crowd like a starving beggar who had spotted a juicy piece of meat in the distance.

Chen Yanran, however, was in no rush as her goal was seizing the opportunity to kill Han Jingru.

Huang Xiaoyong didn't bother to charge right in either as most of the participants were only going to occupy the Outer Circle. He had planned on hunting deeper in the mountains, so he didn't have to worry about competition at all.

“What's the matter, Chen Yanran? Are you giving up right at the start?” Huang Xiaoyong taunted her again.

It's obvious that he took my rejection very personally, or he wouldn't keep trying to shove it in my face like this... Well, I can't blame him though. He courted me for so many years, only to have me reject in the end. To make matters worse, he became the laughing stock of everyone in Longyun City when word got out about it. I suppose it's only natural for him to gloat now that he's made it to the Fourth Stage.

“I plan on hunting deep in the mountains too. There won't be much competition there, so why should I have to hurry?” Chen Yanran said.

“You what?” Huang Xiaoyong paused for a moment before bursting into laughter. “That's the most ridiculous

thing I've ever heard! Aren't you worried that you might end up dying in the mountains?"

"Whether I survive this hunt has nothing to do with you!"

"Of course! Do you think I still care about you like I did before? I was just trying to mock you, that's all!" Huang Xiaoyong said with a chuckle.

Chen Yanran trembled in anger and shame. *I looked down on him for so many years, and now I'm not even worthy of his concern...*

Han Jingru shot him a glare and motioned at him to leave as there he was being excessive with his insults.

Noticing that, Huang Xiaoyong quickly got on his horse and rode off into the mountains. He didn't want to disobey his master's orders, after all.

Han Jingru waited for him to leave before shifting his gaze back towards Chen Yanran. He knew she wanted to kill him, and that the hunting had provided her with the perfect opportunity to do so.

Given her current capability, she wouldn't even stand a chance at survival in the deep mountains. As such, the only possible explanation for her wanting to go there is to get me killed.

"Is it really worth taking such a huge risk just to kill me? You might not make it out of Longyan Mountains alive, you know?" Han Jingru figured there was no need to beat around the bush any longer.

"Since when did you realize I wanted to kill you?" Chen Yanran asked.

She had suspected that he knew about her plans when

he mentioned the Guardian Martyrs, but she couldn't figure out how. After all, her maid was the only person she had told it to, and there was no way her maid would tell it to him.

"Since I woke up." Han Jingru said calmly. "You married me because I was in a coma and therefore at your disposal. When I woke up, I became an unpredictable liability, so you thought about killing me. However, you hesitated to do so because you wanted to see if I was still of any use to you. You plan on using this hunting event to test me, don't you?"

His words sent a shiver down her spine. *I didn't think someone like him would be able to come up with such a thorough analysis!*

"Why'd you come here if you already knew?" Chen Yanran asked in confusion.

"I've never participated in the hunting before, so I thought I'd give it a try. Besides, I've got you by my side, right? In the worst-case scenario, we'll just end up dying together. You know, that actually doesn't sound too bad!" Han Jingru laughed.

He said that to annoy her as he knew how much she hated him, and it seemed to have worked.

Chen Yanran felt utterly disgusted at the mere thought of dying with him, but she was smart enough to know that having him along would greatly increase her chances of survival.

"I'll be sure to burn you some incense to honor your death!"



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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With most of the participants hunting on the Outer Circle of Longyan Mountains, it came as no surprise that none of them had succeeded in becoming Beastmasters during the previous events. After all, no familiar was dumb enough to stick around when there were so many hunters around.

Han Jingru let out a disappointed sigh. "These guys wanted to become Beastmasters in hopes of climbing the social ladder, but they don't even have the guts to take a risk and venture deeper into the mountains?"

"They're probably hoping for a miracle to just fall into their laps." Chen Yanran said.

"I'm curious... What happens if they were to come across a familiar? Do they fight each other for it?" Han Jingru asked.

"I remember this one year where we had over a thousand casualties... All for a two-star familiar..." Chen Yanran replied.

"Are they not allowed to hunt for familiars outside of the hunting?"

"They can, but... As you probably have noticed, most of them aren't very strong, and it's more important to stay alive than to risk it for a promotion."

Han Jingru didn't know whether to laugh or cry at what he had just heard. So, these guys want to enjoy the fame and fortune without putting in the effort or taking the risks? Looks like the people of Xenos aren't that different from those on Earth after all... The only advantage they have over us is their stronger cultivation, nothing more. The more I learn about this place, the more I realize it isn't as great as I thought... The challenges I've faced in Apocalypse's Restricted Area were a lot more compelling than this!

Longyan Mountains were divided into three regions, namely the Outer Circle, the Middle Area, and the Core.

About 99% of the people participants occupied the Outer Circle, and only 1% had the guts to hunt in the Middle Area. No one had dared enter the Core for many years.

The truly strong cultivators couldn't care less about the familiars and only sought to conquer Dark Forest.

As such, everyone in the area applauded Huang Xiaoyong for his bravery when they saw him riding his horse into the Middle Area.

"I knew Huang Xiaoyong would go for the Middle Area! He's ascended two Stages in a row, after all!"

"There's no way a Fourth Stage cultivator like him would waste his time in the Outer Circle!"

"If Huang Xiaoyong becomes a Beastmaster, the Huang family would be untouchable!"

"I wonder if Ms. Chen regrets choosing a useless piece of trash over him?"

Han Jingru stole a glance at Chen Yanran and saw that she was unaffected by what they said. *I guess she already prepared herself mentally for it.*

The two of them followed Huang Xiaoyong as he made his way through the narrow path connecting the mountains.

Although Chen Yanran had made it clear that she wanted to kill him, Han Jingru knew he wouldn't die here.

“Isn’t that Chen Yanran? What’s she doing entering the Middle Area?”

“She’s only a First Stage cultivator! Going there is practically suicide!”

“Who’s that guy behind her? Is he an assistant or something?”

The people began speculating and grew curious of Han Jingru’s identity.

Given how dangerous the Middle Area was, one could easily die unless they were at least a Fourth Stage cultivator. Therefore, they naturally thought of Han Jingru as a strong person when they saw Chen Yanran go in with him.

It didn’t take long before someone recognized Han Jingru as they had seen Chen Yanran stand up for him in Beast Lair.

“W-Wait, no... That guy is Chen Yanran’s husband!”

“You mean he’s the guy she got married with?”

“I thought he was a nobody? Were those rumors false?”

“Of course not! I heard about it from the Chen family’s servants! That guy is definitely a weakling! It’s really strange why she’d go to the Middle Area with him...”

“Do you think they’re trying to kill themselves?”

“Maybe he’s just kept his true strength hidden?”

All sorts of speculations arose, and one of them actually hit the nail on the head. “Maybe she’s trying to get him killed during the hunting so she can be free from her

useless husband!”

Huang Xiaoyong was actually feeling uneasy about entering the Middle Area as he had never been there before. There was no telling what he would come across, and he could very well lose his life if he encountered a powerful Familiar.

He looked behind him and felt relieved when he saw Han Jingru. *With Master around, I'd be safe even in the Core!*

With that in mind, Huang Xiaoyong got off his horse and slowed down his pace to walk alongside Han Jingru.

Naturally, Chen Yanran didn't want to have Huang Xiaoyong anywhere near them as she had planned on testing Han Jingru's true potential and killing him off if he proved to be useless.

“You're a Fourth Stage cultivator, Huang Xiaoyong. Aren't we a little too low to be traveling with you?” She taunted him.

“You should be grateful to have a Fourth Stage cultivator protect you, you know?” Huang Xiaoyong replied with a smile.

“I don't need your protection, so why don't you go hunt your own familiar?” Chen Yanran shooed him off.

Huang Xiaoyong refused decisively. “Nah, I prefer to have some company along the way! Besides, it's the duty of the strong like me to protect the weak!”

Chen Yanran frowned. *I can't carry out my plan with him around, but how am I supposed to get rid of him?*

Han Jingru chuckled to himself. *Protect the weak? Ha! Huang Xiaoyong is just scared to walk by himself! You'd think a Fourth Stage cultivator like him would have a bit more courage than this! Honestly, I'm starting to question my decisions on taking him in as a disciple... How can someone this cowardly ever hope*

to achieve anything great in life?



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Both Chen Yanran and Huang Xiaoyong had grim expressions on their faces upon entering the Middle Area. They knew full well that the familiars in there were on a whole different level compared to the ones in the Outer Circle, and a single mistake could cost them their lives.

Chen Yanran was a lot more stressed out than Huang Xiaoyong though, because only the latter knew they could rely on Han Jingru to keep them safe if things went wrong.

Huang Xiaoyong slowed down his pace to match that of Han Jingru's, but Chen Yanran was so focused on their surroundings that she didn't notice it.

"My life is in your hands, Master! Please keep me safe!" He whispered.

"You're a Fourth Stage cultivator, and we're not even in the Core. What are you so afraid of?" Han Jingru rolled his eyes at him.

"You have no idea, Master... This may be the Middle Area, but it is still possible for the familiars from the Core to show up here! They gotta eat too, you know?" Huang Xiaoyong explained.

Han Jingru nodded. *If we really are unlucky enough to encounter one of those, having a Fourth Stage cultivator around wouldn't be of much help at all...*

Suddenly, the sound of combat came from the front, and Chen Yanran instinctively stopped in her tracks when she heard it.

Huang Xiaoyong and Han Jingru quickly distanced themselves so she wouldn't notice their abnormal behavior.

“I think someone has found a familiar. Should we go have a look?” Chen Yanran asked Huang Xiaoyong as she found his strength a lot more reliable than that of Han Jingru.

Huang Xiaoyong stole a glance at Han Jingru who then nodded at him slightly. “Of course! We should also try to steal the kill while we’re at it!”

The three of them headed in the direction of the noise and peeked out of a corner. They saw three men attacking a familiar that looked very much like a rat yet larger than a tiger.

“That’s an Antelope! These guys sure are unlucky running into one...” Huang Xiaoyong whispered.

“Is it very powerful?” Han Jingru asked in confusion.

“That’s a Four-star familiar, and is considered a very powerful one in Longyan Mountains. Its speed makes it a lot more difficult to handle compared to the other familiars of its level though. You can barely land a solid hit on that thing! The Imperial Court owns an army of Antelopes which it uses to launch ambushes.” Huang Xiaoyong explained.

Han Jingru nodded. *This giant rat must be really good if the Imperial Court would incorporate it into its army.*

The men launched repeated attacks at the Antelope, but they weren’t able to land any of it. The battle soon descended into a stalemate.

“Aren’t you going to help them out?” Han Jingru asked Huang Xiaoyong.

Although it came out as a question, Huang Xiaoyong knew it was an order from his master to lend those men

a hand.

He stepped forward confidently as he wasn't scared to go against a Four-star familiar with three men to back him up, much to Chen Yanran's surprise.

Why would he be so kind as to help them out? Shouldn't he wait till the two sides were injured before making his move?

"This isn't the right time to join the fight, you idiot!" Chen Yanran said disdainfully.

The three men were immediately on alert when they saw Huang Xiaoyong as they didn't know who he was.

"Who are you?"

"We found this familiar first! Are you trying to steal it from us?"

"You'd better stay out of this or we'll kick your a** too!"

The three men threatened Huang Xiaoyong, afraid of losing their prey.

"Don't worry, I'm not here to steal the spoils. It's gonna be hard for you guys to take it down at your current level, but it'll be a lot easier if I gave you a hand. I won't ask for anything in return, okay?" Huang Xiaoyong said with a friendly smile.

Naturally, they didn't believe what he said. *This is an Antelope we're talking about! You could join the Imperial Court's army just by taming one of these! Who could possibly resist something this tempting?*

"Who are you? What's your Stage?" One of them asked.

“I’m Huang Xiaoyong, a Fourth Stage cultivator. My father is the governor of Longyun City.” He introduced himself proudly, which was something he never would have done in the past.

“Huang Xiaoyong?”

“You’re the guy who ascended two Stages at once?”

It was obvious that they had heard about Huang Xiaoyong’s achievement, much to his delight.

“You guys aren’t from Longyun City, huh? I didn’t think the news of my ascension would reach other cities!”

“Is it true that you accomplished that with the help of a high-level master? I can’t believe such powerful people existed in Longyun City!” Another person asked in disbelief. They were a lot more concerned about increasing their own Stages than taming familiars.

Huang Xiaoyong simply smiled at them in response. *If word gets out about Han Jingru’s true potential, the Chen residence would be flooded with people looking to be his disciple! I’m not gonna let anyone steal my Master from me!*

“Enough talk! Let’s take care of the Antelope first!”

The four of them then surrounded the Antelope in an offensive formation, blocking off all of its escape routes and rendering its speed useless.

The Antelope was soon worn down after receiving some critical hits and could barely put up much of a fight.

“Okay, that about does it! I’ll leave the rest to you now!” Huang Xiaoyong said as he stepped out of the fight.

The men were both surprised and relieved to see him show zero interest in stealing the familiar for himself.

Huang Xiaoyong raised an eyebrow at Han Jingru as if to seek his acknowledgment and compliment for a job well done.

Han Jingru responded by rolling his eyes in disdain before shifting his gaze back towards the Antelope.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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When Antelope lay on the ground unmoving, Han Jingru saw the three discussing before one of them walked toward Antelope. After the person gestured something on Antelope's forehead, Antelope started wagging its tail like a dog.

"What did he do? Why is Antelope acting like this at him suddenly?" Han Jingru inquired.

Huang Xiaoyong was about to explain to Han Jingru, but Chen Yanran was quicker than he.

"This is a special rune. With this rune, all the master needs to have is a thought, and the familiar will die. Antelope knows that its life is in that man's hands, and that's why it's trying to appease him," Chen Yanran explained.

"This isn't taming; this is threatening it," Han Jingru commented.

Chen Yanran sneered, "Are we supposed to reason with beasts?"

Right after Chen Yanran said that, Han Jingru felt the small white snake on his arm shudder. Then, it started hissing, evidently displeased with her words.

Han Jingru caressed his arm, which was essentially comforting the snake. He was consoling the snake not to mind the woman's words.

"Chen Yanran, it sounds like you look down on these familiars. Do you think you're better than them? Yet, you're using these familiars to upgrade your status. Isn't that ironic?" Han Jingru muttered.

Chen Yanran's expression turned grim. "I'm human, and they are familiars. Am I not better than them?"

“In the eyes of the Imperial Court, I’m afraid the familiars are more important than human. Do you think it’s because of humans or familiars that the Imperial Court thinks highly of Beastmasters?” Han Jingru laughed.

Chen Yanran’s face was now as dark as the night. Han Jingru’s words seemed reasonable. The Imperial Court thought highly of those who could tame the familiars, and familiars were the key to the entire system. In a way, what the Imperial Court was interested in were the familiars.

“Han Jingru, it’s your choice if you want to be placed on the same level as these creatures, but don’t involve me in this. I’m unlike you. You’re just a piece of trash, and I’m the daughter of the prominent Chen family,” Chen Yanran uttered in a frigid tone.

Huang Xiaoyong clenched his fists, resisting the urge to murder Chen Yanran with his fist. *How dare she speak to Master like this? She must have a death wish.*

Right then, the three people walked over and bowed to Huang Xiaoyong in gratitude.

“Bro, thank you for your help. We were petty earlier.”

“Huang, please forgive us. This familiar is too precious. Your sudden appearance made us wary.”

“Bro, we’re from Xiaoling City. If you come to Xiaoling City, tell us, and we’ll make sure to bring you around for the best time of your life.”

Upon hearing the mention of Xiaoling City, Huang Xiaoyong’s face had a trace of eagerness.

“I didn’t think you’re from Xiaoling City. When I’m free, I’ll meet with you,” Huang Xiaoyong replied with a smile.

The three then looked at Han Jingru, but their gazes did not stop on him. Instead, Chen Yanran caught their attention. After all, she was a beautiful woman, and she was very attractive to men.

"This is..." one of them trailed off as he pointed at Chen Yanran.

"Just someone ordinary who's not worth mentioning. We have to leave now to look for familiars. We'll take our leave now," Huang Xiaoyong announced.

"All right. I hope to meet you at Xiaoling City, Bro."

After the two groups separated, Huang Xiaoyong could not help but mutter, "I didn't think they were from Xiaoling City. It's our lucky day today."

Han Jingru then looked at Huang Xiaoyong, curious. The other man had an odd reaction when he heard the mention of Xiaoling City. Now, he had a look of eagerness on his face. *Is Xiaoling City somewhere special?*

"Our lucky day? Why?" Han Jingru queried.

"Mas-" Before he could finish his word, Huang Xiaoyong quickly stopped. He hastily said, "How can someone like you know the beauty of Xiaoling City? But I can do you a favor and fill you up. Xiaoling City has a river, and both sides of the rivers are scenic lands. Going down the river on a boat, you'll see women dancing on both sides. The scene is like one from a beautiful dream. You can invite those you're interested in. The grandest sight in Xiaoling City would be the waves in the river and the boats that sway in it."

The image of swaying boats emerged in Han Jingru's mind. *Indeed, it's a wonderful sight. No wonder Huang Xiaoyong is eager to go to Xiaoling City. Any man would want to take*

a look at the place.

Although Han Jingru would not be disloyal to Su Yimo in any way, he was keen to have a look at new things.

“I see. If I have the opportunity, I’ll go and have a look,” Han Jingru chuckled.

Right then, Chen Yanran abruptly scoffed. As a woman, she was disdainful at these red-light districts. Moreover, Han Jingru was going to die here today. For him to think of visiting Xiaoling City sounded like a joke to her.

“Chen Yanran, you have no right to stick your nose into my business with the kind of relationship we have, right?” Han Jingru pointed out.

Chen Yanran did not reply to him. Instead, her expression turned cold.

The three continued their journey. Chen Yanran, who already wanted to kill Han Jingru, was now even more determined in her decision. However, whether or not they would meet a familiar would not be up to her.

They walked for almost half a day. The silence in the Middle Area was unsettling. Right then, Han Jingru halted in his footsteps.

“What are you doing?” Shocked by his action, Chen Yanran stopped as well. Reaching the Middle Area had already made her fearful, and Han Jingru’s abrupt actions did nothing to relieve it; his sudden stop made a chill run down her spine.

“There’s a faint scent of blood in the air. Did you smell it?” Han Jingru uttered in a quiet, grave tone. The scent came from the front. Evidently, something must have happened there.

Upon hearing Han Jingru's words, Huang Xiaoyong, who was frowning, closed his eyes and breathed in the air. Indeed, he could smell it.

"It seems like someone has died ahead. I'm afraid they must have met with a powerful familiar," Huang Xiaoyong speculated.

A powerful familiar?

Is this the best opportunity to kill Han Jingru?

Without any hesitation, Chen Yanran continued forward.

With a helpless smile, Han Jingru nodded at Huang Xiaoyong.

Huang Xiaoyong walked toward Han Jingru and murmured, "Master, has this woman gone mad? She's charging ahead despite knowing there's danger ahead!"

"She's trying to kill me. Naturally, she'll want us to encounter a powerful familiar. This isn't her going mad; she's just brutal," Han Jingru explained.

Huang Xiaoyong smirked. If Han Jingru died, with Chen Yanran's prowess, she would not survive either. *What a joke.*

"What an idiot."



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Looking at the three corpses ahead, Huang Xiaoyong exclaimed, "How can it be them?"

Weren't they the three men from Xiaoling City?

After separation, Huang Xiaoyong thought they would leave the Middle Area. After all, they had gotten Antelope. He never expected them to die here.

The colors drained out of Chen Yanran's face. Antelope was a four-star familiar, but she saw no signs of it among the bodies. This meant that it was highly likely a stronger familiar had preyed upon Antelope.

A familiar that was above four-star!

Now, she was worried that Han Jingru would not be the only one to die here; she might die here too.

Huang Xiaoyong was about to step forward to check when Han Jingru ordered, "Stand there."

Instantly, it was as though Huang Xiaoyong's legs were lead as he stood still.

"The Antelope must have been eaten. Between these three, two are Third Stage, and one is a Fourth Stage. Moreover, they have a four-star Antelope familiar with them. What familiar can be this powerful?" Chen Yanran mumbled as she took a step back.

"There aren't many signs of struggles here. That means they must not have much time to react. It seems like they've encountered something vicious." Han Jingru looked at his surroundings. Although there were signs of a fight, it was minimal. It meant that they died before they had much time to defend themselves. Furthermore, there were deep scratch marks on their chests, and evidently, they died from one fatal blow.

“What are we going to do now?” Huang Xiaoyong asked Han Jingru.

Han Jingru frowned. He would not make a move unless it was a last resort, but it seemed like the situation was desperate enough. After all, the combination of these three men’s power was stronger than Huang Xiaoyong’s; Huang Xiaoyong alone would not be able to take on the powerful familiar.

Furthermore, it was already too late to run now. Han Jingru could sense a pair of eyes watching them from the shadows.

Just then, a roar echoed throughout the Longyan Mountains.

“It’s the Manticore! It’s the sound of the Manticore!”

“The Manticore is a seven-star familiar at the Core Area. How can its voice be heard in the Middle Area?”

“We’re doomed. I’m afraid those who went to Middle Area will never come back alive.”

Not only did the roar stunned the people in the Middle Area, but it also stunned the people who were outside Longyan Mountains.

By now, Chen Yanran was consumed by despair. All she wanted was for Han Jingru to die. She never thought she would encounter a seven-star familiar. With her current capabilities, she had no chance to escape.

Han Jingru would die, and so would she.

At that moment, all Chen Yanran could feel was remorse. However, she knew that remorse was pointless now. Manticore was nearby, and there was nowhere for her to

run.

“It’s the Manticore. We’re all going to die here,” Chen Yanran whispered with an ashen face.

“B*tch, what sh*t are you on? How do you know this is from the Manticore?” Huang Xiaoyong anxiously cursed. He did not want to encounter the Manticore as he had just reached Fourth Stage; he had yet to enjoy what it felt like to be powerful. He would be terribly dismayed if he were to die here.

Chen Yanran sneered. “Is there any point in lying to yourself? Will you escape with your life if you lied to yourself?”

Huang Xiaoyong was about to refute her words when a snow-white tiger with wings appeared in front of them. It was two meters tall and four meters long. Its eyes were pure white, and it was a terrifying sight to behold.

When its wings flapped, sand and rocks flew. It was obvious that the Manticore was a mighty being.

Huang Xiaoyong was in despair. *It really is the Manticore.*

This is absurd. I can’t believe a seven-star familiar from the Core Area has appeared here.

With a melancholic grin, Chen Yanran murmured, “Han Jingru, you’re supposed to be the one to die, but now I have to die with you. I can’t accept this.”

At her words, Han Jingru’s expression turned glacial. *Why is she blaming me at a time like this? If not for her sinister plan, why would we encounter a seven-star familiar?*

Perhaps Han Jingru would be able to take on the

Manticore before the little white snake poisoned him. However, with his current condition, he could not fight with the Manticore.

But, it was the Ruby-eyed Python. The moment it showed its face to the public, it would be difficult for Han Jingru to keep his low profile. The moment the Imperial Court noticed him, he would most likely be involved in many disputes.

This was not the result Han Jingru wanted for now.

He glanced at Huang Xiaoyong but said nothing. Instead, he mouthed to him his thoughts.

After realizing what Han Jingru was telling him, Huang Xiaoyong walked to Chen Yanran.

“What are you doing?” she questioned.

Without saying anything, Huang Xiaoyong struck the back of her neck, and she passed out.

“Master, do you have a way to fight against the Manticore?” Huang Xiaoyong looked at Han Jingru in anticipation. Han Jingru was the only hope for them to survive this.

Han Jingru shook his head. “I’m injured. I’m afraid I won’t be able to take it on myself.”

Immediately, Huang Xiaoyong tensed up. He was just a Fourth Stage. Even if he wanted to help Han Jingru, his current power was akin to nothing.

“What do we do now, Master? The Manticore can fly, so we can’t escape even if we wanted to,” Huang Xiaoyong croaked.

“If you can’t keep what you’re about to witness a secret, I’ll have to kill you,” Han Jingru warned.

Although Huang Xiaoyong did not know what he was going to see next, he was quick to submit.

“Master, I’m your disciple. I’ll never betray you,” Huang Xiaoyong reassured. He was curious about what would happen next and why Han Jingru was so cautious about it.

Naturally, Huang Xiaoyong would never think that what happened next would be an unforgettable scene for the rest of his life. It was the nine-star familiar, Ruby-eyed Python. It was the Pinnacle Master of Xenos and the mighty familiar that everyone wanted.

Patting his arm, Han Jingru muttered, “It’s time for you to make a move. Stop napping.”

The little white snake lazily crawled out and looked around its surrounding.

The first expression on Huang Xiaoyong was shocked. *It’s such a small creature. Is Master hoping that it’ll defeat the Manticore? Is he pulling my legs?*

“Master, what is this?” Huang Xiaoyong inquired, baffled. He could not recognize it as the Ruby-eyed Python in its small size. Moreover, he had never seen it. Huang Xiaoyong would have never thought that the legendary Ruby-eyed Python was as tiny as this.

Instead of answering him, Han Jingru watched as the Ruby-eyed Python slowly slither to the legs of the Manticore.

This tiny creature had been the terror of all familiars in the Devil’s Cave. Han Jingru was sure that it would be a

piece of cake for the snake to deal with the Manticore.

What Han Jingru had not expected was for the Manticore to raise its foot and crush the little white snake under it.

“What the f*ck!” Han Jingru swore as his eyes widened.



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Similarly, Huang Xiaoyong's eyes widened. He thought Han Jingru would show the ace up his sleeve, but all he took out was a tiny creature crushed by the Manticore.

"Master, you..." Huang Xiaoyong was at a loss as of words.

Han Jingru wiped the cold sweat off his forehead. It seemed impressive when it was in the Devil's Cave. *A Manticore in Xenos can't possibly wipe it out just like this, can it?*

Moreover, according to Huang Xiaoyong's words, it should be the Ruby-eyed Python. Regardless of everything, it was a nine-star familiar. *How can it not take on a seven-star familiar?*

Is it still growing? Is it not nine-star yet?

We're done for, then.

With Han Jingru's current injuries, it was unlikely that he could win against the seven-star Manticore. If the Ruby-eyed Python was all but a useless snake, the three of them were going to die here.

"Don't worry," Han Jingru consoled Huang Xiaoyong despite his lack of confidence. Han Jingru made sure to keep the panic off his face.

Hearing Han Jingru's words, Huang Xiaoyong calmed down slightly.

It seemed like the Manticore was unsatisfied with just one step. It raised its foot again, seemingly having the intention to grind the little white snake into jam.

Right then, the seven-star Manticore froze. A sense of danger made it look around its surroundings warily. It felt

as though something dangerous was approaching.

At that moment, Han Jingru noticed the hint of fear that flashed across Manticore's eyes.

It roared at the sky, seemingly mustering courage while calling for its opponent to show itself.

That roar made even the lands outside Longyan Mountains shake. Those at the First Stage had similar panicked looks on their faces. Many were planning to leave, fearing that the Manticore would come after them too.

As the crowd slowly dispersed, a figure remained by the Middle Area's entrance.

It was Chen Tiexin.

He knew Chen Yanran was still in the Middle Area, and he knew she wanted to use this opportunity to kill Han Jingru.

Yet, he never thought that the seven-star Manticore would appear in the Middle Area. If Chen Yanran were to encounter the Manticore, she was doomed to die. It worried Chen Tiexin.

Since childhood, the two siblings grew up together. As the older brother, Chen Tiexin bore most of the responsibility of protecting Chen Yanran. He adored his sister, and he stood up for her no matter what happened. Yet, this time, he hesitated.

While he was worried, Chen Tiexin knew that if Chen Yanran encountered the Manticore, he, an individual at Second Stage, would not be able to save her.

If he entered the Middle Area, he would only walk to his

death.

“Chen Tiexin, why are you still standing there? Hurry up and leave. Once the Manticore appears, we’ll all die,” a young man shouted at Chen Tiexin. The two seemed to have a good relationship, for the young man still shouted a reminder despite the danger he was in.

“My sister is still inside,” Chen Tiexin answered with his fists clenched.

“Do you think she’ll survive that? That’s the seven-star Manticore. It’s no ordinary familiar,” the man yelled back.

Chen Tiexin knew how powerful the Manticore was, but he felt reluctant to let Chen Yanran die in Longyan Mountains just like this.

“Hurry up and leave. You can’t save her with your current capabilities. What’s the point in sending yourself in to die?”

Chen Tiexin took in a deep breath and murmured, “Han Jingru, if not for you, this wouldn’t happen to her. I’m going to find out everything about you and make your family die with her.”

At that, Chen Tiexin turned with difficulty. It was not that he did not want to save Chen Yanran; Chen Tiexin knew he was helpless.

“Why did she go to the Middle Area? With her current capabilities, she’s sending herself to death by going there,” the man queried. He could not understand the reason behind Chen Yanran’s trip. After all, most dare not head there.”

Chen Tiexin had originally blamed Han Jingru for this. Now that he heard the young man’s words, his hatred for

Han Jingru grew.

“No reason. She’s just unfortunate,” Chen Tiexin muttered.

In the Middle Area.

After roaring, the Manticore was still looking for its opponent. Yet, it did not realize that the little white snake under its foot was growing bigger rapidly.

Huang Xiaoyong, who saw the change, started breathing quicker and quicker. As the little white snake grew bigger, it looked more and more like the Ruby-eyed Python Huang Xiaoyong once saw in a painting.

It was a legendary nine-star familiar. Thus far, Huang Xiaoyong only knew of one person who could tame the familiar—the Emperor of the Imperial Court. Furthermore, the Emperor had many individuals of Eighth Stage, Ninth Stage, and Pinnacle Masters to help him in his capture of the nine-star familiar.

“M-Master is a Beastmaster, and he has the most powerful nine-star familiar, the Ruby-eyed Python.” As he spoke, Huang Xiaoyong’s legs could not help but tremble in terror.

Although he had guessed that Han Jingru was at Pinnacle Stage, it had just been a guess back then. He had no evidence, so the guess had not shocked him.

However, the current appearance of the nine-star Ruby-eyed Python meant that Han Jingru was definitely in the Pinnacle Stage. There was no way the new knowledge would not excite Huang Xiaoyong.

Pinnacle Master!

Master really is a Pinnacle Master! To Huang Xiaoyong, this was the best news he had heard so far. This meant that he was destined for great success.

There was no honor greater than to be the disciple of a Pinnacle Master.

This was also the first time Han Jingru had seen the true form of the Ruby-eyed Python. He, too, was stunned by the sight in front of his eyes. Right now, the Ruby-eyed Python's body was already as wide as an oil tank, but it was still growing.

"How big can this snake be?" Han Jingru sighed. Most of the time, the small snake was latched on his wrist, and Han Jingru never thought it could be as terrifyingly enormous as this.

Finally, the over thirty-meter-long Ruby-eyed Python revealed its true form.

The once ferocious seven-star Manticore was already trembling in fright. It was now like an obedient kitten, licking its paw.

The Ruby-eyed Python hissed, and the Manticore shuddered. Instantly, its four limbs bent and it kneeled on the ground, seemingly asking for mercy from the Ruby-eyed Python.

The Ruby-eyed Python tilted its head upward proudly and instantly sent the Manticore flying with a sweep of its tail.

The Manticore that crashed on the mountains wailed pitifully. Although it was a powerful seven-star familiar, it was defenseless in the face of a top nine-star familiar like the Ruby-eyed Python.

Right as the Ruby-eyed Python was about to swallow the Manticore whole, Han Jingru abruptly stopped it.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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“Don’t kill it yet,” Han Jingru said to the Ruby-eyed Python.

Han Jingru’s words were sacred to the Ruby-eyed Python, so it was quick to obey.

The Manticore looked at Han Jingru gratefully. Evidently, a familiar of this level was sentient. Just as it was about to escape, Han Jingru voiced, “I stopped it from killing you; it doesn’t mean you can leave.”

The Manticore froze in its spot, bewildered.

The next thing Han Jingru did was turn around to ask Huang Xiaoyong, “Do you want it?”

“Want?” Huang Xiaoyong stared at Han Jingru, confounded. “Want what?”

“The Manticore, of course,” Han Jingru replied.

At that moment, Huang Xiaoyong could feel the goosebumps on his arms, and even the hair behind his neck stood.

Want the Manticore?

Is he telling me to tame the Manticore?

This was a scene Huang Xiaoyong never imagined.

Once upon a time, Huang Xiaoyong’s dream was only to tame a three-star familiar. Moreover, that was a goal that was still too difficult for him.

Yet, he now had the chance to tame a seven-star familiar, and it was a Manticore at that. Huang Xiaoyong thought he was dreaming.

“M-Master, you’re not joking with me, are you?” Huang Xiaoyong stuttered.

“Dilly-dallying like a woman. Do you want it or not? If not, I’ll kill it,” Han Jingru impatiently huffed.

“Of course, of course! I want it!” Huang Xiaoyong nodded fervently. How could he possibly not want an opportunity like this?

It might be the only time in his life that he got to tame a seven-star familiar. After this, he might never encounter it again.

On the other hand, the Manticore was unwilling. After all, Huang Xiaoyong was just at Fourth Stage. To it, this was humiliating.

However, death was looming over its head, and it dared not disobey. Han Jingru’s words were clear. If Huang Xiaoyong did not want it, Han Jingru would ask the Ruby-eyed Python to kill the Manticore.

The Manticore would rather be subservient to Huang Xiaoyong than to die.

“Master, can I really?” Huang Xiaoyong asked, feeling uncertain. After all, he only reached the Fourth Stage. If he were to tame the Manticore, he would stun many to their cores.

Just the thought of riding the Manticore back to Longyun City made Huang Xiaoyong’s heart leap in joy. However, that would mean attracting many people’s attention. If he were to expose his master’s identity, troubles were bound to come.

“Don’t worry. Don’t tell anything to anyone. Let them speculate,” Han Jingru uttered.

Huang Xiaoyong nodded and walked toward the Manticore.

“I know my current capabilities aren’t a match for you. But my master is a Pinnacle Master. One day, I’ll be a match for you. Don’t worry. I won’t treat you badly. I’m the son of the governor. Whatever you want to eat, no matter how much the price, I’ll get it for you,” Huang Xiaoyong said to the Manticore.

With that said, Huang Xiaoyong drew a rune, meant for taming familiars.

With the difference in power between Huang Xiaoyong and the Manticore, the Manticore could easily defend itself from the rune. However, it did not, as the Ruby-eyed Python was drooling and watching him. If it rejected the rune, it was doomed to become the food in the Ruby-eyed Python’s stomach. The Manticore knew what was the wise choice to make.

When the rune melted into the Manticore’s forehead, Huang Xiaoyong could feel a sensation in his heart. No matter where he went, he could sense the location of the Manticore. Moreover, with one thought, he could kill the Manticore.

Abruptly, Huang Xiaoyong kneeled in front of Han Jingru with a sincere look on his face.

It was a gesture of respect from Huang Xiaoyong to Han Jingru. Not only did Han Jingru help him achieve two stages higher than his current stage, but he also helped him tame the Manticore, a seven-star familiar. Kneeling to Han Jingru was the only way Huang Xiaoyong could think of to express his gratitude. From now on, he would only be loyal to Han Jingru.

“Thank you, Master,” Huang Xiaoyong said.

"If you call me Master, then these are things I should do," Han Jingru muttered. He knew that from now on, Huang Xiaoyong would never betray him in any situation. It was good news for Han Jingru.

After all, Xenos was a foreign land for Han Jingru. Having a good assistant could make Han Jingru reach his goal easier.

Han Jingru glanced at Chen Yanran, who was still unconscious. To Huang Xiaoyong, he said, "Take her along. It's time to leave."

Huang Xiaoyong frowned. If it were a while back, he would have thought of taking advantage of her as he had a crush on her for many years. To be intimate with a beautiful woman like her was a dream. However, regardless of everything, she was his master's supposed wife. Huang Xiaoyong dared not bear any inappropriate thoughts of her.

"Master, although you don't have much relationship with her, she's still your wife. It doesn't seem right for me to take her away," Huang Xiaoyong voiced.

Han Jingru raised a brow and laughed, "Don't you like her? You were about to kill me for her too."

Huang Xiaoyong shook his head until he nearly had a concussion. He muttered, "Master, don't tease me. How dare I do that? Even if you don't want her, I won't dare to have a relationship with her."

Helpless, Han Jingru could only lift Chen Yanran to carry her over his shoulder.

The little white snake had already returned to his arm. At the same time, Manticore walked beside Huang Xiaoyong, making him seem mightier than ever.

Walking out of the Middle Area, Han Jingru realized there was no sign of anyone around Longyan Mountains. It was an odd scene to him.

“The Hunting ended so quickly?” Han Jingru inquired.

“The Hunting of the past years usually last around half a month. It couldn’t have ended so quickly,” Huang Xiaoyong explained.

“Where are all the hunters? Why isn’t anyone around?” Han Jingru questioned.

Huang Xiaoyong looked at the Manticore before a smile grew on his lips. “Master, they must have been frightened out of their wits when they heard the roar of the Manticore. They must be worried that the Manticore would come outside, so they ran off.”

Han Jingru nodded. He could not think of any explanations other than this.

“Go back first. Walking with you will attract too much attention to me,” Han Jingru stated.

“Master, if you have anything you need, you can come to the governor’s residence to look for me,” Huang Xiaoyong offered.

After a moment of contemplation, Han Jingru replied, “Come with me to Xiaoling City in a few days. Remember to bring more money with you.”

With a sinister grin, Huang Xiaoyong nodded. “I understand, Master. Don’t worry. I’ll bring enough money.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Huang Xiaoyong entered the city with Manticore by his side.

News of that sight shook the entire Longyun City in less than a quarter of an hour after his arrival.

Everyone in the crowd was looking at Huang Xiaoyong and the Manticore with envious eyes.

This was the proudest moment of Longyun City, and Huang Xiaoyong was destined to be written in Longyun City's history books. No one in the city had ever tamed a seven-star, and he was the first. Hence, he was the pride of Longyun City.

At the governor's residence, Huang Houyi was in despair. Huang Xiaoyong going up by two stages had helped stabilized his position as the governor, but he had gone to the Middle Area for the Hunting. The moment he heard the news of Manticore appearing in the Middle Area, his heart sank.

Everyone knew how powerful the Manticore was. Huang Xiaoyong, an individual of Fourth Stage, stood no chance against a seven-star familiar. Therefore, Huang Houyi was sure that Huang Xiaoyong would not return alive this time. Not only was he losing his son, but he might also lose his position as the governor. Huang Houyi could not accept a reality like this.

Right then, a panicky servant ran in and kneeled in front of Huang Houyi, reporting, "Y-young master is back!"

"He's back!" Huang Houyi jumped to his feet. Having his son return alive was something Huang Houyi never dreamed about.

"Not only is he back, but he has tamed the seven-star Manticore," the servant continued.

Boom!

The news struck Huang Houyi like a bolt from the blue.

He tamed the seven-star familiar?

How can this be true?

Huang Houyi knew his son's capabilities well. It sounded like a joke for a man of Fourth Stage to tame a seven-star familiar.

"Have you lost your mind? What are you talking about? How can he possibly tame the seven-star familiar?" Huang Houyi yelled.

"It's true. I'm speaking of the truth! The entire Longyun City knows about this. Young Master came back with the Manticore," the servant exclaimed.

Huang Houyi gasped. The servant would have to have a death wish to spout lies like this. Therefore, the only possibility now was that he was speaking the truth.

But... How did he do that?

How did Huang Xiaoyong tame the seven-star familiar?

"Quick. Where is he? I want to see him," Huang Houyi urged.

"He's at the entrance. He's right at the entrance of the governor's residence."

Huang Houyi walked as quickly as he could to the entrance.

The first thing he saw was the gigantic Manticore flapping its wings. Beside the Manticore was Huang

Xiaoyong. Although the man was much smaller than it, he was more eye-catching than the beast. After all, he was the one who tamed the Manticore.

Agitation overtook Huang Houyi, and his hands and legs started shaking. Huang Xiaoyong was bringing honor to the Huang family by taming the Manticore. From now on, no one in Longyun City would dare to go up against the governor's family; the Three Major Families would dare not use him as their puppet.

"Xiaoyong, you... you really tamed the Manticore!" Huang Houyi blurted as he walked over to Huang Xiaoyong.

With a small smile, Huang Xiaoyong muttered, "Father, is this grand enough?"

"Of course! This is the seven-star Manticore. Who else in Longyun City but you can do this?" Huang Houyi praised.

"If anyone from the Three Major Families dares to be displeased with your ways, I'll let the Manticore wreck their mansions," Huang Xiaoyong reassured.

Huang Houyi knew no one could now replace him as the governor. With the Manticore around, the Three Major Families could only obey him instead.

By now, the Wang family and the Xie family were anxious. Huang Xiaoyong had progressed two Stages higher, and he was now in Fourth Stage; he had become a problem to them. Before they could solve this problem, Huang Xiaoyong had returned from Longyan Mountains with a seven-star familiar by his side. It was awful news for them.

They had wanted to remove Huang Houyi from his position as the governor to teach their puppet a lesson. However, they could no longer do so with the Manticore

on Huang Houyi behind them.

At the Wang family's mansion, the Wang family patriarch ordered, "Prepare a gift. I'll be heading to the governor's residence to congratulate Huang Xiaoyong myself."

It was the same situation at the Xie family's mansion; the Xie family patriarch, too, ordered their servant to prepare a gift for his visit to the governor's residence.

Meanwhile, at Chen residence.

Chen Tiexin had a look of desolation on his face. In the past, he used to be at the same stage as Huang Xiaoyong; they used to be equals. However, a while back, Huang Xiaoyong had progressed two stages higher. It was a sudden blow to Chen Tiexin's confidence. However, it was not a blow strong enough to defeat him. Chen Tiexin was sure that as long as he found the right mentor, he could surpass Huang Xiaoyong one day.

However, now that news of Huang Xiaoyong's return with the Manticore was everywhere, Chen Tiexin could not help but feel desperation. He knew that even if a mentor was willing to take him in as his disciple, it was unlikely for him to ever tame a seven-star familiar. He had lost to Huang Xiaoyong.

"Seven-star familiar." On Chen Tiexin's face was a bitter smile. It was an impossible dream for many, but Huang Xiaoyong had achieved it.

Right then, Chen Yuanhai came to Chen Tiexin. "Have you heard it? Huang Xiaoyong came back with the Manticore."

"Father, the Three Major Families of Longyun City might never win against the governor anymore," Chen Tiexin remarked.

Chen Yuanhai knew what the Manticore signified. With the Manticore on their side, the Three Major Families were nothing but a clown to the governor's residence. However, this was not the matter Chen Yuanhai was concerned about.

"If Huang Xiaoyong tamed the Manticore, might Chen Yanran still be alive?" Chen Yuanhai wondered.

Chen Tiexin froze.

He had forgotten about Chen Yanran.

Now that he thought about it, it seemed likely for Chen Yanran to still be alive.

"Father, I'll visit the governor's residence immediately. Huang Xiaoyong must know where she is," Chen Tiexin hastily said as he stood up.

However, Chen Yuanhai stopped him. Chen Tiexin could not just simply make a trip to the governor's residence like this.

Now that the Wang family and Xie family had expressed their stance, the Chen family had to do the same. Otherwise, the governor would definitely target the Chen family.

"Let the servant prepare the gifts first. You'll head there with the excuse of congratulating Huang Xiaoyong," Chen Yuanhai instructed.

Chen Tiexin gritted his teeth. In the past, Huang Xiaoyong was nothing but a piece of trash who spent most of his time thinking about women. Yet, he now had to head to his place to congratulate this piece of trash. The feelings of reluctance and displeasure were strong in Chen Tiexin's heart.

“Father, he’s just an individual of Fourth Stage. How can he possibly tame a seven-star familiar?” Chen Tiexin huffed.

Chen Yuanhai sighed, “I’m guessing he must have had a competent master to help him rise by two stages and tame a seven-star familiar.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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A competent master!

Those words made Chen Tiexin even more upset. He had been searching high and low for a competent master for more than a year to no avail. Huang Xiaoyong had done nothing, yet he found a master who could help him tame a seven-star familiar. *How can the world be so unfair?*

Just then, a servant anxiously came up to them. "Ms. Chen is back."

"She's back!"

"She's back."

The two were stunned for a second before they ran toward the door.

The sight of Han Jingru carrying her on his shoulder greeted them.

Walking toward Han Jingru, Chen Tiexin yelled, "Han Jingru, what are you doing? Let go of my sister, you useless piece of trash! How dare you take advantage of her?"

Han Jingru glimpsed at Chen Tiexin before he explained, "She's unconscious. If you don't want me to carry her back, am I supposed to leave her at Longyan Mountains? I'm not taking advantage of her."

However, Chen Tiexin cared not of his words. He refused to let Chen Yanran and Han Jingru have such intimate contact.

"If you're not going to let go of her, I'll hurt you," Chen Tiexin threatened.

Han Jingru smiled, exasperated. This man always put on

a domineering front, despite the fact that he had only reached the Second Stage. Han Jingru wondered where was he getting his confidence from.

“All right, all right. I’ll put her down.” At that, Han Jingru threw Chen Yanran onto the ground.

Instantly, Chen Tiexin stepped forward to grab Chen Yanran. He then turned to warn Han Jingru, “If anything happens to her, you’re dead meat too.”

Meanwhile, Chen Yuanhai had completely ignored Han Jingru. It was as though Han Jingru was made of glass. He heaved a sigh of relief after making sure Chen Yanran was fine.

Looking at Han Jingru from the corner of his eye, Chen Yuanhai questioned, “What happened?”

“She passed out,” Han Jingru answered.

“I know she passed out. I’m asking you how she passed out,” Chen Yuanhai inquired in a cold tone.

“I don’t know. Many things were happening back then. I passed out too, but I woke up earlier than she did.” This was the explanation Han Jingru had thought of when he was on his way back. This was the only way he could avoid more questions from them.

After all, Huang Xiaoyong was the one who tamed the Manticore, and Chen Yanran was the one to spot the appearance of the seven-star familiar. If he did not tell them he was unconscious, he would have to come up with a story of how Huang Xiaoyong tamed the familiar.

“I hope you’re speaking the truth. Otherwise, I’ll come after you,” Chen Yuanhai snarled.

"If you have nothing else, I'll be returning to my room."

As Chen Yanran was still unconscious, the father and son were not in the mood to make things difficult for Han Jingru.

The two then brought Chen Yanran back to her room and lay her on her bed. Soon, she woke.

As the Manticore was the last thing she saw before she passed out, she was in a panic when she woke.

"Oh dear, oh dear," Chen Yanran mumbled.

Hearing Chen Yanran's fearful voice, Chen Tiexin hurried to the side of the bed and consoled, "Yanran, you're fine now. You're back home safe and sound. Don't be scared. It's okay."

"Home?" Chen Yanran looked around the familiar room. *It's home.*

But why am I here?

How did I survive against the seven-star Manticore?

"Tiexin, what happened? Why am I at home? I met the Manticore in the Middle Area. Do you know the Manticore?" Chen Yanran whispered.

Chen Tiexin nodded. How could he not? Furthermore, the Manticore was now the topic of discussion in the entire Longyun City.

"I can't believe I'm alive." Chen Yanran smacked her head, seemingly trying to recall what happened. However, Huang Xiaoyong, a man of Fourth Stage, had secretly attacked her, and she never realized what happened.

“Yanran, what happened after you saw the Manticore?”
Chen Tiexin inquired.

Chen Yanran shook her head, unable to recall anything. She responded, “I remember passing out suddenly after seeing the Manticore. Then I saw you. I don’t know what happened in between. Tiexin, do you know what happened? How did I come back safely?”

Chen Tiexin shook his head. He had not even gone to the Middle Area. Naturally, he would not know what happened in the Middle Area. However, he knew what happened in the end.

“I don’t know what happened in between, but you survived because Huang Xiaoyong tamed the Manticore,”
Chen Tiexin explained.

“What?” Chen Yanran sat up in shock. *Tamed the Manticore? That’s a seven-star familiar. He’s only at Fourth Stage. How can he possibly succeed in that?*

“Tiexin, you must be joking with me, right? How can Huang Xiaoyong tame the Manticore? Although he made progress, he’s only at Fourth Stage,” Chen Yanran squeaked.

Chen Tiexin, too, wished that it were just a joke, but it was reality. Moreover, the entire Longyun City witnessed Huang Xiaoyong’s return with the Manticore. It could not be a dream.

Hearing Chen Tiexin’s silence, Chen Yanran turned to look at Chen Yuanhai, asking, “Father, what’s going on? Did Huang Xiaoyong really tame the Manticore?”

“I don’t know what happened, but that’s what he did. He brought the Manticore back to Longyun City, and many saw it with their own eyes. It can’t be fake news.”

Chen Yanran gasped before she turned back to Chen Tiexin.

Now she knew why Chen Tiexin had fallen silent. The gap between his power and Huang Xiaoyong's was getting wider; he would not feel happy about it.

However, he could not do anything about that. A seven-star familiar was a powerful familiar that one could only dream of taming.

Suddenly recalling Han Jingru, Chen Yanran asked, "Oh yes, what about Han Jingru? How is he?"

Chen Tiexin scoffed, "He's not dead. He was the one who brings you back."

"I'm going to talk to him. I'm sure he knows what happened." At that, Chen Yanran promptly stood up. She was sure that Han Jingru must know something about the moment Huang Xiaoyong tamed the Manticore.

"It's pointless. He said he passed out too, so he doesn't know what had happened. He only woke earlier than you did," Chen Tiexin revealed.

Chen Yanran sneered. "Do you really believe him when he says he passed out? How can he wake earlier if he passed out?"

Chen Tiexin narrowed his eyes as a dangerous look emerged in them. "Do you mean that piece of trash lied to me?"

"I'll know when I talk to him. He might be the only one who can give us answers," Chen Yanran uttered.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Han Jingru was resting on his bed when Chen Yanran stormed in. However, her appearance was within his expectations. After all, everyone was curious about how Huang Xiaoyong had tamed the seven-star familiar. It was unlikely that no one would keep questioning Han Jingru about the incident.

“Like you, I don’t know anything. Even if you ask me, I won’t have an answer that can satisfy you,” Han Jingru replied before Chen Yanran could even ask him.

Chen Yanran fixed her piercing gaze on Han Jingru. Her instincts were telling her that Han Jingru had not passed out. In fact, they were telling her that he must have witnessed Huang Xiaoyong taming the Manticore.

“Han Jingru, you’re living in my house and eating my food. The Chen family gave you the life you now have. You were unconscious for such a long time. If not for me bringing you back home, you would have died in the wilds. This is the favor you owe to the Chen family,” Chen Yanran reminded.

“The reason for you to keep me in the Chen family is that you want to use me,” Han Jingru muttered in a placid tone.

“But can you deny the fact that I saved you?” Chen Yanran questioned.

Han Jingru mulled over her words. It was true that he could not deny that. Regardless of the reasons Chen Yanran had for keeping him here, he did owe them a favor. If he were found by someone else, or if he were left out there, he would either be a pile of bones or buried alive by now.

“Tell me what you want,” Han Jingru uttered.

"I want you to tell me what you saw. How did Huang Xiaoyong tame the Manticore?" Chen Yanran asked.

Han Jingru took in a deep breath before he stood up and walked toward Chen Yanran. "Do you really want to know it?"

"Cut the crap." Chen Yanran glared at Han Jingru.

Shrugging, Han Jingru explained, "If you want to know the truth, fine. I'll tell you. I helped Huang Xiaoyong tame the seven-star familiar. I'm also the one to help him reach Fourth Stage. Are you satisfied with my answer?"

Chen Yanran ground her teeth. How could she possibly believe in words as absurd as this?

How can a piece of trash like Han Jingru help Huang Xiaoyong reach Fourth Stage and tame a seven-star familiar? This is the worst kind of nonsense I've heard so far.

"Han Jingru, do you think I'd believe in such rubbish?" Chen Yanran mocked.

Han Jingru shrugged again. "I'm telling you the truth. If you don't believe me, I can't do anything about it."

"Does Huang Xiaoyong have a master?" Chen Yanran asked.

"He does."

"Did his master help him tame the seven-star familiar?"

"Of course. How can someone at Fourth Stage like Huang Xiaoyong take on the Manticore?"

"What kind of person is his master?"

"I'm his master," Han Jingru replied as he pointed at himself.

"Did he threaten you not to tell anyone about it?" Chen Yanran did not believe in Han Jingru's words at all, thinking that he dared not expose the true identity of Huang Xiaoyong's master.

"Believe in whatever you want to. That's all I can tell you." Han Jingru returned to his bed. He had been sincere, and he had told the truth to Chen Yanran. However, he could not do anything if she did not believe in his words.

"I won't make things difficult for you. After all, I'm sure you won't dare to disobey a powerful man like him. But from now on, the Chen family has nothing to do with you," Chen Yanran announced.

"What do you mean?" Han Jingru inquired with a frown.

Chen Yanran sneered. "Why do you think you could live in the Chen family? The Chen family won't take in a piece of trash like you. Pack up and get out of Longyun City as soon as possible. Don't appear in my line of sight or in Longyun City ever again. If not, I'll never let you off."

With that said, Chen Yanran turned and left.

Han Jingru had not thought that Chen Yanran would cut ties as quickly as she just did after her failed attempts at killing him. He thought he could still lurk around with the Chen family's identity, but it seemed impossible now.

However, that was just a trivial problem. Now that he had Huang Xiaoyong, who had a significant status in Longyun City, as his disciple, finding a house was easy.

After exiting Han Jingru's room, Chen Yanran went back to her room, where her brother and father were waiting.

Seeing her return, Chen Tiexin quickly asked, "How was it? Did you get anything from him?"

"Huang Xiaoyong does have a master, but Han Jingru refuses to tell me who he is. He must have been threatened to keep it a secret, and I dared not ask too many questions about him. After all, if a powerful man like him wants to hide his identity, we're in no place to find out about it," Chen Yanran reported solemnly.

Chen Tiexin sighed before a bitter smile surfaced. "I can't believe Huang Xiaoyong could luck out. I've put in so much effort for this, but I've gotten nothing in return. God must be blind to treat me like this."

"Tiexin, don't worry. You'll find a better master," Chen Yanran consoled.

Chen Tiexin smiled self-deprecatingly. *A better master?*

Chen Tiexin would be satisfied if he found someone at Seventh Stage to be his master. However, Huang Xiaoyong's master easily took down the seven-star familiar, Manticore. That meant he was definitely above the Seventh Stage. Individuals who were above Seventh Stage were officials at the Imperial Court. *How can Huang Xiaoyong be the disciple of an official at the Imperial Court?*

At the governor's residence.

Huang Houyi stood in front of the Manticore, excitement stealing the words from his mind. Huang Xiaoyong's change had brought him too many surprises, and for a moment, Huang Houyi could not believe that these were all real.

Ascending two stages at once had made the Three Major Families think twice before making a move.

Now that Huang Xiaoyong returned with a seven-star familiar and shocked the entire Longyun City, the Three Major Families must be shaking in their boots now. In fact, Huang Houyi was sure that they were regretting going up against him now.

“Dad, how is it? This familiar is not bad, right?” Huang Xiaoyong beamed.

Not bad?

It was not bad. To Huang Houyi, this was marvelous. Huang Xiaoyong was more than worthy of entering the Imperial Court now. It was a scenario Huang Houyi never dared to dream about.

“Son, I don’t know what to say. You’ve given me too many surprises,” Huang Houyi crooned.

Huang Xiaoyong grinned. “Now you can’t say that I’m good for nothing.”

“Of course. You’re so impressive. How can you be good for nothing?” Huang Houyi beamed proudly.

After dismissing the surrounding servant, Huang Houyi walked toward his son and whispered, “Did your master help you tame this seven-star familiar?”

“He did,” Huang Xiaoyong admitted gleefully.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Though Huang Xiaoyong did not assist in taming the Manticore, he still took pride in being Han Jingru's disciple. Hence, he was very proud of his answer.

Huang Houyi also did not belittle Huang Xiaoyong just because he was not involved in taming the beast. He knew it was his son's honor to have such a powerful master.

"Your master is capable of taming a seven-star familiar. How impressive! Which Stage is he in, though?"

Huang Xiaoyong could still feel the adrenaline rush and had yet to fully recover from the shock he experienced earlier, especially when the Ruby-eyed Python revealed itself. He would for sure remember this haunting experience for life.

The Ruby-eyed Python was a legendary nine-star familiar!

"Dad, I understand you're curious, but knowing too much about certain things might put yourself in danger," Huang Xiaoyong warned.

Huang Houyi nodded. Of course, he knew Huang Xiaoyong's master must have his reasons to stay low profile. Huang Houyi could not imagine the consequences he would face had he accidentally exposed the powerful master's identity.

"Very well. I shall not ask further. It would be disastrous if I accidentally blurt out his secrets when I'm drunk," Huang Houyi said.

Huang Xiaoyong patted his father's shoulder and said, "You only need to know he's a powerful man. The power he possesses is beyond our imagination!"

They then noticed a servant standing quite a distance away. It seemed like he wanted to approach them but did not have the guts to come close.

Huang Houyi beckoned him and asked, "Yes?"

"The Wang and the Xie families are here," the servant replied.

Huang Houyi responded with a grin. *They must have come to make peace with us.* Since Huang Houyi had successfully tamed the seven-star familiar, these two families had no choice but to surrender themselves to the governor.

"Tell them I'm not free today," Huang Houyi ordered.

"All right." The servant then left.

Huang Houyi smirked and said, "These people used to manipulate me and treat me like dirt, and I swore one day, they'll get a taste of their own medicine. Now, the tables have finally turned, all thanks to you!"

"Don't worry, Dad. They'll soon know how powerful the Huang family is." A corner of Huang Xiaoyong's mouth quirked up.

Huang Houyi burst out laughing and was absolutely high-spirited. People used to mock Huang Xiaoyong, calling him useless, but now that he had made a name for himself, who dared to make fun of his son anymore?

The Chen family soon found out that the Wang and Xie families paid the governor a visit.

Obviously, they wanted to make peace with the Huangs because they were afraid that Huang Xiaoyong might take revenge on them.

The Chens were not pleased with the turn of events. If those two families gave in and surrendered themselves to the governor, the Chens would not be able to do anything alone anymore. Moreover, since Huang Xiaoyong had become more powerful and had a Manticore now, the Chens were also afraid of stepping on his toes.

"I guess I have to make a trip to the governor's residence too. From now on, the Huangs will become the ultimate ruler of Longyun City." Chen Yuanhai let out a sigh.

Though Chen Tiexin was reluctant to resign to his fate, he knew the Chen family was no match for the Huangs.

"I'll go instead," Chen Tiexin said.

Chen Yuanhai shook his head. "The heads of the Wang and Xie families visited them personally, so I must be there to prove my sincerity."

All of a sudden, Chen Yanran said, "I'll come with you, Dad."

"What for?" Chen Yuanhai was puzzled.

"Han Jingru and I are not officially married. Besides, I've kicked him out of the Chen family," Chen Yanran clenched her teeth and said.

Chen Tiexin and Chen Yuanhai were taken aback by what she said.

She might not have clearly expressed herself, but the two men totally understood what was on her mind.

Huang Xiaoyong used to be one of Chen Yanran's many admirers, but she detested how persistent and annoying he was. At this point, she had no choice but to put aside

her ego. If need be, she would even sacrifice her happiness for the sake of the family.

“No, Yanran. You can’t do this,” Chen Tiexin opposed.

“This is the only way to find out who Huang Xiaoyong’s master is. Besides, it’ll also be good for the Chen family if I marry him since they’re now the most influential family in Longyun City,” Chen Yanran analyzed.

“We can’t do this. Everyone in Longyun City knows Huang Xiaoyong likes you. These people know how you’ve treated him in the past too! How will they think of us if you suddenly decide to offer yourself? We’ll become the laughing stock of the city,” Chen Tiexin said.

“I know, but I also believed Huang Xiaoyong has the power to quash these rumors. Since he likes me, he will listen to me,” Chen Yanran paused for a bit and continued, “If I get to control Huang Xiaoyong, I’m sure I’ll be able to control governor. Soon, we’ll have control over the entire Longyun City.”

Chen Yuanhai began to have second thoughts as he was convinced by what she said. Yet, little did he know, to Huang Xiaoyong, Chen Yanran was nothing but a small fry!

No doubt he was very much in love with her in the past, but times had changed, and he had totally forgotten about her. Besides, he would also not have the guts to touch his master’s wife.

More importantly, Huang Xiaoyong would make the Chen family his arch-enemy if he found out they kicked Han Jingru out of the house.

Between a woman and his master, Huang Xiaoyong would no doubt prove his loyalty to the latter.

“Are you sure he’s still in love with you?” Chen Yuanhai asked.

Chen Yanran smirked. “What do you think? I’m still the most beautiful woman in Longyun City. Huang Xiaoyong has been trying to win my heart for years, and I’m sure I can still charm him with a smile.”

Chen Yuanhai nodded. “All right then. Come with me. They did not entertain the Wang and Xie families, but with you around, perhaps they’ll give us a chance.”

Chen Tiexin initially wanted to express his disagreement, but since his father had made up his mind, he would only warn Chen Yanran, “Do not let Huang Xiaoyong walk all over you.”

“Don’t worry. I bet he wouldn’t dare to do anything to me,” Chen Yanran grinned.



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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“Mr. Huang, the Chen family is here.”

At the governor’s residence, the servant was trembling when he made that announcement.

Huang Houyi shot daggers at the servant and reprimanded him for being so unsteady.

We’ve just gotten rid of the Wang and Xie families. Are we still afraid of the Chen family?

“You’re a member of the governor’s residence, and you’re afraid of the Chens?” Huang Houyi expressed his dismay.

“Master, Chen Yuanhai did not come alone. He came with Chen Yanran,” the servant said.

Huang Houyi was stunned for a moment. He finally understood why the servant behaved in such a manner.

Huang Xiaoyong had fallen in love with Chen Yanran for years, and it was an open secret in Longyun City. She had also blatantly rejected him when he was trying to court her.

Chen Yanran had never visited us before, yet, she has decided to come today. What does this mean?

Huang Houyi took a glance at Huang Xiaoyong and burst out laughing. “Looks like you’ve impressed this woman!”

Had this happened in the past, Huang Xiaoyong would have welcome Chen Yanran into the residence without hesitation. He would have done anything to please the love of his life.

But things had changed as Huang Xiaoyong had moved on from his infatuation. This woman, to him, was his

master's wife, and only his master had the right to decide her future.

"This is your time, son. Do what you think is appropriate." Huang Houyi grinned.

Huang Xiaoyong shook his head and said, "Do you think I still need her in my life? The world is my oyster now, and I can get any woman I want! Even the Imperial Court wouldn't dare to turn down my request."

Huang Houyi nodded. It might sound like Huang Xiaoyong was blowing his own horn, but anything could happen since he was now the Beastmaster of a seven-star familiar. The Imperial Court would definitely take all his requests seriously.

"So, do you still want to meet her?" Huang Houyi asked.

"Why not? I'll be interested to know what she would say to me." Huang Xiaoyong then followed the servant to the entrance of the governor's residence.

Upon receiving the news that Chen Yanran had visited the governor, the Wang and Xie families were extremely unhappy with the dirty trick the Chens used.

"Are they planning to offer Chen Yanran to Huang Xiaoyong to strengthen their position? Isn't she married?" The patriarch of the Wang family clenched his teeth in frustration.

The head of the Xie family snorted dismissively. "Chen Yanran is not even officially married to that trash. Their marriage is merely based on an agreement, if I'm not mistaken. So technically, Chen Yanran is still a virgin. We'll be at a disadvantage if the Chens offer her to the Huangs."

“Chen Yuanhai is basically selling her daughter! What a shameless man,” The head of the Wang family exclaimed. The Huangs might be an insignificant family in the past, but they had become the most powerful people in Longyun City. Therefore, the patriarch of the Wang family must clear up any misunderstanding with the governor if they wish to survive in the city.

The head of the Xie family responded with a sigh. “If only we have a daughter as pretty as Chen Yanran. But then again, Huang Xiaoyong is no longer the man he used to be. We wouldn’t know if he’s still in love with her.”

The head of the Wang family nodded. *Indeed, Huang Xiaoyong has changed. He might have lost interest in Chen Yanran.*

“Go and monitor the governor’s residence and report to me if there are any new developments,” the patriarch of the Wang family instructed his servant.

The moment Chen Yanran saw Huang Xiaoyong coming to the entrance of the governor’s residence, a corner of her mouth quirked up as she thought she still held a special place in his heart.

Clearly, he still cares about me. He would have sent his servant to ask us to leave if he didn’t, like how he did to the Wang and the Xie families.

“Wow, look at you. I’ve not seen you for quite some time, and now you’ve become a Fourth Stage fighter and a seven-star Beastmaster. What a surprise!” Chen Yanran praised him with a smile. This was something she would have never done in the past.

“Are you smiling for the first time? What a surprise!” Huang Xiaoyong reciprocated.

Chen Yanran knitted her brows. She could somewhat feel his attitude had changed. *Is he trying to play hard to get?*

“Aren’t you going to invite me to your house?” Chen Yanran asked.

“Oh, I’ve invited you to my house many times, do you still remember? Even I myself have lost count of the number of invitations. But you turned me down every single time. I guess we can stand here and talk,” Huang Xiaoyong said.

Chen Yuanhai did not interrupt their conversation as he thought it would be best for Chen Yanran to handle the situation herself. But soon, he noticed a change in Huang Xiaoyong’s attitude. *Why did he talk like this to Yanran?*

The sudden change of his attitude could only mean one thing: he had fallen out of love with her.

Chen Yuanhai got a strange feeling in the pit of his stomach, but still, he allowed Chen Yanran to continue to work her charm on him.

“All right then.” Chen Yanran paused for a moment and continued, “I believe you’re aware of my relationship with Han Jingru. Just so you know, we’re not officially married, and we haven’t consummated our marriage.”

“So? Why are you telling me this?” Huang Xiaoyong asked.

“I’ve kicked him out of the family, so if you still wish to marry me, just propose a date,” Chen Yanran wasted no time and told him what was on her mind. In other words, she wanted Huang Xiaoyong to know that she was ready to marry him.

What she said had utterly infuriated Huang Xiaoyong. He

was mad not because of the marriage proposal but the fact that she had kicked his master out of the Chen family!

What a stupid and short-sighted woman. She could have taken good care of Han Jingru if she wants the Chens to become a more powerful family. Han Jingru could have helped Chen Tiexin to move on to the next stage! Yet, she let this chance slip away by kicking him out of the house. What a joke!



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Huang Xiaoyong wanted to know where Han Jingru was, but he knew this question would raise their suspicion. To avoid exposing his relationship with the master, he could only suppress his curiosity.

"Please don't tell me you expect me to marry you," Huang Xiaoyong expressed his disbelief.

"You do like me, don't you? Now it's the time for you to take me as your wife." Chen Yanran was confident that Huang Xiaoyong was still in love with her and would marry her at the drop of a hat.

At this point, Huang Xiaoyong thought the confidence she exuded made her look exceptionally ridiculous. *You looked down on me in the past, and now you come and beg me to marry you when I'm now obviously out of your league?*

Since Huang Xiaoyong had already earned the right to enter the Imperial Court, why would he still care about her?

Moreover, this woman even had the guts to kick his master out of the house. Of course, he would not allow her to marry into his family!

"You're just too full of yourself. Yes, I used to be madly in love with you but not anymore. You're not worthy of my love," Huang Xiaoyong sneered.

What? Did he just say I'm not worthy of his love?

Chen Yanran's expression instantly changed. Never in a million did she expect he would say something like this.

Her confidence and ego shattered in the blink of an eye.

She was so dumbstruck that she nearly fell onto the

ground.

It took her a while to regain her composure. "Did you mean what you said? I'm giving you one more chance."

"I know what I said, and I stand by my words. The Imperial Court would have known that I've tamed the seven-star familiar, and its people are probably on their way to Longyun City now. You're standing in front of someone qualified to enter the Imperial Court, so time to come down off your high horse," he said.

Huang Xiaoyong did not show her any mercy. He would have also been more kind to her if she were not his master's unofficial wife and if she had not kicked his master out of the Chen family.

Since the Chens no longer view Han Jingru as their family member, this woman doesn't deserve to be his wife anymore.

The color drained out of Chen Yanran's face as she did not know how to retaliate. Indeed, Beastmasters, especially seven-star Beastmasters, were held high in regard by the Imperial Court. Huang Xiaoyong joining the Imperial Court was just a matter of time.

"Watch your words, Huang Xiaoyong," Chen Yuanhai finally raised his voice as he could not stand being a bystander anymore.

"You. Who are you to tell me what to say or do?" Huang Xiaoyong gave Chen Yuanhai a sullen stare. This old man used to talk down to him and his father, and he was still trying to intimidate Huang Xiaoyong now even though the tables had turned.

"Are you sure you want to challenge me? Do you know that I can destroy the Chen family in a heartbeat?" Huang

Xiaoyong threatened.

That was quite a wake-up call for Chen Yuanhai.

That's right. Chen Yuanhai was no longer in any position to offend the governor's family. They could easily destroy his family, and the Imperial Court would most likely sweep it under the rug. The Imperial Court would for sure protect the seven-star Beastmaster at all costs.

"I'm not the Huang Xiaoyong I used to be, and so is my family. You can't just come here and bark at us anymore. Longyun City doesn't belong to the Three Major Families anymore." Huang Xiaoyong sniggered.

Chen Yuanhai avoided Huang Xiaoyong's eye contact. He had no right to judge this young man whom he once looked down upon anymore.

Offending him continuously would not bring Chen Yuanhai any benefits. He would only sow more discord between the two families.

"Listen. We, the Chens, will not intervene in the governor's affairs anymore. Please pass this message to your father." Chen Yuanhai set aside his ego and made this compromise.

He hated himself for saying that, but he could only concede defeat.

All of a sudden, Chen Yanran sank to her knees.

Chen Yuanhai was thunderstruck by what she did.

Why is she doing this when I already have everything under control?

"What are you doing?" Chen Yuanhai stepped forward

and tried to hold her up, but Chen Yanran brushed his hands aside.

"I know I've done you wrong in the past. Please forgive me." Chen Yanran said.

Huang Xiaoyong, too, was shocked to see Chen Yanran on her knees. He never expected this proud and overbearing woman would beg for his forgiveness in such a manner.

What difference does it make if I forgive her? The Chen family's position in Longyun City will stay the same, so is my impression of her now.

Nothing's going to change, anyway, all because they're too stupid to have driven a powerful Beastmaster away and treated him like trash!

That's the biggest mistake they've made!

A grave mistake!

Huang Xiaoyong looked at this woman and let out a sarcastic laugh. *Had you treated Master more kindly, the Chens would have benefitted greatly and might even become a powerful family. The Master could have easily helped Chen Tiexin get into the Imperial Court within the snap of a finger.*

For years, Chen Tiexin had searched high and low for a powerful master but to no avail. Yet, when one appeared right at their doorstep, his family chose to kick him out.

"I hope one day, you'll realize and regret the mistake you've made," Huang Xiaoyong said in a calm voice before heading back to the governor's residence.

Chen Yanran did not understand a word Huang Xiaoyong

said.

She might have treated Huang Xiaoyong quite badly in the past, but she had already gone down on her knees to ask for forgiveness. *What else do I need to do to please him?*

“Come on, let’s go home.” Chen Yuanhai could not bear to see his daughter in this state.

Chen Yanran felt unexpectedly dejected. She was even more confused by what Huang Xiaoyong said.

Upon seeing Huang Xiaoyong walking into the residence, Huang Houyi went up and said, “So how was it? Does it feel great to give them a piece of your mind? It’s time to teach the Three Major Families a lesson for despising you for years.”



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Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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Huang Xiaoyong had always imagined how superior he would feel when everyone started looking up to him when he finally made a name for himself.

Yet, now that his dream had come true, he did not seem to enjoy the triumph he had in mind.

Do I feel good about myself? I don't.

Or should I say I don't even feel anything? Not even when Chen Yanran appeared right in front of me outside my residence.

On the contrary, Huang Xiaoyong could not help but wonder how stupid they were when they kicked a powerful master to the curb.

The Chen family would have been more influential than the governor if only she had treated Han Jingru well. They would also have total control over the entire Longyun City by now.

"I thought I'd feel great, but surprisingly, I actually don't," Huang Xiaoyong said calmly.

Huang Houyi responded with a laugh. "This is because they're out of your league now, and you don't even care about these people or how they think of you anymore."

Huang Xiaoyong nodded. *He's right, I guess. Even the Imperial Court is trying to get in my good books now, so why should I let these small fries bother me?*

"If the Imperial Court comes and approaches me, what should I do?" Huang Xiaoyong asked his father as he knew he had not reached his full potential. Moreover, it was his master who helped him tame the seven-star familiar. Though he was qualified to join the Imperial Court, he might not possess the capability to stand out

from the crowd.

This was why Huang Xiaoyong wished to stay with Han Jingru and polish his skills. Rejecting the Imperial Court's invitation was the biggest hurdle he had to overcome now.

"Don't worry. They'll not force you. As long as you pledge your allegiance to the Imperial Court and demonstrate your sincerity before them, they'll respect your decision," Huang Houyi explained.

"They wouldn't blame me even if I turn down their offer?" Huang Xiaoyong was worried and suspicious at the same time.

"Since you've only reached the Fourth Stage, tell them you need to strengthen your skills before joining the Imperial Court. You need to reach the Ninth Stage before you're qualified to cross the Dark Forest, anyway. I'm sure they'll understand," Huang Houyi said.

Huang Xiaoyong nodded as he thought this was the best plan for now. For him to ascend to the next stage, he needed to train under Han Jingru. Had he decided to join the Imperial Court now, he knew he would not be able to advance beyond the Fourth Stage.

"I have to leave now. There's an urgent matter I must attend to," Huang Xiaoyong suddenly thought of Han Jingru, who had been kicked out of the Chen family.

Now that the master was homeless, Huang Xiaoyong had to solve his accommodation issue.

"Go and do what you think it's appropriate. I'll not intervene in your life anymore," Huang Houyi said with a grin.

Huang Houyi used to pay close attention to every little thing Huang Xiaoyong did, but now, he knew his son was no longer a good-for-nothing anymore. He was confident that Huang Xiaoyong was capable of taking care of himself.

The news on Chen Yanran begging forgiveness on her knees outside the governor's residence became the talk of the town. Upon receiving this news, the Wang and Xie families burst into laughter. Initially, they were afraid that the governor would accept the Chens' apology because of Chen Yanran, but apparently, it was not the case. *What an unexpected turn of events!*

"They thought Chen Yanran would turn things around for them, but now they've become the laughing stock of the city," the patriarch of the Wang family snorted.

"It's still hard for me to believe that Chen Yanran kneeled before Huang Xiaoyong. This woman used to think she's better than him but now? Huang Xiaoyong didn't even bother to entertain her," the Xie family patriarch added.

"Huang Xiaoyong is no longer the man he was before. Why would he care about someone like Chen Yanran? But this also shows that we have to put in extra effort to please them," the Wang family patriarch's expression changed when he thought of something more serious.

"You're right. It won't be as easy for us to get in their good books as before. We must work together and make Huang Houyi happy."

Meanwhile, at the Chen residence, Chen Tiexin stopped Han Jingru from leaving when he was about to move out.

"Don't you dare take our things with you," Chen Tiexin threatened in a cold voice.

Han Jingru waved his empty hands in the air and responded, "What do you mean? I didn't have anything with me."

"You could have hidden some expensive items somewhere on your body," Chen Tiexin sneered and ordered the servants, "Search his body. Check thoroughly."

Three servants stepped forth and stood in front of Han Jingru.

Han Jingru raised his hands and was ready for the search.

"I'd advise you not to burn your bridges like this," Han Jingru warned.

"I don't care about what you think," Chen Tiexin scoffed.

Han Jingru pursed his lips. Chen Tiexin must have thought he was a useless man, and there was no point for him to treat him with kindness.

"We found nothing on his body, sir," the servants reported.

Disappointment was written on Chen Tiexin's face. He thought a good-for-nothing like Han Jingru would steal some expensive things from the Chen family before leaving and wanted to take this opportunity to beat him up. *It's all right. There's still something else I can do to humiliate him.*

"Fine. I shall let you go. Get out," Chen Tiexin raised his voice.

Han Jingru could have killed him in the snap of a finger, but it would be a waste of his time and energy to deal

with this useless man.

Dealing with an unimportant person like Chen Tiexin will only tarnish my reputation.

The minute they opened the door, Han Jingru saw a large crowd outside the Chen residence. He did not know what was going on.

Suddenly, Chen Tiexin stepped forward and declared, "From now on, Han Jingru is no longer a member of the Chen family. My sister deserves a better husband than this useless trash. I hope I have made it clear to everyone here."

Upon hearing the announcement, the crowd started pointed fingers at Han Jingru and gossiped about him.

Chen Yanran's marriage had caused quite a stir in Longyun City as the people did not think they were a good match for each other. Therefore, they were not surprised by this move. After all, the Chens are a prominent family, and Han Jingru was just a nobody.



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Chen Tiexin smiled in satisfaction as the crowd started ridiculing and gossiping about Han Jingru. That was part of his plan and he was very happy with everyone's performance. His goal was to chase Han Jingru out of the Chen family and let the whole of Longyun City see what a miserable state the man was in.

At the same time, Chen Tiexin was also hoping that news would get to the governor's residence so that Huang Xiaoyong would know that Chen Yanran was completely not related to that man.

Even though on the surface, Chen Tiexin seemed to be unhappy with Chen Yanran bowing down to Huang Xiaoyong, he was actually looking forward to her marrying into the governor's residence, especially during such times.

Once Chen Yanran managed to become Huang Xiaoyong's wife, it would become possible for him to know Huang Xiaoyong's secret to stage ascension as well as taming the familiar.

If Chen Yuanhai's guess about Huang Xiaoyong having a master was correct, the master might even take him in as a disciple with Huang Xiaoyong's recommendation.

However, Chen Tiexin would never have expected that Huang Xiaoyong had already rejected Chen Yanran resolutely and that Han Jingru was the master he was looking for all this while; the person whom he had personally chased out of the Chen family!

"Do you think what you are doing is even meaningful?" Han Jingru knew Chen Tiexin was the one behind all those, but he would never understand what kind of joy

that man could possibly derive from such childish play.

Does it really satisfy him that much to hear people insulting me?

To Han Jingru, those insults were way milder than what he had to endure from those people at Yun City previously. As such, not only was he not offended at all, but he was also even amused by it.

“Han Jingru, you don’t have to put up a calm front. I know that you are hurting inside. You’re only pretending to be strong as you have no other choice,” Chen Tiexin said condescendingly.

Hurting?

“Pfft!” Han Jingru could no longer resist his laughter. *Would I be hurt by this?*

“You will understand what real pain is in the future. This is nothing to me,” Han Jingru replied and laughed heartily, before passing through the crowd and left the Chen family.

Chen Tiexin gritted his teeth. Judging by Han Jingru’s indifference, it seemed like he was really unaffected by what happened.

But how could it be possible?

As a man, how could he not feel anything when his dignity was being trampled on?

“It’s impossible. That’s just not possible. You’re simply acting tough in front of me. Han Jingru, I bet you’re

suffering deep inside,” Chen Tiexin mumbled to himself as he watched Han Jingru’s figure getting smaller. No matter what, he refused to believe that Han Jingru would be totally unaffected by that.

However, the reality was indeed that it was nothing to Han Jingru. The man could not even be bothered to waste energy arguing with him. To Han Jingru, the desire to kill him was just a passing thought. Chen Tiexin was too weak of an opponent and not important enough for him to place any attention on.

Shortly after, Chen Yuanhai and Chen Yanran returned from the governor’s residence. When Chen Tiexin got wind of that, he immediately went to look for both of them.

“Dad, Yanran, how did it go?” Chen Tiexin asked expectantly.

However, immediately after he asked that question, the man had a bad feeling just by looking at their grim expressions. That wouldn’t be the look on their faces if Huang Xiaoyong had accepted Chen Yanran.

“Yanran, what did Huang Xiaoyong do to you?” Chen Tiexin walked towards Chen Yanran and asked solemnly.

Chen Yanran had not yet gotten over what Huang Xiaoyong said to her. Why would she only realize one day in the future that she had made a grave mistake? Could she have missed out on something important?

“I was rejected by Huang Xiaoyong,” Chen Yanran said.

Chen Tiexin’s expression changed in an instant. Even

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though that answer did not surprise him, given that Huang Xiaoyong was no longer the man he used to be, it was still rather unacceptable for Chen Tiexin.

Huang Xiaoyong had liked Chen Yanran for so many years. Why would he reject her after she took the initiative to confess to him?

“Could that be the truth?” Chen Tiexin muttered under his breath.

“What truth?” Chen Yanran looked up at her brother with a quizzical expression, wondering if there was a deeper meaning in his words.

“Actually, there has been a rumor going around Longyun City lately, saying that Huang Xiaoyong has fallen for someone else. I didn’t believe it though, as that woman is not even half as good as you,” Chen Tiexin replied.

“Who? Have you seen her?” Chen Yanran asked with resentment. To her, it was not possible that there would be another woman in Longyun City who was better than her in terms of both looks and figure. How could Huang Xiaoyong give up on her because of someone else?

“Give me a minute,” Chen Tiexin said and ran towards his room.

Shortly after, he returned to Chen Yanran with a drawing and said to his sister, “Recently, Huang Xiaoyong’s subordinates were seen searching for the woman in this drawing.”

Chen Yanran rolled out the drawing immediately. The person in the drawing was Jiang Yingying.

In actual fact, Huang Xiaoyong was tasked by Han Jingru to look for the woman. However, rumors soon sparked that the woman in the drawing was someone whom Huang Xiaoyong was in love with.

“Her?” Chen Yanran was even more furious to know who her competitor was as that woman was obviously a lot more inferior than her in outer appearance. Why would Huang Xiaoyong reject her for this woman?

“Indeed, she can’t be compared to you at all. However, it’s a fact that Huang Xiaoyong is looking for her. As for whether the rumors are true, I can’t be completely certain about it,” Chen Tiexin said.

Chen Yanran clenched her fists. She would never allow herself to lose to that kind of woman. Suddenly, a murderous intent rose within her and she looked at her brother.

“Tiexin, I need a favor from you,” Chen Yanran said coldly.

“Don’t worry, no matter what it is, I will try my best to help you,” Chen Tiexin replied.

After taking a deep breath, Chen Yanran said with a frosty look on her face, “I want you to find her and kill her.”

Chen Tiexin’s eyelids twitched a little when he heard his sister’s request but he did not reject her. Instead, he said, “Don’t worry, I’ll get someone to make more copies of these drawings. I have traveled widely these few years and made quite a lot of friends. I’m sure it wouldn’t be a problem for me to get their help on this.”

“Thanks, Tiexin. I’ll go back to my room first.” After Chen Yanran finished speaking, she headed back to her room. She still had to figure out what did Huang Xiaoyong’s earlier words mean.

After Chen Yanran left, Chen Tiexin asked Chen Yuanhai, “Father, should we do as Yanran said? Would we be offending Huang Xiaoyong by doing that?”

“I don’t think that woman is in Longyun City. Otherwise, given Huang Xiaoyong’s capabilities, he would have found her long ago. Since she’s elsewhere, even if she’s dead, it wouldn’t be linked to us,” Chen Yuanhai analyzed.

Chen Tiexin understood and said, “Father, I know what to do now.”



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While Han Jingru was roaming aimlessly around the streets after leaving the Chen family, he was discovered by Huang Xiaoyong's informants quickly.

Shortly after, Huang Xiaoyong appeared casually in front of Han Jingru. Even though the master-disciple pair appeared not to have any interactions with each other, Huang Xiaoyong led the way while Han Jingru followed behind. The two of them then reached an alley at the West district with very little foot traffic.

There was a courtyard nearby which was previously acquired by Huang Xiaoyong for his rendezvous with women. However, after falling for Chen Yanran, he had lost interest in other women. As such, the courtyard had been deserted for quite a while and did not serve its original purpose at all.

"Master." After entering the courtyard, Huang Xiaoyong shut the gate and greeted Han Jingru respectfully.

"Is this place yours?" Han Jingru asked. Even though the courtyard was overgrown with weeds, but with a little cleaning and maintenance, it would be a very nice place.

"Yup, I bought this place years ago. Other than myself, no one else knows about it, not even my dad," Huang Xiaoyong shared.

"If we tidy up the place slightly, it would make a good temporary residence. I've been chased out of the Chen family. How pitiful is that?" Han Jingru said with an amused expression and smiled.

Han Jingru was able to joke about the matter, but Huang Xiaoyong couldn't. To him, what the Chen family did was

a great insult to his master. He could never allow that to happen!

“Master, shall we teach the Chen family a lesson?” Huang Xiaoyong asked through gritted teeth.

Han Jingru dismissed his disciple’s suggestion with a wave. “No need for that. Those people are nobodies to me and I wasn’t affected by it at all. Besides, the people from the Imperial Court would be arriving soon. We should not create any unnecessary fuss right now.”

“But those people were too much. I heard what happened at the entrance of the Chen residence. That damned Chen Tiexin! How could he act so ruthlessly!” Huang Xiaoyong said furiously.

“Revenge is never too late. Let’s talk about it next time. I don’t want to attract any attention from the Imperial Court at this moment. Even though we could hide our master-disciple relationship from your dad, if the Imperial Court starts investigating the matter, it wouldn’t be easy to keep it under wraps anymore,” Han Jingru said. He was still trying to figure out the intricacies of Xenos. Before he was able to get a clearer picture of it, the man wanted to maintain a low profile. Besides, Jiang Yingying was still nowhere to be found. The familiar feeling he got at Apocalypse’s second world had also vanished suddenly. Han Jingru hoped to find out the reason behind those two incidences before dealing with other matters.

“Master, since that’s your wish, I will respect it and not create any trouble for you. However, if you feel like teaching those people a lesson, no matter when it is, as long as you let me know, I’ll make sure to see to the Chen

family's demise," Huang Xiaoyong offered.

"OK. If there's nothing else, you should leave first. If there's nothing important, try not to come here too often in the future. We don't want to risk others finding out about us. Regarding that task I entrusted you, maybe you could start searching in other cities. I don't think she's in Longyun City," Han Jingru said.

"Sure, I'll get some men to clean up the place for you now," Huang Xiaoyong said.

"You don't have to. It's just a small matter, I can do it myself," Han Jingru said.

Huang Xiaoyong's expression changed as he said, "Master, how can I let you do such manual work yourself? The servants should do it."

"Just go off now. I can handle it myself. If you get the servants to do it, it would increase the risk of exposing our relationship." Han Jingru shot a stern glance at Huang Xiaoyong.

The latter inexplicably shuddered. Since Han Jingru had already made a decision, he should not be insisting any further. After exchanging a few more words of concern with his master, the man left.

Standing in front of those weeds that had already grown almost as tall as him, Han Jingru felt as if he was tending to the garden at the Genting Villa. It had been a long time since he had done such ordinary activities and it was rather therapeutic for the man. He thought that it would be a lot better if Su Yimo were present as well, even if she were just sitting by the side and watching him

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work.

However, that thought of his could only remain a dream within the near future. Han Jingru was not sure when he could return to Earth. He was not even certain if he could go back at all. Only time would tell.

However, Han Jingru was holding on to the faith that if the people from Xenos were able to visit Earth previously, there would definitely be a passageway there, just like the one at the Apocalypse. As long as he managed to find that passageway, Han Jingru would be able to return to Earth.

After one entire day of hard work, Han Jingru finally managed to finish his work in the courtyard. At that instant, he was already so exhausted that he suddenly regretted rejecting Huang Xiaoyong's offer to let the servants tidy the area up. If he had allowed that, the entire place, including the rooms, would have already been cleaned. However, the reality was that there were still numerous rooms that Han Jingru needed to tidy up.

"Well, it seems like even a master would have problems. I should just pick one room to clean. I don't need that many rooms anyway," Han Jingru muttered to himself before deciding to just clean up one room.

In his own words, he wouldn't be needing the rest of the rooms anyway. Even if he finished cleaning all the rooms, two days later, dust would still accumulate and it would just be a waste of his efforts.

From that day onward, that place was Han Jingru's home. Gossips about him had also gradually died down in Longyun City after a few days. That was because the

people from the Imperial Court had arrived and everyone had shifted their attention to them. Naturally, the Imperial Court became the hottest topic of discussion in Longyun City.

There were three people from the Imperial Court in total. All three of them were dressed impressively and carried dignified looks. They also exuded such imposing auras that were characteristic only of true big shots. Even the governor, Huang Houyi, was trembling in nervousness when facing the representatives from the Imperial Court. He did not even dare to breathe loudly, for fear that he might accidentally offend those bigwigs.

“Sirs, please take a seat. My son will be here right away,” Huang Houyi addressed the three men.

However, the three men did not sit down, neither did they show any reaction at all. All of them looked indifferent, as though they had not heard Huang Houyi’s words at all.

Even though Huang Houyi was slightly embarrassed by the awkward atmosphere, he did not dare to show any displeasure. After all, these men were from the Imperial Court. His status as Longyun City’s governor was nothing in their eyes.

A while later, Huang Xiaoyong appeared with the Manticore. It was apparent that the three men from the Imperial Court looked surprised.

When they first received the news, they refused to believe that a Fourth Stage cultivator would be able to tame a seven-star familiar. After witnessing it with their own eyes, they were indeed feeling emotional as it was almost impossible for a Beastmaster to control a

familiar that was several levels higher.

“Were you really the one who tamed this Manticore?”
One of the men asked Huang Xiaoyong.

“Indeed, Sir. I was the one who tamed the Manticore,”
Huang Xiaoyong replied respectfully with a martial salute.

The same man walked up to Huang Xiaoyong and looked at him straight in the eyes. With a cutting gaze, he continued asking, “You didn’t get any help with that?”

If there was only one thing Huang Xiaoyong was good at since young, it was lying. He could lie sincerely without even batting an eyelid. Standing before those bigwigs from the Imperial Court, he replied without hesitation, “Of course no one helped me. If someone else managed to tame this seven-star familiar, why would they let me have such a powerful creature?”



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After Huang Xiaoyong finished his sentence, the three men from the Imperial Court were all staring at him with penetrating gazes, as if they were seeing right through him. They were hoping that the man's expression would give him away, but Huang Xiaoyong looked extremely natural and at ease. Not to mention giving himself away, he did not even feel the slightest guilt for lying.

Even though Huang Houyi was intimidated by those three people, Huang Xiaoyong wasn't. That was because he had an extremely formidable master. He knew that even if his master had gone to the Imperial Court on his own accord, he would be received by the Emperor personally.

Why would he be fearful of those representatives from the Imperial Court when he had such a powerful master?

"You're an accomplished young man indeed. It's a great feat to own a seven-star familiar at your age. It's without a doubt that you will have a bright future." As that man was unable to find any signs that proved otherwise, he could only believe Huang Xiaoyong's words at the moment.

"Thanks for the compliment, Sir," Huang Xiaoyong answered with a smile.

"The purpose of our visit here is to ask you if you would like to be a part of the Imperial Court?" That man carried on to speak.

"To join the Imperial Court is my greatest wish. It would be my honor to be able to serve the Imperial Court. However, I'm sure all of you know that I'm only at the Fourth Stage currently and I'm afraid that's not good

enough yet. As such, I hope that I can continue training and further improve my skills before serving the Imperial Court.” That was Huang Xiaoyong’s subtle rejection of the invitation extended by the Imperial Court’s representatives.

His father had also mentioned to him before that the Imperial Court would never force him to join immediately, as long as he displayed loyalty to the Imperial Court.

“You don’t have to reject us straight away. We’ll be here for a few more days. You can let us know your answer again three days later,” one man said.

“Sure. In the meantime, Sirs, I will make sure you are well taken care of and your requests would be attended to promptly.” Huang Xiaoyong replied.

“We don’t need that,” the three men said and left, without any further words of farewell.

Huang Houyi finally heaved a sigh of relief. He had been holding his breath subconsciously as he felt pressured by the three men’s presence. However, he was surprised by his son’s performance. That fella handled the situation steadily, with an attitude that was neither servile nor overbearing. Even when facing those guys from the Imperial Court, he still managed to navigate the situation with ease.

“Son, you have far surpassed me and can hold your ground so much better. Why were you not nervous at all in front of those three people just now?” Huang Houyi asked.

“Dad, they won’t eat us up, what’s there to be scared of?”

Besides, those three guys seemed quite friendly.” Huang Xiaoyong laughed.

Friendly?

Huang Houyi instinctively reached for his forehead and wiped off the cold sweat. *Those three people looked as if someone from their families died! How could he call that friendly?*

“I’m quite sure that they have other purposes for staying here. You should be more careful these few days,” Huang Houyi reminded his son.

How could Huang Xiaoyong not know that? Under normal circumstances, the Imperial Court would never pay attention to a small place like Longyun City. Those three people must have stayed because they doubted his words and wanted to investigate further. However, with the abilities of those three guys, they would probably not be able to detect his master.

Those who were in the higher stages would be able to detect those who were in the lower stages. For example, given Huang Xiaoyong’s level, he could be easily detected. However, the higher one’s level was, the more ordinary one would seem. With their capabilities, it would not be possible for the three men to sense Han Jingru’s abilities.

“Even if master walked past them, they wouldn’t be able to sense anything. There’s nothing to worry about at all.” Huang Xiaoyong laughed.

The three men from the Imperial Court found an inn to stay at after leaving the governor’s residence. Just as

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Huang Xiaoyong thought, the reason for the men's extended stay was to investigate the matter further as they did not entirely believe his words.

“How could a cultivator at the Fourth Stage tame a seven-star familiar all by himself? If he didn't receive help, I'm afraid he would have already been killed by the Manticore.”

Inside their shared room, one of the three men commented with a look of contempt. Even himself, someone who was at the Seventh Stage, could only control a five-star familiar at best. As such, there was no way he would believe that Huang Xiaoyong could accomplish such a feat, taming a familiar that was a few levels higher than him.

More importantly, when the man saw the Manticore, he was brimming with envy.

Currently, it was extremely difficult to find and tame a familiar that was five-star and above. Even though there were still a lot of familiars in the Dark Forest, those at the higher levels were more challenging to control. Familiars would rather perish than to serve humans, with the exception being someone at a much higher level than them.

“If there was really someone behind that guy who was able to tame the seven-star familiar, he must be at least at the Eighth Stage. But why would such a formidable person be in a small place like Longyun City?” Another man said, feeling puzzled. No matter how he thought about it, a person like that was very unlikely to be willing to stay at Longyun City.

In recent years, the Imperial Court had been actively recruiting fighters. Even though not every fighter had joined the Imperial Court yet, how was it possible that they had missed out on an Eighth Stage fighter?

“Exactly! Even people like us would never be able to reach the Eighth Stage. By right, an Eighth Stage fighter should not be constrained to Longyun City. If he joins the Imperial Court, with such powerful abilities, he would be given anything he wants.”

“There are indeed only a handful of fighters who could reach the final three stages. Could this guy be someone we know?” One of the men guessed.

It became increasingly difficult to ascend as one rose up the stages. Very often, fighters would spend a lifetime figuring out how to break through to the next stage but to no avail. The final stages were the Eighth Stage, Ninth Stage, and finally, the Pinnacle Master.

The final three stages were the most difficult stages to cross. There were plenty of Seventh Stage fighters in the Imperial Court, but fighters at Eighth Stage and above were a rare sight.

Besides, for the final three stages, there was a huge disparity in capabilities between each stage. If it were a one-to-one combat, a fighter who was just one level higher would be able to crush his opponent easily.

Even though the nations in Xenos did not establish diplomatic ties with each other and were often at war instead, the three nations had established a rule. The rule stated that no matter how intense the battles developed, no party was allowed to send a Pinnacle

Master to take part in a battle. That was because the domineering powers of a Pinnacle Master were enough to destroy an entire nation and no party would be able to bear such destructive consequences. As such, that had become an unspoken rule in Xenos.

Of course, it was still useful to have a Pinnacle Master. It was akin to having nuclear weapons. One did not have to use it, but being in possession of such weapons would be enough to threaten one's enemies.

"That's not very likely. According to what I know, all the Eighth Stage fighters are already serving the Imperial Court."

"But who else could it be? Or could it be that a new fighter had appeared in the Imperial Court but we haven't gotten news of it yet?"

"We will know the details after we investigate. Hopefully, we'll be able to get to the bottom of the matter. However, we wouldn't be able to find anything if a master of that caliber conceals his presence intentionally."

The three men were facing a tough situation. They were indeed suspicious of Huang Xiaoyong but it would be extremely difficult for them to find out the truth. Even though a Seventh Stage fighter was already very powerful, it was insignificant as compared to a fighter from the final three stages.

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Those men from the Imperial Court continued to stay in Longyun City for the next few days. As such, Huang Xiaoyong had to control himself to not look for Han Jingru. Even though he had not left the governor's residence at all during the past few days, given Huang Xiaoyong's personality, he was already at the edge of succumbing to his desires.

That morning, Huang Xiaoyong left the governor's residence secretly. He thought that he had covered his tracks very well, but he had overlooked the fact that those three men from the Imperial Court were all at the Seventh Stage. With their abilities, tracking him down was as easy as pie.

Even though Huang Xiaoyong thought that he had managed to pull it off unnoticed, every single action of his was noticed by the Imperial Court representatives.

When Huang Xiaoyong arrived at the courtyard where Han Jingru was residing, he could hardly believe that it was the place he was at a few days ago and almost thought that he had gone to the wrong place. He had remembered that the courtyard was overgrown with weeds, but what he was seeing then was beautiful flowers and greeneries. There were even small bridges and tranquil streams of water. It was so picturesque that it looked like paradise.

"Why are you here?" Han Jingru raised a brow and asked Huang Xiaoyong when he saw his disciple.

"Master, did you do all these by yourself? I've only been away for a few days but I could barely recognize this place anymore," Huang Xiaoyong said with an astonished expression.

Han Jingru admired his creation in satisfaction after hearing Huang Xiaoyong's words. He took some time to decorate the place as he was feeling bored and had nothing better to do for the past few days. As there was ample space in the courtyard, it was easy for him to decorate it in any manner he wanted. As such, he had designed it to look like paradise. Even though it could still be better, as compared to last time, it was indeed a drastic transformation.

"Have those guys from the Imperial Court left?" Han Jingru asked.

At the mention of those three men, Huang Xiaoyong hung his head and shrugged. If not for them, he wouldn't have to be trapped in the governor's residence for so long and had almost died of boredom.

"Not yet. Those three old men did not look like they would leave anytime soon. However, master, please don't worry. I'm sure no one noticed me sneaking out just now," Huang Xiaoyong said.

Han Jingru smiled faintly in response. Given the capabilities of the Imperial Court representatives, it was unlikely that a Fourth Stage fighter like Huang Xiaoyong would be able to hide his tracks from them. More likely than not, those three men were already observing them from somewhere.

"Do you really think you're formidable enough to hide your tracks from those guys?" Han Jingru said in amusement.

"Master, I left home really early and roamed around for a long time before coming here. How would they be able to

find out?" Huang Xiaoyong replied.

"Given your current abilities, you wouldn't understand the levels of observation and control those from the higher levels have. Perhaps, they were already aware from the moment you left the governor's residence," Han Jingru said. He did not even need to exercise any powers to detect Huang Xiaoyong's presence with his current abilities. He could already sense it right from the instant Huang Xiaoyong reached his doorstep.

Besides, the purpose of the Imperial Court's representatives' extended stay was to investigate Huang Xiaoyong. If that were the case, they would definitely be keeping track of his every movement carefully.

Huang Xiaoyong's heart skipped a beat. If that were true, his actions would have exposed the whereabouts of his master.

Huang Xiaoyong looked at Han Jingru with a look of self-reproach and apologized. "Master, I'm so sorry that I wasn't able to exercise some self-control. What should we do now? Would those old fellas give you trouble since they already know where you are?"

Han Jingru wasn't afraid that the men from the Imperial Court would give him trouble. After all, they wouldn't be able to do anything to him. In the worst situation, Han Jingru could just kill them. It was an easy feat for the man.

But of course, unless absolutely necessary, Han Jingru would not take such extreme measures as the Imperial Court had a supreme status and had the service of countless formidable fighters. Pitting himself against the

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Imperial Court wasn't a wise move.

"It's pointless to apologize now. They are definitely aware of my presence now. However, you don't have to worry about what happens next. It wouldn't be something that you would be able to help," Han Jingru said.

Huang Xiaoyong gritted his teeth. Even though Han Jingru did not blame him, he was unable to forgive himself as he had obviously brought trouble upon his master.

"Master, how about I go with them to the Imperial Court? Maybe they will leave if I agree to that," Huang Xiaoyong offered.

Han Jingru stared at Huang Xiaoyong as if he were looking at someone retarded. *How simple-minded can this guy get?* The Imperial Court's representatives' goal was not to bring him back but to understand how he managed to tame the seven-star familiar.

Even if Huang Xiaoyong had agreed to their request, it wouldn't stop those three men from investigating the matter.

"You should go back to the governor's residence first," Han Jingru said.

Huang Xiaoyong left the courtyard feeling extremely guilty about what he had done. He silently blamed himself on the way back. Meanwhile, the three men from the Imperial Court were already standing in front of Han Jingru in the courtyard.

Shortly after Huang Xiaoyong left, they had already

shown up.

Just as Han Jingru predicted, from the instant Huang Xiaoyong left the governor's residence, they were already watching his movements closely.

"Who are you?" One of the men asked Han Jingru.

"I'm just an ordinary man with two hands and two legs. There's nothing special about me," Han Jingru replied nonchalantly.

"An ordinary man? Why would Huang Xiaoyong sneak out to visit an ordinary man?" Another man asked as he sized Han Jingru up.

"Sneaked out? I have no idea why he had to be sneaky about it, but he wasn't here to visit me. He was here to find trouble instead," Han Jingru replied.

"Don't you think your explanation is a little perfunctory? Do you really think we are going to believe that?" One of the men sneered as Han Jingru's words sounded ridiculous to him.

"Well, you can investigate my identity. After that, you might understand our relationship better. However, there's something I'm curious about instead. Who are you people? Looking at your dressing, I don't think you guys are ordinary people?" Han Jingru asked them in return.

Even though it wasn't the best strategy to feign ignorance at that moment, but it was no doubt the easiest. Han Jingru chose to do that as he did not want to waste energy making up a story. As for whether it

would seem believable to those men, that wasn't part of Han Jingru's consideration.

"So, what's your identity?"

"I used to be the son-in-law of the Chen family but was chased out. The whole of Longyun City had been talking about it. You can ask anyone on the streets and they will be able to tell you the full story," Han Jingru replied.

Right at that moment, one of the men sneaked an attack on Han Jingru from the back.

Han Jingru did not defend himself reflexively. In fact, he did not even move an inch. Only after a few seconds did he act as if he was shocked to see someone behind him.

"What are you doing?" Han Jingru said defensively.

That man frowned upon hearing that. If he had really attacked Han Jingru, it would definitely be fatal.

However, judging from Han Jingru's ignorant response, it really seemed as though he did not manage to sense anything at all.

Could he really be just a commoner?



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The three members of the Imperial Court looked at each other before leaving without a word.

Of course, this did not mean that they believed Han Jingru. In fact, they needed more evidence to prove whether the latter was lying. Therefore, they thought it would be worthwhile for them to verify the man's identity.

Although Han Jingru was not as widely known in Longyun City as he was in Yun City, he still garnered attention, especially after the incident that Chen Tiexin had deliberately planned. Everyone now viewed Han Jingru as a loser, as many of them had witnessed the man leaving the Chen residence while being ridiculed and humiliated.

Without wasting much time, the three members of the Imperial Court immediately started investigating Han Jingru's background.

He became a temporary son-in-law of the Chen family and was then driven out of the Chen residence, thus becoming the laughing stock of Longyun City. On top of that, Chen Yanran married him merely because she could not stand Huang Xiaoyong's harassment.

That alone proved that Han Jingru was not lying when he claimed that Huang Xiaoyong had been troubling him. After all, the latter had liked Chen Yanran for years now, so there was no way he had planned this. Besides, Huang Xiaoyong was once a loser as well. He probably would not have predicted that he would end up where he was today and planned everything beforehand.

"Did we really get the wrong idea about Han Jingru?"

"According to the information we have found so far, he's nothing but trash. A master would not bear the humiliation of being kicked out of the Chen residence."

“But I still feel like something’s amiss. I don’t think this guy is as simple as we think.”

“There’s only one way to clear our confusion— we need to kill him. If he doesn’t take any actions before his death, then our suspicion would be wrong.”

“It’s not a big deal for us to kill a nobody. Furthermore, we’ll have one fewer issue to worry about if we kill him.”

Little did Han Jingru know that the three members of the Imperial Court had successfully found out his background, but even so they still could not dispel their suspicion of him. Instead, they now had the desire to get rid of him for good.

At nighttime, Han Jingru noticed the return of the trio. Knowing why they had timed their return in the middle of the night, Han Jingru sighed helplessly.

He had no intention to complicate the issue further, but he had no better option now.

When the three pushed through Han Jingru’s bedroom door, the latter sat up lazily. “I suppose you already found out who I am. If you know I’m nothing, why aren’t you letting me go?”

“Since you know you’re nothing, why not just die a quick death so no one can mock you further?”

“Why must I die just because I’m mocked?” Han Jingru’s tone gradually turned cold.

“Killing you means getting rid of our concern. Your death will not be in vain.”

Han Jingru stood up and stretched his body while saying, “It wasn’t easy to develop yourselves to such an

advanced level. It's a shame that I will have to kill you."

His words stunned the three of them. At times like this, an ordinary person would have knelt and begged for his life. *How could he still utter such things?*

At this moment, a strong killing intent surrounded the three, which terrified them. They were fighters of the Seventh Stage. Only someone in the final three stages could make them feel such intimidation.

"You... why did you hide your true strength?"

"Who the hell are you and which stage are you at?"

"You know that we are from the Imperial Court. If you kill us, the court will get to the bottom of this and when the time comes, you have no choice but to accept their judgment."

"You're the ones who pushed yourselves to a dead end, so you can't blame me. As for the Imperial Court, I fear them, but I'm not entirely terrified of them."

With that said, Han Jingru suddenly moved, so fast that the three men's eyes could not catch up with his movement.

For normal people, those in the Seventh Stage were like gods. However, killing Seventh Stage fighters was as simple as picking their fingers for experts in the last three stages.

A breeze passed by, and one of them was taken down with no sound at all.

Seeing this, the remaining two turned as pale as ghosts.

His strength surpasses even the Eighth Stage! Is he a

fighter of the Ninth Stage?

“You-”

“Please-”

They tried to reason with him, but their sentences were abruptly cut off midway.

The room went dead silent after that, with only the echoes of Han Jingru’s breathing hanging in the air.

The three members of the Imperial Court were killed just like that. If the news of this incident were to spread, the Imperial Court would surely be shocked to the core. However, Han Jingru would make sure that this incident would not be revealed.

Han Jingru dragged the three corpses to the front yard. Coincidentally, the recently sown plants and flowers were short of fertilizer, so the dead bodies could serve as that.

After dealing with everything, Han Jingru returned to his bedroom to continue his slumber as if nothing had happened.

Han Jingru slept soundly as the full moon rose in the sky. On the other hand, Chen Yanran had been deprived of sleep for days now because she kept recalling Huang Xiaoyong’s words.

After a few days’ continuous pondering, she suddenly felt a bad omen.

She lost consciousness at the Middle Area of Longyan Mountains that day. The only ones by her side then were Han Jingru and Huang Xiaoyong.

It was impossible for Huang Xiaoyong, a fighter of the Fourth Stage, to tame the seven-star Manticore. This left Han Jingru, a known piece of trash.

Before the union, the Wang family and the Xie family had brought along masters of the Fourth Stage. On top of that, Huang Xiaoyong had also brought along ten or so Second Stage masters. However, all of them suddenly disappeared without any traces. After that incident, Huang Xiaoyong had a big change of attitude and acted weirdly towards Han Jingru. Though the two stayed distanced in the presence of others, Chen Yanran still felt like she was missing something huge.

Knowing Huang Xiaoyong, he'll find every chance to insult Han Jingru, especially now that he's a fighter of the Fourth Stage. But why is he not doing so now?

Suddenly, Chen Yanran sat up from her bed as if she realized something.

“Don't tell me Huang Xiaoyong was referring to Han Jingru!” she uttered in horror. Huang Xiaoyong had made it clear that she had missed out on something around her and would regret her decision one day. After some thinking, she realized the strangest person around her was none other than Han Jingru.

He acted like a nobody, but the things that happened around him were strange and seemingly unexplainable.



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The more Chen Yanran dwelled on it, the more uneasy she was. Though there was no evidence to prove that she was right, other than her current speculation she could think of nothing else that could explain Huang Xiaoyong's statement.

Even though it was late at night, she still put on her clothes and strolled towards Han Jingru's bedroom.

The maid who was sleeping on a small bed near the corner stirred awake. She had been tasked to take care of Chen Yanran before the latter shared a room with her husband; her duty was to meet the woman's every need regardless of the time.

"Ms. Chen, it's late. Where are you going?" the maid asked with droopy eyes.

Chen Yanran did not respond. She left the room after putting her clothes on.

Upon seeing this, the maid panicked. She changed into proper attire and hurriedly followed Chen Yanran.

Given her job scope, that maid would have to take responsibility should something happen to Chen Yanran.

"Han Jingru, open the door!" the woman yelled while pounding on the man's door.

A short while later, the maid arrived at her side, puzzled.

She doesn't know that Mr. Tiexin kicked Han Jingru out a few days ago? Or is she delirious after getting rejected by Huang Xiaoyong?

"Ms. Chen, you can stop knocking. Han Jingru isn't here."

"What?" Chen Yanran turned to look at the maid. "Why

isn't he here? Where is he?"

"Mr. Tiexin has chased him out. Have you forgotten?"

"Chased out? When?" Chen Yanran was aghast. It was either she had completely forgotten about it, or she did not pay any attention to things other than what Huang Xiaoyong said after returning home from the governor's residence.

"A few days ago."

"Do you know where he went? I need to see him immediately."

Why would she think I know where he is? Taking care of her is my sole responsibility. I have no right to know or care about Han Jingru.

"I'm not sure, either. Perhaps Mr. Tiexin would know," the maid replied.

Upon hearing that, Chen Yanran swiftly headed to Chen Tiexin's room.

The man was enjoying his sleep when a knock woke him up.

He was about to snap at whoever that disturbed his sleep, but his rage instantly died down when he heard his sister's voice.

He opened the door but before he could ask what she wanted so late at night, she beat him to it. "Tiexin, do you know where Han Jingru is?"

"Han Jingru?" He frowned. "Why are you looking for that piece of trash? And how would I know where he is when I'm the one who kicked him out?"

"I want to see him. Help me find his whereabouts, Tiexin," uttered Chen Yanran nervously.

Chen Tiexin stared at his sister weirdly before looking at the maid, who was equally clueless and could only shake her head at him.

"What's wrong with you? Why do you want to see him?"

"I have something to discuss with him. Can you help me find him? I'll explain to you some other time," the woman persuaded.

Chen Tiexin hated anything that had to do with Han Jingru. He even grimaced just by the mention of his name, but if it were his sister's request, he would do it for her.

"I'll ask someone to find him tomorrow. Get back to sleep for now. It's too late."

Though Chen Yanran was impatient, she knew it was impossible to search for Han Jingru's whereabouts at this hour, so she nodded.

After she left, Chen Tiexin went back to his room. *Why is she so eager to meet Han Jingru? Did something happen? That must be the case.*

"Don't tell me you piece of sh*t took advantage of my sister!" he exclaimed through gritted teeth.

"I'll tear you apart if you really did."

Early next morning, when Han Jingru had just woken up, Huang Xiaoyong surreptitiously paid him a visit with a wide smile.

"You must've done something bad last night to have this

grin on," said Han Jingru.

"Master, I'm a good person. I wouldn't do bad things. I'm here to tell you some news," replied Huang Xiaoyong, still smiling.

"What news?" questioned Han Jingru curiously.

Huang Xiaoyong crouched beside the other man and proudly uttered, "I've appointed my spies to keep watch on those three from the Imperial Court, and I think they've left Longyun City. So it seems that they believed me in the end. But they're really rude and didn't even say goodbye before leaving."

"They didn't bid farewell because they never left," said Han Jingru with a faint smile.

"Huh?" Huang Xiaoyong was confused. *My spies clearly told me that those three are not staying at the inn anymore, which means they've left, doesn't it? Otherwise, why would they change inns for no reason?*

"But my spies told me they didn't return to that inn anymore. If they didn't leave, then where could they be?"

"They changed inns."

"Changed inns? How do you know, Master? My spies are all over the city; it's impossible for me not to know about this."

"How would you know if I'm the one who changed their inn?" Han Jingru stood up and walked to the garden. Huang Xiaoyong quickly followed him with a frown.

Did Master meet them? If so, why did he change their inn? I don't believe those three would listen to Master.

“You’re not pulling my leg, right? Where could you possibly ask them to go?”

Han Jingru stopped at a spot and pointed under their feet, confusing the other man even more.

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“They will forever stay right at this spot under your feet,” explained Han Jingru.

Under my feet? Forever?

A bulb seemed to have lit up in Huang Xiaoyong’s mind. He froze and stared at Han Jingru in shock.

“M-Master, you... you killed them?” the man questioned, horrified. *They are fighters of the Imperial Court with incredible strength, yet he managed to kill them?*



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“Be sure to come here when the flowers blossom,” uttered Han Jingru indifferently.

Huang Xiaoyong’s breath quickened. It was his first time feeling such power from Han Jingru. *How can he be this calm even after killing them, as if it’s not a big deal?*

“Master, if the Imperial Court notices their disappearance, they surely will start investigating,” he reminded Han Jingru. Though he knew his master was strong enough to take down all three Seventh Stage fighters, it did not mean that he was capable enough to be enemies with the entire Imperial Court.

“Then you should find people to disguise as those three and make them leave the city. Things will be settled as long as someone sees them leave.”

“But I don’t think the Imperial Court will buy that for long.”

Han Jingru lifted his head to look at Huang Xiaoyong and smiled. “Then you can go and report that I killed them. That way, you won’t be involved in this matter anymore.”

Han Jingru knew why his disciple was worried. After all, the three men were initially after him so the Imperial Court would make Huang Xiaoyong their sole focus upon noticing their disappearance. It was reasonable for the latter to be afraid.

Huang Xiaoyong trembled slightly. *Why would he think I’d do that? I wouldn’t do that even if I’m drunk.*

Han Jingru was his only way to becoming strong. Besides, he was Huang Xiaoyong’s master. *We should be in this together. I’ll never betray Master just for my sake.*

“How can you say such things, Master? I’m not that kind of person. I’ll still stay by your side even if you somehow

really do become the Imperial Court's enemy. I'm your disciple, after all."

Han Jingru only beamed a smile wordlessly. *If that day truly comes, I think you'll run far away from me instead. You may be loyal now, but that doesn't mean you won't change your mind along the way.*

In Han Jingru's eyes, their relationship would shatter one day because they were from different worlds, and their worlds had a history of being at war with each other.

"You should go now if there's nothing else. Find people for the disguise and escort them out of the city."

"Yes." Huang Xiaoyong nodded and left the garden.

When he returned to the governor's residence, Huang Xiaoyong appointed three men who had similar figures as the three Imperial Court members for the impersonation. The impostors were given the same outfits as what the Imperial Court members wore. The three men left through the East Gate in the evening. It was the liveliest gate and they had chosen it to deliberately let people see that they had indeed left. Even if the Imperial Court noticed the disappearance of the three and came to Longyun City to investigate, this diversion should stall the investigation for a while.

Huang Xiaoyong felt uneasy as he thought about Han Jingru's murder of the three men.

He had always thought of Han Jingru as someone kind enough to put up with even the Chen family's humiliation.

However, seeing that he actually did kill those three with his own hands, Huang Xiaoyong realized that he did not know his Master that well. This incident served him as a warning and made him even more respectful of Han

Jingru.

But he did not know that Han Jingru would not have killed them had they not intended to get rid of him in the first place; Han Jingru was not someone who would kill for no reason.

Han Jingru had two goals now. One was to find Jiang Yingying, and the other one was to find out where the connection came from. Unless absolutely necessary, Han Jingru would prefer to stay under the radar to avoid trouble.

The next day, news of the Imperial Court members' departure from Longyun City spread. The fact that Huang Xiaoyong did not leave with them gave rise to various rumors all over the city.

Some said that he rejected Imperial Court's offer to remain in Longyun City, and some thought that he had reached some agreement with the court and would work with them in the future.

However, regardless of the rumor, Chen Tiexin still felt jealous of him.

Previously, he would not even bat an eye to the likes of Huang Xiaoyong and had only regarded him as a puppet's son. Not only that, but Chen Tiexin would always proudly ignore him and would not even look at him like he was human.

But now, Huang Xiaoyong actually managed to draw the Imperial Court's attention. On top of that, he was a seven-star Beastmaster and Fourth Stage fighter. Chen Tiexin found it torturous that he was so far from the other man in terms of capability.

Chen Tiexin felt that the heavens were unfair because he

had worked his butt off but his hard work did not pay off. On the other hand, Huang Xiaoyong had already achieved so much despite not putting in much effort.

“Mr. Tiexin, something’s wrong with Ms. Chen. You should go see her.” After the maid in charge of Chen Yanran appeared out of the blue and broke his train of thought, he hurriedly went to his sister’s room.

Chen Yanran was staring into space while repeatedly chanting Han Jingru’s name as if she were possessed.

Seeing this, Chen Tiexin went to her side and held her hand. “Yanran, what’s wrong?”

“Tiexin... Tiexin.” She stared at her brother. “Have you found Han Jingru? Where is he? I want to meet him.”

The man gritted his teeth. *Why is she so keen to meet that guy? He must’ve done something to her! Otherwise, she wouldn’t be behaving like this.*

“Yanran, what did he do to you? Don’t be afraid. Tell me, and I’ll avenge you.”

“I want to meet him. I want to meet him, Tiexin. Help me find him, please,” wailed the woman as two streams of tears ran down her cheeks. Seeing this, her brother was convinced that Han Jingru had bullied her badly.

Little did he know that those were actually tears of remorse. The more she pondered about it, the more she felt that Huang Xiaoyong’s words pointed to Han Jingru.

Chen Tiexin took a deep breath and consoled her, “Don’t cry. I will definitely find him, even if it means going to the ends of the world. I won’t let him go.” His words successfully calmed the woman down.

Chen Tiexin was tempted to ask what exactly had happened between his sister and Han Jingru, but he feared it would trigger her emotions again, so he decided against it.

After leaving Chen Yanran's room, he ordered his servants to perform a search all over the city.



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“When you find Han Jingru, break both his legs and bring him here.”

He gave everyone the same instructions. Chen Tiexin firmly believed that Han Jingru had done something inhumane to his sister; he certainly would not forgive the man.

But it's going to be difficult to locate him within a few days because he and Huang Xiaoyong were already on their way to Xiaoling City.

Xiaoling City was known as “a paradise for men” as most of them would want to indulge themselves along both sides of the Rouge River. It was rumored that a rich man had lost all his fortune there and died on top of a woman's body. He had apparently chosen to spend his final moments in that place.

Huang Xiaoyong had also secretly gone to Xiaoling City a few times. The views of Rouge River were indeed irresistible to men.

When Han Jingru proposed to go there this time, he thought that his Master also had the intentions typical of men, so he introduced several famous shops to Han Jingru and even offered to find him a match.

However, Han Jingru rejected his offer. The beauties in this world were meaningless to him. Even someone like Qi Bingying could not move him, let alone other women.

The reason he wanted to go to Xiaoling City was to broaden his horizons and because he was curious. Of course, having curiosity did not mean that he would do the same outrageous things as other men.

“Other than the women, this city must also have masters, right?”

“Absolutely. This city is way bigger than Longyun City. And Rouge River is an attraction for men, so there are definitely masters among them. In Longyun City, fighters who are at the Fourth Stage are already considered undefeatable. But here, it won't be surprising to find someone at the Seventh Stage.”

“Only the Seventh Stage?” asked Han Jingru with a frown.

What does he mean by “only”?

Huang Xiaoyong did not know how to react to his statement. For the people in the ordinary world, there were hardly any Seventh Stage fighters. After all, almost everyone who had reached the last three stages was already a part of the Imperial Court and thus could not go to Xiaoling City as they pleased.

Besides, the women in Xiaoling City could not compare to the women in the Imperial Court.

“Master, Seventh Stage might mean nothing to you. But for normal people, those at the Seventh Stage are like gods. It's rare for them to meet a fighter at that stage.” Huang Xiaoyong deepened his voice before continuing, “Certainly, it's even rarer to find someone like you, who can kill three Seventh Stage fighters alone.”

“You really can be a Pinnacle Master with those flattering skills of yours.”

Huang Xiaoyong had pretty thick skin so he did not find

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that comment embarrassing. Instead, a smug smile crept onto his face. “Master, though I’m not at an impressive stage, nobody could beat me when it comes to flattering. When I was pursuing Chen Yanran in the past, I said many cheesy things to her. Now that I think about it, it does make me cringe.”

“You’re indeed a suck up,” said Han Jingru helplessly.

Han Jingru then changed the topic, “Other than the women, does this city have other interesting stuff?”

This city uses beauties as its marketing tool. Since many people are gathered here, I think there should be some interesting things. This world is still new to me. I want to see something I haven’t seen before.

“Master, this city is most famous for its beautiful women; men come here just for that. What do you mean by other interesting stuff?” Huang Xiaoyong asked in confusion.

Huh? Why did he ask me that when I’m not even from Xenos? I guess he doesn’t care about anything else since his mind is filled with women already.

“Let’s go. We’ll talk when we arrive at Xiaoling City.”

With that, the two of them picked up their pace. Although Han Jingru had no experience riding a horse, it was still easy for him to adapt, given his strength.

They arrived at the city at midnight, which was the peak hour in Xiaoling City.

Huang Xiaoyong was tempted to go straight to Rouge River as soon as they reached the city gate.

In the meantime, Han Jingru noticed that the population of the women here was indeed much higher than in Longyun City. Almost everyone who came into his view was an attractive woman.

“Master, are we going directly to Rouge River?” Huang Xiaoyong could not wait.

“Yeah.” Since Rouge River was the core of Xiaoling City, Han Jingru would surely not miss the chance to visit the landmark.

There was a river not far from the city gate. The owners of all the boat rental shops shouted over each other to get customers.

As the son of the governor of Longyun City, Huang Xiaoyong rented the most expensive boat.

“Master, boats also play an important role here as the women favor the expensive ones. The last time I was here, many of them threw their bras at me and were eager to show me their bare bodies.”

“So those who can’t get onto a boat are not qualified to come to Rouge River?” questioned Han Jingru with a smile. *This is just like those high-end clubs on Earth.*

“Well, they can hang around on both sides of the river. But the pretty young women won’t bat an eye on them. Only the elderly ladies will entertain the poor guys.”

Han Jingru and Huang Xiaoyong stood at the bow of the boat as the workers did the rowing. After a short while, the famous river finally came into sight.

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Countless young women stood on both sides of the riverbank, waving their handkerchiefs and eagerly trying to solicit guests. As Han Jingru and Huang Xiaoyong slowly entered the scene, the women shouted even harder to get their attention.

“Hey handsome, come to us! We’re skilled in all aspects!”

“Look at me, gorgeous! What type of girls do you like? We will satisfy your every need!”



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While Huang Xiaoyong was already drooling over the women, Han Jingru felt uncomfortable.

Situations like this were illegal back on Earth, after all. He had never encountered such blatant ways of soliciting guests before.

Even so, the women's facial features took him by surprise. *These women will surely stun the men on Earth.*

"They're pretty, aren't they, Master?"

"Why did you pursue Chen Yanran for so long when there are so many choices here?" asked Han Jingru with a chuckle.

"Master, this is just prostitution. It's only for fun; I will never wed one of them."

"What will happen to them in the end?" Han Jingru was curious.

Huang Xiaoyong had never met someone who cared about the prostitutes. He himself had never wondered about them.

However, it would not take a genius to guess that they would likely be chased out of the brothel when they aged. If luck were on their side, perhaps rich men would take them in as concubines. Even so, they would probably remain lowly for the rest of their lives.

"Why do you want to know, Master?"

"I'm just curious." Han Jingru's smile remained. On Earth, the women in this field could return home, find a partner,

and might even have their happily ever after. But it was obviously impossible for that to happen here. In this world, once a woman decided to walk this path, her fate would be sealed for life with no way out.

When they reached the middle part of Rouge River, Huang Xiaoyong ordered the rowers to stop. Han Jingru looked around and noticed that most boats also stopped right here. *This must be the famous shop he mentioned earlier.* The shop owners would invite guests to bid for virgins, and business had been going strong.

“Master, we can make a bid from this boat. Let me know if anyone attracts you. I’ll help you meet your needs tonight regardless of how much it costs.”

Huang Xiaoyong had no qualms with splurging on his master. Heck, he would even spend the governor’s entire fortune on Han Jingru.

“That won’t be necessary. I just wanted to look around.”

Just as his words fell, a petite woman was pushed to the riverside.

She hung her head as her body trembled. And different from all other women here, she seemed scared.

Obviously, the woman was forced to do this. Perhaps it was normal in this city, but this was something Han Jingru could not tolerate.

At this moment, the men on their respective boats started shouting their bids. They were most interested in inexperienced women like her. And just like that, her price rose rapidly.

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As the price increased, the bidders' enthusiastic voices gradually died down.

"How much do we need to buy her up?"

"Master, you want to get her out?" Huang Xiaoyong stared at Han Jingru in shock. *Is this love at first sight?*

"I shouldn't pity her, should I?" Han Jingru sighed. He knew he should not do this, but he could not hold himself back when he saw how scared the woman was.

Huang Xiaoyong did not know why Han Jingru wanted to get her out, but he would do it since it was his master's request. Without waiting for long, he raised his hand and was about to make a higher bid when a young man from the other boat interrupted him, "My man, do you seriously want to go against me?"

He walked to the bow of his boat and glared at Huang Xiaoyong. This person had made the highest bid earlier, which meant that he really desired the woman. He clearly disliked the way Huang Xiaoyong had interjected him.

"Are you the only one who can bid?" Huang Xiaoyong stared at the man scornfully.

The young man smiled coldly. "If you want to go against me, you should know who I am first, lest you lose your life in this river."

"What? Are you running out of money? If that's the case, stop bidding then. Don't act like you're rich," Huang Xiaoyong talked back.

The man's already cold face hardened even more. It was

evident that he was a man of status in Xiaoling City, or he would not have uttered such words.

At this time, a sleepy old man appeared beside him. Han Jingru could tell that he was a Fifth Stage fighter. Though he looked harmless, he emitted a deathly vibe.

The people on the other boats quickly recognized who the young man was. They bowed to him while advising Huang Xiaoyong not to cause trouble.

If this had happened in the past, Huang Xiaoyong would have obediently bowed to the young man. However, now that he had his Master with him, he could not care less who the guy was. Besides, he was also no longer a Second Stage fighter.

Hmph. The old man made a sound which was enough to cause waves on the water. Everyone turned pale when they witnessed this.

Huang Xiaoyong, on the other hand, only smiled faintly. *Huh? This is nothing to my Master! There's no need to show off.*

“My man, I would advise you to leave Xiaoling City right now and never appear before me again.” The young man smirked. In his eyes, the old man's appearance was enough to make Huang Xiaoyong piss his pants.

“You can defeat a Fifth Stage fighter on your own, right?” Han Jingru whispered.

In terms of strength, there was a huge difference between Huang Xiaoyong and the old man. *But now that he's a seven-star Beastmaster, does he even need my help?*

“Master, I never expected to show off our amazing skills right after arriving in this city,” said Huang Xiaoyong with a smile.

Though the young man could not hear their conversation, he still felt humiliated when he noticed the smile on Huang Xiaoyong’s face. His own countenance darkened.

“Since you want to die that badly, I’ll grant you your wish!” With that said, the young man looked at the old man. It was clear that he was asking the older one to do the deed.

The latter smiled; killing people was nothing to him.

As a Fifth Stage fighter, he could even get away with killing people in public because he knew nobody would report him in fear of getting on his bad side.

When everyone was silently mourning Huang Xiaoyong’s death, a gigantic white figure came out of nowhere.



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