**Chapter 1 Genius No More:**

‘Dou Zhi Li, 3rd stage!’

Facing the Magical Testing Monument as it displayed the 5 big hurtful words, the youth stood expressionless, lips curled in a small self-ridiculing smile. He tightly clenched his fist and because of the strength used, his slightly sharp fingernails dug deep into the palm of his hand, bringing brief moments of pain.

“Xiao Yan, Dou Zhi Li, 3rd stage! Rank: Low!” Beside the Magical Testing Monument, a middle-aged man looked at the results on the monument and announced them with an indifferent voice.

Immediately after the middle-aged man finished speaking, without much surprise, the people in the square started a commotion, ridiculing him.

“3rd stage? Hmmhmm, as expected. This ‘genius’ has once again taken a step back.”

“Ai, this piece of trash really disgraced his entire clan.”

“If his father wasn’t the clan leader, this kind of trash would already have been kicked out of the clan. n.o.body would care about him, and there wouldn’t be such a thing as leeching off the clan home.”

“How could the once famous genius of Wu Tan Cheng fall to become like this over the past few years?”

“Who knows? Maybe he did something unforgivable and caused the G.o.ds to get angry.”

The ridicule and laughter directed at him came from all directions and resonated in the motionless youth’s ears, as if piercing his heart. He could not help but breathe heavily.

He raised his head to reveal a delicate and immature face, jet black eyes glancing past the people of his age that ridiculed him as well. His lips, which were previously full of self-ridicule, turned to fill with bitterness instead.

“These people, were they always this cold? Or was it because three years ago they smiled humbly to congratulate me, and now they wanted to take it back?” Smiling bitterly, Xiao Yan turned around and silently walked back to the group of people. His lonesome figure seemed to be unable to fit in with the surroundings.

“Next up, Xiao Mei!”

Hearing the tester’s voice, a teenage girl quickly ran up from in the crowd. The moment she got on stage, the murmurings and discussions quietened down and every pair of fiery eyes were locked on her face.

The teenage girl wasn’t more than 14 years old. Although her beauty wasn’t immediately evident, her small childish face combined with her innocence captured the attention of the audience.

She quickly stepped forward and put her tiny hands on the black stone monument. She then closed her eyes gently.

As the girl closed her eyes, the monument s.h.i.+ned brightly once again.

‘Dou Zhi Li, 7th stage!’

“Xiao Mei, Dou Zhi Li, 7th stage! Rank: High!”

“Yeh!” Hearing the tester read out the result, the teen girl smiled proudly.

“Tsk tsk, 7th stage Dou Zhi Li. How impressive! At this rate, in three years she’ll be named a true Dou Zhe already.”

“She really fits the name of the clan’s seedling.”

Hearing the unanimous praise coming from the crowd, the girl’s smile turned even wider. Vanity, the temptation that so many girls are unable to resist…

While chatting with her fellow sister members, her line of sight weaved through the surrounding people and landed on a lonesome figure away from them.

Furrowing her brows for a while, she finally decided against walking over. Between the two of them was already a huge gap. Looking at Xiao Yan’s performance these past few years, by the time the Adulthood Ceremony comes, he would only be able to place at the lower tier clan member ranks. She, however, with her brilliance, would become the clan’s very important and thus well-nurtured fighter. There would be no limit to her future.

“Ai…” An inexplicable sigh emerged from her. Xiao Mei thought back to the youth from three years ago, bursting with energy and pride. At 4 he started practicing, and at 10 he achieved the 9th stage Dou Zhi Li. At 11 he broke the 10th stage Dou Zhi Li barrier and condensed his Dou Zhi Qi Zu successfully. He became the youngest Dou Zhe in the clan since the past 100 years.

At that time, his self-confidence as well as immeasurable power attracted countless young teens which of course, included Xiao Mei.

However, the path of a genius was always winding. Three years ago, this genius youngster whose fame reached the absolute top, received what could possibly be the cruelest blow. The hard work he put into acculmulating and condensing the Dou Zhi Qi Zu over the past ten years had, in just one night, vanished into nothingness. All the Dou Zhi Li in his body slowly dissipated with time and instead, pity for him grew.

As a result of losing his Dou Zhi Li, his physical strength decreased as well.

From the position of a genius, in one night he fell below the average person. This kind of blow made the youth lose his will to carry on training. The reverence once a.s.sociated with this lad had slowly changed into disdain and ridicule.

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Standing so high up, and falling right down – this kind of fall might just be one that he could never recover from.

“Next, Xiao Xun Er!”

Among the commotion, the tester’s voice sounded yet again.

Following the calling of this highly reputable name, the group of people quietened down immediately. Every single gaze turned.

At the centerpoint of attention was a teen girl clad in a purple dress, elegantly standing there. Her calm, tender and immaculate face was completely unaffected by the many gazes of the crowd.

Her calm and indifferent att.i.tude could be compared to the blooming of a lotus. At such a young age, she already had the air of a refined lady. It would be hard to imagine how she would affect the city and the nation once she grew up.

This purple dress girl, if compared to Xiao Mei in terms of beauty, was clearly several leagues above. It’s no wonder the crowd would have this kind of actions.

Taking small, graceful steps, the girl named Xiao Xun Er walked up in front of the stone monument. She stretched her small hand out and the purple sleeve mixed with black and gold threads fell down her arm, revealing a delicate snow-white wrist. She touched the monument lightly.

In the silence, the monument shone once more.

“Dou Zhi Li, 9th stage! Rank: High!”

Looking at the words on the monument, the entire square fell into deep silence.

“…… She really reached the 9th stage, how frightening! The position of the youngest high rank in the clan has been taken, without a shred of doubt, by Miss Xun Er!” After the silence, several teens couldn’t help but wolf whistle, their eyes full of respect and awe.

Dou Zhi Li was essential towards being a Dou Zhe. Dou Zhi Li is split into 10 different stages, and when the body acquires 10 stages of Dou Zhi Li, it can better condense the Dou Zhi Qi Zu, becoming a well-respected Dou Zhe!

In the crowd of people, Xiao Mei stared at the purple dress girl in front of the monument with a little jealousy.

Looking at the results on the monument, the middle-aged tester who would normally be indifferent smiled, faced her and congratulated her: “Miss Xun Er, half a year later, you should be able to condense the Dou Qi Zhi Zu. If you succeed, you’ll be a Dou Zhe at the age of 14, the second person to do so in the Xiao clan.

Of course, the second person. First would be the fallen genius, Xiao Yan.

“Thanks.” The teen girl nodded her head lightly, her calm face showing a little happiness because of his praise. She quietly turned, and in the midst of the crowd’s attention, slowly walked to the downtrodden youth in the back of the group.

“Brother Xiao Yan.” At the youth’s side, the teen girl stopped. She faced Xiao Yan and bowed respectfully. Her beautiful and gentle face showed a elegant smile which would make the surrounding girls jealous.

“What qualifications do I have right now for you to call me that?” He faced the girl that could be considered the clan’s radiant pearl and said bitterly. She, after being down-hearted for an extremely short while, continued to maintain her respect.

“Brother Xiao Yan, you once said to Xun Er before – to take on anything, one must first be able to let go. One is only truly free when he can take on and let go easily.” Xiao Xun Er said gently, her smiling face full of warmth.

“Haha, truly free? I only know how to say it. Look at me now, do I look like a free person? This world wasn’t mine to begin with.” Xiao Yan laughed at himself, saying dispiritedly.

Facing Xiao Yan’s somber mood, Xiao Xun Er’s fine brows furrowed a little, and she said seriously: “Brother Xiao Yan, though I don’t know what’s happening to you, Xun Er honestly believes that you will stand again and reclaim your lost glory and respect…” She stopped for a moment, her white tender face reddening a little. “Back then, there were a lot of people who were attracted to you…”

“Haha…” Hearing the girl’s whole-hearted truth, he laughed awkwardly but didn’t say anything else. Other people would be swayed by it, but he did not have the qualifications nor the mood. Instead, he silently turned around and walked away from the square.

Standing still and facing the lonely back of the youth, she hesitated for a while before chasing after him and walking side-by-side with him. Meanwhile, from behind a jealous wolf whistle sounded(?).

斗之力, which is the internal fighting energy or qi that wuxia often refer to. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qi for more information.

乌坦城, the city’s name.

斗者, a fighter who has condensed their 10 stages of Dou Zhi Li, this is one of the ranks in the hierarchy of DPCQ.

斗之气旋, which is the ‘channels’ that the qi flows in, I think.

斗气之旋, not sure why the wording is changed.

She refers to herself in 3rd person.

要能放下，才能拿起，提放自如，是自在人 is an important quote that came from the author of DPCQ that has started gaining a little fame.

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**Chapter 2 Dou Qi Continent:**

The moon was like a silver plate and the stars filled the sky.

At the summit of the cliff, Xiao Yan lay on the gra.s.s and in his mouth was a strand of green gra.s.s. He chewed it slightly and let the bitterness spread into his mouth slowly.

He raised his white palm and put it in front of him, blocking the moon and only letting some moonlight pa.s.s through the gaps between his fingers. He looked at the giant circular silver moon in the sky.

“Ai…” Thinking back the testing in the afternoon, Xiao Yan sighed lightly. He lazily pulled his hand back and rested both hands on his head. He looked absent-minded.

“15 years already, huh?” a soft voice that suddenly was spat out from the young teen without any warning.

In Xiao Yan’s mind, there was a secret that only he himself knew: He wasn’t a person from this world. More accurately, his soul wasn’t from this world. He was from a deep blue star called Earth. As for unexplainable mystery of why he would be here, he himself had no clue. However, after living here for some time, he slowly realised: He pa.s.sed through to the other side!

As he grew older, he slowly came to understand bits and pieces of this continent.

This continent was called the Dou Qi Continent. On the continent, there wasn’t many tales of magic users and their effects, but rather, Dou Qi was the main star.

On this big piece of land, the training of Dou Qi had become commonplace after the hard work of countless individuals who continued to train beyond generations, expanding the knowledge surrounding Dou Qi all the way to the top. Dou Qi and mankind are one and the same in everyday life and as such, Dou Qi is extremely important in the continent. It could be called irreplaceable!

As the number of levels in Dou Qi kept increasing, so did the number of ways to train it. Some were better than others, as expected.

After going through a system of a.n.a.lysis, the Dou Qi rankings in the Dou Qi Continent got split into four different cla.s.ses – Tian, Di, Xuan, Huang.

And every cla.s.s was split further into Beginner, Medium and High ranks!

The Dou Qi techniques you learned also determined how strong you would be. For example, if a person practiced a Xuan cla.s.s Medium rank technique, he would naturally be stronger than a person who practiced a Huang cla.s.s High rank technique.

In the Dou Qi Continent, to differentiate the strong from the weak, there are 3 criterias that need to be looked at.

First, and also the most important, is your natural body strength. If a person only has a 1 star level of strength, even if he practiced the Tian cla.s.s High rank techniques, he wouldn’t be able to beat a Huang cla.s.s Combat Master.

Next is technique level. If two people of the same innate strength were to battle, the one with the better technique will obviously win.

Lastly is Dou Ji.

Dou Ji is a special kind of skill that is used when controlling Dou Qi and in the land of Dou Qi, Dou Ji is also separated into Tian, Di, Xuan, Huang.

Dou Qi in the continent speaks for itself, but Dou Ji is different. Almost everyone starts off with a Dou Ji cla.s.s of Huang. If you wanted to learn more advance control skills, you would need to join a sect or enrol in a Dou Qi school.

Of course, there are some who, by chance, managed to learn the skills that others before have left behind, or those who have compatible Dou Ji skills. For these people, their combat level might be slightly higher than normal.

Relying on these 3 aspects, you can determine who is strong and who is weak. All in all, if you managed to learn a high level Dou Qi technique, the benefits in the future would be enormous.

However, high level Dou Qi techniques are really hard to come by as a commoner. Those that are open to the public are normal, Huang cla.s.s techniques. For those bigger clans or small sects, Xuan cla.s.s techniques are the norm. For example, in Xiao Yan’s clan, their highest level technique was only practiceable by the clan leader – Lion Wind Strike. It was a wind style Xuan cla.s.s Medium rank technique.

Above the Xuan cla.s.s would be the Di cla.s.s, but this kind of high-level techniques might only obtainable by a powerful country-like organisation.

As for the Tian cla.s.s, in a hundred years, it hasn’t appeared once.

As previously stated, commoners trying to get a high-level technique is like trying to climb a mountain without gear. However, nothing is absolute. In the world of Dou Qi, there are thousands of clans. In the North, there are people referred to as ‘Unbeatable’. They fused their soul with wild animals and became barbarians. In the South, there are smart and talented high cla.s.s beast spirit clans, and even the strange and infamous underworld people.

Because of the vastness of the continent, there are bound to be cases of nameless figures who, by chance, happened upon a miracle that made them strong. Or, perhaps, there might be people who are bound by fate to discover strong techniques. In the land of Dou Qi, there is one famous sentence: If you find yourself stuck in a ditch or forsaken by the world, don’t panic. Take two steps forward and maybe you’ll find yourself stronger than ever before.

Of course, though this line isn’t false, in the thousand years of history in the continent, there aren’t many stories of people getting strong by random chance.

As a result of this, every day, there are countless individuals who try to break through and discover a new skill or technique, but instead only return with a broken hip or leg.

All in all, this continent is full of mysteries and miracles.

To access the vault of secret Dou Qi techniques, you must at least be a full-fledged Dou Zhe to meet the basic requirements. For Xiao Yan, it seemed so far away.

Puu Xiao Yan spat the gra.s.s out and quickly stood up and made a maniacal face. He faced the sky and shouted: “G.o.d d.a.m.n it! How could I be played for a fool like this?”

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In his past life, Xiao Yan was a mediocre, average commoner. Wealth, fame and beauty seemed to run parallel to his life, never intersecting it. Then, when he came to this continent, Xiao Yan was shocked. Because of a second set of experiences, his spirit became much stronger than the average person.

It must be known that in the Dou Qi continent, your spirit is decided upon at birth. Maybe, as you grew older, it would strengthen a slight bit, but there is no known technique to train your spirit to be stronger.

It was Xiao Yan’s strong spirit that gave him his talent, as well as his fame as a genius.

For an average person, if they were told that they could be a genius, there’s little doubt that they would claim their fame and live the high life. For the run-of-the-mill person like Xiao Yan, when he started training his Dou Zhi Qi, the temptation of being able to rise to fame would be unbearable. Of course he wouldn’t choose to stay hidden and continue to train!

If there wasn’t any accident, Xiao Yan could perhaps grow even more with his ‘genius’ label. Unfortunately, at 11, his label was stolen from him and in one night, a genius turned into a piece of trash.

After shouting at the top of his lungs for a while, Xiao Yan finally calmed down and his face turned calm again. No matter how angry he got, he wouldn’t be able to get his strength back.

Bitterly shaking his head, Xiao Yan felt miserable. He had no clue what happened to his body, and nothing seemed out of the ordinary. His spirit was growing as he aged, as expected. His absorbtion of Dou Zhi Qi was also extraordinarly fast. It was faster than the strongest fighter from a few years back. All these factors should have meant that Xiao Yan was a natural genius, but all the Dou Zhi Qi that he absorbed seemed to be completely gone. His self-esteem took a big hit and he could only feel depressed.

Taking another deep breath, Xiao Yan raised his hand. On his finger was a black ring of simple design. The material used to make it was unknown. On it were some markings as well. This was the only present his late mother gave to him before she pa.s.sed. He started wearing it since the age of 4 and even now, 10 years later, he was still wearing. It was a precious gift from his mother and Xiao Yan treasured it dearly. He rubbed the ring and said bitterly: “These few years, I’ve really let Mother down, huh?”

Sighing deeply, Xiao Yan quickly stood up and turned around, saying to the black figure from the woods: “Father, why have you come?”

Though his Dou Zhi Qi was only 3rd stage, his spiritual awareness was akin to that of a 5 star Dou Zhe, perhaps even better. While thinking about his mother, he felt a sudden disturbance from the woods.

“Ah ah, Yan Er. It’s already quite late. Why are you still here?” From within the cl.u.s.ter of trees, after a moment of silence, a tender voice sounded.

The trees shaked a little and a middle-aged man jumped out, face smiling widely. His eyes were locked on his son under the moonlight.

The middle-aged man was wearing an expensive looking grey tunic. He walked with pride and dignity and his face showed it. He was the Xiao clan leader, as well as Xiao Yan’s father, a 5 star Dou s.h.i.+ – Xiao Zhan!

“Father, why have you not returned to rest yet?” Facing the middle-aged man, Xiao Yan’s smiled thickened. Although he had another set of memories, when he was born, the person before him treated him as with love and care. When he lost his power and spirit, the love did not lessen but grew instead. This poked at Xiao Yan’s heart, making Xiao Yan recognise him as his father.

“Yan Er, are you still thinking about what happened this afternoon?” Taking a big step forward, Xiao Zhan smiled again.

“Ha ha, what’s there to think about? It’s within my expectations.” Xiao Yan shaked his head and forced a smile.

“Ai…” Looking at Xiao Yan’s tender face, Xiao Zhan let out a sigh. The both of them sinked into silence for a while, before Xiao Zhan said: “Yan Er, you’re 15 now, aren’t you?”

“Yes, father.”

“Just one more year… and you have to attend the Adulthood Ceremony…” Xiao Zhan said.

“Yes, father. Only a year left.” Xiao Yan’s fist clenched for a while before he replied. He was extremely clear what the Adulthood Ceremony meant. Once the ceremony had past, for the Xiao Yan that didn’t train, he would be subject to the criteria of searching for Dou Qi techniques. Because he was so weak, he would be sent to do a normal job in the other parts of the Xiao clan. This was a clan rule and even if the clan leader was his father, he would not be able to do anything about it.

If one didn’t reach Dou Zhe by the age of 25, the clan would abadon them.

“Sorry, Yan Er. If you don’t reach the Dou Zhi Qi 7th stage by next year, I can’t do anything to help you, no matter how much I want to. In this clan, I’m not the sole decision maker. There’s also those old geezers waiting for me to make a mistake…” Looking at the peaceful Xiao Yan, Xiao Zhan voiced guiltily.

“Father, I will continue to work hard. One year later, I’ll definitely reach the Dou Zhi Qi 7th stage!” Xiao Yan rea.s.sured his father.

“4 stages in 1 year? Ahh… if it were me from before, it may have been possible, but now… I might not have much of a chance…” Though Xiao Yan was trying to rea.s.sure his father, he himself was bitter about it.

Knowing full well Xiao Yan’s position, Xiao Zhan could only answer with a sigh. He knew that 4 stages of Dou Zhi Qi in a year was extremely difficult. He gently patted Xiao Yan’s head, and smiled, saying: “It’s getting quite late, you should go back and get some rest. Tomorrow, the clan has a guest and you shouldn’t miss the ceremony.”

“Guest? Who?” Xiao Yan asked, full of curiousity.

“You’ll find out tomorrow.” Xiao Zhan winked at the restless Xiao Yan, leaving with a big smile on his face.

“Don’t you worry, father. I’ll work really hard.” Xiao Yan rubbed the simple ring while raising his head and whispering.

Just when Xiao Yan raised his head, the black ring on his finger sudddenly lit up with a mysterious glow and flashed. Blinking, Xiao Yan realised it wasn’t a person…

斗技, meaning combat skills or something akin to that.

狂狮怒罡 guessing the meaning here.

炎儿, the first letter being Yan, Xiao Yan’s name. Used to refer to someone very close or someone you love dearly. Usually used by parents to address their children.

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**Battle Through the Heavens:**

Chapter 3: Guests

A young man was meditating on his bed. In front of him, his hands were clasped in a weird yet relaxed manner. His chest peacefully rose and fell with the rhythm of his breath. Everything was just&h.e.l.lip; so natural! With every breath he took, a pale white stream of what seemed to be air darted into the young man’s nose and mouth, squeezing into his body and reshaping it.

As the young man was meditating, a strange yet dim sparkle appeared for a brief moment on the plain black ring that he wore on his finger &h.e.l.lip;

“Huuuu&h.e.l.lip;” The young man slowly let out his breath and opened his eyes, blinking. A pale white light flashed across his black pupils, that was the Dou Qi that had just been absorbed but not yet completely refined.

“It took such great effort to get that Dou Qi, but&h.e.l.lip; f\*ck, it’s disappearing again! No, no please noooo&h.e.l.lip;” The young man tried desperately to keep the disappearing Dou Qi from slipping away but to no avail. As the last sliver of Dou Qi left his body, the young man’s face changed from being calm to one of anger and despair and his voice rose with fury.

He curled his hands into fists and was rapidly clenching and unclenching them. Eventually, his visage transited from extreme anger to a forced grin. After all, there was nothing he could do about it. Wearily, he dragged his body off the bed and stretched his numb legs. With only Dou Qi of a 3rd Stage, such menial matters were always present.

After having done a few exercises in his plain room, an old, wizened voiced sounded outside of his door: “Young master, the clan leader has requested your presence in the hall.”

The young man was the third son of the clan header, Xiao Yan. Above him were two brothers, but they had already left the clan in search of adventure. Only at the end of each year would they come back and meet their family. Overall however, the two brothers were extremely nice to their little brother, Xiao Yan, even when he fell from being a genius to a piece of trash.

“Coming!” Xiao Yan changed his clothes and went out. Outside of his room was an elder in a green robe. “Let’s go!”

Looking at the young man’s fresh face, the elder nodded his head. But when he turned around, his eyes showed a flash of regret.If young master had his former talent, he probably would have been a great Dou Zhe, such a waste&h.e.l.lip;

The elder and the young man crossed through the back yard and finally arrived solemnly at the welcoming hall. After politely knocking, the two softly went in.

The hall was quite large, but there were many people already in it. At the head of the hall were Xiao Zhan and three emotionless elders. They were the clan elders and had equal importance to the Clan leader.

On the left, below the four were other elders from the clan. These elders didn’t hold as much power as the clan elders but nevertheless, they had quite a bit of say and weren’t pushovers. Besides these elders were young men that had shown promise and talent.

On the other side was three strangers, looks like they were the people that Xiao Zhan foretold last night.

The young man’s eyes quickly swept through the strangers. Of the three, there was an elder wearing a moon white outfit. Although the elder was all smiles, his tiny eyes were full of energy, restlessly scanning the room. Xiao Yan’s sight dipped lower, stopping at the elder’s chest. On his chest was a silver moon and besides the moon were seven s.h.i.+ny stars.

7 Star Da Dou s.h.i.+! This guy’s a 7 star Da Dou s.h.i.+? Incredible. Xiao Yao could barely refrain from gasping at the elder. The elder was stronger than his own father, in fact, he was two whole stars stronger.

Anyone that became a Da Dou s.h.i.+ was at least a power to be reckoned with. With that kind of strength, most places would probably rush for recruitment. To be able to see such a powerful person, it’s not surprising that Xiao Yan was shocked.

Beside the elder were a young couple. They were also wearing moon white robes. The male was about 20 years old and had a handsome face, coupled with a strong build. He was definitely the ideal type for any girl. Of course, the most important thing was, on his chest were 5 golden stars. This represented the strength of the young man: 5 star Dou Zhe!

To be able to become a 5 star Dou Zhe at the age of 20 definitely shows the exceptional talent of the young man.

With a handsome face and decent strength, this young man, not only became the target of stares from young girls in the clan, even Xiao Mei occasionally sent glances to him.

But, the looks that the girls gave had no effect on the young man. His entire focus was concentrated on the young girl beside him&h.e.l.lip;

The young girl’s age was similar to Xiao Yan which made Xiao Yan flinch. Her beauty even rivaled Xiao Mei’s, no, she was prettier than Xiao Mei. In the entire clan, probably only Xiao Xun Er could rival her. No wonder the guys of Xiao clan chased girls outside of the clan.

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On the intricate ear of the young girl was a green jade earrings. As she moved around, the pieces of jade clinked together, chirping a beautiful melody and adding a hint of royalty to the girl&h.e.l.lip;

In addition, on the developing chest of the girl were 3 golden stars.

A 3-Star Dou Zhe, This girl&h.e.l.lip; if she didn’t use any special methods, she must be an incredible genius! Xiao Yao’s heart fell, she had talent rivalling his former talent! But Xiao Yao forced his eyes away from the cold beauty. No matter what, beneath Xiao Yao’s immature appearance was a mature soul. Although the girl was very pretty, he kept himself from acting like a drooling slob.

Xiao Yan’s actions caused a slight tension within the girl. Although she wasn’t the kind that had an entire universe revolving around her, her beauty and appearance wasn’t bad. Xiao Yan’s random glance over her was a first for her.

“Father, three elders!” Walking quickly, Xiao Yan courteously greeted the Xiao Zhan and the three elders.

“Haha, Yan Er, you came! Here, come sit.” Seeing Xiao Yan arrival, Xiao Zhan stopped talking to his guests and nodded in the direction of Xiao Yan, waving his hand to indicate for Xiao Yan to take a seat.

With a slight smile, Xiao Yan ignored the lazy, almost hateful gazes from the three clan elders and searched for his seat. But, he was surprised at the result, he didn’t have a seat&h.e.l.lip;

Hahhh, my position in the clan is just sinking lower and lower. It was better before, but now, they even embarra.s.s me in front of guests, these old geezers&h.e.l.lip; Xiao Yao ridiculed himself silently, in his mind, he shook his head as if it could block the emotions that welled up within him.

Looking at the motionless Xiao Yan, the young clan members let out soft, mocking laughter, showing their happiness at seeing Xiao Yan be made a fool.

Finally, Xiao Zhan realized Xiao Yan’s predicament. A look of anger flashed across his face before being replaced with a bent eyebrow: “Second elder, you&h.e.l.lip;”

“Ohh, really sorry. I can’t believe that I forgot about young master. Hehe, I’ll go get someone to prepare a chair!” The yellow robed elder smiled at the staring Xiao Zhan. He patted his forehead in an act of self-criticism but the belittling look in his eyes didn’t fade.

“Brother Xiao Yan, come sit here!” The clear voice of a girl rang across the hall.

The three elders tensed, their gaze s.h.i.+fting to Xun Er in the corner. Their mouths twitched but none of them said anything&h.e.l.lip;

In the corner, Xiao Xun Er closed the thick book in her lap, and blinked at Xiao Yan.

Looking at Xiao Xun Er’s smiling face, Xiao Yan froze for a second. Quickly, he recovered and after touching his nose, he walked towards Xun Er under the envious gazes of the surrounding clan members and after what seemed like the longest few seconds, he plopped next to Xun Er.

Xiao Yan whispered: “Thanks, you’ve rescued me again.”

Xiao Xun Er lightly smiled, two small dimples appearing on her face. Her slender fingers flipped open the book in front of her. Even though she was extremely young, there was an air of intellectuality around her. After scanning through the page, Xun Er suddenly complained: “Brother Xiao Yan, you haven’t sat beside me, alone, for three years now, right?”

“Uhh&h.e.l.lip;you’re a genius in the clan, isn’t it simple for you if you want friends?” Looking at the resentful face of Xun Er, Xiao Yan drily laughed.

“But the thing is, a certain someone snuck into my room every night when I was 4 to 6. And then that certain someone used a clumsy technique and weak Dou Zi Qi to strengthen my bones and

meridians. Every time, the same person would get himself sweating profusely before leaving. Brother Xiao Yan, do you know who he is?” Xun Er paused for a moment and suddenly tilted her head, and smiled towards Xiao Yan.

“Uhh&h.e.l.lip; how, how am I supposed to know? I was so young back then, in fact, I could barely walk, how would I know?” Xiao Yan’s heart began to beat violently. Forcing open a smile, Xiao Yan guilty turned his gaze to the center of the hall.

“Hehe&h.e.l.lip;” Looking at Xiao Yan’s reaction, a slight smile floated on Xiao Xun Er’s face. Her sight moved back to the book on her lap and as if talking to herself, she said: “Even though I know that, that person did it in goodwill, I’m a girl right? How can I let someone carelessly touch me? If I ever find out who did it, hmph&h.e.l.lip;”

Xiao Yan’s mouth began to twitch violently, keeping his sight straight, he shut his mouth tight&h.e.l.lip;

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**Chapter 4 – Faction of the Misty Clouds:**

In the main hall, Xiao Zhan and the three clan elders were talking excitedly with the strange elder. The guest seemed to have something weighing on his mind, yet every time when it seemed as if he was about to broach the subject, he would swallow back the words and change the topic. Each time he did this, the delicate girl next to him would give the elder a subtle yet firm glance&h.e.l.lip;

After listening on to their conversation for a while, Xiao Yan was bored by their conversation and his head was slowly drooping&h.e.l.lip;

“Brother Xiao Yan, do you know who they are?” Right when Xiao Yan was about to fall asleep from boredom, Xun Er who was beside him opened her ancient book and asked Xiao Yan.

“Do you know?” Xiao Yan curiously looked at Xun Er.

“Did you see the symbol of a silver sword with the clouds on the cuff of their robes?” Xun Er said with a light smile.

“Oh?” Xiao Yan looked towards the cuffs of the three and indeed, there he clearly saw the embroidered symbol of a sword sparkling in the clouds!

“They are from the Faction of Misty Clouds?” Xiao Yan asked in bewilderment.

Even though Xiao Yan had never gone out into the real world, he had read from books about this faction. Xiao Yan’s clan lived in a city named Wu Tan City which was part of the Jia Ma Empire. Even though this city is listed as being one of the bigger cities within Jia Ma Empire, it was still dwarfed by the size of the empire, despite having the Magic Monsters Mountain Range behind it.

Within the city itself, Xiao Yan’s clan was the biggest. Besides the Xiao Clan, there were two other clans that competed with the Xiao Clan, but even after 24 years of blood and strife, they were unable to overtake the Xiao clan&h.e.l.lip;

If the Xiao Clan was the strongest power in Wu Tan City, then the Faction of Misty Clouds would be the strongest power in the entire Jia Ma Empire! The difference between the Xiao Clan and the Faction of Misty Clouds was enormous, to the point where Xiao Yan’s father Xiao Zhan, who normally kept a strict and harsh face, was extremely respectful in front of these guests.

“Why are they here?” Xiao Yan whispered.

Xun Er’s slim fingers paused, “Maybe it’s related to you, Brother Xiao Yan &h.e.l.lip;”

“Me? But I don’t have any relations.h.i.+p with them!?” Hearing Xun Er’s response, Xiao Yan paused before shaking his head and whispering back.

“Do you know the name of the girl up there?” Xun Er glanced at the girl.

“No, do you?” Xian Yan furrowed his brows as he examined the face of the girl Xun Er pointed out. He cannot recall ever having seen her before.

“She’s Nalan Yanran!” A curious expression floated on Xun Er’s face.

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Xiao Yan stiffened, “Nalan Yanran? The granddaughter of Nalan Jie, the Lionheart commander of Jia Ma Empire? She’s&h.e.l.lip; she’s my fiancée that was set between our families, before I was born?”

“Hehe, grandfather and Nalan Jie were like blood brothers and at that time, you and Nalan Yanran were born around the same time, so the two decided that you guys would get married. But, unfortunately, three years after you were born, grandfather died in a fight with a clan enemy and as time pa.s.sed, Xiao Clan’s relation with the Nalan family became weaker&h.e.l.lip;” Xun Er paused and looked at Xiao Yan who was absorbed in Xun Er’s story, “Nalan Jie is not only arrogant, he also puts extreme emphasis on promises. The marriage was decided by him so even though your name has been quite bad the past few years, he has never once thought of annulling the marriage&h.e.l.lip;”

“That geezer sure is quite obstinate&h.e.l.lip;” Xiao Yan smiled.

“Nalan Jie has the final say in all matters within the family so even though he really is very fond of his granddaughter, no one in the family has stepped up to oppose the marriage&h.e.l.lip;” Xun Er’s beautiful eyes lightly glanced at Xiao Yan before continuing, “But 5 years ago, Nalan Yanran became a student under the faction leader of Misty Clouds. In these 5 years, Nalan Yanran demonstrated incredible talent. When a person has enough power to change the path of their life, they would try their hardest to change things that they don’t like and unfortunately, she absolutely hates her promised marriage with brother Xiao Yan!”

“You’re saying&h.e.l.lip; that she came to CANCEL the marriage?”

Xiao Yan’s face darkened. At this moment he was furious, not because Nalan Yanran did not want him as her husband but rather, because Nalan Yanran is trying to cancel the marriage with the entire clan present! If that happens then his father would lose much of his dignity and respect within the clan!

Xiao Yan slowly breathed in, the cold air calming his raging thoughts. Within his sleeve, Xiao Yan curled his fist, thinking, if I was a Dou s.h.i.+, who would dare to trample over my dignity?

It was true, if Xiao Yan was a Dou s.h.i.+, then, even if Nalan Yanran had the backing of the Faction of Misty Clouds, she would not be able to do such a thing. A 15 year old Dou s.h.i.+,,there were only a few that had such high accomplishments in the entire history of Dou Qi Mainland. And the few people that were at that level when they were that young are now some of the most influential people in the entire Dou Qi world.

A small fragile hand cleverly evaded Xiao Yan’s sleeves and held onto Xiao Yan’s hands. Xun Er softly said, “Brother Xiao Yan, if she really cancels the marriage, then that’s her own loss. I believe that in a couple of years, she will be regretting her decisions today!”

“Regret?” Xiao Yan sneered. “With my current abilities, I don’t have that kind of luxury.”

Xiao Yan paused before changing the tone of his voice, “Wait, Xun Er. How are you so familiar with them? The things that you’ve just said, my father might not even know some of them. How do you know all these?”

Xun Er stiffened but did not say anything.

Looking at Xue Er’s avoidance on the subject, Xiao Yan could only helplessly smile. Even though Xun Er was also part of the Xiao family, she and Xiao Yan didn’t have any relation by blood. In addition, Xiao Yan had never seen Xun Er’s parents and every time he asked his father about them, Xiao Zhan would shake his head and not speak. Soon, Xun Er’s parents became a taboo subject, something that they seemed to fear speaking about.

For Xiao Yan, Xun Er’s ident.i.ty was always veiled in mystery. No matter how hard or how cleverly he tried, Xun Er would always stay silent.

“Ugh, whatever, if you don’t want to say it then don’t.” Shaking his head, Xiao Yan’s face suddenly darkened again. The guest elder, under the repeated signals from Nalan Yanran, finally stood up&h.e.l.lip;

“Heh, using the Faction of Misty Clouds to pressure father? This Nalan Yanran certainly is using some shameless tactics&h.e.l.lip;” Fury began to build within Xiao Yan’s heart.

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