

The confidence that Jiang Ning had wasn't a blustering courage. It required neither dramatic and expressive displays nor arrogant declarations.

He exuded confidence simply by sitting there and speaking in his mild, indifferent tones.

Liu Qing was stumped.

She had not come across anyone like him before.

She couldn't describe the feelings that overcame her when she was with Jiang Ning. They felt like a mix of awe, nervousness, respect and a tinge of... adoration.

It was a complicated web of emotions that not even Liu Qing could untangle herself from.

"The next round!" Mr He thundered.

Everyone's eyes were drawn towards the arena.

The second round had started.

Those who had been eliminated in the first round had failed the test. Liu Qing knew exactly how that felt.

It was a feeling that she had experienced more than once.

She had been lucky this time though. She had passed the first round.

She corrected herself immediately. It hadn't been

luck. It had been the labors of her hard work. She had deserved it.

“The next match is between Chen Long and Li Wei!” Mr He’s voice thundered.

A commotion stirred in the audience. Everyone’s eyes landed on Chen Long and Li Wei, who were standing the distance.

How could it be the two of them?

Alongside Luo Heng, Chen Long and Li Wei were the two other most powerful disciples in the Inner Court.

Luo Heng was stronger than the both of them while Chen Long and Li Wei were well matched. It was going to be a tough fight. Why were they being pitted against the other in the second round?

It was akin to trapping two tigers in the same cage. Only one would emerge triumphant.

This fight wasn’t simply one to pass the test. If that were the case, they could have held the test any time. Why was it being held today, when Qingshan Sect were entertaining visitors?

Everyone seemed a little confused. They couldn’t help but look at Liu Chuandao and wonder why he had planned the fights this way. What was his intention behind this arrangement?

Zhang Heng turned towards Liu Chuandao and gave him a look too.

When the crowd caught the look in Zhang Heng's eyes, they realized that the principal of the Inner Court had no idea what was going on too.

Liu Chuandao revealed nothing on his face. He was the only one who knew that he hadn't planned this. Zhang Heng had been the one behind it.

He wasn't going to say anything though.

He wasn't going to interfere with the test regardless of what Zhang Heng had planned. This was the Inner Court's test. Zhang Heng had full rein over how it was going to be run. Liu Chuandao wasn't going to interfere and let Zhang Heng have anything on him.

SWOOSH!

SWOOSH!

Chen Ling and Li Wei entered the arena. Their eyes shone brightly.

Those who weren't familiar with them viewed them as evenly matched opponents who weren't going to yield easily and admit that his opponent was more powerful than he was.

This was a great chance to prove who was the better of them both.

"Chen Long, let's find out who's the better fighter today." Li Wei smiled and cupped his fists in greeting. "Here's to a fair fight."

“And a good battle!”

Boom!

As soon as they were done talking, they attacked at the same time with startling speed.

Their first blow resulted in a thunderous collision.

BAM!

The ground trembled.

The force of their blows rippled in the air and blasted at the audience's eardrums.

They were incredibly strong.

The crowd gasped aloud. The two fighters were the cream of the crop in the Inner Court and the younger generation of disciples in the sect. They were the second strongest fighters following Luo Heng.

They were going to be admitted to the Portico and become the Portico disciple of an elder sooner or later.

The fight in the arena looked intense. Chen Long and Li Wei had charged right into battle as soon as the fight had started. Mr He had retreated into the distance so that he wouldn't distract the opponents in any way.

The audience was completely engrossed in the fight, their full attention drawn to the most exciting battle today.

Liu Qing was doing the same too. Her eyes were fixed on the two disciples in the arena. There was a conflicted look in her eyes.


“They’re really strong!” was the thought that occupied her mind.

They would have left her trailing in the dust in the past.


What terrified her the most was the fact that she hadn’t realized how much stronger they were.

Yet, within a span of a month, she had learned to discern things that she hadn’t been able to.

She turned towards Jiang Ning and gave him a look. “Who’s going to win?”

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Liu Qing had posed the question casually. No matter how incredible Jiang Ning was, he couldn't be more powerful than Chen Long and Li Wei. He wouldn't be able to predict the outcome of the fight.

"Chen Long's going to win," Jiang Ning said immediately without thinking at all.

"Why him?" Liu Qing froze momentarily. "I heard Li Wei's slightly stronger than he is. There might not be a huge difference between the two, but that slight bit's enough to let him win the fight, right?"

Jiang Ning smiled and shook his head. "Chen Long's going to win. This is going to be a short battle."

"What?"

Liu Qing wasn't convinced.

She didn't believe Jiang Ning at all.

Was the fight really going to end that quickly?

The intense battle continued in the arena. No one had the upper hand on the other. The fight was likely to take a while because of how well matched the fighters were.

BAM!

Liu Qing was about to say something when a thunderous boom resounded in the air suddenly. It was followed swiftly by a howl of pain. The arena ground shook violently. Li Wei was flung

aside then sent tumbling down the arena.

He rolled a few times on the ground before spitting out a mouthful of blood. It took him some time to get to his feet. Disbelief filled his eyes.

He couldn't believe what had happened.

Had he lost...so quickly?

Everyone else in the audience was equally taken aback. It had seemed like a tough fight a moment ago. Yet, in the next moment, Li Wei had been defeated.

"I hadn't expected that." Li Wei took a deep breath, then started coughing fiercely. It took him some time before he finally stopped. "I didn't realize you'd progressed so far. I've lost."

Having said that, he turned and left.

There was a hint of a smile on Chen Long's face. He didn't say anything. He turned, gave Luo Heng a look and walked away from the arena.

Liu Qing froze, rooted to the spot. She didn't care about how everyone else was reacting to Chen Long's sudden victory.

She stared at Jiang Ning stupidly with utter disbelief. He had accurately predicted the outcome of the fight again. And he had done it with astounding precision.

Chen Long and Li Wei had been stuck in a fierce fight. How had Jiang Ning figured out that Chen

Long had been on his way to a swift victory?

This...this seemed like an impossible feat.

She was quite certain that neither Zheng Heng nor Mr He would have known either. No one had known that Chen Long had concealed his true strength.

“But why?” She blurted out.

Jiang Ning poured himself another cup of tea. He laughed softly. “The look he gave his opponent was one of scorn.”

“Maybe he’s simply being arrogant?”

“He can’t afford to be arrogant,” Jiang Ning said calmly.

Liu Qing got more confused. Jiang Ning spoke like he had known Chen Long for years and knew Chen Long like the back of his hand.

Jiang Ning knew what kind of person Chen Long was, his character and the choices that he would make.

But...this was the first time that Jiang Ning had seen Chen Long.

How had he...

Liu Qing’s head swam. Jiang Ning’s abilities awed and terrified her. His judgment of other people seemed terrifyingly accurate. It was scary.



Was she an open book to Jiang Ning too?

“The next match!” Before Liu Qing’s imagination could run wild, Mr He issued an announcement for the next fight. “Liu Qing versus Luo Heng!”

Liu Qing felt as if she had just been struck by a bolt of lightning.

Was it her turn?

Was her opponent...Luo Heng?

Luo Heng, the most powerful fighter in the Inner Court?

Was this a joke?

Her face had gone numb. She couldn’t feel her limbs. She...was going to lose, wasn’t she?

She wasn’t the only one thinking that. Everyone in the crowd had arrived at the same conclusion as soon as they had heard Mr He’s announcement.

Liu Qing might not last more than three counts before Luo Heng defeated her. They weren’t in the same league at all. Even Li Wei, who had been defeated earlier, could beat Liu Qing easily.

She was going to lose.

Quite a few people in the crowd had started to shake their heads or engage in hushed conversations. They were murmuring gleefully to one another and laughing at her misfortune.

Luo Heng had entered the arena. The look on his face revealed no emotion at all. He wasn't looking at Liu Qing. The only thought that occupied his mind now was to end this fight as quickly as possible so that he could fight Chen Long.

“Go on. Beat him,” Jiang Ning said coolly.



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