

Chapter 41: Turning the Sky Wheel (3)

“Am I.... seeing things? Did Ye Qingtang actually spin the wheel four rounds?!”

“Four rounds.... Doesn’t this mean she’s at least innate stage seven? But... I thought her spirit root shattered?”

A frenzy of speculations exploded among the crowd like the tumultuous chaos of a thunderstorm.

No one expected Ye Qingtang to be able to turn the Sky Wheel initially. However, she actually managed four full revolutions right in front of their eyes!

That had even exceeded Duan Tianrao’s results by a whole round!

Everyone was completely stunned by what they had witnessed.

This included Ye Ling, who stood astounded beneath the stage with his eyes wide opened. This was all beyond him. Not only was his daughter capable of turning the wheel... she was able to achieve four full revolutions!

Ye Xun, who had sat back and watched with her eyes rolling initially, anticipated Ye Qingtang failing and become a laughing stock, but after witnessing her display, the gentle smile she put on earlier went rigid.

How could this be?

How did Ye Qingtang possess such strength?

Wasn’t she without a spirit root?

Her shock stirred up her penchant to turn to Duan Tianrao who was standing beside her. But as expected, he had a face filled with astonishment like the others.

Duan Tianrao could never imagine Ye Qingtang would surpass him by an entire level in strength.

Duan Tianrui was stupefied as well. But, when he saw the crowd standing in awe of Ye Qingtang, who remained nonchalant on stage, a look of contempt flashed across his face. While everyone was confounded by her performance, Duan Tianrui voiced his opinion suddenly:

“Miss Ye, today’s the Day of the Sabbath. The purpose of our noble families here is to present our blessings to the people of the City of Lin. But you’re still wearing that face veil without any intention to reveal your appearance. Isn’t that kind of disrespectful?”

Once Duan Tianrui’s words were spoken, the crowd seemed to regain their senses and realized Ye Qingtang had been wearing a face veil all along.

At that moment, everyone began to raise a questioning eyebrow.

“Her strength’s a shocker indeed.”

“Strength’s not everything. Haven’t you heard, she’s notorious for her hideous appearance? Otherwise, why do you think Duan Tianrao would break up with her?”

“True. Strength’s secondary for a girl. Looks are of primary importance. Regardless of a girl’s strength, if no one could bear to look at her, she’s unsuitable to be a First Lady. Ye Xun, on the other hand, is pretty and possesses considerable strength. A girl like her is then worthy of the people’s affection.”

With Duan Tianrui’s digression, everyone’s attention was quickly diverted from Ye Qingtang’s display of strength to her appearance. Their curiosity was well-founded because she had always worn a face veil in public. As a young lady of the Ye household, if she was not hideous, why would she need to hide her face?

As the crowd changed their subject of speculation, Duan Tianrao had recovered considerably from his astonishment. He turned instinctively to look at Ye Xun, his beautiful wife-to-be standing beside him, and only then did the shock he had finally recede.

Duan Tianrui was trying to hide his growing smirk after his diversionary tactic managed to succeed. He believed he had driven Ye Qingtang into a corner when she remained speechless over all the ensuing provocations. He became elated and added to the pressure instead.

“And Miss Ye, you are presenting a blessing on behalf of your household. Removing that veil from your face is only proper, if your household honors the rite, that is.”

Ye Qingtang gave the belligerent Duan Tianrui a cold-eyed glare, with a condescending sneer on her lips.

Chapter 42: Gossips and Rumors (1)

“You want me to remove my face veil?” Ye Qingtang asked abruptly.

Duan Tianrui stated matter-of-factly: “It’s not my personal want, it’s a matter of decency and respect for the Sabbath’s traditions. Miss Ye, you can rest assured, we are just conscientious of the rite’s proceedings, even if your appearance is undesirable, we would not take heed of that.”

Although Duan Tianrui glossed over his words, everyone could still infer that he was criticizing Ye Qingtang for her hideous appearance.

And Duan Tianrao and Ye Xun, who stood beside him, did not seem the least concerned to stop him.

Ye Qingtang gave a derisive laugh as she looked Duan Tianrui in the eye and said: “As you wish.”

In the next moment, she lifted her hand and tore the veil from her face.

When the veil was removed, gasps of awe and disbelief resounded instantly throughout the entire plaza.

A face with such exquisite features, that was akin God’s gift to mankind, was suddenly unveiled for all to envy. That flawless and snow-white skin accentuated her sensual and luscious lips which had curled slightly into a faint smile.

Just witnessing that could be considered a blessing from the heavens.

No one expected such beauty to exist behind that flimsy piece of face veil.

“Well? Are you satisfied now?” Ye Qingtang asked while a radiant smile played on her lips, which apparently enthralled the crowd, rendering them a speechless lot that could only gawk at her pretty face in a daze.

Duan Tianrui was at a complete loss for words. For the life of him, he could never imagine Ye Qingtang was a beauty queen.

Ye Xun, whose looks garnered the crowd's praises previously, could never hold a candle to Ye Qingtang. In fact, Ye Qingtang's appearance was beyond comparison, even for the rumored 'City of Lin's Number 1 Beauty', Ye You.

While Duan Tianrui remained dumbfounded, Ye Xun and Duan Tianrao displayed quite a spectacular array of expressions on their faces.

All color drained from Ye Xun's face in an instant. If she had not witnessed this herself, she could never believe that the stunning beauty standing on stage was Ye Qingtang!

How is this possible.... She remembered clearly.... Ye Qingtang had a hideous blemish on her face ever since birth....

Duan Tianrao gawked at Ye Qingtang's gorgeous looks like the rest of the crowd. In the limelight under the sun, her presence on stage was akin to a Goddess's advent from the heavens who no mortal maiden could hope to contend with in appearances.

"That's hideous? Who claimed Miss Ye was hideous just now? If she's hideous, is there anything beautiful in this world?"

Feelings of exhilaration swept across the common folk in the plaza, for it was the first time they had laid eyes on such a gorgeous young lady.

"Only a girl with her looks deserves the 'City of Lin's Number 1 Beauty' title."

As everyone sang praises for Ye Qingtang's appearance, many recalled Duan Tianrui's criticism just now and began to realize, due to his spiteful nature, he might be trying to defame her and thus allegedly coerced her into making a fool of herself.

Without knowing....

Ye Qingtang was the epitome of beauty itself!

At this moment, everyone began inferring their thoughts from the recent string of events.

Previously they had assumed the reason behind Duan Tianrao renouncing their engagement, was because he could not put up with Ye Qingtang, whom was lacking in both strength and looks.

But now....

With Ye Qingtang's apparently gorgeous looks, on top of her impressive strength displayed when turning the Sky Wheel, people started thinking otherwise.

Regardless of looks or strength, Ye Xun obviously paled in comparison to her.

Unless Duan Tianrao had lost his mind, why would he give up marrying Ye Qingtang in exchange for Ye Xun?

Translator's Rant

Apparently, marrying a person because of love for his/her character is unthinkable.... XD

Chapter 43: Gossip and Rumors (2)

Just when speculations from the crowd's new inferences were going about, an upright figure emerged on the altar's stage and approached Ye Qingtang out of the blue.

Upon getting a closer look, the crowd realized that person was none other than the young prodigy Si Bai, from the Si household!

"Tang Tang, the rites are done. I doubt there's any need for us to loiter around? Grandpa had ordered me to get you home for his game of chess." Si Bai smiled and regarded Ye Qingtang amicably as he extended an invitation to her.

"All right." Ye Qingtang returned his smile after a slight nod, and without paying heed to the surrounding stares, she followed Si Bai off stage.

"What's this? Are they on good terms?"

"Haven't you heard how Mr. Si Bai addressed her? I guess there's more to it than that."

"Ain't there bad blood between the Si and Ye household? Why're they inviting Miss Ye to their residence?"

These series of questions reverberated through the minds of the crowd as they witnessed Ye Qingtang and Si Bai departing together from the stage. The stunning beauty, Ye Qingtang, and the prince charming, Si Bai, walking side-by-side, made the perfect portrayal of an epic couple straight out of fairy tales, a truly wonderful sight to behold.

Everyone knew Si Bai's phlegmatic character, who rarely kept contact with people outside the Si household. However, with him openly inviting Ye Qingtang, and their seemingly intimate relationship....

The crowd automatically turned their attention to Duan Tianrao and his followers standing rigidly beneath the stage.

Their previous assumption of Duan Tianrao ditching Ye Qingtang was completely overturned.

Duan Tianrao, though considered a capable man, still paled in comparison with Si Bai.

"Don't tell me.... calling off the engagement, was not Mr Duan Tianrao's intention? Was it Miss Ye Qingtang getting together with Mr Si Bai, that things ended up this way?"

"Obviously! If you're him, would you give up a Goddess for a mere maiden? Unless you're blind, that is."

"The same goes for the ladies as well. Mr Si Bai's definitely the better choice. To think I pitied Miss Ye at first, now should I feel sorry for Mr Duan Tianrao instead?"

The crowd came to a conclusion, that Duan Tianrao was forced to call off his engagement with Ye Qingtang.

Duan Tianrao's face was a riot of color as the crowd's chatters transposed to sarcasm through his ears.

All the humiliation and disgrace that was supposed to be brought upon Ye Qingtang, came back to haunt him.

“Duan-lang...” Ye Xun looked anxiously at Duan Tianrao’s stifled demeanor from a side, with eyes filled with worries.

Duan Tianrao heaved a deep breath before turning around, completely ignoring Ye Xun and said to the rest, “Let’s go.”

Ye Xun was startled by his attitude but could only hang her head behind Duan Tianrui as they left without turning back.

From then on, Duan Tianrao became the laughing stock in the City of Lin.

Before leaving, Ye Qingtang sought Ye Ling’s consent for her to visit the Si household. Ye Ling was obviously elated at the moment and without reading too much into it, he gave her his consent whilst he returned home, as happy as a clam.

No one would dare criticize her daughter’s looks again in the future!

Within the main hall of the Si’s residence...

“Master Si, are you certain?” Ye Qingtang, who turned up at their invitation, had her eyes widened, while a radiant smile played on her lips.

Old Master Si nodded and reiterated, “The purpose of calling you here today on such short notice, is to notify you first-hand of his lordship’s agreement to meet up with you. His lordship will be gracing us with his presence in a few days.” While those words were spoken, Old Master Si could not hide his tone of delight from having his job well done.

Chapter 44: Gossip and Rumors (3)

Ye Qingtang had already saved two lives from the Si household. If Mu Su declined the meeting invitation, Old Master Si would have a hard time making it up to her. Thus, it was fortunate everything went smoothly.

“Master Si, many thanks for your kind assistance.” Ye Qingtang was truly grateful for his help. Without the Si household’s referral, it would be impossible for her to get in touch with dignitaries such as Mu Su.

As long as she could meet him, her plans could finally come to fruition!

“There’s no need for thanks.” Old Master Si smiled as he added, “Qingtang, you’re no stranger to us, just call me grandpa like the rest of them young’uns if you wish.”

Ye Qingtang’s eyes lit up and without standing on ceremony, she said, “Roger, Grandpa Si.”

Old Master Si gave a chortle before he continued:

“Qingtang, this old grandpa will nag a bit. Since you’ll be meeting his Lordship, make sure you’re sincere in your intentions. His Lordship’s a large-hearted personage but condemns contrivances, you’d do well to remember that.”

“Roger.” Ye Qingtang knew Old Master Si was giving his advice out of good will.

Old Master Si held Ye Qingtang in high regard even though she was part of the Ye household that he despised. But one could not deny, the longer he had gotten to know her, the more his fondness towards this sweet and smart girl grew. She had nothing of the sort of brashness and ignorance that ought to be evident in a girl her age.

Old Master Si intended for her to stay for a meal, but Ye Qingtang declined politely.

Since she had heard an answer from Mu Su, it was time for her next move. She estimated the arrival of that ‘thing’, which was bound to be born. If she was late, she might miss that again, like during her past.

“Grandpa Si, I’m sorry I can’t stay for long. There’s still some matters I’ve to attend to.”

“No worries. I won’t keep you then.”

After bidding her valediction to Old Master Si, Ye Qingtang left the Si’s residence.

She hummed a tune while on her way to the Withered Woods.

Her visit to the Withered Woods now was not for a stroll, but to acquire a certain treasure she missed out in her past!

While treading along the fallen leaves, Ye Qingtang maneuvered effortlessly through the woods. Behind the Withered Woods was a mountain range which drew the horizon between the earth and sky.

There was a thunderstorm a few days ago, which caused a landslide in the encompassing valley, damaging quite a portion of the woods. The aftermath was a mess, with the surrounding fallen leaves cluttered with gravel and debris.

Ye Qingtang lifted the hem of her skirt as she strode towards the valley, stopping in front of a cavern which was partially caved-in.

In her past, Ye Ling and the Second Elder were assassinated upon the Great Elder’s return. Ye Qingtang faced the same crisis, that forced her to escape into the Withered Woods.

She fell upon this stone cavern while escaping amidst the darkness of the night, hiding within it for days, enduring her suffering and hunger. It was not until she was certain of the assassins’ departure, did she finally come out of the cave.

And it was also during that moment, when she caught a glimpse of that certain ‘thing’, but she was too weak and distracted with keeping herself alive to pay any attention to that, without knowing she had missed out on a treasure which could turn her life around.

No way would she miss that again this time!

A smirk came across her lips as she rummaged through piles of rubble, with her fair and delicate hands.

Moments later, a dirt and grime covered “egg”, the size of her palm, was unearthed before her very eyes.

Chapter 45: The Great Elder (1)

The egg was small, and though tainted by dirt and grime, one could still roughly discern the blue and white crisscrosses on the eggshell.

Ye Qingtang's eyes lit up once she saw that.

"Finally!"

It was a fertilized egg, laid by a drake!

Belonging to a species of lightning drakes, God knows how long the egg had been buried deep within the mountains, but it was finally uncovered after the landslide a few days ago. In the past, Ye Qingtang chanced upon it once, but neglected it due to her dire straits. By the time she returned to look for it, the egg had already perished from being out in the open for too long.

Many years passed since then, she laid eyes on a domesticated lightning drake on a certain occasion. Its might and glory were certainly a sight to behold though its owner was no more than a stage two cultivator. But with the drake's devastating and relentless prowess, it single-handedly broke through and decimated an encircling enemy force of nearly ten thousand.

Ye Qingtang deeply regretted then, if she had managed to save that egg during the initial encounter, Ye You and her accomplices could never have driven her into a corner.

This time however, she would not let that regret come to pass.

Ye Qingtang excavated the egg from the dirt and rubble and carried it carefully in her bosom.

As long as she could hatch this egg and raise its hatchling successfully, she would gain a powerful weapon in her arsenal!

"Little one, things sure have changed for you and me this time. We will no longer miss our chance for a new life." A smile played on Ye Qingtang's lips as she caressed the egg.

There was still quite some time before the egg could hatch. Keeping it on her at all times, with the warmth from her body as its incubator, would be necessary to sustain the life within it.

After getting the egg, Ye Qingtang returned home promptly, only to find a foreboding atmosphere once she stepped through the main gates.

A slight change came over her demeanor as she approached the main hall.

Ye Ling sat at the host's position in the main hall. Seated next to him, was an old man with a cold and menacing countenance.

"Tang Tang, you're back just in time. The Great Elder had just returned." While Ye Ling turned his attention to her, an inkling of helplessness could be seen from his eyes despite him putting up a front.

Ye Qingtang stopped in her tracks for a moment, before she turned her gaze towards the Great Elder.

On the day when she was tricked by Ye Xun to leave the residence, it was none other than him who captured her and allowed Ye You, his granddaughter, to gouge out her spirit root.

The Great Elder could be considered the perpetrator of all her miseries in the past. Meeting him in the flesh after all this time, though Ye Qingtang was no longer as rash as she used to be, she had to rein herself in discreetly, while greeting him nonchalantly:

“Ye Qingtang sends her greetings, Great Elder.”

The Great Elder was more than eighty years old. Though all his hair had turned grey, he was still a staunch man who looked more like he was still in his fifties. His piercing gaze prowled over Ye Qingtang briefly. After discovering the blemish was gone from her face, his eyes flashed a glint of bewilderment, but he remained unperturbed and only nodded his head slightly in return.

“Your journey, escorting Xiao-You¹ all the way to the Cloud-Breakers must be tiring. Better rest early.” Ye Ling suggested calmly, though deep down, he was totally wary of the Great Elder.

The Great Elder had an impassive face as he stated: “Thank you Sir, for your concern. Xiao-You earning the favor of the Cloud-Breaker’s sovereign is a great honor for the Ye household, so to me, it was well worth all the trouble.”

Ye Ling cracked a smile as he heard that.

Chapter 46: The Great Elder (2)

“But I’m indeed rather tired. I’ll retire to my room then.” The Great Elder stated with an indifferent look and left without waiting for Ye Ling’s response.

Only after the Great Elder left the hall did Ye Ling gradually loosen up.

“Tang Tang, now that the Great Elder has returned, you might want to go out less often. Your second uncle is due to return from his training in a few days; we’ll go and receive him then.” Ye Ling had his worries, as his health deteriorated over these years, on top of the Second Elder’s sequestered training, the Great Elder was getting brazenly assertive in his ways.

Ye Ling was not a fool, he had by now noticed the Great Elder’s ruthless ambition.

But Ye Ling was unable to contend with him at present and could only play by his rules till the Second Elder’s return, when they could finally confront the Great Elder.

Now, Ye Ling was mostly concerned with Ye Qingtang’s safety. He was afraid the Great Elder would lay hands on his daughter who was the heir to the head of the household, and thus gave his forewarning.

Ye Qingtang heaved a sigh to herself as she looked at her worried father.

She was aware her father’s caution was a consequence of ensuring her safety. Even after the Great Elder subverted all his authority as head of the household, her father never retaliated, all for the sake of her safety.

However....

Little did her father knew, she had already come to harm.

In her past, Ye Qingtang was coerced by the Great Elder into keeping mum. Her reason to remain silent this time however, was to prevent causing further distress for her father.

“Duly noted, father.” Ye Qingtang nodded meekly.

Ye Ling was then relieved.

“Your performance during the rites today was marvelous. As your father, even I’m amazed how strong you’ve become. But still, rest early and be ready in these few days. Once your second uncle returns, everything’ll work out for the best.”

“Yes, father”

Though Ye Qingtang agreed to Ye Ling’s notion, she could not unwind like him.

That was because the Great Elder was fully aware of Ye Ling’s plan to confront him upon the Second Elder’s return.

Thus, in the past, the Great Elder actually had him assassinated a day before the Second Elder’s return and in turn, framed the Second Elder for his murder, killing two birds with one stone and eliminating them both.

This time, Ye Qingtang would avert the Great Elder’s treacherous scheme at all costs.

With that in mind, she narrowed her eyes and returned to her room swiftly.

The medicine she had prepared for Ye Ling was already mixed into his tea daily. Those medicine would slowly neutralize the poison in his body. Without Ye Ling himself noticing, his condition had improved considerably over these few days.

But....

She was still a long way off from being able to adeptly deal with the Great Elder and required more preparations....

Ye Xun had been in a foul mood ever since she returned from the Duan household.

Previously, she was the one who informed Duan Tianrao in secret, of Ye Qingtang’s shattered spirit root and her supposedly hideous appearance.

But today, Ye Qingtang had put her in a tight spot. Even without Duan Tianrao voicing his misgivings, Ye Xun clearly felt his change in attitude towards herself.

“Ye Qingtang, why must you always get in my way?” Ye Xun heaved a deep breath discreetly, as she tried hard to turn her mood around before stepping into the Ye residence.

Upon returning, she heard news of the Great Elder’s arrival, and her anguish receded an instant.

She had long since joined the ranks of the Great Elder and was obviously well aware of his ambitions. Now with his return, neither Ye Ling nor Ye Qingtang could hope to live in peace!

Chapter 47: assassination (1)

The Great Elder was vying for the position as head of the household and would never allow Ye Qingtang to walk away scot-free.

While having such thoughts, Ye Xun rushed off to meet the Great Elder immediately.

The Great Elder was seated in his study at the moment and while bearing an impassive countenance, he looked at Ye Xun who stood in front of him.

“Grandpa, Xun-er didn’t know you’ve returned beforehand. Forgive me for not being around to receive you.” Ye Xun apologized meekly while prostrating herself before the Great Elder.

“You may stand. It’s not your fault. I didn’t expect to return ahead of time as well.” The Great Elder raised a hand slightly, allowing Ye Xun to dispense with the formalities.

Ye Xun added meekly: “Grandpa, your journey must be tiring. But now that sis is officially a member of the Cloud-breakers, her future looks bright and she’ll surely be blessed with limitless potential.”

Ye Xun’s glib praises were like music to the Great Elder’s ears, though he remained indifferent and asked, “During my absence, did that Ye Qingtang get out of hand?”

“She heeded your warning and didn’t mention anything to Ye Ling about that incident.” Ye Xun dared not play around with the Great Elder and only gave facts.

The Great Elder nodded slightly before he spoke suddenly in a cold and menacing voice, “Least she’s smart enough to understand that’s for her own good. If she’s unable to keep her mouth shut, she’ll have to feel my full wrath.”

Ye Xun watched the Great Elder reveal his vicious and sinister nature before she stated suddenly: “Though she dared not defy you.... during the rites today, her display of strength was odd.”

“Odd?” The Great Elder furrowed his brows slightly.

Ye Xun proceeded to give an account of what transpired during the rites, in detail to the Great Elder.

The Great Elder exuded a slightly sullen demeanor after hearing her account.

“An innate seventh stage.”

Ye Qingtang had obviously lost her spirit root, how could she harness that degree of strength?

But the Great Elder was not too concerned about that, even if she was truly at that level, she was still beneath him. What mattered to him the most was the Second Elder’s return in a few days.

Comparing the entire household, only the Second Elder was above him in terms of strength, and was a staunch supporter of Ye Ling.

If they were to join forces against him, that would definitely be an obstacle to his plans.

“You may leave.” The Great Elder stated, without voicing that concern.

“Yes.” Ye Xun obediently left the room.

The Great Elder narrowed his eyes as he sat alone in his study.

The Second Elder would return in two days. The moment he showed himself, would also be when the entire household fall into the Great Elder’s hands.

A smirk played across the Great Elder's lips as he summoned his confidant to the study.

"I'll need you to make a trip to Qin Luo's Pavilion, on the eastern side of the city...." With that said, he wrote a letter and handed it over to the confidant, who left promptly after receiving his instructions.

The Great Elder sneered as he remained seated by his desk.

Qin Luo's Pavilion was a common teahouse though that was only on the surface. It was in fact, an underground organization that dealt with assassinations. Its leader, Qin Luo, possessed outstanding capabilities and with his band of elites, they were successful in all missions they had undertaken.

The Great Elder's task for his confidant was buying their service to complete his plan.

As darkness settled deep in the night of the following day, most of the lights were already extinguished in the Ye residence.

Ye Ling sat alone in his study with his brows knitted. It was not till his attendants completed their preparation of the best liquors, did his rigid demeanor finally wind down.

The Second Elder would leave the training grounds early tomorrow morning. As long as he could return to the Ye household, things would finally work out in his favor.

As he peered at the jars of liquor on the table, Ye Ling heaved a sigh of relief, before he blew out the lamp and prepared to retire to his room.

Chapter 48: assassination (2)

Just when Ye Ling stepped out of his study, he suddenly felt a foreboding feeling hidden amidst the gentle breeze in the depths of the night.

His eyes narrowed in an instant and one of his hands moved instinctively onto the hilt of his sword.

The wind howled abruptly as a few shadows descended from the roofs.

In a flash, Ye Ling was surrounded by four figures draped in black garbs.

"Gentlemen, to what do I owe the pleasure of your visit at this hour?" Ye Ling was putting on a front as his eyes scanned the vast courtyard. There was no sign of the guards who should had been on duty and aside from himself, only those four uninvited guests were around.

"Are you the head of this household?" One of them, who seemed to be the leader, asked.

"Yes." Ye Ling answered.

The leader's eyes flashed a menacing glare and as he exchanged glances with the others, they unsheathed their swords in the next instant and attacked Ye Ling without a word!

Ye Ling was shocked as he crossed swords with those men.

In the blink of an eye, sparks as many as stars in the night sky flew from the clash of their folded steel.

Those four men were powerful adversaries, even for Ye Ling when he was in his prime. Not to mention with his recent weakened condition, he could not hope to win against them and thus, broke out in a cold sweat within moments.

The leader sent Ye Ling flying with a sudden kick that knocked him down flat on the ground. Ye Ling's life was about to be forfeited as those men dove towards him with their swords.

Just when the tip of their swords was about to penetrate his chest, an arc of slashing light flashed before them.

That was closely followed by a quartet of clangs from the men's steel as the trajectory of their swords were knocked astray by that single streak of light!

A dainty figure had appeared suddenly from beyond the walls of the courtyard, cutting in straight between the men and Ye Ling.

However, Ye Ling was alarmed when he realized who that figure was.

"Tang Tang! Get out of here now!" Ye Ling could never expect his daughter to appear out of nowhere. Protecting himself from those men were already beyond his capabilities, even if Ye Qingtang possessed the strength of an innate seventh stage, defeating them would still be impossible.

Ye Qingtang bore a cold countenance as she stood in front of Ye Ling. Under the moonlight, her cold-eyed stare swept across the four bloodthirsty foes who preyed upon them.

"Lass, you wanna die too?" The leader furrowed his brow and exuded a murderous intent as he kept an eye on Ye Qingtang, who appeared out of the blue.

Ye Qingtang stood undaunted with Ye Ling behind her back. In her past on this night, her father was murdered by assassins employed by the Great Elder. She would never let that tragedy come to pass again now that she was reborn.

But....

She did not try her hand at putting up a fight because she was fully aware of the differences between their strength. With her current capabilities, she could never hope to defeat them.

Instead, Ye Qingtang began talking to them amicably: "I know you guys are after my father's life for a price, and I know who's the one behind this as well. What I didn't know.... was the price that person offered, to engage such talented individuals such as yourselves? To think you all would totally ignore our family's name and barge right in."

"Lass, that has nothing to do with you. Since you knew our deal but showed yourself nonetheless, that's too bad for you." The leader gave a derisive laugh as he prepared to raise his sword again.

Ye Qingtang added without flinching: "It's definitely not cheap to buy the services of Qin Luo's Pavilion. May I ask the price for engaging your good self, Mr. Qin Luo, the great leader, and three of your highly talented subordinates? Let me guess, the price must be more than ten thousand gold, am I right?"

Chapter 49: assassination (3)

The four men faltered for a moment when they heard Ye Qingtang's statement.

They were all fully masked, how did the lass know their identities?

"Let's see, if it's at least ten thousand gold, how much more would that be? Wait, don't tell me it's just ten thousand?" Ye Qingtang asked with a grin.

The men narrowed their eyes. Though they did not ascertain her answer, their silence affirmed her conjecture.

Ye Qingtang chuckled and said: "For real? I didn't expect our Great Elder to be so stingy, giving you guys such a meagre amount for this."

Did she just mention the Great Elder?

Those men initially assumed Ye Qingtang was buying time, however.... Not only did she disclose their identities, she actually knew the Great Elder was the one who hired them.

It was impossible for the men to remain indifferent in this situation.

"Lass, what're you trying to imply?" The leader asked in a cold and menacing voice.

Ye Qingtang replied nonchalantly: "Nothing much, just giving my two cents. With your expertise, that amount of payment's an insult to your capabilities, don't you reckon? I'll make you a much better deal. Forty thousand gold, for you guys to get rid of that stingy Great Elder instead."

The men were stunned by her words.

Forty thousand?

That's four times the amount the Great Elder's offering!

The men exchanged glances quickly; to accept her offer now would be jumping the gun. The leader spoke: "Miss Ye, I know who you are. You're presumptuous to take us for fools. We're all aware of your circumstances. With how things are now for you and your father, let's not talk about forty thousand, I'm afraid even that measly ten thousand gold's unaffordable for you...."

Ye Ling did not lower his guard for a moment whilst he stood behind Ye Qingtang. He too, assumed she was buying time for their escape, though regrettably, he had to go along with the leader's presumption. It was impossible to fork out forty thousand gold given their current circumstances.

However....

Ye Qingtang retained her grin and while looking them in the eye, she suddenly extracted solid gold from her dimension ring, setting them piece by piece in front of those men.

Within moments, a stack of gold worth twenty thousand laid before them. Those pieces of glittering gold glowed like a fluorescent under the moonlight, almost too blinding for the men whose eyes had adapted to the darkness of the night.

Although their organization had received numerous job offers in the past, payment wise was always in the range of thousands. A ten thousand gold offer by the Great Elder was already considered one of their highest bidders in these recent years.

But....

Miss Ye's offer was over the top, to think she was truly capable of forking out this much gold!

"Here's twenty thousand gold, as down payment for my job offer. As long as you can get rid of the Great Elder, the remaining twenty thousand gold will be yours in no time." Ye Qingtang raised her eyes over the stack of gold and gazed at the four men, whom were clearly wavering by now.

In her past, she was oblivious to the Great Elder's plans, not to mention her negligible assets that was obviously insufficient to buy off these assassins. But... Things are different now.

She could beat the Great Elder at his own game and give him a taste of his own medicine.

The men were hesitant to accept Ye Qingtang's offer at first, but after being presented with that stack of gold, they exchanged glances again. With a sagacious eye, the leader was clearly putting up a solemn facade as he said:

"We're an organization which upholds our contracts. A job's our obligation, we'll see to its completion once accepted. If people get wind of us being this fickle on our terms, wouldn't that be a smear on our good name?" Though the leader spoke in a cold voice as usual, it was not as menacing as before.

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Ye Qingtang spoke with a genuine smile, "Of course, I'm well aware of your organization's creed and I respect you all for that. That's why your kind assistance will mean a lot to us. Once the Great Elder's gone and my father regains his authority in our household, you all can rest assured we'll return the favor that no amount of gold is enough to buy."

The men were momentarily stunned by her words.

Like other noble families, there were bound to be underlying factors behind the Ye Household's success. Tens of thousands of gold might indeed be a paltry sum when compared to the family's assets.

Their deal with the Great Elder could be considered a one-off gain. But, if they were to accept Ye Qingtang's offer, not only could they get their hands on a lot more gold, the Ye household would owe them a lifetime favor that they could profit for good!

Her offer had quickly struck a favorable cord with the men's pragmatic common sense. Now, their eyes showed not a shade of menace but geniality instead.

"We catch your drift, Miss Ye and we accept your offer! No worries, we're firmly resolved to fulfill your request." The men's murderous intent was like a fleeting shadow; from this moment, they behaved more like attendants than assassins.

"I knew I could count on you guys. We'll never forget this favor." Ye Qingtang thanked the men with a smile.

“Off we go then, and off with the Great Elder’s head!” With that said, the men bid their valedictions and set off for their new target: the malicious and sinister Great Elder!

When those men left, Ye Ling finally broke the silence whilst he stood quietly beside her all this time.

“Tang Tang, how did you....” Ye Ling was totally confounded by his own daughter. He was certain they were at death’s door just a while ago, but now, Ye Qingtang had not only averted that, she had even managed to turn the tables on the Great Elder.

“No worries, father. I’ll make sure no one lays a finger on you.” Seeing that her father was safe and sound, Ye Qingtang could finally let go of her past regret.

“I knew the Great Elder’s was a treacherous scum when he sought to undermine my position. But to think he would actually stoop so low to hire assassins....” Ye Ling knitted his brow from having faced this unprecedented predicament.

“Father, the Great Elder knows neither mercy nor honor when it comes to fulfilling his ambitions. He feared you might join hands with second uncle upon his return to foil his plans. That’s why he tried to remove you before that.” Ye Qingtang stated matter-of-factly.

Ye Ling heaved a heavy sigh as he shook his head, “Those assassins from the Qin Luo’s Pavilion, and the Great Elder himself is a force to be reckoned with. There’s also his loyal guards. I’m afraid we.....”

Before Ye Ling could finish his words, he was interrupted by a sudden clamor from the front courtyard and a smell of blood that wafted through the air.

Ye Ling and Ye Qingtang exchanged glances, before they made haste to the front courtyard.

That clamor came from the nearby courtyard at where the Great Elder resided and within that, corpses were littered about. Those belonged to the guards on duty within that premises and they were long dead.

“To be able to take out that many guards around the Great Elder in such a short time. I must say those assassins from Qin Luo’s Pavilion are well worth their salt.” The situation had gotten increasingly alarming for Ye Ling. If Ye Qingtang had not intervened in the nick of time, he would be one of those corpses lying in a pool of blood.

Ye Qingtang did not comment on the situation, but when she was about to step into the courtyard with Ye Ling, she caught a glimpse of the Great Elder escaping beyond the walls with his tail between his legs. His purser who intended to give chase stopped in his tracks quietly when he noticed Ye Qingtang’s presence.