

Chapter 61: The Lull Before the Storm (1)

“And I wondered why the brat was unduly intimate with Ye Xun, so that’s the reason. To think your father and I once hoped you’d be in his hands, and he turns out to be a heartless bastard!” The Second Elder went rampant in his verbal lashings but as he turned his attention towards Ye Qingtang, he simmered down in an instant.

“No worries Tang Tang, there’s nothing to fear. Even if you’ve lost your spirit root, I’ll wring the neck of those who dare bully you.”

Ye Qingtang felt gratified by this heartwarming reunion. With Ye Ling and the Second Elder by her side, there was indeed nothing to fear.

“Sir, that Great Elder’s definitely up to no good. Now that his granddaughter has even made it to the Cloud-breakers, he’s sure to pull a stunt like that again. We’ll need to be on our guard. I’ll keep an eye on him once we’ve returned. I’d like to see what else he’s capable of.” The Second Elder spoke in a vehement tone. After the earlier incident, he could clearly tell that the Great Elder was intent on getting rid of him.

“Of course. With you around, I can rest assured. But your injuries....” Ye Ling asked concernedly.

“No worries. All those Elders can never stand up to me in a one-on-one. Their blows felt like a scratch.” The Second Elder reassured.

Ye Ling nodded with a look of relief and turned towards his daughter next. All that had transpired today went beyond his expectations. Though he was well aware of the Great Elder’s treachery, he did not expect him to act so brazenly immediately after failing in that assassination attempt.

If Ye Qingtang had not arrived in time, they would not have been able to overcome that ordeal.

“Tang Tang, you’ve grown up indeed.” Ye Ling regarded his precious daughter, feeling elated over her maturity, yet melancholic at her becoming independent of him.

Ye Qingtang had a genuine smile on her face as she watched their happy faces, and she made a vow in her heart, for their sake and her own, she would do anything to gain the power to protect all the people she loved.

With the Second Elder’s return, there was a reckoning within the hierarchy of the Ye Household.

During the Second Elder’s absence, the Great Elder was able to seize the authority over the household. But now that the Second Elder was back with a vengeance, possessing a prowess that the Great Elder could never hope to contend with, the entire household recognized the importance of acting prudently to prevent stepping on his toes.

As a result, Ye Ling and Ye Qingtang was overjoyed with their newfound peace, but on the other hand, the Great Elder was getting more sullen with each passing day.

And in two more days, the Great Elder would be celebrating his birthday. Though they had had that skirmish at the training grounds the other day, that incident was totally concealed from the public.

The Great Elder's birthday was an event worthy of celebration. Thus, to respect the household's traditions and values, both parties unanimously agreed to come to a temporary truce. Besides, they did not wish to tarnish the household name by disclosing their enmity to the public as well. To indict the Great Elder would require proper evidence, Ye Ling and the Second Elder could only wait for the opportunity to nab him red handed.

"Grandpa, the preparations are almost complete..." Ye Xun was currently stationed in the Great Elder's quarters, as she addressed the Great Elder respectfully.

Although the Great Elder had his plans thwarted by Ye Qingtang, his position as Great Elder of the Ye Household remained unchallenged. However, with that recent skirmish, when it came to arrangements for his birthday feast, he would very much prefer Ye Xun to oversee its preparations.

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The Great Elder nodded slightly, but his features remained impassive.

Ye Xun scrutinized his reactions before she decided to test the waters, "Grandpa, will Sis make it in time for your birthday celebrations?"

Since Ye You had become a disciple of the Cloud-Breaker's sovereign, she was now considered an Exalted personage that commanded respect from all commoners and even the nobility; including the head of a noble house.

The Great Elder dismissed Ye Xun's presumption, saying, "She just joined the Cloud-Breakers and should emphasize on cultivating her martial prowess." The Great Elder had always regarded Ye Ling and his family as inferiors. All his machinations came with a fail-safe and regardless of them catching onto his intentions, they had no way of indicting him without evidence.

Even after he tried to assassinate Ye Ling and frame the Second Elder, they could do nothing against him.

Even now, he remained in power as the great Elder of the Ye household, without anyone to challenge his position.

"Duly noted." Ye Xun nodded disappointedly.

The Second Elder's injuries were not critical and were well on the path to recovery after recuperating for a few days. Maybe it was his presence that contributed to the improvement in Ye Ling's vigor as well?

As usual, Ye Qingtang would visit the Si Household in the afternoon to provide treatment for Si Bai.

The Second Elder was bewildered as he and Ye Ling saw her off at the gate.

"How on earth did this girl get acquainted with the Si household? If memory serves, the Si household was hostile towards us. I recall hearing she and their youngest master are...." The Second Elder threw Ye Ling a questioning look. Though Si Bai was known to suffer a weak constitution, his accomplishments as a young prodigy were well beyond Duan Tianrao's capabilities. If Ye Qingtang was truly in a relationship with Si Bai, that would call for a celebration.

Ye Ling shook his head whilst he chuckled and replied, "I'm not so sure myself. That's my girl. She's like a totally different person ever since she lost her spirit root. In a good way though; she appears to be more confident and independent. I suspected they were in a relationship previously as well, but she denied it outright and I didn't get to ask her more."

With his answer, the Second Elder began pondering over the nature of their relationship.

Ye Qingtang arrived in the Si Household within moments.

Old Master Si looked at her and asked, "I heard your Great Elder had even roped in Elders from the Duan Household to welcome your Second Elder's return?"

Ye Qingtang was slightly intrigued by how Old Master Si caught wind of that incident, but since she never intended to keep a lid on the matter, she nodded to affirm his conjecture.

Old Master Si sneered and said, "Though I do not know the details, I can tell from his acts that he was up to no good. Luckily your Second Elder made it back safely. He's your father's most staunch supporter and with him around, I'm sure your Great Elder will think twice before trying his antics again."

Ye Qingtang was secretly amused by Old Master Si's nostalgic countenance, as he expressed his full contempt of the Great Elder.

Old Master Si added, "By the way, his Lordship, Mu Su, will be arriving in a couple of days. Have you made any arrangements for the meeting?" Old Master Si got right down to business after venting his frustration.

Ye Qingtang was pleasantly surprised by his sudden announcement.

A couple of days?

Wouldn't they be celebrating the Great Elder's birthday then?

Ye Qingtang replied instantly, "Grandpa Si, may I request for your kind assistance in conveying a message to his Lordship – a warm reception will be ready for him upon his arrival at the Ye's residence."

"You want to meet him there?" Old Master Si was astonished upon hearing her preferred venue for the meeting.

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Ye Qingtang nodded.

Old Master Si furrowed his brow slightly, apparently displeased with Ye Qingtang's arrangements.

"Your Grand Elder will be having his birthday celebration then. If you're meeting there, people will assume his Lordship's actually paying him a visit and that'll be an unnecessary boost to his already inflated ego." Though Old Master Si no longer held prejudice against the Ye household by virtue of Ye Qingtang, he still despised their Great Elder.

The Ye household was one of the three prestigious noble houses in the City of Lin. Therefore, its Great Elder's birthday was a much celebrated event, with the other noble houses receiving the birthday invitations several days in advance.

Mu Su was invited by the Si Household at Ye Qingtang's request. If it was not for the Si Household's affiliation with him, an esteemed Marquis would never have agreed to grace the small City of Lin with his presence.

The thought of Mu Su appearing at the Great Elder's birthday feast was enough to make Old Master Si miserable.

Ye Qingtang chuckled and said, "Grandpa Si, I don't mind. Let him bask in that glory."

For that glory could very well turn into a catastrophe instead, and that would be beyond his control.

"You've something up your sleeve, don't you?" Old Master Si peered at Ye Qingtang with suspicion.

Ye Qingtang gazed at him with innocent eyes and an endearing smile, but kept mum about the answer.

This stubborn pair continued their staring contest, till Old Master Si finally gave in.

"All right, I get it. I'll pass on the message." Old Master Si said in a sulking tone.

"Thank you so much for your help, Grandpa Si."

Old Master Si got up from his seat sluggishly. Before he left the main hall, he grumbled, "You're one tough nut to crack and your grandpa's too old to challenge you to a battle of wits."

Ye Qingtang could neither laugh nor cry at his complaint, but she had already devised a plan as she watched Old Master Si retire to his quarters.

That moonlit night, Ye Qingtang finally left the Si's residence. However, instead of returning home straight away, she secretly made a detour to the eastern side of the city, where Qin Luo's Pavilion was situated.

Two days later, the Ye Household ushered in the Great Elder's birthday celebration. Decorations and frills filled the entire manor and the guests started rolling in when the night was still young.

"That's certainly a lot more people compared to the previous years." The Second Elder watched the festivities with a cold-eyed glare, but his features remained impassive.

Ye Ling was standing at his side and had a faint smile on his face as he explained, "That's on account of Ye You, since she had just joined the Cloud-Breakers. You can't blame the people for looking up to her grandfather as a result. They would want to congratulate him for that, on top of his birthday well wishes."

The Second Elder furrowed his brow slightly and gave the Great Elder, who was basking in the guests' praises, a peculiar look.

"Last time, didn't you tell me that Ye You was accepted due to her verdurous spirit root?"

"Yup." Ye Ling nodded.

The Second Elder was knitting his brow by now as he stated, "The Great Elder was always so secretive about his granddaughter's cultivating performance.... But once Tang Tang shattered her spirit root, he

revealed Ye You's to be verdurous. That news even reached the ears of the Cloud-breaker's sovereign. Don't you find this coincidence... a tad weird?"

The Second Elder was always at odds with the Great Elder, and thus he did not care much for his granddaughter Ye You as well.

Previously, even after knowing the state of Ye You's spirit root, he did not spare it another thought. It was only now that he started to have qualms about this coincidence.

Ye Qingtang shattering her spirit root, Ye You revealing hers, and both were known to be verdurous.

Ye Ling furrowed his brow at the Second Elder's conjecture and though he grew suspicious likewise, he felt that it was too much of a leap. He said, "I understand what you're implying. Having two verdurous spirit roots under the same roof is too good to be true and the timing in its discovery does raise concerns, but... I've never heard of a way to rob someone else's spirit root for one's own use... and besides, Tang Tang never spoke of this as well."

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Ye Ling was doubtful at first, but because Ye Qingtang had claimed that her spirit root was accidentally shattered, he did not pry much into the matter.

"Maybe I'm just over-thinking."

Though having said that, the Second Elder still lamented the loss of Ye Qingtang's spirit root.

Not only was her spirit root verdurous, she was pretty talented in martial prowess as well. If her spirit root was still intact, she would have had a bright future ahead of her.

Ye Qingtang approached them while they were discussing the matter. Though it was supposed to be a joyous day for the Ye household, none other than the Great Elder's associates felt like celebrating.

Since the Great Elder was the star of the day, the three of them could get to sit back and relax.

"Father, Uncle. I've just smuggled these from the kitchen. Wanna grab a bite?" Ye Qingtang grinned merrily while she offered some snacks to Ye Ling and the Second Elder.

She was touched by their concerns when she overheard their conversation.

However, till now, she had not revealed the truth to the both of them. She had to prevent them from starting a direct skirmish with the Great Elder out of blind fury that might jeopardize her plans. Certain problems could be better resolved if tackled on her own.

"Sure." Ye Ling and the Second Elder smiled in return.

Ye Qingtang indulged herself in the snacks as well, while she watched with a grin, the Great Elder basking in the guests' compliments.

Tonight, the Great Elder received the guests with a ruddy complexion, that even smothered his usual menacing countenance.

“Great Elder, you’re indeed fortunate to have such a talented granddaughter. It’s a blessing that others could never hope to attain in their lifetime. Now that she had even joined the Cloud-breakers, you can only imagine the number of people that are green with envy.”

Though the Great Elder’s features remained impassive, he was actually rather pleased with the compliments.

“Xiao-You’s still young, and a mere rookie in the Cloud-breakers. She’s just lucky to earn the Sovereign’s affection. I can only hope for the best in her endeavors.”

“You’re far too modest. The Cloud-breakers is prestigious even amongst the Exalted clans and not just anyone can make it in. She’s definitely the cream of the crop.”

“That’s right. To be recruited by the Sovereign personally, not anyone can get this chance of a lifetime!”

News of Ye You being recruited by the Cloud-breakers was long circulated amongst the common rabble in the city. Everyone knew just how powerful the Cloud-breakers were and they could only regard Ye You’s fortune with envy. However, many understood the fact that not anyone could come to possess a verdurous spirit root like hers.

The Great Elder finally broke into a faint smile, after hearing all those compliments.

“Grandpa, Duan-lang’s here to present his well-wishes on behalf of the Duan household.” Ye Xun, who was the sole organizer for the whole birthday banquet, led the well-attired Duan Tianrao into the main hall.

“A happy birthday to you, Great Elder. May you be blessed with the best and your days as happy as today. Here’s some gifts from my family, specially prepared for you.” Duan Tianrao gave his regards with a beaming smile on his face, while his attendants presented the gifts, before stacking them onto the table beside the Great Elder.

“Many thanks for the gifts. Please give my regards to your father as well.” The Great Elder nodded his head in appreciation, before turning his attention towards Ye Xun.

“Xun-er, I’ve heard you’re reaching the cultivation level of an innate stage six. Is that true?”

Ye Xun put on a faint smile and said: “Yes Grandpa. Most probably in a month’s time.”

“Not bad.” The Great Elder nodded, seemingly pleased with her progress.

“Though Xun-er’s not as talented as Sis, but as the saying goes, practice makes perfect. I can only hope that, with rigorous training, I may be able to achieve a standard that doesn’t let Grandpa down.” Ye Xun clearly understood that her own spirit root could neither be on par with Ye Qingtang’s previously, nor Ye You’s current one. But, she had her own plans.

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After Ye You joined the Cloud-breakers, Ye Xun could never hope to catch up to her. But in the case of Ye Qingtang, even if her strength currently exceeded hers, without a spirit root, it would be difficult for her to make further progress. Whilst Ye Xun still possessed one, that yielded the potential for limitless growth.

Thus, she did not fret about their current gap in strength, as that would certainly iron out itself in the days to come.

Ye Xun was clear on the fact that her spirit root being intact was more important to Duan Tianrao.

Regardless of Ye Qingtang's beauty, she could be considered a handicapped person.

The Duan household would never allow a lady without a spirit root to become the wife of their heir to the household.

With that in mind, Ye Xun turned her gaze towards Duan Tianrao standing beside her. From his eyes, Ye Xun could discern that he held praise and affection for her.

"Xun-er, you've done well. Let's train together and we can better improve ourselves in the future." Duan Tianrao suggested with a smile.

Ye Xun nodded meekly.

And while they were still mingling around with the guests, one of the guardsmen rushed into the hall suddenly.

"My Lord and Elders, the Marquis of the City of Luoxing, his Lordship Mu Su, has arrived!"

In an instant, the entire hall erupted into a frenzy over the announcement.

The Marquis of the City of Luoxing!!

Mu Su was a renowned dignitary that almost everyone in this world would have heard of his name.

The City of Luoxing, though a city by the marches, was a powerhouse, that even compelled the Imperial Emperor to give his good graces when faced with Mu Su's presence. Mu Su himself, was a man possessing unfathomable powers, pledging his service to the Temple of Ancient Splendor. The common people would never in their lives get to meet a dignitary as powerful as him, in the flesh.

And no one could have expected such a dignitary to show up personally at the Ye's residence!

All eyes were on the Great Elder at this moment.

Today is the Great Elder's birthday. Maybe Mu Su is here to give him his best wishes for his birthday?

No one in the City of Lin could have hoped to get acquainted with Mu Su, except for Ye You, who had just joined the Cloud-breakers, and would be deemed worthy and plausible of meeting his acquaintance.

"Grandpa, Sis must have been the one to invite his Lordship here, to celebrate your birthday on her behalf." When the thought crossed her mind, Ye Xun spoke up with a smile in an instant.

The Great Elder was shocked by the announcement as well, but when he realized all eyes were on him, mostly green with envy, he came to his senses in a jiffy, "I've not heard of this from her though."

"Then she must have arranged this as a surprise for you, because who else could have the means to invite his Lordship?" Ye Xun replied, all excited.

After pondering for a moment, the Great Elder determined that only his granddaughter could have indeed made such an arrangement, and a radiant smile blossomed on his face.

Mu Su's arrival came as an unexpected surprise.

It even shocked Ye Ling and the Second Elder, who had been uninterested in the whole birthday event.

"Why did his Lordship visit us so suddenly?" Ye Ling was quite perturbed.

The Second Elder furrowed his brow and said: "Though we are one of the noble houses in this city, but surely we're as insignificant as the common rabble before his Lordship. His purpose for this sudden visit is certainly a mystery."

"You reckon he's here at Ye You's request?" Ye Ling raised a matter of concern.

"That could be the case."

Ye Qingtang continued to indulge in her snacks while she watched their solemn expressions with a mischievous gleam in her eyes, saying: "Father, Uncle. You don't have to get so worked up."

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The Second Elder shook his head and said: "Tang Tang, that's the Marquis of the City of Luoxing, a renowned dignitary. If Ye You managed to invite him, then I'm afraid from now on, the Great Elder will only act more audaciously with his backing."

"It's useless to cry over spilled milk. He's already here; we have to put our best face forward." Ye Ling heaved a sigh before he and the Second Elder went ahead with getting the attendants ready for Mu Su's reception.

Ye Qingtang felt like laughing her head off.

In her past, Ye You was nearly slaughtered by Mu Su during their first meeting. Him accepting her invitation would be the greatest joke of all time.

While the thought crossed Ye Qingtang's mind, a strapping and dashing man appeared in front of the main hall.

The initial clamor in the hall died down in an instant, and those city-acclaimed personages amongst the guests actually retreated quietly to a side, peering nervously at the man as he made his way into the hall.

The Great Elder heaved a deep breath. He could no longer pay heed to Ye Ling or the Second Elder, whom stood close beside him. Adjusting his attire and acting with his utmost decorum, he approached the man to receive him.

Ye Ling and the Second Elder followed closely behind.

Upon a closer look, Mu Su's stalwart build, chiseled features, and dignified appearance far surpassed any man in the city, and the brilliant confidence he exuded directly reflected his immense prowess. Even as he approached casually, his demeanor compelled respect from others.

Duan Tianrao watched the approaching Mu Su with eyes of admiration and he spoke to Ye Xun in a hushed tone: "Who could have expected that even his Lordship would turn up for the Great Elder's birthday?"

Ye Xun giggled and said: "Well, only Sis could come up with such a big surprise. Grandpa's certainly thrilled."

Ye Ling, as head of the household, took the lead and welcomed Mu Su.

"Welcome, my Lord. Please forgive us for any inconvenience. We've not expected you to grace us with your presence."

Mu Su nodded indifferently. While everyone was in awe with his surprisingly composed and relaxed demeanor, he pretended to sweep an inadvertent gaze across the people in the hall, seemingly searching for someone.

Huh?

Where's Ye Qingtang?

Mu Su was baffled, just like the time when the Si Household delivered her message to him. He could never figure out her intentions, but alas... due to an intimidating existence, he had no choice but to accept her invitation. Not to mention coming all the way to the Ye residence, even if he had to carry her back on a palanquin personally, he would have to do it without complaints.

The Great Elder, who stood next to Ye Ling, watched the admiring crowd with a smug gleam in his eyes. As he dared not act arrogantly before Mu Su, he addressed him with deference immediately: "What brings you here today, my Lord? Was it my granddaughter who troubled you with this invitation?"

Whilst the Great Elder asked the question, he glanced at Ye Ling deliberately from the corner of his eyes.

Granddaughter?

Mu Su had no idea who the old man asking the question was, but judging from his age and his seemingly reputable status in the Ye Household, he assumed he was Ye Qingtang's grandfather and nodded in reply: "Yes."

Mu Su's informal answer was akin a glorious blessing bestowed upon the Great Elder.

With his conjecture affirmed, the Great Elder was all the more thrilled over this best birthday gift he had ever received.

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The admiring guests were all the more green with envy.

Sure enough, Mu Su was invited by Ye You to celebrate the Great Elder's birthday!

On the other hand, Ye Ling and the Second Elder were disheartened. Whatever the reason behind Ye You going to such lengths to invite Mu Su, that was a cause for concern.

“Thank you, your Lordship. No amount of words can express my delight in making your acquaintance. On behalf of Xiao-You, let me serve as your host for this evening.” The Great Elder was overjoyed and could not help but to crack a beaming smile on his face.

“Xiao-You?” When Mu Su heard the name, he realized there might be a mis-communication. He furrowed his brow and said: “I don’t know anyone by the name of Xiao-You.”

“What?” The Great Elder’s smile completely froze on his face once those words were spoken.

“Your Lordship.... With all due respect, did you not acknowledge you were invited by my granddaughter Ye You?”

Mu Su clarified: “I guess that’s a misunderstanding. I was invited by the young lady of the house, Miss Ye Qingtang.”

One could witness the effect of Mu Su’s jaw-dropping words literally.

The Great Elder nearly had his eyes popping out of his head, and he actually thought that his ears were playing tricks on him.

Even Ye Ling and the Second Elder echoed his sentiments.

His Lordship came all the way here looking for Tang Tang?

Ye Xun’s face was frozen in a rictus smile as well.

“Where is Ye Qingtang?” Mu Su totally ignored the Great Elder whose face had turned sour. No one else present mattered to him, except Ye Qingtang.

The Great Elder started twitching his lips, but no words came out of it.

Ye Ling came to his senses in an instant and began looking for Ye Qingtang amongst the crowd.

And with this impeccable timing, Ye Qingtang revealed herself amidst the commotion.

“I’m here, your Lordship.” Ye Qingtang remained composed even under the daunting eyes of the Great Elder.

Mu Su felt relieved once she had shown up, but his features remained impassive.

“I’ve heard you wanted to meet up?” Mu Su mentioned her purpose in a casual tone.

Ye Qingtang nodded explicitly.

The expressions on the people’s faces only turned more complicated at this point.

Mu Su came all the way here just because Ye Qingtang wished to meet up with him?

What sort of blasphemy is this?!

The people were shocked.

Ye Ling and the Second Elder were more bewildered by Ye Qingtang’s composure even before a dignitary like Mu Su.

How did Tang Tang get acquainted with him?

The Great Elder's face clouded over, the thrill and satisfaction from having assumed that his visit was a surprise from Ye You, were all washed away, having been replaced by this dreadful reality!

Who the hell does Ye Qingtang think she is?!

"So, Miss Ye, why do you wish to see me?" Mu Su finally showed a faint smile on his perpetually enigmatic face.

Though it was a just a smile, that was enough to shock all the guests present.

Everyone realized the fact that his Lordship had shown Ye Qingtang a smile, but acted all indifferent when the Great Elder addressed him.

Ye Qingtang swept her gaze across the confounded crowd, and over the Great Elder's sour face, before meeting Mu Su's eyes and said: "This young lady will like to request for your Lordship's referral to Xuan Ling's clan."

Once her words were spoken, gasps of surprise filled the entire hall.

Xuan Ling's clan was one of the prestigious exalted clans. Given its tremendous sphere of influence, to be accepted into the clan would be deemed an incredible feat.

The entry requirements to an Exalted clan not only depended on the applicant's personal status, but also entailed a referral from a powerful personage. However, the applicant would only be granted the right to participate in its entry examination upon meeting all those requirements.

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Just the words "Exalted Clans" were enough to instill reverence in the hearts of the people. God knows how many had squandered their whole lives making every possible attempt at joining, but to no avail.

The reason the Great Elder was able to earn his current prestige was not only due to his position in the Ye Household, but mainly because of his granddaughter being recruited into an Exalted Clan.

Given Mu Su's status, he was indeed more than qualified to refer candidates for the entry examinations.

No one had the guts to approach him for that, but Ye Qingtang had just done it.

Thus, everyone thought she was out of her mind.

Mu Su would never agree!

Ye Qingtang was well aware that that would be the result, had she made the request personally, and that was why she decided to approach the Si household in the first place.

Mu Su and the Si household shared a very special bond, and he would certainly accede to the request if Old Master Si was involved. From Ye Qingtang's past experience, the young masters of the Si household having successfully joined an Exalted Clan, was mainly due to the merit of Mu Su's referral.

No one believed Mu Su would accede to Ye Qingtang's sudden request.

The Great Elder, who was at his worst, managed to turn his mood around upon hearing Ye Qingtang's impudent request.

To think she would waste all her efforts of inviting Mu Su over such a ludicrous matter, what a joke.

What kind of personage does she consider Mu Su as?

To come all this way to meet her was already a Godsend and she actually had the audacity to push her luck by attempting to use him as a stepping stone!

The color drained from Ye Ling's face in an instant. He could never have expected his daughter to come up with such an absurd request. He anticipated an ominous reaction from Mu Su, and nearly begged for his forgiveness.

However....

Mu Su only furrowed his brow after hearing Ye Qingtang's request and even before Ye Ling could speak up, he replied:

"Are you sure you want Xuan Ling's clan and not the others?"

Given his status, referring Ye Qingtang to an Exalted Clan was not much of an issue, the only problem was, why did it have to be Xuan Ling's clan.

"Yes." Ye Qingtang nodded explicitly.

In her past, without a spirit root, she only managed to join Xuan Ling's clan after overcoming great odds. Thus, she was well aware that one could only achieve greater heights by joining an Exalted Clan.

And.... only Xuan Ling's clan had something that she needed.

"All right." Mu Su acceded to the request after pondering for a moment.

Though his answer was simple, that was like dropping a bomb which exploded in the Great Elder's face, whom was totally stunned by it.

Did he just agree to that?

He did!

Mu Su not only acceded to Ye Qingtang's absurd request, judging from his tone, he even seemed willing to refer her to other Exalted Clans if she ever requested.

Having realized that, the Great Elder went bonkers.

Joining an Exalted Clan was almost deemed an impossible feat. If things were otherwise, he would not have to risk robbing Ye Qingtang's spirit root for Ye You.

But now...

Ye Qingtang just had to simply ask and she was presented with the entry opportunity!

Although Xuan Ling's clan was not as big in name as the Cloud-breakers, but they were still considered prestigious. The Great Elder could never stomach the fact of Ye Qingtang turning her life around!

“My Lord, perhaps it might be better for you to know that Ye Qingtang had actually shattered her spirit root? Without it, it’ll be impossible to pass the entry examinations and if the clans ever found out she was referred by your good self, wouldn’t that tarnish your good name?” The Great Elder reminded everyone that Ye Qingtang was, in fact, without a spirit root.

Everyone came to their senses after hearing his words.

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A candidate would usually be allowed to take the entry examinations, if he or she was referred by a powerful personage, such as Mu Su. But if said personage was to refer someone without a spirit root, that would definitely turn into the greatest joke of all time!

Even Mu Su faltered for a moment.

Ye Qingtang had no spirit root?

Ye Qingtang stood firmly at a side, whilst she faced the detestable Great Elder, who seemed intent on ruining her life once again, with a sneer in her mind.

The Great Elder admonished her in the next instant: “Qingtang, you’re too much! You can’t just take advantage of his Lordship’s generosity for your own selfish desires! You know full well it’ll be impossible for you to pass the entry examinations given your condition. You’re just going to get his Lordship into a lot of trouble!”

Mu Su had a complicated look on his face as he peered at Ye Qingtang and asked: “Is your spirit root really shattered? Are you still able to Reveal Thy Root?”

Reveal Thy Root is a method to project one’s inner spirit root via creating its replica on the palm of a hand, usually used for the root’s quality inspection. If Ye Qingtang had no spirit root, then she would not be able to perform this.

Ye Qingtang cast a sideways glance at the Great Elder before focusing on Mu Su and replied: “It shattered previously, but.... I can give it a try.”

Ye Qingtang stepped forward in the next moment, with her right palm exposed in the open.

A faint glow started accumulating in the palm of her hand.

“It’s working!” Everyone gasped in surprise.

Sure enough, once the glow flared into a dazzling light, it began to take the shape of a sapling, before it finally sprung into a full-fledged spirit root.

Once its shape stabilized, the replica started changing colors.

The quality of a spirit root could be determined by its respective color band in a visible spectrum.

And that encompassed the seven colors of a rainbow.

Going by red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet, the quality increases further down the order.

And what used to be Ye Qingtang's spirit root, but robbed by Ye You, was recognized as blue.

Though there were still better ones like indigo or violet, but those two were considered rare findings that might only occur once in a millennium.

That said, a blue one was thus considered a good find in this current age, else the Cloud-breaker's sovereign would never had recruited Ye You as a disciple.

At this moment, everyone had their sights fixated on the replica in Ye Qingtang's hand, and they were stunned.

The replica of a spirit root that emitted a reddish glow, hovered on the palm of her hand. Its form was perfect, without any sign of defects.

The Great Elder got the shock of his life when he saw that on her hand.

How is this possible?!

Ye Qingtang's spirit root was certainly gouged out by Ye You right in front of his eyes!

How can she still possess one?!

"Didn't you claim that her spirit root shattered?" The Second Elder had a perplexed look on his face as he directed his question at Ye Ling. When Ye Qingtang shattered her spirit root, the Second Elder was still in the midst of his sequestered training, thus he was unaware of the details.

Ye Ling gave him a blank look, "Her spirit root was indeed shattered, and her original was a blue one, but now, that's a red one...."

A shattered spirit root was equivalent to losing all hopes of cultivating one's prowess, and time had never told of growing one again after shattering it.

Mu Su observed the replica on Ye Qingtang's hand and asked, "Was your spirit root really shattered?"

Ye Qingtang nodded explicitly.

This matter had surely piqued Mu Su's curiosity. If Ye Qingtang had truly shattered her spirit root before, it would be impossible for her to possess the current one that showed no abnormality. With this in mind, Mu Su was promptly reminded of his true purpose for the trip, he contemplated on the matter before he spoke in an enigmatic manner: "Your case is truly a wonder, Miss Ye. If you have the time, may I invite you to come with me. Though I'm unable to unravel the mystery behind it, someone else might be able to. And in regards to granting you my referral, I'm more than happy to oblige."

Chapter 70: The Birthday Banquet (7)

Mu Su made a generous offer because he was well aware that even without a spirit root, Xuan Ling's Clan would still be forced to accept ye Qingtang, given His Highness' personality.

Once Mu Su suggested that, the people were baffled again.

What happened to His Lordship?

Why is he so gracious towards Ye Qingtang?

Not only did he come all the way here to meet her, he had even acceded to her request that bordered on absurdity. Now, he even offered to escort her personally just to have her spirit root examined!

Everyone knew of Mu Su's distinguished status and many of his acquaintances were certainly not the average person.

At this moment, many green-eyed gazes landed on Ye Qingtang, especially from those younger personages amongst the guests who would kill to fill her shoes.

Just being able to get Mu Su's referral would have been a Godsend.

The Great Elder's face clouded over. He had never expected Ye Qingtang to turn her life around.

And Ye Xun, who was already shocked by the sight of Ye Qingtang's new spirit root, became totally flabbergasted when Mu Su agreed to her request for the referral as well. Now, a feeling of unease stirred in her gut as she instinctively turned to face Duan Tianrao standing beside her.

What she saw was his knitted brow and blazing eyes, transfixed on Ye Qingtang amongst the crowd.

"Duan-lang..."

While in a daze, Duan Tianrao turned his gaze towards the nervous Ye Xun, and he asked with a frown: "Xun-er, didn't you claim that Ye Qingtang's spirit root was shattered?"

Ye Xun shrugged stiffly, "It's true.... But I've no idea how she managed to grow one again...."

Duan Tianrao's brows remained knitted even after hearing Ye Xun's explanation and his eyes no longer displayed the affection he once held towards her.

Duan Tianrao initially insisted on calling off his engagement with Ye Qingtang because of the rumors of her hideous appearance and the loss of her spirit root that would impede any future progress in her cultivation.

However....

All those rumors turned out to be falsehoods right before his eyes.

Ye Qingtang was not hideous at all. Instead, she was a beauty queen and she had somehow gained a new spirit root in place of her shattered one.

It was at this moment that Duan Tianrao began resenting Ye Xun, for she was the one who seemed to have tricked him into believing those rumors.

"Duan-lang..." Ye Xun could only utter his name nervously again when his displeasure became apparent.

But Duan Tianrao turned his back on her and left her side without another word. Though he remained in the hall, it was obvious he did not wish to associate with her again.

Ye Xun became alarmed.

At the other side, Ye Qingtang pondered over Mu Su's offer. Since the re-emergence of a spirit root was a mystery that she had never come across, she would welcome any advice from anyone who might be knowledgeable in this field.

However....

A subtle gleam could be seen from her eyes. She had yet to get the show on the road, staying behind would be inevitable.

“Many thanks for your kind support and consideration, my Lord. But as the young lady of the house, it is my duty to attend to the rest of our guests for the night. So, may I suggest leaving at a later time? That is of course, if you do not mind?” Ye Qingtang asked politely.

Mu Su would never make things difficult for her. Just gaining her acceptance would be enough to fulfill his objective.