

Mr Lang's features were twisted into a terrible look.

It was a face that was contorted into a smiling face and a sorrowful look, and neither at the same time. Looking at him was akin to staring at the face of the devil.

"How do you feel?" He asked mildly and with a gravelly voice as he eyed Luo Qi.

"I feel incredible. This is amazing!"

Luo Qi seemed lost in another world. His eyes were half-lidded and the look on his face was that of confoundment. His skin had taken on a blackish tone. He looked as if he had been poisoned.

Mr Lang nodded at the sight. He patted Luo Qi on the shoulder lightly, then leaned in and whispered in his ear. "Keep going then. Just keep going."

Luo Qi inhaled deeply, shut his eyes and allowed himself to immerse fully in his world.

Mr Lang turned around, stepped into the darkness and vanished without a trace.

Luo Qi was left alone in the study.

He opened his eyes an hour later. Something had changed significantly. The look in his eyes had become sharper and more bloodthirsty. There was a bright edge to it.

One could see a cloud of black mist moving and

shifting in his eyes.

He got up. He felt an endless well of power filling him and a stream of heat coursing in his veins and threatening to erupt from his body.

Luo Qi let out a long breath. His body felt light. “This feels incredible. I had no idea that there’re tons of such antique books hidden in the world beyond the mountain. Tianlian Sect’s going to become the most powerful sect in the mountain if we can get our hands on those books!”

They might surpass themselves and become a legend.

His eyes shone with a bright light and the cloud of black mist disappeared within moments. He seemed to be himself once more.

Luo Qi pulled the doors to the study open and squinted at the sunlight pouring into his eyes. The light was a little blinding.

“Chief,” the guards standing at the door greeted him.

“Plant two trees in the courtyard right over there. The sunlight is too glaring.”

“Yes, sir.” The guards seemed a little taken aback, but they dared not voice their opinions.

They could move a mountain into the courtyard if that was what Luo Qi wanted. It hardly mattered that Luo Qi was the one who had requested that no trees be planted in the courtyard because he

didn't want anything to block out the sun.

What had made him change his mind?

"Chief, Elder Luo Long came earlier. He wished to know if you have time tonight. The chief's presence is required for the ancestral worship."

"Ancestral worship?" Luo Qi nodded. "I nearly forgot about that."

He paused for a moment. "Tell Luo Long that I'll be there."

Ancestral worship was an affair of utmost importance. Tianlian Sect was getting more powerful and on its way to becoming the strongest sect in the mountain. They had to let their ancestors know.

The sect's achievements would not have been possible without Luo Qi's leadership.

He was the hero of the sect and its greatest champion!

Luo Qi was going to share his achievements with his ancestors and tell them how proud he was of what he had done.

The guard nodded and raced off to inform Luo Long.

Meanwhile, Luo Long was making preparations for the ancestral worship tonight. He knew Luo Qi. The man would agree to attend and he would make time for it.

It was mandatory for the chief to participate in ancestral worship. Besides, Luo Qi must be proud of what he had done for the sect. He must think that he was the sect's greatest champion. He was definitely going to speak to their ancestors about his contributions during ancestral worship.

Luo Long turned and eyed Jiang Ning, who was standing next to him.

"We have one chance. We're doomed if this fails."

Jiang Ning simply listened quietly.

"Luo Qi will attend the worship tonight. I will draw the others away so that he will enter the ancestral hall to commune with our ancestors. Everything will fall on you then. Our efforts will be wasted if you don't manage to get the antidote from him. Make sure you don't kill him unless you are left with no other choice."

Luo Long's eyelid twitched.



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Luo Long knew that Jiang Ning was an incredible fighter. He had seen the limits of Luo Qi's abilities. But when it came to Jiang Ning...

After all this while, he had not seen what Jiang Ning was truly capable of. None of the elders could force him to reveal all his cards.

Luo Qi was being manipulated by Mr Lang. He didn't deserve to die for it. Tianlian Sect needed its chief.

"Did you hear what I just said?" Luo Long began to panic when Jiang Ning didn't say a word.

He was genuinely worried that Jiang Ning might kill Luo Qi.

"Yes," said Jiang Ning plainly as he nodded.

They had discussed earlier and agreed that Luo Long would get Jiang Ning into the ancestral hall while Jiang Ning would hide himself and find a chance to make a move later that night.

Time passed steadily.

Soon, night fell.

Luo Long was the one who made preparations for the ancestral worship that took place every month. There were rules on whom could attend ancestral worship, where each person was to stand and who was allowed to speak.

The sky gradually darkened.

“Watch out, don’t knock those wreaths over.”

“Move a little to the side. You’re standing in the way.”

The servants were busy with the final preparations. Those who were supposed to attend the ancestral worship had begun to arrive.

“Elder Huang, you’re supposed to light the incense sticks tonight,” said Luo Long as he looked at the other elder. “It’s your turn to do it.”

Elder Huang shook his head. He looked terrible. “I don’t deserve to do it.”

Suffering a reprimand from Luo Qi at his age had been an utter humiliation to him. If he weren’t afraid of dying, he would have killed himself.

“You’re the oldest elder in Tianlian Sect. That qualifies you to perform the task,” said Luo Long. “It’s decided. You’ll light the incense sticks and escort the chief into the ancestral hall for prayers.”

“Alright,” said Elder Huang before falling silent.

Luo Qi arrived.

His strides were wide as he walked into the room. His entire person exuded a strange aura.

It was an aura that invoked loathing instinctively.

Luo Long’s heart began to race as he was assailed by an intense feeling.

The man standing before him was Luo Qi, yet all Luo Long saw was someone unfamiliar.

A complete stranger.

“What’s going on?” Luo Long looked around and saw a similar expression on everyone else’s faces. They seemed to be filled with disbelief.

“This feels odd.”

He didn’t voice his doubts nor did he say a word. He watched as Luo Qi approached the ancestral hall and looked around him.

“We should start now,” said Luo Qi.

“It’s time.” Luo Long nodded.

Luo Qi turned around and looked at the ancestral hall. Instead of kneeling like he usually would, he remained standing. Behind him, Luo Long and the others fell to their knees.

“Light the incense sticks!” shouted Luo Qi.

Everybody frowned. They had not expected Luo Qi to remain standing. His not kneeling was a sign of disrespect to their ancestors.

Regardless, no one said a word.

Luo Long gave Elder Huang a look. The latter got up immediately and lit the incense sticks. A light fragrance drifted in the air.

“The ancestral worship begins now!” declared the elder.

Everyone had lowered their heads and begun to chant the rules of the sect silently. Luo Qi, on the other hand, appeared unconcerned about the protocols of the ritual.

SLAM!

The doors of the ancestral hall were pulled shut.

“What’s wrong with the chief?”

“I can’t believe it. He didn’t kneel.”

“What’s going on?”

A few elders blurted out in bewilderment.

Luo Long shook his head.

“Alright, everyone, the chief has his reasons for what he does. Let’s step away.” He looked at everyone. “We shouldn’t disturb him.”

He had everyone leave, then turned and glanced at the ancestral hall. He hoped for Jiang Ning’s success and that the man managed to get the antidote from Luo Qi. They would be doomed otherwise.

Everything hinged on Jiang Ning now. He had no idea why he trusted Jiang Ning so much. They were supposed to be enemies!

Yet, right now, he was praying from the bottom of his heart that Jiang Ning was more powerful than he had imagined the man to be.





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