

Immortal 1051

Chapter 1051: Free of Feelings

Yan Xuehen's white clothes fluttered. Her expression was cold, but unlike Chu Chuyan's cold eyes, there was an awe-imposing and dignified aura emanating from her expression. It was likely the prestige she had gained from managing a top level sect for so long.

The temperature of the entire room dropped many degrees with her arrival. Zu An's first reaction was to think that Chu Chuyan had been pretty cold back then too, but her insides had been quite warm. He wondered if it was the same for this woman.

That thought scared even Zu An himself. He quickly gathered his thoughts. He was thankful that there were no mind reading skills in this world. Otherwise, he would already be dead if the other party knew what he was thinking.

"There is something wrong with your expression." Yan Xuehen gave Zu An an unhappy frown.

"Ahem, please pardon my current appearance, as I am still injured. I cannot get up to greet Sect Master Yan." Zu An could only pretend to be weak to change the topic.

The other party was visiting him in the dead of night. There was no way she was there to talk about romance with him. If she really had come to finish him off, his weak act would throw her off, and he would see if he could find a chance to get away.

"Sect Master Yan?" Yan Xuehen harrumphed. "Considering your relationship with Chuyan, is it not a bit inappropriate to call me Sect Master Yan?"

Zu An felt his scalp go numb. It seemed he had been found out after all... He could only test the waters and exclaim, "Master?"

Yan Xuehen was speechless. She retorted, "Who the hell is your master? Stop trying to worm your way in!"

Zu An said with a wronged expression, "You are Chuyan's master. Chuyan and I are husband and wife, so what else would I call you if not master? I do not want to be someone who disrespects my master and betrays my ancestors!"

Yan Xuehen frowned slightly. She felt the phrase 'disrespects my master and betrays my ancestors' sounded a bit strange, but she just treated it as her own misunderstanding. She didn't pursue the matter further. She asked, "Since you have this level of a relationship with Chuyan, why are you so intimate with that Devil Sect witch?"[1]

Zu An felt the situation was a huge pain in the ass. He had anticipated instances where he would be caught between the grudges of his girls, but never had he ever expected to be in such a hellish situation with his lovers' seniors.

He could only say, "I was captured by the court in the past and encountered a lot of danger. It was thanks to Lady Qiu who saved me with no regard for her life that I survived. That is something Chu Chuyan knows about as well."

What he was implying was, Even my wife knows about my relationship with Qiu Honglei, so what is a master like you interfering for?

Yan Xuehen was a bit unhappy. "You can completely repay the life-saving gritudes of others through other means; did you need to give her your heart? Is it not only because she is pretty that your lustful desires were stirred?"

Zu An replied with an upright expression, "How can feelings between lovers be called lustful desires?"

Yan Xuehen said indifferently, "Look at how well you are twisting my words. I do not feel like arguing with you about these things. Either way, you and Chuyan have already divorced each other, so there will be no relationship between the two of you in the future. You can be with that Devil Sect witch if you want, or if you want to, you can be with other women. None of it has anything to do with her anymore."

Zu An began to panic. He said, "The only reason we had to divorce was because that was the only way to protect the Chu clan! It was not because we no longer loved each other; our feelings still remain..."

"Oh?" Yan Xuehen cut him off before he even finished his sentence. She asked, "In that case, who would you choose between Chuyan and that Devil Sect witch?"

"Uh..." Zu An hesitated. He replied, "Can I have them both?" Even though he could say some pretty nonsense to get by, it would only hurt them if news of this reached Qiu Honglei and Yun Jianyue's ears.

Furthermore, judging from how Yan Xuehen and Yun Jianyue didn't seem to get along, probably... No, she'd definitely pass on his words to piss the other party off.

Yan Xuehen was stunned.

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +444 +444 +444...

How can this brat be so shameless? He dares to say something so disgraceful in front of my face?

Her expression grew grim. She said, "I never planned to let you two stay together anyway. That is why it does not matter even if you end up with that Devil Sect witch."

Zu An said with a frown, "This is a personal matter between me and Chuyan. It is not something you as her master should be interfering with, right?"

"Of course I should," Yan Xuehen said indifferently. "I cultivate the daoist art of clear-mindedness. If she wants to reach the higher levels, she must let go of her worldly emotions. In that case, there will be less pain overall if she stops sooner rather than later. If you really want the best thing for her, then you should let her go. True love should consider the bigger picture, and not your own selfish intentions."

Zu An was completely speechless. What the hell is going on? Why does the Devil Sect's Heavenly Devil Temptation need the cultivator to remain chaste, and why does White Jade Sect need their cultivators to let go of all of their emotions?! They should all just cultivate the eunuchs' sunflower secret manual or something.

He calmly looked at the other party and asked, "Has Sect Master Yan ever experienced romance before?"

Yan Xuehen was stunned. Her eyes swept over Zu An and she said, "Of course not." Her voice was completely calm, as if she were saying something she didn't care about at all.

"Then if you have never experienced love, how can you say that you understand it?" Zu An sighed. "Is the sect master's explanation not a bit too presumptuous? Things like 'love means letting go', 'think about the other person', those are all just fabricated words of endearment that fictional novels churned out to deceive young ladies."

A slight blush appeared on Yan Xuehen's fair cheeks. What she said really had come from one of those romance books.

Her sect's technique needed her to let go of all emotions. However, she didn't know anything about feelings, let alone experiencing love! But she saw all men in the world as nothing. There was no way she would experience love with any of them by her own initiative.

As such, she had thought of a different method. She had secretly purchased most of the romance novels on the market to research the love affairs of those other stupid men and women. Afterward, she thought that she could already understand what love was, and that she could now reach that indifferent ultimate state more easily.

Among those stories, the one she had liked the most was 'Sweet Pampered Wife: Dominating Sword Immortal's Ninety-Nine Days of Searching For Love'. She had even lent it to Chu Chuyan for her to study and read during her leisure.

But she obviously couldn't admit to such things! She was so embarrassed from Zu An's inadvertent exposure that she really wanted to run away and hide in shame.

Yet in the end, she was a grandmaster after all, so she quickly recovered her composure. "I'm not in the mood to discuss these things with you. I won't pursue the matter of you plotting against me earlier because of Chuyan."

Zu An replied with a laugh, "Didn't make a proper agreement? What do you mean plotting against you? There were so many people who were witnesses back there!"

Yan Xuehen sneered. "Do you think I'm stupid? Even though I'm not as frivolous as that monster Yun Jianyue, I wouldn't be so inflexible as to be held back by a few words. Who would know I acted against you if I took your life right here? It's obviously because of Chuyan that I'm holding back. You should know your place."

Zu An frowned. However he knew that he couldn't convince the other party, so he could only change the topic. He said, "Right, I heard that White Jade Sect has always been an upright sect who considers themselves righteous. Why would you collude with the fiend races and help them smuggle military goods? Hasn't this harmed the lives of countless humans?"

Yan Xuehen frowned slightly and said, "Nonsense. When has our sect ever participated in these matters?"

"Isn't that little junior brother of yours doing this? He colluded with Cloudcenter Commandery's Magistrate Zuo Su and turned the entire Cloudcenter court into their own hub of benefits, colluding with the fiend races for their interests," Zu An said coldly. "Don't tell me you didn't know about any of this?"

Yan Xuehen remained silent for a long time. Then, she slowly said, "I rarely involve myself in matters of the world. I do not know too much about this matter. I will look into it when I return."

Zu An couldn't help but sigh with relief when he learned that their sect wasn't the real mastermind behind the matter. After all, this was a glorious grandmaster who could take his life at a moment's notice. The fact that she had held herself back and explained that much was already quite a good result.

"Then I will have to trouble the sect master for that." Zu An suddenly thought of something. He took out a set of makeup products he had bought from Rouge Spice earlier, saying, "Please help me deliver these goods, sect master."

Yan Xuehen gave them a look and shook her head, replying, "I do not use these things. There is no need for you to give me gifts to try to get on my good side."

Zu An was speechless. After some hesitation, he still said, "I am hoping that the sect master can pass these onto Chuyan for me."

Yan Xuehen was shocked. Her expression sank. "Just now, I already told you that Chuyan would have nothing to do with you anymore in the future, to not disturb her pursuit of the dao!"

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +233 +233 +233...

She turned around and left with a huff after saying that. Only the faint fragrance that remained proved that she had been just a moment ago.

Zu An wanted to cry when he saw the dazzling lineup of makeup products on the table. Should I have given her two sets instead? Maybe she would've taken them then?

Sigh, this Rouge Spice stuff really is unlucky. I tried to give it out as gifts to several people, but all of them refused me.

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The next morning, an Embroidered Envoy came to report, "Sir Zu, I've already finished investigating the things you asked me to look into yesterday."

"What's the result?" Zu An, who had been meditating on his bed, opened his eyes.

"It was indeed as Sir Zu suspected," the Embroidered Envoy replied.

"You've worked hard." Zu An had the Embroidered Envoy withdraw after speaking a few words of encouragement. He released a deep sigh and muttered, "Turns out it was like this..."

Then, he told the others at the temporary residence that he was going into seclusion, and to not bother him if it wasn't important. He had Daji dress up as him, while he himself changed into different clothes and left secretly.

Chapter 1052: Invisible Hand

Zu An put on a mask to disguise himself as just a passerby, then left after changing his outfit. He avoided the eyes of the surrounding surveillance.

When he was just about to leave, he suddenly noticed that a young lady with an outstanding figure was pacing back and forth by the entrance. The rippling waves that formed when she walked drew the eyes of everyone who passed by. Who else could it be but Pei Mianman?

Zu An quickly went over to bring her away. Pei Mianman was alarmed when someone grabbed her hand, and a black flame surged from her hand. But that flame went out soon after making contact with the other party's hand.

She stared blankly for a moment, then realized something. She exclaimed with pleasant surprise, "Ah Zu?"

"Yeah, it's me." Zu An suppressed his voice as he brought her over to a nearby alley.

There were some people who noticed the strange interaction and followed them, but Pei Mianman swept out her hand casually. A black shadow surrounded those people, and they could no longer see anything. When everything returned to normal, Pei Mianman and Zu An were already nowhere to be seen.

Were we attacked by ghosts or something?

Those individuals were horrified and didn't dare to continue chasing the two.

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Meanwhile, Pei Mianman and Zu An were already walking along the main street. She couldn't help but pinch Zu An's face, saying, "It feels weird when you have that mask on."

Zu An removed the mask and chuckled, replying, "I wore this because everyone is watching me carefully right now, so I have to at least do something to hide myself. By the way, why were you standing around our residence so early in the morning?"

"How could I do nothing after something so big happened last night? I only learned you were involved the morning after. I heard you were seriously injured, so of course I had to come to visit you! But who would've thought that the guards wouldn't let me in, and they wouldn't even deliver a message for me," Pei Mianman said in annoyance. Then, she quickly grabbed Zu An's arm to check his body, asking, "Where are your injuries? Why are you running around right now instead of properly nursing your injuries?"

"Some things happened back at the temporary residence, so the entire place is on lockdown. No one is allowed to come in or leave. That's why you were stopped." When he saw how nervous she was, Zu An felt warm inside. He added, "Don't worry, I'm fine. They're just some small injuries."

"What small injuries? I heard that a sword was stabbed straight through your chest and that you couldn't even move from your bed, that you were half dead!" Pei Mianman's eyes became misty. She said, "You don't have to act tough anymore; just rest well and focus on recovering."

"I've already pretty much recovered." Zu An pulled down his shirt to show her his chest, explaining, "I cultivate the Primordial Origin Sutra, which has powerful regeneration abilities. I even reforged my body several times over with primordial ki, so my body is harder than anyone else's. You should know that better than anyone else, right?"

"Hmph, you're so indecent." Pei Mianman's charming face immediately flushed red. She looked even more tender and beautiful than before.

However, when she examined his body herself, she saw that he really was more or less healed. She thus felt fully at ease. Still, she said, "Even if your body is fine, your injuries haven't fully healed yet. Why are you leaving so early in the morning?"

"How could I have run into you if I hadn't left so early in the morning?" Zu An chuckled, then said, "The reason I left today was to investigate a matter."

"What kind of thing is it that's made you so anxious?" Pei Mianman exclaimed in alarm.

"Someone warned me to be careful of the Pegasus Merchant Group before." Zu An didn't bring up Tang Tian'er's name. "I had someone look into them last night after I came back. Rouge Spice is also owned by the Pegasus Merchant Group."

"What's wrong with that?" Pei Mianman didn't really pay much attention to the true owners of such stores. She didn't understand what Zu An was saying.

"In these past few days, apart from visiting the Pei clan, Zhao Zhi has barely been to any other places. He only buys some gifts from certain stores, so I visited those stores to see if there was anything wrong with them. I suspected he might have met up with some people there," Zu An explained. "But after looking into them, I discovered that all of those shops had a common trait, which is that they're all owned by Pegasus Merchant Group!"

Pei Mianman also sensed that something was off. She exclaimed, "Don't tell me King Qi is colluding with Pegasus Merchant Group?"

"I don't know for certain either." Zu An felt a huge headache. Han Fengqiu had appeared in the Zhenyuan Merchant Group compound the previous night too. Didn't that mean he should be with Zhenyuan Merchant Group? He said, "That's why I plan to look around the Pegasus Merchant Group."

There was another reason he hadn't mentioned. When he had investigated Rouge Spice, he had been taken to the Zhenyuan Merchant Group by Qiu Honglei. Was that a coincidence, or was there a different reason for that?

"That's something worth looking into." Pei Mianman's eyes lit up. She asked, "Do you know where the Pegasus Merchant Group is?"

"No idea. I was just about to ask around. It shouldn't be too hard to find, right?" Zu An replied.

"You don't have to ask anyone! I'll take you there." Pei Mianman was a local after all. Furthermore, the Pegasus Merchant Group was also a top merchant group in Cloudcenter Commandery, so its existence was no secret.

Zu An obviously wouldn't refuse such a pretty tour guide. Under her guidance, the two quickly arrived at the Pegasus Merchant Group's location.

The Zhenyuan Merchant Group's style was a bit more reserved, while the Pegasus Merchant Group went all out on their decorations, with gold and jade everywhere. It looked even more imposing in style and conveyed a strong sense of a nouveau-riche upstart.

The two of them found a distant wall and secretly climbed over. The further in they went, however, the more Pei Mianman's expression changed. She exclaimed, "It's just a merchant group; why is the security so tight?!"

Zu An said in a lowered voice, "Looks like there's something wrong with this place after all."

Compared to the previous night's Zhenyuan Merchant Group, the security wasn't inferior at all. The two remained extremely careful. Fortunately, Zu An had the jade badge to scout around him. Pei Mianman was one of the best among her generation too, so they avoided all of the security along the way.

They were about to enter the area where strategic locations like the study were located when suddenly, Zu An felt something. He quickly grabbed Pei Mianman and hid behind a nearby rock garden.

The opening behind the rock garden was extremely narrow. They had to be pressed up tightly against each other to fit.

Pei Mianman's face turned a bit red. However, she didn't get embarrassed, but instead felt the situation was thrilling. She wrapped her arm around Zu An's neck and got on her tiptoes, giving him a kiss.

Zu An felt a soft sensation near his chest. When he saw the naughty expression in the other party's eyes, he couldn't help but admit that this woman really was a vixen.

Several people slowly walked out from around the corner just then.

"I didn't expect Zhenyuan Merchant Group to have White Jade Sect behind them. Things are troublesome now; that hag Yan Xuehen isn't easy to deal with."

"Boss Zhang, please don't worry too much. Yan Xuehen rarely pays attention to worldly matters, so she probably won't get involved. Furthermore, even if she did, we would have our sect master to deal with her."

Zu An was startled. He quietly looked out and saw the two middle-aged men in front. One of them was dressed in blue robes and had a stalwart build, his eyes flickering with brilliance. His gait was steady and powerful, giving him the air of a formidable figure.

Pei Mianman told him through voice transmission, "That man is the Pegasus Merchant Group's Boss Zhang Che. He's visited my father often over the years to give us presents. I've met him before and have some impression of him."

"Zhang Che?" Zu An had heard a bit about someone with that name. With the Pegasus Merchant Group behind him, he was a big player in Cloudcenter Commandery as well.

Pei Mianman voiced her surprise. "Why is that guy here too?"

Her surprise was, however, no surprise to Zu An. There was a big fatty at Zhang Che's side. He looked like a local wealthy landlord, with a golden abacus in hand. If he hadn't known that person, Zu An would have thought he was Pegasus Merchant Group's boss.

Zu An had met that person before on his way to the capital from Brightmoon City. He was one of the Devil Sect's Solitary Eight, Solitary Metal! Pei Mianman had seen him back then too, which was why she was so puzzled.

Zu An's mood turned serious. As expected, Pegasus Merchant Group had ties with the Devil Sect! Looks like Qiu Honglei really did appear in Rouge Spice to draw me away.

He suddenly remembered what Qiu Honglei had said before, asking if he would get mad if he found out that she had lied to him. This was probably the matter she had been talking about.

"Turns out she was the one looking out for me." Zu An recalled how Qiu Honglei had frantically tried to protect him the previous day and sighed. She probably didn't know there would be so many experts gathered over there.

Zhang Che and Solitary Metal had already left. Pei Mianman noticed Zu An's pale complexion and asked out of concern, "What's wrong?"

"It's nothing." Zu An let go of those thoughts. It was easy to see whether Qiu Honglei's feelings for him were real or fake. Why did he need to feel bad about such things?

"Who was that Yan Xuehen they mentioned earlier?" Pei Mianman became curious again when she saw that he was fine.

"White Jade Sect's Sect Master. She's also Chuyan's master," Zu An casually replied.

"Ah? She was that grandmaster from last night?" Pei Mianman jumped in fright. She wasn't all that surprised by the woman's cultivation, but rather that she was Chu Chuyan's master. She bit her lips when she thought of that and asked guiltily, "What if she knows about the two of us? Will she act in Chuyan's place?"

"That's a possibility." Zu An thought back to the previous night when the other party had come to talk to him about Qiu Honglei. If she knew about his relationship with Pei Mianman too... Ugh, just the thought alone is scary...

They had already gotten the information they needed, so Zu An and Pei Mianman left the Pegasus Merchant Group.

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After hearing about the matter of Yan Xuehen, Pei Mianman didn't have much interest in much else. She looked preoccupied with something. She wasn't even in the mood to go for a stroll with Zu An anymore. The two of them went their separate ways after they chatted for a while longer.

Zu An's mood was also heavy, because he felt as if he had just gotten himself trapped in a huge net. It was as if there were an invisible hand guiding him to do certain things.

But even after spending a long time thinking about it, he just couldn't figure out where the problem lay. He could only return to the temporary official residence for the time being.

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When he got back, the entire residence was surrounded by layers of security.

The soldiers present were all tough with fierce expressions, their auras suffused with killing intent. They were all battle-hardened warriors. They weren't the Civil Affairs Manor's troops, but rather the Military Affairs Manor's field army!

Zu An's expression darkened. Don't tell me Jian Taiding is taking desperate measures and plans to rebel?

After looking around for a while, though, he rejected that suspicion. The soldiers seemed to only plan on surrounding the temporary residence. They didn't have any intentions of barging in.

When he got inside again, he just happened to hear a knock on his door. A voice called out, "Ah Zu, I do not want to disturb your rest either, but there is a serious matter that needs to be discussed!"

Zu An recalled Daji, then went over to open the door.

"Jian Taiding has moved his troops. The current situation does not look good." Sang Hong didn't even have time for normal greetings and immediately cut to the chase when he saw Zu An.

Chapter 1053: Flipping the Table

Zu An walked over to the window and looked outside, remarking, "Don't tell me Jian Taiding really is planning to rebel?"

"That is unlikely. He is not that stupid." Sang Hong also approached the window. He looked at the layers of troops surrounding them and said, "The Military Affairs Manor sent their troops to completely surround our residence. The excuse they are using is that Cloudcenter Commandery has experienced too many instances of violence recently, so they are worried that there might be danger to the Imperial Envoy. That is why they sent their troops over to protect us.

"But everyone knows that this so-called protection is actually just house arrest, to strictly monitor everyone who enters and exits this place.

"Being locked down like this robs our Imperial Envoy of any prestige we have left. Furthermore, we cannot do a single thing now." Sang Hong's voice was full of anger. "I voiced my doubts, but those troops' leaders all replied with complete ignorance, saying that they were only obeying their superiors' orders. I asked to meet with their superiors, but then they told me that Jian Taiding has entered secluded cultivation."

"What secluded cultivation? He's clearly nursing his injuries." Zu An harrumphed.

"We know that, but what else can we do if they play these kinds of tricks?" Sang Hong replied with a bitter smile.

"Then are we just going to let them keep this up?" Zu An asked with a frown.

"This is not necessarily a bad thing, because this kind of damned decision goes completely against the rules. I have already contacted the court, and his majesty will pass down the order to King Yan, to have him lead his troops here to prepare against anything unexpected." Sang Hong looked toward Yi Commandery. "Since Jian Taiding is unwilling to have a complete falling out, we will just wait patiently until King Yan's army arrives. The situation is now against them."

He had personally reported the entire sequence of events to the emperor today. What kind of a person was the emperor? He wasn't someone so pedantic as to demand proof. King Yan from the nearest commandery would bring over his men, and they would swiftly take down Jian Taiding and everyone else. Once the situation stabilized, they could slowly collect all the proof they needed.

Zu An frowned and said, "But I just feel like this matter is full of oddities, that we've gotten ourselves caught up in a huge, invisible net, and that we're being toyed with. There might be someone else behind all of this."

"Even if that is true, so what?" Sang Hong gave Zu An a profound look. "Do not forget our objective. Is it really to investigate the duke's disappearance? Is it really to uphold righteousness?"

Zu An was startled. Only then did he remember the words the emperor had left him with before he left. The purpose of the mission was to deal with the Yu clan, to seize all of Cloudcenter Commandery's ore mines and take down all of their influential clans, and for the court to regain all of its authority.

Yu Xuantao had been one of the members in that secret meeting, and he was an elder with tremendous status in the Yu clan. Even if no one else in the Yu clan knew about the matter, the emperor already had enough of an excuse to act against the Yu clan. Furthermore, he could even deal with Jian Taiding as well, having a justifiable reason to reclaim Cloudcenter Duke's fiefdom. What else could he even wish for?

As for the so-called plots and conspiracies, the emperor didn't care at all. He only cared about the result.

Seeing that Zu An understood, Sang Hong didn't say anything else. He patted Zu An's shoulder and said, "You do not need to think about anything else for now, just focus on your recovery."

Pei You came over just then. After unloading all of his complaints about the soldiers outside, he then told everyone the results of his investigations, saying, "I went to the Yu clan to ask for Yu Xuantao's cooperation in the investigation, but the Yu clan told me that his secluded cultivation went wrong last night, causing his meridians to explode, so he died."

"The Yu clan were surprisingly decisive in eliminating him. But unfortunately, all of that is meaningless." Sang Hong sneered.

Yu Yanluo's beautiful figure appeared in Zu An's mind. He really could not associate that graceful and gentle beauty with the idea of a venomous madam.

Come on, the prettier the girl, the better they are at lying! Why do you keep forgetting this? Zu An warned himself. His expression became steadier too. He needed to get to the bottom of this matter and find out the truth.

When everyone else left, he took out the recording stone he had gotten from the Civil Affairs Manor and viewed Jian Yanyou's appearance again and again.

Zu An slowly closed his eyes after observing it for many hours. Jian Yanyou's image appeared in his mind from various angles. The duke's every movement and the way he spoke replayed in Zu An's mind.

When he knew all of those things thoroughly, Zu An took out the paper and pen he had already prepared a long time beforehand. Long strokes quickly danced across the surface. Jian Yanyou's appearance quickly materialized.

Those who had known Jian Yanyou would immediately feel their eyes pop out, because the portraits of this world cared more about stylized imagery than realism. However, Zu An's picture looked just like the real Jian Yanyou.

Then, Zu An sat down in front of the mirror and used the skill 'Face of a Thousand Identities'. His face began to change. Eventually, a face similar to Jian Yanyou appeared in the reflection. He compared it with the drawing he had just made. He then modified some of the details, and only when it was identical did he nod in satisfaction.

Ever since he had arrived at Cloudcenter Commandery, he had always felt as if there were a pair of invisible hands that had already arranged everything in place. Unfortunately, he didn't have enough information and couldn't find out who the one behind the scenes was.

The enemy acted in secret, while he acted overtly. If that continued, wouldn't he be led around right by the nose?

In that case, I'll just flip the whole damn table! I'll make them play by my rules.

But there was still another problem. He could imitate Jian Yanyou's face, but not his voice.

Helpless to do anything else, he could only take out a small butterfly-shaped item and wear it by his collar. It was naturally the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer he had won from the lottery before.

He had to successfully fool a man with a kawaii voice before each use... Zu An's eyes twitched when he thought about that. It would be complete social suicide if he was found out! But with how things were, he had no other choice but to use it.

Who should I trick? Several candidates passed through Zu An's mind. In the end, Pei You appeared in his mind and he thought, Sorry, but I choose you!

Meanwhile, Pei You was pacing back and forth restlessly inside of his room. He had been detained in the temporary official residence after being involved in Zuo Su's death. But after he was finally cleared of suspicion, the Military Affairs Manor had surrounded the entire place with soldiers! He felt as if his little bro down there were about to shrivel up forever.

"Sigh, I wanted to help out the local girls with their businesses, and yet I can't even leave this place! Heavens, is it too hard to ask for just one girl?!"

Just then, a soft and lovable voice called out, "Hey, cutie~"

Pei You immediately felt all of his fine hairs stand on end. It was definitely the voice of a cute girl!

"Who are you?" He exclaimed. He didn't completely drop his guard. The entire temporary residence was under lockdown right now. The sudden appearance of a girl was just way too fishy.

"I am a servant from this residence. Sir Sang knows that the young master has felt wronged recently, so he told me to come and serve this young master," the 'girl' outside said bashfully.

Pei You was overjoyed. He exclaimed, "Sir Sang really is considerate! Miss, please hurry and come in." His previous gloominess immediately vanished without a trace. He quickly opened the door.

"Huh? Brother Zu? Why is it you? Where is that maid?" He was stunned when he saw the one at the entrance. He quickly looked behind Zu An.

But when he saw Daji, he began breathing rapidly. How can there be someone so beautiful in this world? Don't tell me she's that maid who talked to me just now?

My luck today is crazy good!

However, just then, Daji's eyes shone. Pei You's expression turned into one of confusion.

Zu An's expression darkened. Thankfully, he had brought Daji over. Otherwise, his social life would have been finished.

By the time he had convinced Pei You he was the temporary residence's maid, the offering to the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer had already succeeded. He had been about to leave, but the other party had opened the door so impatiently, so they had ended up bumping into each other.

In order to prevent Pei You from suspecting him, he'd had Daji use her 'Fox Charm' to confuse him. Then, he watched as Pei You turned around and walked toward his bed. He took off his clothes while walking, then jumped into bed naked. His legs clamped down on a bundle of his blankets, and the bed began to rock back and forth noisily.

Zu An was stupefied. He looked at Daji, asking, "Just what kind of order did you give him?"

Daji just blinked innocently. Zu An could only close the door, thinking, If I recorded that, Pei You might just decide life wasn't worth living anymore...

Compared to what Pei You had just gone through, using the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer didn't seem to be so hard to accept anymore.

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Zu An chose an area where the soldiers outside were relatively sparse and headed over. Even though his stealth ability was formidable, there were soldiers everywhere outside. There was no way he could sneak past all of them.

However, there was no need for him to hide himself either. He just walked straight ahead and used Daji's skill to charm everyone. Once he left, the soldiers would wake up again and forget all about what had just happened.

When he arrived at Yu Manor, he took out a mirror to examine his new appearance. After he confirmed that there were no flaws, he then kicked off and entered secretly.

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Zu An had already entered Yu Manor several times, so he was familiar with the layout and the security. He used the jade badge and Mirror Mirage to avoid the sentries, successfully arriving at Yu Yanluo's residence.

He secretly pushed open the window and entered. Hot air rushed at him from within. He immediately felt relieved, thinking, Looks like Yu Yanluo is here after all, or else this room wouldn't be so hot.

Since Yu Yanluo preferred peace and quiet, there was no one else in the room. He could vaguely see a wonderful figure lying down behind the distant red curtains. Even though he couldn't see her too clearly, just that silhouette was already a stunning scene. When paired with her unique fragrance, it was enough to make any man's imagination run wild.

Zu An took a few steps forward, then stopped in front of her bed.

"Name yourself!" Yu Yanluo finally sensed something and suddenly stood up. She grabbed a cloth and covered her chest while looking his way vigilantly.

Zu An said in Jian Yanyou's voice, "Madam, it is I!"

Chapter 1054: World Ender

A surprised voice let out an exclamation from behind the curtains. Then, a snow-white arm moved aside the veil, revealing Yu Yanluo's face. Since she had just been sleeping, she was only wearing her personal garments. Even though she was hiding behind a blanket she had pulled over, Zu An could still see her fair and glistening neck.

They were several feet apart. Zu An quietly examined her, trying to see if he could detect any alarm from her expression. But he was disappointed. Yu Yanluo's expression was a bit confused and lost, but there wasn't the slightest bit of fear.

"Please wait for a moment; I will change my clothes." Yu Yanluo bowed slightly to him, then drew the curtains closed.

She was so beautiful that merely getting dressed was an enchanting sight. She really didn't let down her reputation as the number one beauty whom Pei You just couldn't stop thinking about.

Zu An thus observed that these two were clearly husband and wife, and yet she was going to get dressed outside of his presence. Interesting...

A while later, the curtains moved aside again. Yu Yanluo left her bed, her clothes now in order. However, she wasn't wearing socks. Under the weak illumination of the moonlight, her feet seemed to be glowing with a sparkling luster. They were exquisite and perfect. If Shinji Matou saw them, his tongue might just fall off from all the bootlicking.[1]

Yu Yanluo walked over to the table and lit a candle. The fire illuminated her perfect complexion. She was covered in a white fox fur coat, appearing luxurious yet also delicate. Zu An frowned when he saw her movements. However, he didn't stop her.

Just then, Maid Xing asked from outside, "Madam, what's wrong?" She had clearly sensed that Yu Yanluo had lit a candle, realizing that something was strange.

Zu An calmly looked at Yu Yanluo. He began to secretly store up strength in preparation against an attack.

But to his surprise, Yu Yanluo didn't call anyone in. She instead said gently, "It is fine; you can leave for now. Do not come closer unless I give you the order to."

"Yes, madam!" Maid Xing bowed. Her footsteps indicated that she was leaving.

"It has been a long time, madam. Have you missed me?" Zu An moved his arms toward her for a hug to see her reaction. He wanted to test out just what kind of a relationship the husband and wife had.

Yu Yanluo turned around. Her dress moved as she avoided his arms. Then, she looked at him with a frown, asking, "Who are you?"

Zu An was startled. He hadn't thought his act had any flaws. He thought Yu Yanluo was behaving that way just to test him. As such, he replied seriously, "What? It has been so long that you do not even recognize your own husband anymore?"

"You are not Jian Yanyou." Yu Yanluo looked at him coldly. At the same time, she became inwardly vigilant.

Zu An knew that she wasn't bluffing when he heard her straightforward tone. She really was sure that he wasn't Jian Yanyou. He suppressed his curiosity and continued asking, "What? Was it because you colluded with Jian Taiding to kill me that you are sure that I am no longer alive?"

Yu Yanluo's expression grew cold. She asked, "Just what kind of evil existence are you? How are you able to look so similar to Jian Yanyou?"

Zu An harrumphed. "Are you trying to change the topic? You know just how terrible this period has been for me. The heavens have given me a chance to return to this world, so I naturally have to get revenge on all of my enemies one by one." After saying that, he pressed forward step by step.

He had always been confused about something. This woman had been the world's number one beauty, and yet she didn't have any cultivation. That alone would be one thing, but she had never been seized by anyone as their exclusive property either.

That was what was strange. He refused to believe that all of the powerful cultivators in the world cared this much about ceremony, that they were all monks who didn't care about lust. After all, with Yu Yanluo's appearance, even the most well-trained monk might return to worldly ways after meeting her.

That suspicion had become even stronger when he arrived in Cloudcenter Commandery. Its people's cultivations were all extremely high, and they were all completely blinded by greed. Just how could Yu Yanluo manage to protect herself in this den of wolves?

He hadn't thought much of it back in Brightmoon City's outskirts when his cultivation was still low. Now, it really was strange to him.

There had only been a group of third to fourth ranked guards at her side back then. Such guards might be enough to protect some ordinary noble clan's young miss, but she was the former number one beauty of the entire capital! She had even been far away from Cloudcenter Commandery, the Yu clan's territory. How could those other powers be able to resist their desire to go after her?

He thought back to how she had always had that air of indifference and composure around her. Zu An was more and more certain that Yu Yanluo definitely had some secrets! This was the perfect chance to test her out.

Sure enough, Yu Yanluo's expression changed when she saw him approach. Previously, when she had lit a candle, she had stopped in front of a bookshelf. At that moment, she picked up a painting on the table and threw it at Zu An.

Zu An was stunned. You're throwing a painting at me? He didn't know whether to laugh or cry. Why does this seem like a fight between sweethearts, where the girlfriend is throwing things at the boyfriend?

However, soon afterward, he couldn't smile anymore, because he felt the scenery around him change completely. He was no longer in Yu Yanluo's chambers. Rather, he was in an entirely different world. The mist around him was so thick he couldn't see his own fingers even if he brought his hand up in front of him.

"An illusion?" Zu An frowned. He immediately summoned Hundredwarble as a countermeasure, but even following its cry, there was no reaction at all. The mist scattered temporarily where Hundredwarble flew through it, but everything returned to normal soon afterward.

"Who exactly are you?" Yu Yanluo's voice rang out from the sky just then. It was just as beautiful and moving as before, but it now carried a mysterious feeling of dignity, as if she were a deity speaking from above.

Zu An frowned. He kicked off and leapt into the sky, rushing toward the source of the sound. He hadn't reached the master rank yet, so he couldn't fly through the sky at will. However, short-term flight wasn't too difficult.

Unfortunately, there was nothing above him even when he rushed into the air. This world seemed to be limitless. A hazy mist covered everything. Even with his current cultivation, he could still only see about a zhang away.

He landed on the ground, then used the jade badge to help him observe the surroundings. However, shockingly, there actually wasn't a single living thing within a range of several li. That meant either this really was a completely barren place, or that the creatures were all high-leveled and outside the jade badge's control.

Zu An soon knew the answer. He became alert and dodged off to the side. A sharp javelin thrust into the spot he had just been standing in.

But isn't this javelin a bit too long? he thought. It felt like a long bamboo pole that reached all the way into the mist. He couldn't see exactly how long it was at all.

Then, a giant monster slowly appeared from the mist. Zu An observed its appearance. It was long and slender in build, having a total of a dozen legs. Every single leg was like a long bamboo pole. The javelin had actually been one of its legs. It looked just like the stick insects he had seen in his previous world, but its body was countless times bigger.

It bared its fangs and brandished its long legs, continuing to slam them down at Zu An. Even though it was large, its movements weren't slow at all. On the contrary, it was extremely nimble. Its bamboo branch-like legs were even more dangerous than thrown lances.

Eighth rank!

Zu An evaded with his Sunflower Phantasm. Then, while the other party was confused, he finally found an opening and sent a fist at its leg.

The monster's leg broke apart with a brittle crack. Its entire body staggered after it lost a leg; it had clearly lost its balance.

Zu An moved as fast as lightning. He quickly broke its remaining legs as well. The monster finally couldn't hold on anymore and came crashing down.

Zu An was just about to leave when his expression changed. He suddenly looked up. The monster staggered back and forth, and its broken legs began to regenerate at a visible rate.

Zu An was stunned. This thing can regenerate?

Its regeneration was even more exaggerated than his Primordial Origin Sutra! At the very least, if he lost an arm or a leg, there was no way he would grow another one so quickly.

Yu Yanluo spoke again. "You cannot kill it."

Zu An couldn't help but reply with a sneer, "This isn't your body, is it?"

Yu Yanluo was speechless.

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +22 +22 +22...

She was clearly furious that she had been associated with such an ugly thing.

A flame surged in Zu An's hand just then. While the monster had yet to recover, he tore it into eight pieces. Then, his flames immediately burned the monster to ashes. Even if you can regenerate your limbs, how will you regenerate from ashes?

"Huh?" Yu Yanluo voiced her surprise. She sensed that his flames were special. "Your flame seems to be the natural enemy of these monsters. But it does not matter."

A cool breeze brushed past as soon she spoke. The mist from before vanished without a trace. Zu An suddenly felt the ground beneath him disappear. Then, he fell straight down. Fishy and salty waters surged all around him. He could smell the sea!

He moved quickly, flying straight into the air. The ground beneath him had already disappeared without a trace, replaced with a boundless sea.

"The terrain completely changed?" Zu An exclaimed, shocked. How high was that woman's cultivation? Why was she able to do all of these things?

Yu Yanluo was still inside her own chambers. She stood in front of the desk with a scroll unrolled in front of her. In her hand was a pen. She added a few strokes to the surface.

Zu An immediately felt the previously mild winds become fierce. The seas below also began to churn, producing violent and intense splashes.

"I will ask you one more time. Who are you, and why have you impersonated Jian Yanyou? If you still do not speak, I will no longer be polite." Yu Yanluo spoke from above again. Her face was faintly discernible in the sky, just like the appearance of divine beings in the movies of Zu An's previous world.

Zu An frowned slightly. What's going on? Don't tell me I've entered her domain? But no matter how formidable Yu Yanluo was, it shouldn't have been to this degree, right? Why did she possess such a miraculous domain?

He roared with laughter and exclaimed, "What do you mean impersonate? I am precisely your one hundred percent guaranteed or your money back husband!" He was deliberately trying to anger the other party, to see if it would make her reveal any openings.

Yu Yanluo harrumphed.

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +233 +233 +233...

The crazy winds around Zu An immediately became stronger, to the extent that he couldn't even stand still anymore. Suddenly, he saw a white line heading in his direction.

"What is this now?" Zu An became vigilant. The white line was extremely fast, arriving almost instantly.

Zu An's expression finally changed, because he could see that it wasn't a white line, but a tsunami that was several hundred meters tall! The closest he had ever been to a tsunami was in theaters when he had seen Interstellar. That had already been shocking enough back then!

In his previous world, 2004's Indian Ocean Tsunami had only reached a height of thirty meters, and yet it had caused three hundred thousand casualties, with more than two million becoming homeless.

The several-hundred-meter tsunami looked as if it intended to end this very world. Zu An's human instincts made every single one of his fine hairs stand on end.

"This is your final chance. Who are you?" Yu Yanluo's beautiful voice rang out from above once more.

Chapter 1055: Breakthrough

"Why are you so sure that I am not your husband? Was it because you saw me die for yourself?" Zu An asked with a calm smile. It was almost as if the tremendous ocean waves right in front of him didn't exist.

"You just refuse to acknowledge your wrongs!" Yu Yanluo's pretty brow furrowed. Her hand brushed out, and the endless ocean waves came crashing down on Zu An.

But after a bit of hesitation, her brush moved around again. The endless waters disappeared in the end. Despite that, the first part of the terrifying tsunami had already rushed past. She didn't see any sign of the other party anymore, only a great, surging sea.

Yu Yanluo was stunned when she saw that, wondering, "Did he die?"

She hadn't dared to be too lenient when she saw him fight against that creature, as his cultivation didn't seem low at all. Now, it seemed that because the other party was of the fire element, he had ended up being countered by the water element.

That was why she created that huge ocean. But with how strong the other party was, even though those ocean waves were terrifying, they would only be able to seriously injure him and strip him of his fighting prowess. They shouldn't have taken his life! Why was there no sign of him left?

She thought to herself for a bit. Then, she picked up her pen and drew a few strokes. The great sea was immediately divided in half, gradually revealing the bottom of the sea.

Zu An was at the ocean bottom, raising his head toward the sky in puzzlement. He hadn't expected the other party to be able to part the great sea so easily. That was an ability only characters in fairy tales had!

The projection of Yu Yanluo's face looked shocked. She had imagined many possibilities, and what she had been the most worried about was that the ocean waves would kill him, or that he might be seriously injured or unconscious, and thus unable to answer her questions anymore. Never had she expected him to be sitting at the ocean bottom leisurely, and furthermore without a single injury!

There was a blue transparent bubble around him. Was that the water element? But how could that be? Wasn't he a fire element cultivator? Yu Yanluo was stupefied. She felt as if what she had assumed to be common knowledge for so many years had been shattered.

"Is that a skill or a magical artifact? There is no way you are both a water and fire dual element cultivator, right?" Yu Yanluo couldn't help but ask.

Zu An obviously wouldn't tell her that he was using Blue Mallard's water element affinity. He looked at the projection, then remarked, "I should be inside your painting right now, correct?"

Yu Yanluo was even more shocked. She exclaimed, "You were even able to guess that?"

There were many enemies who had been trapped in her painting before, and they had been unable to guess that they were in a painting even as they lived out the rest of their lives. They hadn't even realized what had happened upon their deaths, only assuming that they had been sent to some mysterious dungeon or a dangerous land.

This was the first person who had been able to tell that he was trapped in a painting while inside the painting.

But for Zu An, it wasn't hard for him to make that association at all. For example, 'Investiture of the Gods' had Nuwa's World Scroll. He hadn't thought of it at first either. However, after seeing that Yu Yanluo's abilities in this world had become more and more ridiculous, he finally realized the truth.

Zu An said, "Even though I am trapped here, it is limited by your own cultivation. It will be hard for you to do anything too threatening to me."

Yu Yanluo fell silent. A while later, she said, "Indeed, even though I can draw some things, with the strength you showed, I would not be able to do much to you. But regardless, unless I permit it, you

cannot leave this world and you will be trapped here forever. That is why you should tell me your identity and motives as soon as possible. Then, I can consider whether or not I should let you out."

Zu An frowned. There was no way he would beg her for that. He had come to investigate where Yu Yanluo's confidence lay. If he didn't find out anything, and the other party instead learned about his secrets, what kind of dignity would he have left? More importantly, even though his relationship with her was decent, now that he knew her greatest secret, she might not let him off so easily.

"Your painting is likely not as ridiculous as you are making it out to be. There is definitely a way out. Otherwise, would you not be completely invincible in this world?" Zu An's mind moved quickly. He immediately realized that point.

"Correct. There are many formidable individuals who can forcefully break out of my painting. The world in this painting cannot contain their power." Yu Yanluo frankly admitted it. But she immediately shot back, "Even so, you have clearly not reached that level yet."

Zu An was speechless. Girl, do you have to be that straightforward?

"In that case, call for me when you have finally thought things through." Yu Yanluo knew he wouldn't immediately accept his fate when she saw his expression. She believed that he would give in after he suffered a bit more. She left the desk and returned to her bed. Then, she couldn't help but yawn.

Who wouldn't be a bit annoyed if they were sleeping soundly, but were forced awake by a disturbance? She thought to herself that she was going to keep that person there for a few more days even if he begged her later.

She removed her clothes when she got in bed, then returned to her covers. The heat coming from underground warmed the bed. She released a groan of comfort, stretched her body lazily, then changed into a more comfortable position.

...

Yu Yanluo might have been comfortable, but Zu An was definitely not. As he saw Yu Yanluo's figure disappear from the horizon, the force parting the sea seemed to have disappeared as well. The water gathered together again.

Zu An kicked off the ground and burst out of the ocean's surface. He moved across the water, quickly traveling dozens of li in an effort to find the edge of the world. How big could a painting be anyway?

But he soon realized that he was greatly mistaken. Regardless of which direction he went in, there was only an endless sea. There was no limit to the horizon. It was as if the world would extend along with him as he moved.

Then, Zu An took out the Tai'e Sword. He released all sorts of powerful attacks at the sky above and the sea below. But no matter how ferocious his attacks were, the skies and sea were too great. His power quickly disappeared.

"Looks like my cultivation hasn't reached the limits of what this world can tolerate after all." Zu An's brow furrowed.

Things would indeed be a bit troublesome if this continued. Even though his Brilliant Glass Bead had plenty of assorted goods, there was a limit to that as well. Even if it could last him for a year and a half, he couldn't stay inside for that long. There were still so many people waiting for him outside.

But he didn't continue to wantonly waste his strength either. As the ocean waves rose and fell, his thoughts moved quickly.

Suddenly, his eyes lit up. He remembered that back then, when Eunuch Wei Dan had tried to capture Old Mi, he had used a strange kind of footwork when they fought: 'Steps of Rising Lotus'. Back then, he had claimed that it could break through sealed space.

Later on, after Wei Dan had died and Old Mi had failed to possess him, instead becoming a part of him, Zu An had naturally obtained the technique as well. While he had been interested in that method back then, his cultivation had been too low, so he couldn't use it.

By the time his cultivation was high enough, he already had enough techniques. He hadn't thought he needed it anymore.

He was currently trapped inside a painting, though. Wasn't the 'Steps of Rising Lotus' the best skill for getting out?

Details of the technique began to reappear in his mind. With his current knowledge and experience, he already had a much deeper and more profound understanding of the technique's domain.

An hour later, Zu An opened his eyes and looked toward the sky. There wasn't even a single trace of restlessness left in his expression; instead, it was replaced with a confident smile of success.

He slowly lifted his feet, then walked toward the sky step by step. Each step left a lotus flower imprint behind. Meanwhile, the surrounding space was different from before, when it hadn't responded at all no matter what he did. Now, gradually, traces of primal chaos and emptiness began to appear.

Zu An knew those were the signs of spatial collapse. He continued his steps. A powerful force gradually began to concentrate around him. It seemed to be the painting's world doing its utmost to try and restrain him.

His expression remained calm as he continued to step forward. When he reached the sixth step, he sensed that there seemed to be a membrane-like object blocking his path. It was probably Yu Yanluo's final layer of defense in the painting's world.

With the seventh step, he instantly broke through the barrier!

Zu An felt his entire body become lighter. The next moment, he reappeared in the room he had been in previously.

There was a painting on the table, but it looked as if someone had poked a hole in that painting and left it strewn on the table. It turned out to be the painting that had trapped Zu An for so long.

Zu An was glad he had the Steps of Rising Lotus. Otherwise, he really might have gambled too much this time. His eyes landed on the bed to the side. He saw that Yu Yanluo was sound asleep. All of his pent-up annoyances surged at that moment. This woman really is sleeping well!

He walked over to the bedside. Yu Yanluo seemed to have sensed something and opened her eyes in a daze. However, she immediately felt her shoulder go numb. Her acupoints had been sealed.

Zu An pulled back his fingers and took the chance to sit down by the bed. He exclaimed, "Huh? You even took off your clothes already? Are you really that relaxed?"

Because Yu Yanluo had been about to get up, her covers slid off, exposing a lot of her skin. It was so fair that it was a bit blinding. The undergarments underneath were black silk, soft and supple. Zu An could tell how comfortable they had to feel even without touching them. There were no decorations or embroidery on them, only some openwork patterns around the edges.

Zu An thought to himself that this woman looked so pure on the outside, and yet she dressed so... passionately? I have to say, the clothes you wear during the day are pretty reserved. I didn't expect your clothes underneath to be so bold.

Yu Yanluo clearly sensed his gaze. A flash of rage appeared in her eyes as she asked, "How did you get out?"

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +444 +444 +444...

"Big... Ahem." Zu An was alarmed and almost said something he shouldn't have. "The madam's painting is not omnipotent. I told you I could get out, so I did."

Yu Yanluo was a bit confused. Why had this person almost called her 'big madam'? Her surname was clearly Yu.

But that wasn't what was important right now. The other man was sitting right by the side of the bed, so close to her. Her expression began to gradually change colors, and her hair began to move around even though there was no wind.

Zu An noticed that a fine layer of goosebumps had begun to appear on Yu Yanluo's skin due to the cold. He reached out and covered her up again.

When she saw his movement, Yu Yanluo thought he was going to treat her with disrespect and the killing intent in her eyes grew stronger. But when she realized that he was only covering her up better, she was stunned. The color in her eyes also gradually faded as she asked, "Who exactly are you?"

Zu An didn't notice those fine changes. He replied, "Madam, you are mistaken about something. I am the one questioning you, and not the other way around. You and Jian Taiding worked together to harm me in the past; do you not feel even a bit of guilt?"

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "Stop pretending already. I know that you are not Jian Yanyou."

Zu An sighed and gave up on his final test. He replied, "I thought my disguise was seamless. Where exactly did it fail?"

Face of a Thousand Identities and Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer together had actually failed! He had to find out why, and only then could he make the proper changes in the future.

Chapter 1056: Sticking Out

Yu Yanluo stared at him calmly. When she saw that he hadn't done anything disrespectful to her, she replied, "Your face and your voice really are identical to Jian Yanyou. But even though you managed to copy his appearance, you did not copy his mind."

Zu An frowned and asked, "What do you mean?"

Yu Yanluo explained, "Let me explain it like this. Others might not be able to notice any flaws if you tried to fool them, but for me, there are just too many flaws."

"I have a smattering of knowledge in illustration. In the dao of art, others might think that it is better the more accurately you draw the target, but in reality, that is not the case. It is not too difficult for a well trained artist to make a precise imitation of the target. In the domain of art, such an artist can only be considered to have rudimentary skill."

Zu An's face heated up. He had spent a long time practicing drawing for 'Face of a Thousand Identities' and had thought he was incredible for being able to produce such a lifelike copy, that he had become an art master so quickly. But who could have expected that Yu Yanluo only saw him as a beginner?

Yu Yanluo continued, "There are also some artists who pursue meaning rather than form. That is why some ordinary people would feel that their art is not similar to the real person at all, and think their skills were comparable to those of some random street peddlers. Those ordinary people are actually greatly mistaken. When these artists draw, they add in their understanding and insights regarding their objective, and they convey unique meaning. It is not something that others can easily imitate."

"But that is still not the highest level of art. The most profound artists often go back to their roots, attaching importance to both form and meaning. If an ordinary person saw their work, they would only feel that it resembles the original object, and thus be able to appreciate its beauty. Those who knew better would sense the meaning behind the illustration. Not only would it completely represent the original form, it would also contain the insights of the artist."

Yu Yanluo's gaze landed on Zu An's face after she said that, and she continued, "The Jian Yanyou you have replicated mimics the form, but not the mind. An ordinary person might not be able to tell the difference, but it is full of flaws in my eyes."

Zu An was speechless. Isn't she saying that in her eyes, I'm just like a random street peddler artist?

"Enough. I have already answered your question. Can you tell me who you are now?" Yu Yanluo's eyes stared calmly into Zu An's as she spoke. They shone like the bright stars of the night sky, beautiful and enchanting.

Zu An thought for a bit, then said, "No wonder you used that painting to trap me. Looks like you have already achieved profound results in this domain. How high can you rank in this world in terms of art?"

Seeing that he had avoided her question again, Yu Yanluo was initially a bit unhappy. But when she heard he was going to talk about the dao of art, she couldn't help but blink. She seemed a bit more interested. She thought seriously to herself for a while, then replied, "I should be able to rank number two."

"The world is so large; the fact that you can rank number two is already quite incredible." Zu An sighed in praise. Afterward, he then asked, "Then who is number one?"

"I do not know." Yu Yanluo's voice was soft and moving, as if she didn't realize that she was in a dangerous situation at all.

"You do not know?" Zu An was confused. "Then how do you know that you are number two?"

"I have not met anyone whose skills are above mine, but there will always be people better than you. Perhaps there is someone who is better than me somewhere in this world, but there are definitely not too many of them. After thinking about it, I decided that number two was a rather fair statement." Yu Yanluo's tone was serious, as if she were currently discussing an extremely serious matter.

Zu An was stunned. Are you kidding me?

He felt another huge mental blow to his confidence. Look at how innocent she looks while bragging about herself... But there really isn't much you can do about it either....

He suddenly thought of something and looked the other party in the eyes, saying, "From what I know, the Royal Academy's libationer has taken in a few disciples, and every single one of them excels in their own respective fields. The one who represents 'art' is extremely mysterious, with almost no one knowing their name. It is not even known if they are male or female. If I am not mistaken, that person should be you, though?"

Yu Yanluo hesitated for a moment, but in the end, she nodded and replied, "Indeed, that person is me. The reason I have concealed my identity is because my status is too special. Neither my teacher nor I wish to bring about any unnecessary troubles, which is why we did not announce it to the world."

Zu An was immediately stunned. He hadn't expected Yu Yanluo to be the libationer's disciple[1]!

According to his interactions with the libationer's other disciples, they were pretty much all pure and innocent individuals. They all had a mysterious bias and fanaticism toward their own domain.

"If you are the libationer's direct disciple, why has this beauty committed such wrongs?" Zu An couldn't help but ask with a sigh.

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "Someone barged into my bedroom in the middle of the night disguised as my husband. Who exactly is the wrongdoer here?"

Zu An's face heated up. He replied, "Do not try to change the topic. I am talking about the death of Jian Yanyou."

Yu Yanluo's voice had a hint of sorrow as she asked, "Has he really died?"

"Do not tell me you did not know about this." Zu An couldn't help but speak somewhat mockingly.

"I only know that something has most likely happened to him. I really did not know that he had already died." Yu Yanluo paused for a moment, then asked, "From what you are saying, it seems to be Jian Taiding who has done the deed, no?"

Zu An frowned. Is this woman really innocent or is she acting? If she is, aren't her acting skills just a bit too terrifying?

Suddenly, a snow-white arm shot out from under the covers. Zu An was alarmed and subconsciously raised his arm to block it, but a strange radiance suddenly fired from Yu Yanluo's eyes. He immediately felt his body become exceptionally heavy. His movements became a bit slower than usual.

During that brief opening, the snow-white arm broke through his defenses and struck the major acupoint on his chest. Zu An's entire body trembled. He sat down rigidly and couldn't move anymore. He could only ask, "Why were you able to move again?"

He was certain he had sealed up the other party. How had she recovered so quickly?

"Am I supposed to just lie here and continue letting you do whatever you want?" Yu Yanluo replied with a sneer. A proud look flashed through her eyes. She sat up. She was about to pick up her clothes off to the side, but when she reached out her hand, she realized that she really was dressed much too sparsely at the moment. She gave Zu An an upset glare, then threw her covers over his head to block his sight.

Her body's warmth and enchanting fragrance were left on the covers. Zu An suddenly felt his mind wander a bit. He thought back to his previous world where there would always be some freaks who would buy used female stockings on the online forums. Just how much would the covers that carried the smell of the world's number one beauty go for?

His view brightened soon afterward. The covers were removed; Yu Yanluo had already gotten dressed again.

"Why were you able to undo your seal?" Zu An asked again. He remembered that there were no errors in his seal. If the other party were a master rank, perhaps he might not be able to seal her, but she clearly wasn't.

"I am the one asking you the questions now, and not the other way around." Yu Yanluo suddenly felt a bit of delight. Just then, the other party had treated her exactly the same way. She had actually been able to get revenge so quickly!

"Who exactly are you?" she asked while sizing him up. "You resemble him, you really do... Perhaps only I alone, someone who understands the dao of art, and furthermore someone extremely familiar with Jian Yanyou, could tell the difference."

She didn't seem to mind too much that there was no response. She continued, "If you do not want to answer, I will just check for myself." Then, she reached her hand out to his face, looking for a face mask to remove.

"Huh?" Even after searching for a long time, she actually couldn't find the place where the mask and the skin met.

"Can you not be so... Ah..." Zu An exclaimed. Yu Yanluo's hand was cold to the touch. To be honest, there were probably countless men in this world who were willing to be caressed by Yu Yanluo that way, but Zu An wasn't one of them.

Yu Yanluo continued to pull at his face because she couldn't find a mask. Eventually, she used both of her hands. Even though there was no mirror, Zu An could imagine his own face being pulled every which way.

"There is no mask?" Yu Yanluo's red lips opened wide in shock.

"I already told you, I am your husband." Zu An tried to remedy the situation.

Yu Yanluo's expression grew cold. She said, "I sensed that there was a fiend race aura coming from your body. Are you of the Peacock King race? But I have never heard of the Peacock King race having transformation abilities..." Her voice gradually became softer as she spoke her thoughts out loud.

Zu An was stunned. Is the fiend race aura she's talking about the feather Kong Nanwu gave me?

"Indeed, I am a companion of Kong Qing. As for this transformation technique, it was a skill I picked up." Zu An borrowed the situation to make up an identity. He wanted to take the chance to see if she had any connections with the fiend races.

Yu Yanluo looked at him coldly and said, "Your Peacock clan and I have always minded our own businesses. Why have you crossed the boundary?"

Zu An was alarmed. Judging from her tone, it seemed she really didn't have any relationship with Kong Qing. After thinking about it, he replied, "There were just some things that I wanted to verify with the madam. If there are any ways in which I have offended you, I ask for the madam's forgiveness."

"Forgiveness? You barged into my room in the middle of the night and impersonated my husband. It is obvious that you had filthy designs." Yu Yanluo sneered.

"I have truly offended you." Zu An didn't dare to take on that accusation. He explained, "I only came to confirm the matter of Jian Yanyou's death. I did not have any intentions of offending the madam."

"If not for the fact that you helped me cover myself up again and did not do anything else, you would already be a dead man right now." Yu Yanluo's expression was cold, as if she were speaking to someone whose life and death were completely within her control. She asked, "So Jian Yanyou really was killed by his younger brother?"

"I have obtained conclusive intelligence, but there is no proof," Zu An replied ambiguously.

Yu Yanluo fell silent. A trace of sadness appeared between her brows.

"The madam seems to be extremely sad. According to our intelligence, madam and Jian Yanyou did not live together, so your affection for each other seemed to be limited," Zu An said to see if there were any changes in her expression.

"He was my husband in name, and he has treated me well over these years. How can I be happy after hearing about his death?" Yu Yanluo sighed.

Zu An asked, "Can the madam help me with one of my misgivings? How did you break free from my control earlier?"

"My body is different from an ordinary person's," Yu Yanluo replied casually. "But I am even more curious about something else. Why is your Peacock clan looking into his affairs?" Her expression suddenly changed when she said that. She said, "No, there is no way you are from the Peacock clan. Who exactly are you? Restore your original appearance at once!"

Zu An suddenly moved. Under such close distance, there was no way Yu Yanluo could react at all. He continuously sealed several of her major acupoints. Having learned his lesson, he even took out the Jade Moon Serpent's tendons, wrapping them around her several times and tying her up.

Yu Yanluo was ashamed and furious, exclaiming, "Why are you so lowly and vulgar?!"

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +555 +555 +555...

Zu An's face heated up. He had never tied up someone before. He hadn't paid much attention to how he tied her up, and only afterward did he notice that he had tied her up the way his many online teachers from various romance flicks taught him.

"Ahem, I had to do this to make sure you would not plot against me again." He shifted his gaze a bit unnaturally. After all, being tied up like that really did make certain parts stick out.

Chapter 1057: Interrogation

Yu Yanluo became emotional. Due to her hurried breathing, her chest rose and fell more and more intensely. That was even more so the case when the strange rope wrapped around her. The way she had been tied up made her feel extremely humiliated.

"These are the tendons of a serpent?" she asked. She managed a great clan after all, so her knowledge and experiences were extraordinary. She quickly recognized the item tying her up.

"Indeed. That is why even if your acupoints have not been sealed, you should not be able to move for a while." Zu An was still a bit nervous. If not because he had refined his body several times through primordial ki, making his body incredibly tough and completely changing his body's weak points, the other party's scheme would actually have succeeded.

Yu Yanluo had put on a weak and delicate appearance, but her acting really worked a bit too well. Zu An thought, As expected, the prettier the girl, the better they are at lying...

Yu Yanluo struggled for a bit, but sure enough, she couldn't break free. She could only temporarily give up. She asked, "Why were you still able to move even though I sealed your acupoint?" She had confidence in her own cultivation as well. There was no way she had hit the wrong spot.

"Because my body is different from an ordinary person's," Zu An chuckled, returning her words right back to her.

Yu Yanluo was speechless. Karmic retribution really happened quickly! Just a moment before, she had been happy that she was able to get payback; and yet now, a moment later, she had been taken down by the other party again.

Zu An looked her up and down, then asked, "So, why is your body different from normal people?"

He had already noticed that even though he had sealed up several of her major acupoints, she could still move a bit. If not for the Jade Moon Serpent's tendons, something really might have gone wrong again.

Yu Yanluo looked away, as if she didn't want to pay him any attention.

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +55 +55 +55...

Zu An squatted down by her side. He found her angry expression rather cute. He asked, "Also, how did you discern that I might be from the Peacock clan?"

Seeing that she was still looking away, he reached out and pulled her chin back toward him, saying, "Answer my question."

Yu Yanluo's skin was ice-cold. At the same time, however, it was soft and elastic. However, she carried a hint of a dangerous aura as she spat with a cold expression, "Remove your filthy hand."

"If you had cooperated with my interrogation, I wouldn't have had to do this." Zu An hadn't actually intended to take advantage of her either. He naturally withdrew his hand.

"You tied me up this way, and yet you still want me to cooperate and answer your questions?" Yu Yanluo got angry again just from the thought. Across the years, her beauty had drawn the lust of many men, but when had she ever suffered this kind of humiliation?

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +428 +428 +428...

Zu An knew that she really was angry from all of the Rage points coming in from the backend. But he remained unaffected and said indifferently, "I also treated you with respect at first, but all that brought me in return was an ambush from the madam. That is why I could only do this to feel at ease."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed and looked away. However, Zu An seemed unconcerned. He continued, "The madam does not seem to understand the current situation. Perhaps your beauty and status might make other men curry favor from you in every way possible, but your life and death can be decided by a single thought from me. It would be best not to anger me."

Yu Yanluo sneered. "I refuse to believe that you would dare to kill me."

She had seen that the other party had even helped her cover herself up earlier, so she didn't think he was someone who would go that far. When she realized that, the other party's threat was nowhere near as intimidating.

Zu An frowned when he saw how confident she seemed. He replied, "Indeed, I will not kill the madam. However, please do not forget that you are a woman."

Yu Yanluo finally looked back at him, her expression changing. "What are you trying to say?"

"Exactly as my words imply." Zu An said calmly. "You are a woman, and moreover the most beautiful woman in the eyes of many men. Meanwhile, I am a man. For a single man and woman to be together in the depths of night, I would not dare to guarantee that absolutely nothing will happen."

Surprisingly, however, Yu Yanluo instead smiled sweetly when she heard that and said, "No, you will not."

Zu An was getting a bit annoyed now. He asked, "Are you doubting my ability, or are you doubting your own charm?"

Yu Yanluo said, "I was not even wearing my clothes, and yet you did not use that chance to do anything improper to me. That means you are still a decent person deep down. How could you do something so despicable?"

Zu An was becoming depressed. He hadn't expected to be dealt the good guy card so quickly. He replied, "Do not try to incite me with indirect psychological methods. From now on, each time you do not answer my question, I will remove one article of clothing. Let us see just how many articles of clothing you can stand losing today."

Yu Yanluo was speechless. She ground her teeth. She really wanted to say 'I don't believe that you would dare to take off my clothes', but she was conflicted; she felt that she might really incite the other party and didn't know what to do.

Seeing that she was still a bit unwilling, Zu An took out three bottles and placed them in front of her.

"What are those?" Yu Yanluo asked vigilantly.

"This one is called 'Bull Cream'." Zu An pointed at the left bottle.

"Why would a bull produce any cream?" Yu Yanluo asked.

"Because this medicine is one that fully unleashes one's desires, making all the different places that can produce liquid... ahem, making even bulls able to produce milk. You can imagine just how powerful this medicine is," Zu An said while doing his best to keep a straight face.

"Despicable!" Yu Yanluo finally knew what the item was. Her face reddened, and there was a hint of annoyance between her brows.

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +88 +88 +88...

Zu An continued, pointing at the bottle in the middle. "This one is 'Eighteen Spring Winds'. As the name implies, women who are affected by this drug must engage in intercourse with a man, and they must do it eighteen times before the effects will wear off."

He couldn't help but recall the past scene with Zheng Dan. If it weren't because his body was so tough, he really might not have been able to detoxify the drug. A gentle smile couldn't help but come to his face when he recalled Zheng Dan's warmth and passion.

"Your smile is so obscene!" Yu Yanluo exclaimed. "You actually have such despicable drugs! It looks as if I have really overestimated you today."

Zu An said, "There is still another one I have not introduced yet. This one is called 'Worries Be Gone'..."

"Enough, enough. Just hurry and ask me what you want to know!" Yu Yanluo interrupted him, her face red. These drugs' effects were getting worse and worse. She didn't even dare to continue listening to their effects.

Zu An chuckled. If he had known it would be this way, he would have brought the medicines out earlier. He reiterated, "The first question. Why is your body different from other people's?" That was what he was the most curious about. There was no way she had modified her body through primordial ki, right?

Yu Yanluo hesitated, but the intimidation had worked. She thus replied, "My constitution is special. In the past, teacher passed on a special technique to me. It allows me to change my build, allowing me to become more flexible and stronger than an ordinary person. When you tried to seal my acupoint earlier, I moved that acupoint away."

Zu An's brow furrowed. There was actually such a thing?

He had to admit that this woman really was much more flexible than normal. Any normal person bound in such a position would already be breaking down from pain, yet she seemed to be perfectly fine. And yet, even so, he felt she wasn't telling the complete truth.

But since she had replied, he couldn't go back on his word. He continued, "Very good. The second question is, how did you know I was not from the Peacock clan? Was it because you knew that the Peacock clan participated in the scheme against Jian Yanyou?"

"You clearly asked two questions!" Yu Yanluo's eyes widened as she cried out in dissatisfaction.

Zu An sighed. She was cute even when she threw a tantrum. No wonder so many men had lost their minds over her over the years. He coughed lightly and focused his thoughts, insisting, "Hurry up and answer my question."

Yu Yanluo gave him a look. She could only say, "Because Kong Qing and Jian Taiding's relationship was always rather good, so their clansmen would never come here to ask me these questions."

"Are you implying that Jian Taiding and Kong Qing colluded in the scheme against Jian Yanyou?" Zu An asked.

"I do not know about that." Yu Yanluo shook her head. "I have only heard some rumors that the two sides had some dealings."

"This matter is related to the life and death of your husband, and yet you can actually remain this calm?" Zu An frowned.

"Rather than calling me and Yanyou husband and wife, it would be more accurate to call us cooperating partners. If something has happened to him, I will grieve for him, but that is all," Yu Yanluo said calmly.

"His death really has nothing to do with you?"

"Correct!"

"Why should I trust you?"

"Then why are you even asking me anything?"

Zu An was momentarily speechless. This woman really did know how to use logic to her advantage. He could only change his question. "Has Jian Taiding colluded with the fiend races, making a large profit off all manner of illegal smuggling over the years?"

Yu Yanluo was clearly a bit hesitant. However, Zu An picked up a bottle and began to wave it a few times. She clenched her teeth and said, "Indeed, I have heard about Jian Taiding having a relationship with that side over the years." This guy is too hateful! I really want to bite him right now!

"Are you not leaving something out? From what I know, the Yu clan has participated as well," Zu An said coldly.

Yu Yanluo's beautiful brow furrowed. She replied, "That is wrong."

"Then what is going on with Yu Xuantao?" Zu An quickly replied. "Yu Xuantao is your uncle, an elder in the Yu clan."

Yu Yanluo's expression changed slightly. She said, "You are right in that some troublemakers have appeared in the Yu clan, but that was his individual conduct. He does not represent the Yu clan."

"You are not telling me that as the leader of your clan, you had no idea that your own clansmen were colluding with the fiend races, are you?" Zu An obviously wouldn't believe her words.

"Because of some special reasons, I have delegated much of my authority in the past few years. I did not pay attention to some of the details. I did not expect the clan to be so daring, to actually dare to do something like this." Yu Yanluo's expression was overcast; she was clearly a bit upset at those people.

"Heh," Zu An looked at her mockingly and asked, "Do you think these words are convincing at all?"

Yu Yanluo said indifferently, "Our Yu clan operates the ki stone business; our wealth is unsurpassed in this world. Perhaps others have motives for selfish profits, but I am the Yu clan's leader. The entire Yu clan is mine; why would I carry out these kinds of smuggling affairs with the fiend races? For the sake of making money?"

Zu An was stunned. What she said made so much sense that he couldn't even argue back.

He wanted to ask something else, but Yu Yanluo was already impatient. She exclaimed, "Zu An, have you asked me enough questions yet? Hurry up and let me go already!"

Zu An was stunned.

Chapter 1058: Chess Piece

Zu An reacted quickly. He only lost his composure for an instant before snapping out of his daze. "Who is Zu An? Could he be the madam's close friend?"

Yu Yanluo gave him a sidelong glance and replied, "Are you really asking me that to my face? Do you have no sense of shame?"

Zu An began sweating buckets. What the hell is going on? This woman has even more secrets? She actually even knows my real identity?

Is she trying to trick me?

But why did she say my name? That's just too much of a coincidence, right? Or does she have some kind of system that lets her see my true name too?

As if seeing through his confusion, Yu Yanluo said, "I already had my suspicions from earlier. For some reason, I felt you were somewhat familiar. But because your disguise was too good, I did not immediately realize that it was you.

"Later on, when you exited the painting, I was not wearing much clothing while sleeping. When you restrained me, you saw that my shoulder was exposed to the air, so you even helped me cover up again. At first, I thought you were a gentleman, which was why I still treated you quite well."

“But later on, you... You tied me up like that, and even took out those assorted medicines, so I immediately knew you were definitely no gentleman at your very core. And yet, if you were not such an upright gentleman, there would be no way you could have remained completely indifferent to the previous temptation. Even though I am no seductress, I believe I still have some charm. There are not many men who could hold themselves back in a situation where I was not wearing my clothes, but you were clearly not the gentleman I imagined. That left only one possibility: You knew me, and our relationship was not bad.”

Zu An harrumphed. “But this does not prove that I am that person you are talking about.”

Yu Yanluo had a smile on her face when she heard his attitude. She replied, “With that as the premise, the rest was easy to deduce. Even though I know many people, there are not many who would dare to do something like this. Besides, the way you did things just now was also quite different from the people I am familiar with.

“Furthermore, you seemed especially concerned with Yanyou’s disappearance, as well as Jian Taiding and the fiend races’ smuggling affair. The ones who are the most interested in these things in all of Cloudcenter Commandery are none other than the Imperial Envoy.

“Furthermore, only three people would have the ability to infiltrate my room. Sang Hong is already old; this is not his style of doing things. Apart from you, the mysterious Golden Token Eleven was a possibility, but the only one who could tie me up with these Jade Moon Serpent tendons was you alone, Zu An. Back then, you helped the crown prince take down an eighth ranked Jade Moon Serpent during his exam. That is not a secret to those who have looked into the matter.

“Furthermore, to be so familiar with the Royal Academy’s Rear Mountain, it could be no one else but you.”

When he heard the entire analysis, Zu An was shocked and left in complete admiration. He exclaimed, “Madam really is the reincarnation of Sherlock Holmes!”

“Who is Sherlock Holmes?” Yu Yanluo mouthed the name to herself. She began to think about whether any famous people she knew had that surname.

“Uh, he’s a detective with legendary reasoning abilities.” Zu An gave a vague explanation and quickly changed the topic. Since his identity had already been exposed, there was no point in continuing to deny it. His face changed, gradually returning to his original appearance.

Yu Yanluo was dumbfounded by the entire process. “What kind of ability is this? You actually transformed yourself!”

She had originally thought that he’d used some kind of miraculous artifact, such as a mysterious face mask. How could she have known that he had actually changed himself? His ability was way too shocking!

Zu An had a helpless smile on his face as he replied, “It’s my first time using it, but didn’t you still expose me?”

Yu Yanluo said with a serious expression, “The reason why I was able to see through it was because I am skilled in the field of art and saw through that sliver of a flaw in your disguise. A normal person would be

unable to see through it at all.” Halfway through her sentence, however, she suddenly felt that something was strange. She couldn't help but add with a sneer, “How much longer do you plan to keep me tied up like this?”

“I’ll help you out right now,” Zu An replied. Seeing that he had already been exposed and couldn't continue the interrogation, there was no meaning in keeping her tied up anymore. He walked behind her and began to undo the knots.

He hadn't noticed it when he was interrogating her, but now that he was up close, when he saw her in such a strange posture and smelled the fragrance coming from her, which man's thoughts wouldn't run wild?

He said, “Ahem, I apologize for the offense and ask for the madam's forgiveness.”

As soon as she got a bit of breathing room, Yu Yanluo's body moved slightly. Then, like a beautiful snake, she slipped out of the gap.

Zu An's eyes widened. This degree of flexibility is a bit too ridiculous, isn't it?

“Hmph, weren't you acting all tough when you were interrogating me before? Why do you look completely different now?” Yu Yanluo rubbed her wrists and gave Zu An an unhappy glare.

Zu An was a bit embarrassed. He explained, “It was different just then. That was mainly for investigating the case...”

“Hah, so is that why you took out aphrodisiacs?” Yu Yanluo gave him a strange look. “You barged into a woman's chambers disguised as her husband, and you even brought all sorts of strange drugs with you. Don't tell me you actually have that kind of secret hobby?”

“Absolutely not!” Zu An wouldn't dare to shoulder such accusations. “This was a skill I just obtained not too long ago, and I just learned it too. You were the first one I used it on.”

Yu Yanluo released a light snort, her cheeks turning a bit red. She said, “You really are daring, coming over here to mess with me for your first time.”

“I'm being wronged here! I really was investigating the case! I've never thought about using it to do anything despicable.” Zu An even felt a bit guilty as he tried to defend himself. After all, he really had barged into a woman's chambers disguised as her husband in the middle of the night. No matter how one looked at it, his motives definitely seemed impure.

“That ‘Eighteen Spring Winds’... Hmph, just saying it dirties my mouth. How do you explain those drugs?” Yu Yanluo asked. She obviously wasn't going to let him off so easily.

“Back then, there were some people who wanted to harm me and used them on me. Later on, I took them as my spoils,” Zu An replied.

Yu Yanluo was stunned. Her expression became a bit strange when she looked at Zu An. These drugs were used on a man? Was it a man or a woman who used it on him? Just the thought of that scene alone was absurd.

When he saw Yu Yanluo's expression, Zu An knew that her thoughts were all over the place. He exclaimed, "I really didn't think any weird thoughts! From start to finish, I never actually did anything to you, right? That's something you should know clearly."

"Being tied up like that isn't considered doing something?" There was a bit of anger in Yu Yanluo's expression.

In all of these years, she had encountered countless pursuers, and all of them had treated her with utmost respect. They had been scared to leave her with any bad impressions. And yet now, this guy had actually treated her like a maid, humiliating her like that. Just the thought alone...

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +69 +69 +69...

"I did that because I panicked. After all, you almost took me down from your surprise attack." Zu An shivered inwardly when he remembered what had happened. The libationer's disciples were all outstanding after all, with many trump cards and secrets.

"If not for the fact that you still treated me with respect earlier, do you think I would have had the patience to say all this to you?" Yu Yanluo sorted out her clothes, and subconsciously wanted to sit down on her bed. But immediately afterward, she felt that doing so in front of a man in the middle of the night might be suggesting something, especially after the awkward things that had just happened. As such, she changed her mind and sat down by a table off to the side. When she saw the hole in the painting on the desk, she said regretfully, "An excellent painting has been destroyed."

Zu An said with a sigh of amazement, "I didn't expect the madam to have hidden it so well. Everyone in the world thinks you're weak and powerless, but none of them have any idea that you could even hide a dragon in here. Now, my act of saving you when I was only at the third rank in Brightmoon City really seems like a joke."

A hint of gentleness appeared on Yu Yanluo's face. She replied, "That is not what I believe at all. A man's chivalry is more significant if it is displayed when he is weak. Anyone can step forward bravely when they are strong, and only those who still dare to take the risk to save others when they are weak are truly deserving of admiration. Honestly, you were quite cute in the past; you even said you would become my..."

Her smile suddenly froze when she said that. The other party's 'bold, visionary words' had just seemed like the ignorance of a youngster in the past, so she hadn't thought about it too much. But today, Zu An really had barged in pretending to be her husband! Furthermore, he had even tied up her up like that... Her expression turned strange when she thought of that.

Zu An's face heated up when he saw her expression. He immediately said, "You even asked the emperor for mercy for my sake. At first, I thought it was just because you were repaying your gratitude in the past, but now, it seems you wouldn't have been in any danger at all and it didn't matter. Why did you make a trip all the way to the capital to help me back then?"

"It was my teacher who entrusted me with the task of helping you. When I heard this request, I was a bit surprised, because I did not understand why you would have any connection with my teacher. However, I did plan to save you myself too, because I have always admired you quite a bit. That was why I agreed," Yu Yanluo explained.

“The libationer?” Zu An’s expression changed a bit. He had been nothing more than a drafted son-in-law back then, the definition of a good-for-nothing in the eyes of most people. How could he possibly have drawn the attention of someone like the libationer?

Wait, Principal Jiang also took good care of me when I was back in Brightmoon Academy. Jiang Luofu was also the libationer’s disciple...

He felt as if he had always been one of the libationer’s chess pieces. Why did he have such a horrifying feeling?

Yu Yanluo gave him a look. She smiled and said, “I was also quite confused as to why that elder would pay so much attention to you. At first, I almost thought you were his illegitimate child.”

“And then?” Zu An thought to himself that having such an awesome patron behind him wasn’t something he would reject at all...

“But then I felt I was just overthinking things, because you and teacher look nothing alike,” Yu Yanluo said with an amused expression. Zu An was speechless.

The two of them chatted for a while, but then the conversation returned to the main point. Zu An said, “Madam, since you know that Jian Taiding harmed the duke and even colluded with the fiend races, I must ask you to cooperate with us by punishing him.”

Yu Yanluo shook her head and replied, “I fear that I cannot.”

Zu An was surprised, asking, “Why?”

“Because I have no proof, of course.” Yu Yanluo blinked. “Furthermore, the Yu clan and Jian clan’s relationship is tangled and complicated; it is not convenient for me to personally step in.”

Zu An thought to himself, Looks like the Yu clan really was involved.

Yu Yanluo rested her chin on her hand and looked at him with a smile, saying, “But do not misunderstand; this is also for the sake of your people. Jian Taiding currently controls the Martial Affairs Manor’s troops. If there is no conclusive proof, those troops can easily cause a huge disaster.”

“You won’t even cooperate with us, so where would I go to find proof?” Zu An asked dejectedly.

“Actually, there is something you can do.” Yu Yanluo laughed. The entire room seemed to brighten a bit thanks to her smile.

Chapter 1059: Her Smell Is Still There?

Zu An sighed in amazement. This woman was really the perfect definition of what a truly gorgeous woman was. He had always been curious why in his previous world’s history, King You of Zhou would do something so stupid as lightning warning beacons for no reason other than to make his wife Bao Si smile[1], but now, he had a good idea. If it were a beauty as incredible as Yu Yanluo, for the sake of making her smile, men would easily make impulsive decisions.

He collected his thoughts and asked curiously, “What is that?”

Yu Yanluo gave him a look. Her expression became a bit strange. She replied, "Didn't you just impersonate my husband? Just continue to pretend to be him. Even though I can see through it, that doesn't mean others can."

Zu An realized something. He asked, "You're saying to just try something and test the waters?"

Yu Yanluo nodded and replied, "Correct. You can return to the Duke Manor as Yanyou and seize back all of the military authority. That way, even if Jian Taiding wants to rebel, he will have no troops to do so."

Zu An's eyes lit up. Right now, their greatest threat was Jian Taiding's military authority, since he could flip the table at any time. Sang Hong had no choice but to call for reinforcements from Yi Commandery.

Those troops would take time to arrive, and Cloudcenter Commandery was Jian Taiding's domain. When the time came, it would be hard to hide those troops from him. Who knew what he would do if backed against a wall?

But if Zu An went disguised as Jian Yanyou, he could control the troops and even use this identity to investigate the entire sequence of events. After all, Jian Yanyou had been led to his death by Jian Taiding. If Jian Taiding saw his older brother who should have been dead appear again, his soul might just leave his very body.

As the saying went, as soon as there was a little bit of chaos, mistakes would easily follow. Zu An just had to wait for openings to take advantage of and exploit.

"But many people are familiar with Jian Yanyou. I also don't know anything about his habits and other things. Even if I look the same, I'll probably be exposed quickly." Zu An was a bit worried.

"That is indeed a problem." Yu Yanluo remained quiet for a moment before continuing, "How about this? You should just pretend to have been seriously hurt and lost your memory. That way, you can explain most of the discrepancies."

"Amnesia?" Zu An had a strange expression. This stupid TV drama cliché really is pretty useful... He hadn't expected her to have even thought of that on her own.

"Indeed. As for Yanyou's normal lifestyle habits, I am here. I can teach you." Yu Yanluo's eyes began to sparkle. She was no longer as calm as before and instead seemed to have found something interesting.

"You're familiar with his normal routines?" Zu An couldn't help but ask. He had previously heard that the two of them usually didn't live together.

As if seeing through his thoughts, Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "He is my husband after all. Even if we were just putting on an act, we had to do it such that it was convincing for everyone else. I naturally needed to know about some of the details."

She suddenly felt stunned. Why did she have to explain their real relationship to him?

Zu An was incredibly shocked and exclaimed, "You and the duke were just husband and wife in name?" Even though that was what he had suspected, it was the first time he had heard such a conclusive statement.

Seeing as she had already spoken of it, Yu Yanluo didn't continue to hide it either. She sighed and said, "Indeed. In the past, I drew way too much attention with this appearance of mine... There were many crazy pursuers coming after me. In order to avoid trouble, I decided to find someone to marry. That person had to have enough status, and only then would it stop those... rivals in love. At the same time, he could not be too far from the Yu clan. The most important part was that he had to be of good moral character, or else he might treat the fake marriage seriously. That would put me in a tough situation.

"These conditions would not be too difficult individually, but when put together, there were extremely few candidates. In the end, I chose Yanyou. He perfectly fulfilled his promises to me over the years.

"To be honest, he is one of my few good friends. It was one thing when I did not know what happened before, but now that I know he was plotted against, I naturally need to help avenge him."

"Could it be that after all these years, Cloudcenter Duke, he... never asked you for anything more?" Zu An felt a bit of disbelief.

Yu Yanluo shot him an annoyed look and replied, "He is a true gentleman. Do you think he is the same as you?"

Zu An instead sneered inwardly. This Cloudcenter Duke really was something. He had such a devastatingly beautiful woman as his wife, and yet he really hadn't even taken half a step over the boundaries. Just how had he done it?

"How about you come over and practice these next few days? I will tell you some details about the Duke Manor so you can successfully deceive those who serve Yanyou," Yu Yanluo continued.

Zu An replied, "But it isn't too convenient during the day... The temporary residence has been surrounded by the Military Affairs Manor's troops. I actually snuck out today. Everyone outside thinks I'm seriously injured and resting. If someone knew what my current condition was like, it might just cause a huge uproar."

Yu Yanluo also realized that. "I almost would have forgotten if you had not told me. Judging from how tough and lively you were when you fought against me earlier, you did not seem injured at all! Jian Taiding was wounded so badly that he could not even leave his home, and he is a master rank cultivator!" She felt more and more alarmed as she spoke. Her enticing red lips were agape for a long time.

"I was actually injured too. I just forcefully endured it when I fought against you earlier..." Zu An said humbly.

Yu Yanluo was speechless. She asked, "You were able to defeat me even while you were injured? Are you trying to shame my cultivation or my intelligence?"

Zu An laughed awkwardly and replied, "That's not what I meant. I still have some injuries, but my regenerative ability is pretty strong. My body is rather sturdy too."

"Your body is indeed pretty hard." That was something Yu Yanluo had to admit. In her painting world, she was like a deity. The monster she made had actually been smashed apart by his fist, and he had even managed to survive the terrifying ocean wave. The toughness of his body already surpassed that of any human.

But her cheeks turned red as soon as she said that. She immediately realized her words were a bit ambiguous and provocative. They really were improper. She secretly gave Zu An a look and saw that his eyes remained clear, his expression still normal. He didn't seem to have heard anything strange. She sighed inwardly in relief.

She cleared her throat and quickly changed the topic, asking, "Then when would it be more convenient for you to come?"

"I don't think the day would work. Let's just do it at night," Zu An replied after thinking about it.

"At night?" Yu Yanluo's expression turned strange.

Zu An also realized his response was inappropriate. He explained awkwardly, "I didn't have any other meaning."

"I know." Yu Yanluo smiled warmly. "How about this? It would be inconvenient for you to return for the time being. Either way, everyone else thinks you are cultivating in seclusion, so you should just stay here at my place. We should use the time we have to train you well. That way, you can quickly go back and stabilize the situation in the Duke Manor."

"Live with you here?" Zu An's face heated up. He asked, "This is a bit too inconvenient, isn't it?"

"I am not even worried as the woman; what is a man like you scared of?" Yu Yanluo frowned slightly. But she quickly realized something. She looked at him with a strange expression and asked, "You did not think I meant you would live in this room, did you?"

"Uh..." Only then did Zu An realize that it was his thoughts that had gone the wrong way.

Yu Yanluo harrumphed when she saw his expression. "You really know how to daydream. There is a room next door; you will stay over there. The manor's people normally do not go there, so no one will know you are there."

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. However, he realized another problem. If he continued to stay here and something happened back at the temporary residence, what if Big Manman went looking for him?

"What is it? Is there anything else that is worrying you?" Yu Yanluo noticed that he seemed to be deeply troubled by something and asked out of curiosity.

"It's nothing. I'll be troubling the madam then." Zu An decided he was going to explain to Big Manman when he had some time another day. It shouldn't be too big of an issue.

Yu Yanluo nodded and said, "I will bring you to the room so you can take a look for now." She got up and walked over to the wall. She rotated a button on it, and a door slowly opened.

Zu An was alarmed, exclaiming, "The two sides are connected?"

Yu Yanluo voiced her confirmation. "The next room is also one of my bedrooms, so I joined them together for the sake of convenience. However, you cannot open this door from your side."

Zu An said dejectedly, "You make it sound as if I'd sneak my way over in the middle of the night or something."

Yu Yanluo looked at him calmly and replied, "Is that not what you did today?"

Zu An was speechless. However, he couldn't help but look at her eyes a few times. Yu Yanluo's eyes were enchanting like gemstones, and mysterious like the starry skies.

However, what left him with an even deeper impression was that during that intense fight earlier, her eyes had released that beautiful and sinister light. He really had felt the threat of death back then.

What the hell was that? A kind of eye technique?

He had watched Naruto before, so he was no stranger to eye techniques. But that thing was clearly her trump card, so he couldn't just ask her about it.

Yu Yanluo pointed at the room and said, "I stay there sometimes as well, so everything you need should be there. See if there is anything missing and let me know. The Yu clan has many people with all sorts of different opinions. In order to prevent others from knowing about this, I will have the things you need delivered to my room, then pass them to you."

Zu An waved his hand casually and said, "There's no need; just a bed is enough. I'm not that picky."

Yu Yanluo replied, "Then you should rest for now. I will draw some portraits of people from the Duke Manor who are rather close to Yanyou. That way, you will be able to recognize them."

"That would be bothering you; that's way too much work!" Zu An exclaimed, a bit embarrassed.

Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "It might be a lot of work for ordinary people, but illustration is my field of expertise. It is not that difficult for me at all. It has already gotten dark, so you can get some rest first. I will continue sleeping after I finish the drawings too."

She closed the door after the two of them said their goodbyes. Zu An lay on the bed, his head full of thoughts. He wondered if she was the one who had killed Yu Xuantao.

Even so, he had gained a lot from his trip thanks to their previous interaction. At the very least, he now knew she wasn't the final boss he had imagined. Furthermore, together with her help, dealing with Jian Taiding was going to become much easier.

But what was annoying was that the mission the emperor had given him was to take down the Yu clan...

Wait, the emperor is going to be my enemy sooner or later. He wants to deal with the Yu clan, but I secretly want to protect them. Isn't it fine then? He immediately felt much better when he thought of that.

Suddenly, he smelled a scent that was both reminiscent of orchids, but also of someone's natural fragrance, coming from the covers. He immediately remembered that Yu Yanluo had told him she would sleep on this side from time to time. The covers carried her smell.

That distinctive smell still remained after so long! It didn't seem to be the smell of cosmetic products, either. But he had been to Rouge Spice a few days ago, and had smelled many famous products. None of them smelled that good!

Suddenly, the door on the wall opened up. Yu Yanluo's expression wasn't as calm as before. She sprinted over and snatched the blanket covering him away. She said before turning around and leaving quickly, "These covers are old. I had a maid bring over a set of new covers. Wait for a bit."

Even though she tried her best to sound calm, the trace of redness around her neck sold her out.

Chapter 1060: Paper Wives

"???"

There were a thousand question marks in Zu An's mind. Isn't this just a blanket you slept in before? Do you have to be that embarrassed? Or was that scent another smell?

Yu Yanluo had already changed into a nightgown. The silk material was close-fitting, hazily outlining her mature and wonderful figure. But the more it appeared so ambiguous, the more enticing it was. That was especially true for her waist and bottom, which formed simply outrageous arcs. She was the definition of natural womanly charm.

Soon afterward, Yu Yanluo came back with a brand new set of blankets and said, "Here."

"Uh... thanks, madam." Zu An really didn't know what to say. He couldn't just ask her what that smell was, could he?

He was just about to say something when his eyes narrowed. Because Yu Yanluo had bent down to arrange the new covers, her collar area was completely exposed. Together with the fact that she was wearing extremely loose and spacious sleepwear, a beautiful scene was fully revealed when she bent down.

Zu An was obviously too embarrassed to take advantage of her at that moment, and he looked away stiffly.

Yu Yanluo helped him replace the covers, but suddenly noticed that he was acting strangely. When she lowered her head, her face immediately reddened. She quickly held her hands in front of her chest and stood back up.

She had just changed her clothes, but then had been in a rush to change the covers, so she hadn't immediately reacted. She usually dressed casually that way when she was alone, because there was no way another man would enter her room. That was why she hadn't noticed anything after she changed her clothes.

But she didn't scream and lose her head like a young lady, instead pretending to be calm and saying, "Since you have not slept yet, just come over and take a look at those people from the Duke Manor."

Zu An was shocked. He asked, "You already finished drawing them that quickly?"

Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "I have already drawn several of them. You can watch me draw the rest of them."

Her statement drew Zu An's interest. He said, "Perfect; I wanted to learn how to draw better."

"You want to learn how to draw?" Yu Yanluo replied, stunned.

Zu An nodded and said, "It's because my transformation technique's basic requirement is mastery of drawing. Only then can I perfectly mimic my target's details. I already practiced for a long time and thought I was already a master, but you immediately saw through it."

"So that was what it was." Yu Yanluo realized why Zu An wanted to learn. She said, "Your transformation technique is quite incredible. That's good too, then. While observing me, you can try to think about which areas you can still improve on. That way, there won't be any flaws when you try to fool others in the future."

Zu An thought to himself, Why does this sound so weird? He immediately got off the bed and followed her out.

Yu Yanluo had her fur coat draped over her collar. She had clearly already noticed what happened. But talking about such a matter would embarrass them both. It would be better to just let bygones be bygones.

She took out several drawings and handed them to Zu An, explaining, "The first is the Duke Manor's butler, Uncle Ming. The manor's tasks, big and small, are under his management. He has already followed Yanyou for many years, and is someone who is extremely familiar with him. If anyone has a chance of seeing through your disguise, it will be him."

Zu An received it and gave the paper a look. He saw a man who looked just like one of the butlers he was familiar with. He recognized that person; they had met previously during the investigation of the Duke Manor.

The drawing was just like the other person, as expected. What was even more shocking was that this drawing seemed too lifelike, as if it weren't just a drawing, but rather a real person.

Suddenly, it rippled, and a strand of mist slowly rose from the paper. It then landed on the ground. The mist slowly scattered outward, gradually forming a human image. Who else could it be but Uncle Ming?!

"The young master may call me Uncle Ming. Please ask me if there is anything you need to know about the manor." The person bowed to Zu An. His tone was polite, and yet also carried a bit of distance, exactly the same as when they had met the first time.

Zu An was surprised. He hadn't expected the other person to appear. All of the muscles in his body immediately went taut, ready to retaliate at a moment's notice.

Yu Yanluo smiled sweetly and said, "There is no need for you to be nervous. He is merely a drawing of mine, he is not real."

"He's just a drawing?" Zu An's eyes widened. He quickly turned and saw that sure enough, his hand could pass right through the other party's body. The drawing clearly didn't have a body.

"Young master, please do not do that. It will quickly speed up my rate of disappearance," 'Uncle Ming' took a step back and said a bit helplessly.

"It can even speak?" Zu An looked at Yu Yanluo. He was now utterly shocked.

Yu Yanluo explained, "He is just an existence that has emerged from my drawing. Strictly speaking, he is not really alive. Whenever I finish drawing someone and give them preset designs, they appear vividly

like this, becoming just like the one I wish to draw. However, they do not have corporeal bodies and scatter after a bit of time.”

Zu An couldn't help but sigh. He said, “When I heard the phrase ‘drawings so vivid they seem alive’ before, I thought it was just a legend, but Madam has really done it, and is even able to make living people.”

He couldn't help but think back to all those shut-ins with their 2D waifus. If they had Yu Yanluo's help, wouldn't their 2D waifus all become real people? Even if it were only for a moment, that would be enough to make them all go wild. It wasn't just shut-ins, either. If Yu Yanluo drew some celebrities, their fans would also go crazy from excitement.

The only regretful thing was that the drawings had no real bodies. They could only be seen, not touched...

“This is just the result of a lot of practice,” Yu Yanluo said nonchalantly, as if she were talking about something extremely commonplace. She continued, “Hm? What are you thinking about? Hurry up and use this chance to familiarize yourself with him. This way, there will be no holes in your behavior when you meet him as Yanyou later.”

“Oh, alright.” Zu An's face heated up. What the hell am I thinking about? Why would a shut-in need a real body? Having their two hands to accompany them is already enough.

Yu Yanluo continued, “I have already put everything I know about Uncle Ming into this drawing. He will explain everything to you. You can just chat with him, and he will tell you those things. I will go back to drawing the others.”

She lowered her head and focused on her drawing again. Her pen danced along the paper like a dragon, but perhaps because of what had happened previously, even though she had a fur coat covering her, she still subconsciously used her hand to cover her chest.

Who are you even on guard against? Am I that kind of person? Zu An was a bit dispirited.

However, his attention quickly shifted to Uncle Ming. The other party began to discuss things with him, explaining all manner of information to him. It included several details about Jian Yanyou's normal lifestyle.

Zu An sighed in amazement. It really was much easier interacting with such a ‘living’ person than reading from a sheet of paper.

After some time passed, Uncle Ming's figure began to turn blurry. In the end, he turned into specks of light and vanished.

Yu Yanluo sensed something. She raised her head and asked, “How much of all of that did you remember? How about I draw another copy for you?”

“There's no need, I remembered it all.” Zu An replied.

“You remembered it all?” Yu Yanluo frowned slightly. Because of her beautiful appearance, her pursuers had tried every trick in the book. Many people would keep acting just to get more of her attention. But

for some reason, she didn't want Zu An to become such a person. She couldn't help but feel a bit of disappointment.

"I really did remember it all." Zu An pointed at his head and said, "My memory has always been pretty good."

Ever since he'd had his aptitude improved by the system's Marrow Cleansing Pills, he could pretty much learn anything after looking at it once.

Back then, Thick Browed Daoist had had 'Face of a Thousand Identities' for so long, and yet he hadn't managed to get very far. He was an eighth ranked cultivator, so his aptitude wasn't low either, meaning 'Face of a Thousand Identities' was a technique that was extremely difficult to understand. However, Zu An had already learned most of it on the way to Cloudcenter Commandery.

If he'd had such an ability in his previous world, he would have been able to get into any university he wanted!

"Really?" Yu Yanluo was already feeling somewhat unhappy. She continued, "Then let me test you. What are Yanyou's sleeping habits?"

You have successfully trolled Yu Yanluo for +33 +33 +33...

Zu An was puzzled. Why did she suddenly get upset for no reason?

But since she had asked him, he answered, "He definitely wouldn't eat anything a few hours before bed, nor would he drink any tea. Furthermore, he would head to the study to read for a bit."

"Oh. Then what book does he like the most?" Yu Yanluo asked.

"Previously, he was reading the 'Spring and Autumn Annals'," Zu AN replied.

...

After she had asked a series of questions, a look of surprise appeared in Yu Yanluo's eyes. She had thought that Zu An was just boasting at first, but he really did remember every single detail clearly.

She was finally convinced, and said, "I apologize; I suspected you incorrectly. It seems you really are quite talented." She was someone who had knowledge across many fields. She naturally understood what a highly retentive memory meant.

"It's all thanks to madam's incredible drawing skills." Zu An sighed in amazement.

Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "I suggest that you change into Yanyou again so it will feel more natural later."

Zu An thought to himself that her suggestion made sense. He was training to fool the people close to Jian Yanyou in the Duke Manor, so he naturally needed to use Jian Yanyou's appearance to get a good feeling for it beforehand. As such, his face began to change, gradually turning into Jian Yanyou's.

Yu Yanluo stared at him the entire time. After she witnessed the whole process, she couldn't help but say, "This skill of yours really is completely unique. It is almost as if you have stolen one of the crafts of heaven."

“But I don’t have much confidence in it anymore after madam exposed me,” Zu An said with a bitter smile. Having his first attempt seen through really didn’t feel amazing.

“I will help you perfect it later, so you will not have to worry about being seen through anymore.” Yu Yanluo smiled. She pointed at the paper on the table and suggested, “Why not take a look at the next drawing first?”

Zu An nodded. He picked up the new sheet of paper. When he saw it, however, his entire body froze up. He had thought that it would be one of the important guards of the manor, but who could have expected that it would be an incredibly beautiful woman?

Every beauty really has their own unique charms... Even though she was a bit inferior to his close female friends, she was still a first rate beauty.

He gave the other papers a look. They were also of other beauties. However, they each had a particularly distinctive trait. Judging from their hairstyles and outfits, they were clearly married women.

As his eyes passed over them, the beauties all turned into mist that flew out of the paper. When they saw Zu An, they all surrounded him excitedly and exclaimed, “My lord!”

Zu An was alarmed.