"What the hell? Dragon Master, are you abandoning me for a woman? I'm the one who carried you across tens of thousands of miles of the South American continent. Shouldn't you at least be grateful for the work that I put in? How could you gang up with Chandra to bully me?" protested Gaia as he ran through the forest and filled it with his loud complaints.

The sorry sight of Gaia sent Chandra into bursts of giggling.

Her soft peals of laughter sounded like a babbling brook cascading down the rocky mountainside.

"Alright, you can stop the act right now. Do you really think I'm an idiot who's going to be tricked by your act?" laughed Chandra.

"Chandra, there's something I have to tell you. I saw him," said Ye Fan solemnly after they finally stopped fooling around.

His eyes darkened with seriousness as he stared at Chandra.

Something flickered in Chandra's eyes. The calm surface of her heart rippled with

emotion.

Ye Fan's words were like a lock that had unlocked the memories that she had sealed away a long time ago.

She knew whom Ye Fan was referring to.

He was the only living person who shared a history with Chandra.

Her family and friends had been slain by him and his sword years ago.

The man whom Ye Fan had mentioned was Chandra's fellow disciple, Brahma!

Chandra began to tremble.

A murderous rage colored her lovely face.

Her beautiful eyes turned red with hate.

Before Chandra could spiral out of control, someone's palm tightened firmly around her pale wrist.

The young man was here, providing her comfort and support in her most dire moments, like he always had.

"I'm sorry, Chandra. I was too weak. I couldn't kill him. He escaped in the end," muttered Ye Fan. One could hear the notes of guilt and self-reproach in his voice.

"No, it's not your fault, Dragon Master..."

Gaia appeared to have figured out whom they were talking about. He was ready to step forward and apologize to Chandra for teaming up with Brahma and foiling Ye Fan's attempt at avenging Chandra.

If he had not sneaked up on Ye Fan and attacked him, Ye Fan could have defeated Brahma with Invoke the Celestial Cloud.

But no one could know for sure now.

Countless coincidences had led to Brahma's escape.

"Shut up! This isn't your place to speak," Ye Fan yelled at Gaia before he could say a word.

"But, Dragon Master, I..."

Ye Fan kicked him aside when he attempted to say something.

"Shut your mouth!"

Intimidated by Ye Fan, Gaia finally shut up and hid himself in a corner.

Ye Fan proceeded to blame himself for Brahma's escape.

He wasn't trying to be a hero. He knew how much Chandra hated Brahma. If she found out that Gaia had once been friends and allies with Brahma, she might decide that she hated Gaia as well.

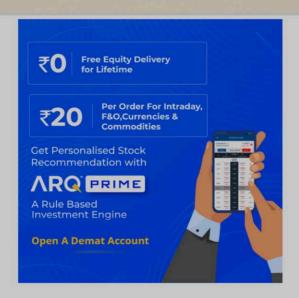
Ye Fan had known Chandra for many years. He knew that she wasn't as harmless as she looked.

Those who suffered Chandra's hate also suffered terrible fates.

After all, a healer was also an expert in poison.

In a good mood, Chandra was the famed healer of the martial arts circle.

But in a foul mood, she became a terrifying expert in poison who would terrify even a grandmaster.



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A reckless supreme grandmaster would not escape her wrath either.

Ye Fan and Chandra were great friends. She would never hurt Ye Fan. But that didn't mean that she wouldn't try and hurt Gaia.

That was why Ye Fan decided to shoulder the full responsibility when it came to Brahma's escape.

Chandra appeared to have calmed down while Ye Fan and Gaia had been bickering with each other.

She turned her back towards Ye Fan, then laughed softly. "It's alright, Ye Fan. I knew you did your best. He wasn't fated to die that day. I've waited for so long, I don't mind waiting a while longer. But I hope you haven't forgotten the promise you made me. I'll help you storm Chu Sect and you'll help me storm Folo Palace."

"Of course," Ye Fan said firmly. "Don't worry, Chandra. I never go back on my word. Once I'm done settling my affairs, I'll charge into India with you. I'll make sure you have your revenge. Indra's going to pay a hundred-fold for what he did to you. This is my promise to

you. It's what I owe you."

Chandra had helped Ye Fan countless times over the years and this was the only thing that he could do for her to repay her kindness.

It was what he owed her.

Chandra froze when she heard what Ye Fan had said.

Somehow, his words made her feel safe.

She trusted in the young man unconditionally.

"Alright, I'll be here waiting." Chandra nodded. A smile unfurled slowly on her face, like a wave rippling slowly across the calm surface of the lake. She changed the subject the next moment. "Alright, let's not talk about me. You're awake now and you're fully healed. You should get back and check out how things are going at home. You've been away for quite some time. There must be someone back home worried sick about you."

Her words did serve as a reminder to Ye Fan.

"You're right. I've not contacted my family after I left. How long have I been asleep?"

"About six months, I think," said Chandra.

Time simply passed them by while they were in the wilderness and cut off from the rest of civilization. Chandra couldn't exactly tell how much time had passed.

But she had a feeling that it must have been six months. Perhaps even seven or eight months.

To a martial artist, six months weren't exactly long.

After all, a martial artist of Ye Fan's level could go into a seclusion that spanned three to five years if they were lucky to stumble upon enlightenment.

Chandra's master had gone into seclusion for ten years so that he might achieve a breakthrough.

Ye Fan had been away for barely a year. Comparatively, it was like a blink of an eye.

Alarm colored Ye Fan's face when he heard

what Chandra had said though.

"What? Have I been in a trance for that long?"

He had been in the Amazon rainforest for months before this.

Coupled with the months that he had spent hidden away, deep in his healing trance, he would have been away from home for a year!



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••• Wait! I Have Something to Say!



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One year was a short time for a martial artist.

But for those who did not practice martial arts, it wasn't at all.

Within a year, one would have experienced the four seasons. Its wintry cold and summer heat. Its warm spring and its cool autumn.

Within a year, the world could have changed to something beyond recognition.

Ye Fan finally began to panic when he realized how long he had been away.

He had been gone for a year. Qiu Mu-Cheng and his mother must be so worried.

"I have to hurry home. Chandra, I'm sorry. I wanted to keep you company for a few days but it appears that I don't have the time for that. I need to get back as soon as possible."

Ye Fan couldn't wait to get back home after he had realized that he had been gone from home for nearly a year.

After bidding farewell to Chandra, he headed



straight for Jiangdong.

Then, he seemed to have remembered something and rushed back.

"Gaia, don't hang around and do nothing. Get ready while I head back. The final battle will take place soon," said Ye Fan sternly. He sounded dead serious.

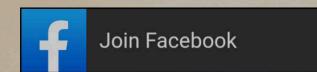
Gaia froze momentarily, then widened his eyes.

"Dragon Master, are you saying...that you're planning on storming the Chu family soon? So soon? You've just recovered from your injuries. Shouldn't you wait a little longer?"

He had known all along that a day would come when Ye Fan settled his debts with the Chu family.

But he had not expected that day to arrive so quickly. He wasn't prepared to hear these words so soon.

After all, Ye Fan had just survived a terrible attack. He had gotten into a huge battle with the martial artists of Chu Sect six months ago and had nearly been killed by Chu Sect's





sect leader.

He had expected Ye Fan to wait a while longer after the last attack that he had survived before he attempted to storm the Chu family.

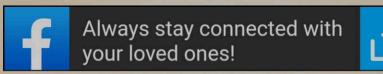
He had not expected Ye Fan to announce his plans to attack the Chu family this quickly.

"Wait?" Ye Fan shook his head and smiled. "I've waited long enough. I've planned this and made preparations for the storming for years. It's time to set the plan in motion. My mind is made up. After I return to China and settle my affairs, we'll head for the Chu family. It's time to settle all our grudges, old and new!"

The look in Ye Fan's eyes turned cold and in his cold eyes burned a raging fire.

Soon, the child that the Chu family had cast out would return once again.

"Alright then. I see that the Dragon Master's mind is made up. Well, I'll do my best to help. There's little chance of walking out of this alive, but I'm not going to regret doing this!"





Gaia stopped trying to persuade Ye Fan to change his mind when he realized that the latter's mind had already been made.

Instead, he strengthened his own resolve and cupped his fists. His words were filled with determination and his frank and unconcealed loyalty to Ye Fan.

Ye Fan nodded. "We might not survive this. You should make your own arrangements and settle your own affairs. I'll let you know where we are to meet."

"Alright," said Gaia.

He looked at Ye Fan, his lips parting. He seemed like he wanted to say something but had decided against it in the end.

The look on his face was driving Ye Fan crazy.

"If you want to say something, just say it!" thundered Ye Fan as he frowned.

Gaia smiled sheepishly.

"Dragon Master, I have a question that I'm not sure if I should ask," he whispered before





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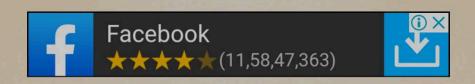
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pausing suddenly. Then, he gathered his courage and continued. "Well, this thing between you and Chu Sect's sect leader, Tang Yun...are the both of you..."

Chandra's eyes fell on Gaia then.

She seemed curious as well. What kind of relationship did Ye Fan share with that beautiful and fearsome sect leader, Tang Yun?

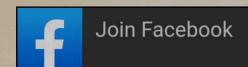
"Silence!"

Before he was done talking, Gaia felt a wave of rage erupting from Ye Fan and rushing towards him. Ye Fan's fury sent him flying into the distance.

"I'm warning you. Never mention that name to me ever again. We have nothing to do with each other and we will never have anything to do with each other. She is nothing but an enemy!" Ye Fan's voice thundered furiously in the heavens.

His words were heavy with a cold rage.

The intensity of Ye Fan's outburst revealed the despair and devastation that he must





feel.

No one had any idea how terribly that woman had hurt Ye Fan.

When she had stabbed him in the chest that night, she had shattered whatever remnants of tenderness and hope that he had harbored for her and their relationship.

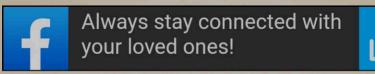
She had killed the woman called Yu Yun, the woman whom he had trained with every day and every night in the old Chu family home.

Ye Fan wasn't the heartless one. She had been the one who had destroyed everything good that they had shared.

"Please don't be mad, Dragon Master! I was wrong to overstep myself. I shouldn't have said that. It's all my fault!" Gaia fell to his knees and pleaded for forgiveness when he realized that he had misspoken. He was terrified. Ye Fan rarely got so angry. The young man's furious roars were still rumbling in the sky, like thunder.

Gaia received no reply.

After a long while, he looked up and realized





that the young man had left.

He had headed into the vast desert and its expansive blue skies.

Gaia stared as the young man disappeared into the horizon, then released a loud sigh of relief. His forehead was damp with cold sweat.

"The Dragon Master's becoming more powerful and more terrifying," sighed Gaia as he smiled wryly. It took him a long while to collect himself.

Chandra appeared unaffected by Ye Fan's fit of rage. She headed back to the lake, sat down and began plucking at her instrument again.

"You shouldn't have provoked him. He's a dragon. Poke a dragon and you risk getting burned," said Chandra with a soft laugh.

Gaia appeared outraged. Exasperation colored his eyes.

"I don't have the guts to do that. I was just curious, so I asked him what's going on between him and Tang..." Gaia was about to



say Tang Yun's name when he remembered what Ye Fan had told him. He stopped himself in the nick of time.

"I just wanted to know what's going on between the two of them. The Chu family is one of the three families under Chu Sect. When we storm the Chu family, Chu Sect's response will determine whether we fail or succeed. If the Dragon Master and Chu Sect's sect leader happen to get along quite well, he might be able to persuade Chu Sect to stay out of this whole thing. Our chances of success will be a lot higher then, right? I didn't expect such a huge reaction from the Dragon Master. He got mad before I was done talking."



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