

Immortal 1061

Chapter 1061: Defending Traditions of the Past

Zu An jumped in fright. This was the first time he had felt so flustered while being surrounded by beauties. He quickly moved backward and looked at Yu Yanluo, asking, "Madam, what is going on here?"

Yu Yanluo gave him a look of dissatisfaction, replying, "How can you act like that? People will immediately see that something is off if you do that."

"But you have to at least tell me who they are, right?" Zu An protested. The women chased him again, simultaneously grabbing his arms. They even had him rest his elbows on their chests.

Even though they didn't have physical bodies, there was a faint fragrance of cosmetics coming from their bodies. That alone was enough to make one's mind go wild.

Yu Yanluo couldn't help but smile when she saw Zu An's flustered state. She explained, "They are Yanyou's wives. The one with the large chest who is pulling on your hand is Liu Ji. The one with the long legs is Zhang Ji. The one with the thin waist is Chu Ji. Once you enter the Duke Manor, you will interact with them sooner or later. You should get used to them, or else that kind of gap in your behavior might appear."

Zu An could no longer remain calm when he heard her introduction. He exclaimed, "You're having your husband's wives accompany another man?"

Even though that was what he said, he had to admit it was an extremely attractive proposal. The women really all had their own charms. Furthermore, as young married women, they were all at their most charming ages, not to mention their appeal as the wives of a duke.

Why is my little guy not listening to me right now?

Ah Zu, Ah Zu, how can you have such a nasty preference?

Hmph, this preference is called defending the traditions of the past!

Yu Yanluo looked at him with a strange expression and remarked, "What are you thinking about right now? I am only telling you to get used to their skinship. It is not as if I am telling you to sleep with them."

Zu An was speechless. Are you messing with me right now?

You clearly suggested all sorts of things, and you even made these girls wear so little clothes. But then... This is it?

As if sensing his dissatisfaction, Yu Yanluo had a proud look as she said, "I do not care what else you do once you go into the duke manor, but you are not allowed to disturb Yanyou's inner chamber. He is my friend, after all; I cannot do something so dishonest to him."

Zu An couldn't help but mumble, "The duke already died anyway, so they'd have to be pretty bored..."

"What did you say?" Yu Yanluo's pretty brows shot up.

Zu An coughed and added, "I meant that once this matter is over, we should let them leave the Duke Manor. Those who should remarry should remarry. There's no need for them to stay there for the rest of their lives."

Yu Yanluo was a bit surprised and said, "Your way of thinking is quite different from most men in this world. You seem to be much more open-minded."

Zu An sighed and replied, "It's not that my thoughts are open-minded, but rather that this world as a whole is too backward in its thinking."

He couldn't help but recall his previous world again. He discovered that even though many of his thoughts were still affected by that world, he was already getting more and more used to this world. He didn't want to go back as badly compared to when he had first arrived.

Yu Yanluo couldn't understand what he was trying to say, but she didn't bother trying either. She said, "Get used to them for now. The things they know are probably things Uncle Ming does not know."

Zu An was confused. He asked, "How do you know this much about the Duke Manor's inner chambers?" She even knew the secrets Uncle Ming and the concubines of the harem knew.

Yu Yanluo said with a smile, "I have been managing such a large clan, so I naturally have some methods of my own. Previously, when my marriage agreement with Jian Yanyou was made, how could I have not prepared any countermeasures? That is why I placed some of my people there.

"Furthermore, I could not fulfill all of my obligations as his wife, so he would naturally feel some regret. That was why I helped him find some considerate women."

"These women are your subordinates?" Zu An thought to himself, No wonder she's so familiar with them.

"I sent over Liu Ji and Chu Ji. They are not spies the way you might be thinking; I never contacted them again after they were sent to the Duke Manor, nor did I tell them to send me any intelligence to avoid Yanyou's displeasure. I told them it was enough as long as they served our husband wholeheartedly," Yu Yanluo explained.

Zu An thought to himself, where would one even find a wife who would help her husband find concubines, and furthermore ones who were so good-looking?

As those girls accompanied him, however, he finally began gradually assuming the role of Jian Yanyou. At the very least, he wouldn't be at a loss for what to do if he encountered the women in the future.

When they left, Zu An took the chance to move closer to the drawings. He was really curious as to just how Yu Yanluo had made them. Yu Yanluo guessed his intentions too and didn't try to hide anything. Instead, she leaned aside so he could see more clearly.

The way Yu Yanluo put pen to paper was entirely different from the way a normal person would. Before she drew, she closed her eyes and thought for a bit. Then, a faint smile appeared on her face, and her pen started to move.

She didn't immediately use the brush, but instead used her ink pen to draw some seemingly messy lines that somehow also vaguely hinted at a pattern. Then, under the manipulation of her fingers, the single

pen seemed to multiply into many, drawing simultaneously on the paper. The disordered and messy outline was gradually connected together, and a figure started to take form.

In the end, only the two eye sockets were left blank. She wasn't in a rush to fill them in and instead turned to look at Zu An, saying, "Your drawing skills do not have many deficiencies; the only flaw is the eyes. The eyes are windows into the soul, as well as the key in the infusion of the soul. If you want to fully draw out the charm of your target, the eyes are the easiest place to start..."

Then, she explained various things about the comprehension of the target's charms, as well as how to draw them. With such an incredible teacher to teach him, Zu An immediately gained enlightenment into his previous questions.

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The sky outside had already unknowingly brightened. Yu Yanluo's eyes shone with brilliance as she exclaimed, "You really are freakishly talented! You managed to comprehend so much in a single night. The only thing that is missing is real practice and the accumulation of time. After a few more years, your skill in the arts might just surpass mine."

"The madam is too humble. I am indebted to your teachings, which were the reason why I was able to understand how profound and deep this dao is." Zu An bowed toward her. "Furthermore, I know just how vast the difference between the madam and myself is. I do not believe that I can ever reach your level in this life of mine."

Yu Yanluo's expression became gentler as she said, "Look at how sweet a talker you are. Do not forget that you have transcendent aptitude, so you can learn anything quickly. Surpassing me is not a complete impossibility."

She yawned after she finished speaking, and she couldn't help but stretch out her body. Her body's wonderful curves were perfectly displayed. She said, "No more; I cannot do this anymore. I cannot hold on anymore after doing all of that with you tonight. I normally sleep a lot in this kind of weather, so I need to make up for my sleep right now."

"I've truly troubled the madam. I'm going to return first then; please rest well." Zu An got up to bid her farewell.

Yu Yanluo was stunned and asked, "Are you not going to sleep here?"

She suddenly realized that the way she had worded that sentence was strange. She quickly added, "What I meant was, sleep next door."

Zu An thought to himself, What, don't tell me I can sleep on your bed?

However, he explained, "I still have some things to take care of outside. I'll come and seek out the madam again to continue this in the evening."

Yu Yanluo thought for a bit, then took out a jade pendant. She said, "Even though your cultivation is not bad, there is no way you can be that lucky every time. Carry this with you. If you have this with you, many of the manor's defenses will not target you. You can also move freely through the Yu clan then."

Zu An figured that what she said made sense. It wouldn't be too good for him to sneak around every time like a thief. He put away the jade pendant and replied, "Thank you, madam!"

The pendant was similar to the one Yu Yanluo had given him back in Brightmoon City. However, the material was a bit better. There was still a hint of Yu Yanluo's body temperature on it, making it feel more intimate.

Yu Yanluo felt numb across her body when she saw Zu An caress the pendant with his fingers. It was almost as if his fingers were moving across her own body. Her expression became a bit unnatural and she said, "There is no need for thanks. With your speed of learning, you should be able to go to the Duke Manor in just a few more days. You should hurry and carry on with what you need to take care of. I am going to sleep."

Zu An cupped his hands toward her. Then, he quickly exited through the window.

Yu Yanluo stood by the windowsill, watching his disappearing figure in a daze. She stood there for a long time. Only after a while did she caress her own face and wonder to herself absentmindedly, "Why do I feel a bit warm? He is clearly a lot younger than me..."

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Meanwhile, Zu An headed straight back to the temporary residence. There were still troops from the Military Affairs Manor outside, and he used Daji to knock them out again. Then, he went to Sang Hong to inform him about his seclusion.

"Your condition has worsened?" Sang Hong exclaimed, alarmed. He immediately wanted to examine Zu An.

"It's not too big of a deal. I just want to make sure there are no hidden illnesses that will affect my future cultivation," Zu An explained.

"How is that not a big deal? Focus on cultivating; you do not need to worry about Cloudcenter Commandery's affairs anymore. I will not let anyone disturb you." Sang Hong immediately panicked. In this world, cultivation was status and identity. This was a rising star he had favored and entrusted practically all of his family's hopes to, so how could he let something happen to Zu An?

"Thank you, respected uncle!" Zu An felt a bit guilty for tricking the other party when he saw just how worried Sang Hong was. However, Sang Hong was the Imperial Envoy who had to act against the Yu clan, while he didn't want to antagonize the Yu clan. The enemy of one's enemy was one's friend, so being friends with Yu Yanluo matched his interests more. As such, Zu An decided not to involve Sang Hong to reduce the variables.

Then, to make sure he wasn't disturbed, Sang Hong emptied out all of the rooms around Zu An's. He even sent the Armed Escort Army to stand guard nearby and strictly prevent anyone from disturbing him.

Zu An sighed in relief. Now, it didn't seem as if anyone would come to disturb him anymore.

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After taking care of those matters, Zu An secretly left the temporary residence and arrived at Pei Manor.

"Young... Young master," Hong Zao called out bashfully when she saw him. Do I have to pull another all nighter today...

But he always brings me good things to eat, and he is pretty handsome...

When the young miss isn't feeling too well in the future, will I have to help out...

Her face immediately turned red when she thought of that. Her heart began to pound fiercely.

"Hello, Hong Zao. I brought you some peanut-flavored snow dango," Zu An said, patting her head dotingly. This girl was pretty cute.

"I'm going to get fat from all the things the young master brings me," Hong Zao said, beaming with joy. She was already starting to drool as she spoke.

"Being a bit chubby is also pretty cute." Zu An pinched her cheeks. Then, he went to look for Pei Mianman.

Hong Zao was a bit conflicted. So the young master likes girls a bit chubby? Should I eat a bit more then...

"You're teasing Hong Zao as soon as you get here?" Pei Mianman remarked, rolling her eyes.

Zu An laughed and took her into his arms, saying, "I just find that little girl a bit cute; don't think too much of it. She's still so little."

"What do you mean 'little'? You'll soon know that she isn't little at all! She's my personal maid, so she'll be yours sooner or later too." Pei Mianman had a strange look on her face as she asked, "Right, why didn't you come over last night?"

Zu An then explained the matter of the Yu Clan to her. He couldn't hide it from her, or else it would be troublesome if she came to look for him.

"What? You're going to live with Yu Yanluo?!" Pei Mianman immediately sat up straight.

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Zu An quickly corrected her. "I'm not living with her; I'm staying in another room next to hers."

"Aren't you only separated by a single wall then?" Pei Mianman grabbed him as if she wanted to put him behind her protectively. "Even if you weren't living in the temporary residence, you could've just stayed with me! Why did you have to live with her?"

Zu An replied, "It's because I have to pretend to be Jian Yanyou, so there are many details I don't know about. I need her to teach me. This is the most effective way to save the most amount of time possible."

"Do you know who Yu Yanluo is? If a meteor were to fall from the sky and hit ten people anywhere in the world, at least one of them would be a fan of hers! Why would a woman like that take the initiative to invite an unfamiliar man to live next door to her?" Pei Mianman became vigilant, saying, "No way. She probably started lusting after your body after her husband passed away."

“Lusting after my body?” Zu An gave her a strange look. I do have confidence in myself, but isn’t that a bit too much?

Pei Mianman’s face also turned red. Yu Yanluo’s reputation was so great that it was really hard to imagine that kind of woman desiring the body of a man. But since the words had already left her mouth, she wasn’t willing to concede defeat anymore. She continued, “Why not? You’re handsome, and your cultivation is high. You’re a good person too, and you’re funny and interesting... No matter how pretty she is, Yu Yanluo is still a woman; she still needs a man to love her dearly. After so many years have already passed, how could she not be moved at all? Otherwise, why didn’t she look for another man, but instead let you live next door?”

Seeing that it was getting more and more out of hand the more she spoke, Zu An quickly cut her off, saying, “It was because I saved her before in Brightmoon City. She might just feel a bit more at ease around me because of that.”

“But you just said that her cultivation was really high! Hmph, that woman had the nerve to pretend to be weak and have you save her. What else could it be other than lusting after your body?” Pei Mianman finally seemed to have found her argument and spoke with a harrumph.

Zu An was speechless. Any smart man wouldn’t try to reason with a woman in such a situation. As such, he quickly smiled and said, “Alright, alright, alright, she wants my body. But you have to trust me, I will definitely maintain my purity for you.”

“Trust you?” Pei Mianman harrumphed. “Who was the one who even went after his wife’s close friend?”

Zu An was speechless again. He was starting to feel a bit of a headache. He picked her up and put her on his lap, spanking her. “What kind of nonsense are you spouting? Our relationship is clearly a harmonious one!”

Pei Mianman’s gaze became flirty as she was hit. She turned around to look at him provocatively. She said while looking ‘alarmed’, “No, big brother Zu! I can’t do anything that’ll let down Chuyan!”

Zu An immediately felt himself growing bigger. This woman really was alluring!

Pei Mianman always liked to play such harem roleplaying games with him, and her close friend Chuyan was a character who appeared often. If Chuyan were to see them one day, wouldn’t she get so angry she’d draw her sword and kill them?

But the more it was like that, the more Zu An felt a taboo sensation of stimulation. As such, he quickly got into character as well. He harrumphed and replied, “Your refusal would make things right with Chuyan, but wouldn’t you be letting me down?”

Pei Mianman gave him a wronged look and said, “Then... I guess I can at least... help you out a bit. But you can’t take my purity! That way, it doesn’t count as betraying Chuyan.”

Zu An really was amused now. She was clearly going through her period, and yet she still made her intentions sound so pure.

“No, wait. I’d still have a guilty conscience after.” Pei Mianman quickly pushed him away a while later. She bit her lip and continued, “How about this? I’ll pretend to be Chuyan, and you can treat me as if I

were her. That way, I'll feel a bit better. Do you have her clothes? Let me borrow some so I can look more like her..."

Zu An was stupefied. He couldn't help but repeat that infamous quote: "You're such a seductress!" [1]

After who knew how much time had passed, Pei Mianman wiped the corners of her mouth with a reddened face. She didn't bother putting on her clothes again and leaned gently against his embrace. At the same time, she rubbed her sore cheeks. Hmph, at least he won't seek out other vixens now; my hard work was worth it.

Chuyan, you should actually be thanking me for this. I'm doing so much for your man's purity!

Zu An caressed her fair skin with his fingers. The two looked into each other's eyes as they whispered to each other. The conversation unknowingly arrived at the subject of Cloudcenter Commandery.

"Right, has that fella Zhao Zhi bothered you at all recently?" Zu An asked. He was curious about Zhao Zhi's most recent activities. Han Fengqiu had been at the Zhenyuan Merchant Group gathering. With him there, King Qi Manor's influence was all but guaranteed.

Pei Mianman shook her head and replied, "They came to ask about the progress of the investigation on your side. I did as we agreed, just telling them half-truths and half-lies. But recently, they haven't come to ask about it anymore... It really is a bit strange."

Zu An frowned. For some reason, he felt Zhao Zhi was plotting something bad, but he had more important things to worry about at the moment. He was going to wait until he dealt with the Duke Manor first.

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When he left Pei Manor, Zu An's legs were still feeling a bit weak. Big Manman really is an alluring woman through and through! Her fighting strength had clearly been reduced by half already, and yet he had still been left in such a state afterward.

That girl really was ridiculously talented in that field... She'd had Hong Zao bring over a bottle of oils, and Zu An had experienced pleasures he could never experience with a washboard.

That wasn't all. Halfway through, she had even called in Hong Zao to serve him too. He'd really had to use the last ounce of rationality he had left to refuse.

Is that woman trying to completely suck me dry or something? Zu An thought, speechless. He had an idea of what she was thinking, but he felt her worries were groundless. Yu Yanluo wasn't the kind of person she expected.

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He came back to Yu Manor. With the token that bypassed the Yu Manor's security, even though it was daytime, it was still easier for him to return to Yu Yanluo's bedroom than before.

"You're here," Yu Yanluo greeted him. She seemed to have just gotten up from bed. She fastened her waistband's button while nodding toward him with a smile. She acted completely natural the entire time. She didn't seem awkward or embarrassed at all.

It was instead Zu An who felt a bit embarrassed. He replied, "I think it'd be better if I give you a moment to yourself." He turned around after saying that.

Yu Yanluo smiled and asked, "Are you going to play the gentleman now? You were definitely much more daring last night."

Now that he was being provoked that way by a mature beauty, Zu An naturally wouldn't be outdone. He replied, "Then does madam want me to treat you the way I treated you last night?"

Yu Yanluo's smile immediately froze on her face. Her provocative expression was replaced with embarrassment. She replied, "Hmph, I knew you were a scoundrel."

Just then, someone outside knocked and said, "Madam, your food has arrived."

Yu Yanluo's expression became natural again. She gestured for Zu An to hide behind a screen, and she sorted out her clothes before saying, "Come in."

Soon afterward, Maid Xing entered with a wooden tray, bearing an assortment of delicious food. She arranged the plates on the desk while saying with a smile, "Madam's appetite today seems to be exceptionally good; you actually ordered so many things at once."

Yu Yanluo didn't reveal any strange behavior. She said, "My mood seems to have improved a lot recently, so my appetite has gotten better as well. I should be able to eat more in the near future."

"That is good to hear!" Maid Xing said happily. If her madam's condition was good, she would obviously be happy to hear that. Yu Yanluo chatted a bit more with her, but then Maid Xing left, closing the door behind her.

Zu An walked out from behind the screen. Yu Yanluo gestured toward him and said, "The food has just arrived, so come over and eat."

Zu An saw that there were many small, fine dishes on the table. He couldn't help but say with a smile, "I think madam should eat first. My appetite always gets the best of me. If I start now, there might not be much left for madam afterward."

Yu Yanluo shook her head and said, "My appetite is usually poor around wintertime. These were all things I actually had them prepare for you. I would have called them to bring in more, but everyone knows about my condition. If I suddenly increased the amount by too much at once, that could draw a lot of suspicion, so I apologize in advance."

Zu An was stunned. He couldn't help but say with a sigh, "The madam is so considerate that I don't even know how to repay you!"

Yu Yanluo lifted up her dress and sat down by a small table. "By helping Yanyou get revenge, I will actually be the one who owes you a favor. I should be the one saying that."

Zu An sighed in admiration. Time hadn't left a trace on her body, and had instead made her seem even more wise and considerate. No wonder so many outstanding heroes prostrated themselves in devotion to her.

There was a natural calmness and charm to Yu Yanluo. The longer one spent around her, the more one would become affected. and then he

“Why are we business partners buttering each other up? Let’s eat.” Zu An chuckled, then sat down straightforwardly.

“Butter each other up?” Yu Yanluo was stunned, but she quickly guessed the meaning. She couldn't help but click her tongue in wonder. The person in front of her really was different from everyone else. He always came up with such new phrases, giving others a fresh sensation.

“Hm? Why is there only one set of utensils?” Zu An didn’t find a second set even after looking around.

Yu Yanluo said with a smile, “I live alone, so of course there is only a single set of eating utensils. Are you trying to expose us? You can eat; I do not have much of an appetite anyway.”

Zu An said out of curiosity, “Ever since the last time I met the madam, I’ve discovered that you fear the cold and your appetite is poor. Are you wounded somewhere?”

Yu Yanluo shook her head. “That is not it. This is how my body naturally is. Once it is winter, I tend to sleep a lot and lose my appetite. I have already gotten used to it after so many years. It will be fine after this season passes; you do not need to worry.”

“You don’t have an appetite...” Zu An thought of something and took out a bottle. He scattered a bit of the contents over each dish, then picked up a bit of food with his chopsticks, bringing it up to her mouth. He said, “I prepared a small gift after I met the madam last time. I was so busy I almost forgot. Here, give it a try.”

Yu Yanluo didn’t open her mouth. Her eyes landed on that bottle on the table as she noticed that he had scattered something over the food. She asked with a strange expression, “This isn’t some drug like that ‘Eighteen Spring Winds’, right?”

Zu An was speechless. He couldn't help but reply unhappily, “Am I that kind of person in madam’s eyes?”

Yu Yanluo nodded and replied, “Absolutely.”

Zu An was speechless again. As such, he took a bite out of it himself first. “Now you have nothing to worry about, right?”

Yu Yanluo had a crafty smile on her face as she replied, “What if you already took the antidote ahead of time?”

However, she didn’t wait for his response and took the chopsticks, picking something and eating a bit of it. “I am just messing with you. If I really do end up being poisoned, just call me a poor judge of character.”

Her eyes widened before she even finished her sentence, as if she had encountered something extremely shocking.

Chapter 1063: Return

“Just what did you add to this? Why does it taste so good?” Yu Yanluo looked at Zu An in shock.

Zu An chuckled and replied, “I’m glad the madam likes it.”

Yu Yanluo’s shock still remained on her beautiful cheeks as she said, “You still have not answered my questions!”

When he saw how she was throwing a playful tantrum, Zu An thought to himself, Pretty girls really are privileged. They’re cute even when they’re annoyed.

But it wasn’t any secret. Zu An replied, “This thing is called MSG. When I saw the madam and learned that your appetite wasn’t good, I had my subordinates look into it. This is the result of their research. It should be able to improve the madam’s appetite.”

“MSG?” Yu Yan licked her lips to savor that previous taste. She said with a sigh, “This thing is miraculous in its ability to make foods tastier. No, that word alone isn’t fitting enough; it makes the food hundreds, even thousands of times better!”

Zu An said with a smile, “Madam, please don’t give it too much importance. Even though this thing seems miraculous, it’s actually not hard to make at all. Dry some edible mushrooms in the sun, then grind them into powder. Then, mix in some dried scallops to add in more savory flavor. The resulting product will greatly enhance the flavors of foods.”

Yu Yanluo blinked. Her expression immediately became extremely strange when she looked at Zu An. She asked, “You are just giving me the recipe?”

Zu An was a bit surprised. He asked, “What’s so special about this? It’s just that I didn’t have much time, so I only managed to make this little bit. I didn’t want the madam to not have anything, so you can just have the recipe. With the Yu clan’s ability, making this MSG shouldn’t be too difficult. That way, madam can still eat when her appetite is poor and doesn’t need to become so thin.”

Yu Yanluo couldn’t help but sigh. “Do you know that what you have just told me so carelessly is actually an incredibly profitable business opportunity?”

“I only care about the madam’s daily life being a bit better. I didn’t think about any of that other stuff.” Zu An chuckled.

Yu Yanluo stared at him for a long time. When she saw that he wasn’t acting at all, she sighed in amazement and said, “You really are different from all the other men in this world. You’ve brought me so many surprises in this brief amount of time! Last time, the Warm Darling was already a huge business opportunity, and yet compared to this MSG, it’s not even worth mentioning. Those Warm Darlings are highly practical, but the ones who would make the most use of them would still be people with some financial means.

“But this MSG is entirely different! According to the production methods you have mentioned earlier, if it is made on a large scale, the production costs will be nearly negligible. This is something that even ordinary families can use. Even though the individual profit margins will be quite a bit lower than the Warm Darlings, when you take the entire market into consideration, the profits as a whole will far surpass the Warm Darlings.”

Zu An stared blankly when he heard that. In the end, he couldn't help but say, "Madam really is a business genius. Even any random thing can be turned into such a huge opportunity."

Yu Yanluo said with a smile, "This is just a habit of mine from being in the profession for so long. The true credit should go to your incredible imagination. How about this? If you do not mind, I will take care of this business as well. We will divide the profits fifty-fifty."

Zu An didn't act pretentiously. He replied, "I never really had any intentions of doing that, so I'll leave it all up to the madam. If the madam feels there's value, please feel free to act accordingly."

Yu Yanluo sighed in admiration, saying, "I have only met you a few times, and yet you have already gifted me with so many incredible gifts. You might just be my lucky star."

"It's quite an honor to be able to serve as the madam's lucky star." Zu An gave her a gentleman's bow.

Yu Yanluo's smile grew bigger. She said, "Enough; I will just take it to mean there is no opposition then. I will order my subordinates to follow up on this MSG business."

Zu An smiled and said, "Making money is secondary. As long as the madam's appetite improves, that's what I'm looking forward to the most."

Yu Yanluo blushed slightly. She harrumphed and said, "You really know how to use that mouth of yours; even I am starting to become affected. If you used these tricks to fool ordinary girls, would you not steal all of their hearts?"

Zu An feigned surprise as he replied, "Don't tell me the madam isn't a young lady?"

Yu Yanluo was stunned. Then, she laughed so hard her body rocked back and forth. She couldn't help but hit his shoulder lightly before saying "You look so honest on the outside, but you are actually so slick-mouthed."

Zu An said with a sigh, "Madam really doesn't understand me. I'm clearly the type who looks sleazy on the outside, but is actually honest and sincere deep down."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "If you are honest, there are no honest men in this world." Even though that was what she said, she didn't actually intend any rebuke toward him at all.

Women really were strange. They would have high evaluations for what an honest person was, and yet they just couldn't bring themselves to really like honest people. They'd instead like men who were a little bad.

Yu Yanluo didn't know why, but chatting with Zu An was always a joyful thing. It was something she had never experienced with other men before.

The two of them quickly swept through the food. Yu Yanluo actually didn't feel fully content at the end. She said, "I have not eaten like this in a long time. You were not able to get enough as a result."

Zu An chuckled and said, "Don't worry, I'm pretty tough; I won't die even if I don't eat for a day or two, let alone right now where I already ate a lot."

Yu Yanluo felt a bit of a headache. She asked, "What do we do from now on? I cannot have you going hungry each time."

"That's not a problem. Let's make a hotpot; I'll bring some ingredients from outside," Zu An suggested.

"A hotpot?" Yu Yanluo's pretty brow furrowed. "I am not a huge fan of lamb's gaminess. I also find hotpot a bit too bland." She would always lose her appetite during the winter. That was why she wasn't too interested in a light-flavored hotpot.

"That's no problem at all. We can have some mala hotpot." Zu An began to miss the spiciness from his previous world that would make him sweat when he ate it. "Your body fears the cold, so it's good to eat a bit of spice to dispel the cold."

"Mala hotpot?" Yu Yanluo's eyes lit up. "That sounds quite interesting. I'll have to give it a try then." She called over a servant to clean things up, then continued training with Zu An again.

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For some reason, time seemed to pass extremely quickly. Two days passed just like that.

Yu Yanluo nodded in satisfaction, saying, "Not bad. Your current self should be able to convince those in the Duke Manor now."

"It's all thanks to the madam's careful guidance," Zu An said sincerely. He wouldn't have felt so grateful if it were just because of his Jian Yanyou disguise, though. The main reason was because he had gained many insights into the field of art from observing Yu Yanluo's incredible skill.

Even though he had already been able to replicate the original quite well in his drawings, he had lacked a bit of 'soul' in his art. That was why a true master of art would easily see through his mistakes.

Now that he had observed Yu Yanluo's dao, he could borrow her mastery to gain a lot of enlightenment in that field. Now, if he tried to impersonate someone else in the future, there wouldn't be any holes in his disguise at all.

"As expected of transcendent aptitude; you learn everything quickly." Yu Yanluo smiled. "I will call over Gong Pan later. He was Yanyou's personal guard captain. If you can fool him, there will be no issues when you head to the Duke Manor. Then, you can have him escort you there."

"We're moving that quickly?" Zu An felt a bit conflicted when he heard what she said.

Yu Yanluo said with a chuckle, "Do not worry; there is no need for you to lose that much confidence in yourself just because I saw through your first disguise. Your disguise's level is already extremely high. Furthermore, you have even received my guidance. If I did not already know what happened, I might even be fooled by you."

"I'm not worried about the Duke Manor, but rather..." Zu An was about to say something, but stopped. He asked, "Can the madam call over a servant? Preferably male."

"Why?" Yu Yanluo was confused. "I do not keep any male servants near my dwelling. Suddenly calling one over would be a bit strange."

“Uh... I have a use for one.” Zu An immediately felt a bit embarrassed. He couldn't just tell her that he had to pretend to be a girl and fool the servant, right? Damn this Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer!

Seeing how Zu An was hesitant, Yu Yanluo's expression became strange. “You do not swing that way... Right?”

Zu An was speechless.

“Of course not!” he exclaimed. He felt a huge headache. The two of them had lived and eaten together for some time, so they had already become close friends. In the end, he decided to explain it to her. “This disguise technique is a bit special. Before changing into the target, I have to... pretend to be a woman and fool another man. Only then can I use it.”

He couldn't explain the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer, so he had to say it was part of the transformation skill.

Yu Yanluo's eyes opened wide. A smile appeared on the corners of her lips, before growing bigger and bigger. In the end, her body was rocking back and forth, unable to contain her laughter.

She laughed while apologizing. “Sorry! I normally do not laugh at other people, unless... I really cannot stop myself, ha ha ha...”

Zu An's expression was extremely awful. That technique really was complete social suicide.

After she had a good laugh, Yu Yanluo called over a male servant. She personally watched the process of Zu An changing into a cute girl to fool him, thoroughly enjoying the entire process.

That servant felt so light that it was as if he were floating. The madam never allows any men to approach her room, but I was actually called over today!

And what's that sweet sounding girl's relationship with the madam? Her voice is so pretty; she must be really cute.

Also, why was the madam laughing the entire time? Even though she was clearly trying to hide it, I could still hear her. Could it be that the madam favors me? After all, she rarely smiles even toward other people.

My ancestors are definitely blessing me right now! I definitely need to light some incense for them once I get back.

Zu An had already changed into Jian Yanyou's appearance. He gave Yu Yanluo an annoyed look, exclaiming, “Have you had enough yet?”

Yu Yanluo covered her mouth, replying, “But this really is funny.”

Zu An was speechless. He coughed lightly and said, “You can call over Gong Pan now.”

Yu Yanluo realized that the matter at hand was more important too. She suppressed her urge to laugh and sent someone to call in Gong Pan.

...

Gong Pan arrived outside the room soon afterward. He said, "I greet the madam. May I ask why you have called me here?"

Yu Yanluo gestured for Zu An to follow her. Then, she slowly opened the door, replying, "Commander Gong, do you see who we have here?"

Gong Pan raised his head. When he saw the man next to her, his eyes were filled with shock. He exclaimed, "Commandery Duke!"

"It has been a long time." Zu An smiled. He said those words in the tone he had practiced for days.

"Duke, it really is you!" Gong Pan was surprised and overjoyed to hear that familiar voice. He quickly ran over to cling to Zu An; the fully grown man started to bawl out his heart right there and then.

"Hurry and get back up; how can you cry like this?" Zu An quickly supported him to his feet.

"Duke, you have no idea! Ever since you left, all of us have either scattered apart or passed away..." Gong Pan rubbed his eyes. "Ah, let us not talk about these things anymore. The duke's return is the most important and the happiest thing!"

Yu Yanluo said, "Yanyou is seriously injured right now. Not only has his cultivation dropped, he is missing many of his memories too. I will have to trouble Captain Gong to take care of him."

Gong Pan exclaimed earnestly, "With me here, anyone who dares to harm the duke will have to walk over my dead body!"

Zu An quickly added a few more words of encouragement.

...

Yu Yanluo brought over some members of the Yu clan, and they escorted Zu An to the Duke Manor together with Gong Pan.

After all of the recent disturbances, Cloudcenter Commandery's various factions all had their ears pricked, paying attention to the slightest news. Soon, a piece of shocking news began to sweep through Cloudcenter Commandery's court.

The missing Cloudcenter Duke had returned!

Chapter 1064: What's Tolerable and Intolerable

"The duke has returned! The duke has returned!" Gong Pan exclaimed as he escorted Zu An and Yu Yanluo back to the Duke Manor.

All of the maids and servants were stunned at first, but they soon expressed their incredible shock. Afterward, they all excitedly spread the news through the manor. News of Jian Yanyou's return quickly traveled everywhere.

When Jian Taiding, who had been resting in his room, first heard the disturbance, he was furious. He quickly called in his trusted aide from outside, exclaiming, "Who is making that racket outside without any regard for the rules?"

The guard replied, "Second master, the servants seem to be worked up over some matter. This subordinate will look into it right now."

Just then, another subordinate quickly rushed over while shouting, "Second master, second master, bad news!"

Jian Taiding's expression immediately darkened when he heard those words. He said, "Punish yourself with twenty strikes. Do not speak if you are only going to say unlucky things."

The subordinate realized his mistake and immediately broke out into a cold sweat. He immediately knelt down apologetically while slapping his own cheeks.

Jian Taiding's mood finally eased a bit when he heard the slaps. He said, "Enough. What happened that made you so flustered?"

"The first master... has returned!" the subordinate said while trembling.

Jian Taiding's expression turned cold. "Are you tired of living? You dare play this kind of trick on me?"

"This subordinate doesn't dare!" The guard quickly explained, "Gong Pan has escorted the master back! Madam Yu came with him as well; many people in the manor have witnessed this! That's why all of the servants in the manor were in such a commotion."

"What?!" Jian Taiding felt his blood boil. His injuries flared out, dyeing his bandages in blood again. He felt as if the world were turning upside down around him. He staggered and fell backward. Fortunately, his personal guard moved quickly, catching him before he hit the ground. The rest called for a physician in alarm while treating his injuries.

Even so, Jian Taiding was still a master rank cultivator. After a momentary breather, he opened his eyes slightly. However, his complexion was much paler than normal. He exclaimed, "Why didn't you tell me something so important sooner?!"

After giving the guard who had reported a kick, he headed out. Even though his injuries were heavy, it wasn't enough to stop his confusion and curiosity.

How could that person have returned?!

The guard who had been kicked vomited blood several times. No matter how injured Jian Taiding was, he was still a master rank cultivator. His enraged kick was definitely no joking matter.

The guard felt incredibly wronged. I was trying to tell you! It was you who stopped me from saying anything... A bit of resentment appeared in his eyes as he watched Jian Taiding leave.

...

Meanwhile, Jian Taiding rushed over under the escort of his guards. Soon afterward, he saw a group of servants surrounding a few individuals excitedly. When he remembered his subordinates' report, he roared furiously, "Which scoundrel dares to impersonate my older... older brother?"

Jian Taiding's prestige in the manor still remained. When they heard his furious shout, the guards immediately scattered in fear, revealing the people behind them.

When he saw who those people were, Jian Taiding came to a screeching halt. He was completely frozen in place. In that instant, it was as if a huge explosion had gone off in his head. He began to question life itself.

Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?

It really is my older brother!

In that instant, regret, fear, shock, and all manner of other emotions appeared in his mind. His entire being was about to break down.

“My good younger brother, you did not expect to see me again, did you?” Zu An looked at him and spoke with heavy insinuations. He and Yu Yanluo had already simulated the present scenario several times. That was why there really was no flaw in his act at all.

As expected, Jian Taiding’s expression changed. He knew what had happened to Jian Yanyou, so those words almost sounded like a threat of revenge.

I did that to my older brother; there’s no way he would forgive me. When he thought about how the other party’s cultivation was far above his own, his entire body began to shake uncontrollably.

Just then, a steady voice spoke up. “Nonsense; there is no way you are the duke!” A well-dressed elder was standing nearby with some servants. He stared coldly at Zu An.

A commotion suddenly broke out. That person was the Duke Manor’s butler, Uncle Ming!

He was the duke’s right arm, someone who had helped him deal with various matters inside and outside of the manor. He really was a person of virtue and prestige, and he was perhaps the one most familiar with the duke. Now that someone like him had called the duke a fake, those present subconsciously believed him. They kept their distance from Zu An and looked at him vigilantly.

Zu An frowned and replied, “Uncle Ming, have you already forgotten who I am in the time since we last saw each other?”

Uncle Ming examined him and replied, “You indeed resemble the duke, but the greatest flaw is your cultivation. The duke has strength comparable to a grandmaster. Even though you are not weak, you are still far weaker than the duke.”

Only then did Jian Taiding snap out of his daze. Exactly! I know what happened to Jian Yanyou; how could he possibly appear here again?

What a hateful fake!

As such, he also said in agreement, “Indeed. Men, arrest this sorcerer of unknown origins!”

“Yes, sir!”

His trusted aide and guards immediately rushed at the other party.

Gong Pan drew his blade when he saw that, guarding Zu An. The guards recognized Gong Pan and felt a bit hesitant.

Zu An gave Jian Taiding a meaningful look, retorting, "Second brother, are you trying to silence me?"

Jian Taiding knew the other person was fake, so when he heard that, he almost vomited blood. "Hmph, who the hell is your second brother? You could have pretended to be anyone, and yet you just had to impersonate my older brother. The first thing you should have thought of was your cultivation!"

Gong Pan spoke up just then, saying, "Because the duke was seriously injured, his cultivation has temporarily fallen."

The people present understood what had happened when they heard that. They had been curious what had happened to Cloudcenter Duke when he disappeared. Many of them had suspected that he might have been seriously injured and was resting elsewhere.

But even as time went on, he had never appeared. They thus began to believe that he had already died. When he said that, those present remembered what had happened before.

"My older brother's cultivation is profound and exceptional; how could he have been injured? Gong Pan, where did you get this fraud from? This truly is deplorable and punishable by execution!" Jian Taiding berated him angrily.

Zu An harrumphed and said, "I believe second brother knows exactly why I was injured."

Jian Taiding's breath stopped. He was also surprised, because the temperament and bearing of the one in front of him were exactly the same as those of his older brother. Furthermore, he knew what he had done. Could it really be his older brother then?

But how can that be? I personally...

There's no way this is a ghost, right?

The surrounding guards and maids looked at each other in dismay. Judging from what Zu An was saying, didn't that mean the second master had done something to the first master?

Uncle Ming spoke up again. "This matter is too fishy. I cannot just let you all say whatever you want. How about this? This old servant has followed at the duke's side all these years, so I believe I understand him quite well. I will ask some questions to verify his identity."

Jian Taiding's eyes lit up. He said, "Indeed, Uncle Ming is publicly acknowledged as the one who understands my older brother best. Your respected self would definitely be able to tell whether he is real or fake."

The others nodded in agreement. They all trusted Uncle Ming's status.

Zu An thought to himself that Uncle Ming and Jian Taiding were finishing each other's sentences. These two had probably already gotten into cahoots a long time ago.

He had no idea that the one he trusted the most had already betrayed him. Sigh, this Jian Yanyou wasn't done in by his younger brother for no reason.

Gong Pan said, "The duke was injured before. Not only has his cultivation temporarily dropped, he has amnesia too."

Jian Taiding roared with laughter when he heard the lack of confidence in the other party's voice. He retorted "I knew that was what you were going to say. I really do not know where you found this counterfeit from. Of course he does not know about my older brother's affairs! That is why he ended up using this shoddy amnesia excuse."

The others nodded in agreement. They felt Gong Pan had a guilty conscience.

Gong Pan's face turned completely red. He was about to refute them when Zu An stopped him, saying, "It is fine. Even though some of my memories are missing, I still remember most things. Uncle Ming, please feel free to ask away."

Uncle Ming was surprised. As such, he began to ask some random questions. At first, he chose subjects multiple people in the manor knew about, but Zu An was prepared. Soon, Uncle Ming's questions became trickier and trickier; but no matter what he asked, Zu An always had an answer.

Those who had just been present to join in on the liveliness felt their suspicions fade away bit by bit; they recovered their initial enthusiasm about seeing their lord again.

When Jian Taiding saw that the situation wasn't looking good for him, he quickly protested, "These are all things you could find out if you did a bit of investigation! You dared to impersonate my older brother, so of course you made some preparations. Knowing these things does not prove you are my older brother at all."

Uncle Ming hesitated, then said with a nod, "Second master's words are reasonable."

Jian Taiding's trusted aides quickly spoke up in agreement. The neutral individuals who had been starting to believe that Zu An was the real duke began to waver again.

"Then how do you want me to prove my identity?" Zu An asked as he looked at Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming. "Do you all truly not believe, or could it be that you did not want me to return?"

There was no lack of intelligent people present. They began to pick up on something. Their expressions became stranger as they watched the situation.

"You are speaking venomous slander!" Jian Taiding panicked. He exclaimed, "I am my older brother's sibling. How could I not tell whether you are real or fake?"

A pleasant-sounding voice spoke up just then. "Yanyou is my husband. Do you think a woman cannot discern who her husband is?"

Yu Yanluo, who had deliberately waited a bit before showing up, emerged with Maid Xing and the other servants. They slowly walked over from a distance.

The maids she passed by lowered their heads in shame. Compared to her, even the prettiest maid was like a sparrow before a phoenix.

The male servants were even more worked up, their hearts pounding crazily. However, they knew their statuses were worlds apart from Yu Yanyou's. Just being able to see her once already left them extremely satisfied.

When he saw her exceptional beauty and graceful figure, a hint of infatuation appeared in Jian Taiding's eyes. However, he was an influential figure himself and quickly snapped out of his daze. He immediately greeted her respectfully. "Greetings, sister-in-law!"

Yu Yanluo nodded calmly, but then pretended to be surprised. "Why are second uncle's injuries so severe?"

Jian Taiding said, "I was ambushed by a few fiend race experts. Even though I suffered some injuries, I made sure that they paid the price and ensured the safety of Cloudcenter Commandery's people."

Zu An cursed the man for being shameless inside. This fellow had clearly been beaten like a dog by him, and yet he had come up with such an honorable-sounding excuse.

"Those fiend races are quite hateful," Yu Yanluo calmly responded. She then looked toward Zu An with a 'pleasantly surprised smile'. She exclaimed, "Yanyou, you have returned!"

Zu An spread his arms toward her and answered, "Yes, I have returned!"

Yu Yanluo's expression froze momentarily. Then, a blush flashed across her cheeks. This guy isn't doing what we agreed on; he just had to do this... But they were in front of so many people, so she couldn't just ignore him. She could only quickly walk over and enter his embrace, exclaiming, "Yanyou, I am not dreaming, am I?"

At the same time, she said through ki transmission, "You were a scoundrel after all, using this chance to take advantage of me."

Zu An replied with a smile, "Madam could have chosen not to hug me."

Yu Yanluo ground her teeth in anger. This guy had taken advantage of her, and yet he had actually said something like that!

Jian Taiding's eyes widened, and he immediately erupted into rage. The goddess he had admired for so long was someone whose hand he had never even touched, and yet she had entered the embrace of another man!

How could that be tolerated?

You have successfully trolled Jian Taiding for +999 +999 +999...

Chapter 1065: A Way to Authenticate

Zu An nearly jumped in fright when he received such an exaggerated amount of Rage Points. After all, even though he had already arrived some time prior, even though Jian Taiding had gotten upset a few times, the Rage points had still been within a limited range.

Now, Jian Taiding clearly wasn't holding back anymore.

Zu An thought about why. It seemed to be because he had hugged Yu Yanluo. Tsk tsk tsk, so this fella actually had an unseemingly infatuation for his sister-in-law!

He gave Yu Yanluo another hug when he thought of that, then gave Jian Taiding a provocative look.

Yu Yanluo couldn't really go against him under the onlookers' watchful eyes. She could only borrow the cover of their bodies to secretly pinch Zu An's waist.

But even though the pinch was hidden well, Jian Taiding's gaze was incredibly focused, and he naturally noticed something.

They seemed to be flirting!

He immediately felt his blood stir within him again. Another mouthful of blood sprayed out of his mouth. His injuries that had finally been stanching with difficulty burst apart again, and his bandages became visibly soaked in blood once more.

You have successfully trolled Jian Taiding for +888 +888 +888...

Jian Taiding completely fainted. He would rather do that than publicly acknowledge Zu An's identity.

"Second master has fainted; second master has fainted!"

"Hurry! Bring him back to his room to rest right now."

"Call for the doctors!"

A group of people shouted in confusion.

Zu An took the chance to give out orders as the manor lord, ordering for them to bring Jian Taiding back to his room. Uncle Ming wanted to say something, but he hesitated. In the end, he didn't say anything else.

A group of servants brought Jian Taiding away. As the 'older brother', Zu An naturally needed to follow behind them to take a look.

...

They quickly arrived in front of a courtyard. The expressions of those present became a bit strange as they stopped in front of the entrance.

Zu An was confused, but Yu Yanluo sent him a message. "This used to be Jian Yanyou's room."

Zu An immediately realized what was going on. He couldn't help but sneer. This fella Jian Taiding really likes to reap what he hasn't sown. Not only did he kill you, he's also sleeping in your room and even trying to take your girl.

Jian Yanyou, come on, man!

Sigh, since I'm pretending to be you, I might as well help you vent out some of your frustrations.

As such, Zu An's expression became overcast. He coughed and exclaimed, "Why did you all bring him here? Why are you not bringing him to his own room?"

The others kept quiet out of fear. Only Uncle Ming braced himself and said, "Second master has resided here in your absence."

“Nonsense. Did he think I was dead?” Zu An sneered. “Furthermore, these rooms were carefully chosen by a feng shui master in the field. We brothers had our own courtyards designed for us. Going against that would incur great karmic retribution. No wonder he was injured so badly! Hurry and bring him back; this is for his own good.”

Jian Taiding, who was pretending to be unconscious, almost spat out another mouthful of blood. What the hell do you mean it’s for my own good? I’m already injured like this, and yet you’re still dragging me left and right? You still have the shame to say these things?

Also, does that feng shui shit even work? Weren’t you still done in back then while staying in this room?

He was suddenly shocked when he thought of that. Wait, maybe there really is something wrong with this room’s feng shui?

You have successfully trolled Jian Taiding for +681 +681 +681...

Yu Yanluo resisted her urge to laugh. She stepped forward and said, “I think the second master should be brought back to his own room. Resting in the place you are used to staying in will help the recovery process.”

The reason why they couldn't back down on that matter was because of a crucial issue. It wouldn't be a big deal for Jian Taiding to live there if Jian Yanyou were absent. However, now that he had returned, if he backed down, it would look as if he were scared of Jian Taiding, or that he had thoughts of giving up his position.

Regardless of which one it was, those who still supported the duke would lose morale. Those who were still hesitating on who to side with would choose Jian Taiding. That was why, while it might look like a small matter, it was actually not small at all.

When he heard Yu Yanluo speak out in support of Jian Yanyou, Jian Taiding began to regret choosing to faint. He couldn't even argue against them now.

Why is this woman siding with an outsider like this?!

I’ve always liked her so much and treated her so well. This thankless wretch!

Meanwhile, Uncle Ming wanted to say something, but it had been Jian Yanyou’s room to begin with. Jian Taiding had moved in with rather illegitimate motives, while he himself was Jian Yanyou’s trusted aide. If he spoke out for Jian Taiding at this point, he might draw unwanted suspicion.

...

Even though the two of them were hesitating, everything was still decided. Jian Taiding was brought back to his original room, and the room was given to Zu An to live in. Because many of Jian Taiding’s possessions had been left there, the maids and servants quickly cleaned things up. At the same time, they brought back Jian Yanyou’s original belongings.

Zu An had Gong Pan stay there and check to see if he could find any secret files in the room. But based on Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming’s reactions, the chances of them succeeding in that aspect seemed slim.

He and Yu Yanluo escorted Jian Taiding back to his room. After all, in everyone's eyes, they were close brothers, so he had to at least play the part.

The deathly pale Jian Taiding was placed in bed. Because the physician still hadn't arrived, Zu An took the chance to sit down next to him. He checked Jian Taiding's pulse to examine the state of his injuries.

Once one reached a certain degree of cultivation, using ki to check another's injuries was basic knowledge. Jian Yanyou's cultivation had been profound before, so his actions were unsurprising to the bystanders.

But Jian Taiding's entire body went rigid, while Uncle Ming's expression also changed. Both of their bodies tensed up, as if they would immediately retaliate as soon as they sensed something odd.

Zu An checked Jian Taiding's body with his ki. Sure enough, his last attack had seriously wounded the other party. Not only was there a huge flesh wound, the sword ki's damage had reached the base of his heart.

Even though such an injury wasn't lethal for a master rank cultivator like Jian Taiding, his strength wouldn't return to its peak for quite some time.

Zu An hesitated. He was currently holding Jian Taiding's pulse. As long as he used the Heaven Devouring Sutra, there was a good chance that he could suck the other party completely dry. The dangers of Cloudcenter Commandery would thus be dealt with through brute force.

But he gave up on that tempting chance in the end. The first reason was that there were too many people watching. If such a sinister technique were exposed, he would be viewed as a public enemy by the entire world. After all, no one wanted the cultivation they had earned through bitter training to be stolen so easily by another.

The second reason was that Jian Taiding still had a lot of subordinates. There were countless trusted aides of his in the Military Affairs Manor as well. Zu An didn't want to repeat the disastrous tragedy of his previous world's vicious Emperor of Northern Wei, who was ultimately captured and killed by his own subordinate.

The physician rushed over soon after, so Zu An let go of Jian Taiding's hand then and said, "Second master, please rest well. I will take care of the manor's business; there is no need for you to worry."

Those present voiced their agreement. Zu An and Yu Yanluo thus returned to the other room.

...

Meanwhile, in the other room, everything was still a mess from having been replaced. When Zu An asked Gong Pan if he had found anything, Gong Pan unsurprisingly replied no. Even though there were some secret documents, they were about the Military Affairs Manor's official business and not matters related to Jian Yanyou or the fiend races.

After sending Gong Pan to stand guard outside, Yu Yanluo sighed in clear relief and said, "We have passed the first trial. Your performance was much better than I expected."

"It was still thanks to the madam's instructions," Zu An said with a smile.

Yu Yanluo rolled her eyes and retorted, "I definitely did not teach you to hug me."

Zu An said with an upright expression, "They were all suspecting my identity. It was a good chance to convince them."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "Hmph, you are just saying complete nonsense with a straight face."

Yu Yanluo sounded a bit annoyed, so Zu An checked the Keyboard System's backend. He actually hadn't received any Rage points from her! He chuckled inwardly.

The two chatted for a while, but then someone outside came to report that Sang Hong and the others had come to meet him. Zu An was surprised. He hadn't expected them to meet him in such a situation.

Yu Yanluo explained, "You are now the duke. Since the duke has returned, their visit should come as no surprise. Do not worry. Not even the people here have noticed anything strange, so there is even less of a chance of them noticing anything. You should just do things as we practiced."

Zu An nodded and had the Imperial Envoy wait in the guest lounge. Yu Yanluo preferred peace and quiet, so she waited nearby in a guest room and didn't meet them with him.

...

When he arrived at the guest hall, Zu An noticed that not only was Sang Hong there; so were also the Vice Magistrate Xu Yu, the City Lord Pei Shao, and even the Yu clan's people, the brothers Yu Xuanyu and Yu Xuansu. The two brothers were respectively part of the Civil Affairs Manor and Military Affairs Manor, and were each accompanied by many of their colleagues.

They were incredibly shocked when they saw Zu An. They all offered their congratulations, celebrating his safe return. Then, they began to ask where he had gone during his disappearance.

Zu An shook his head and replied, "After I was seriously injured, I cultivated in seclusion in a hidden cave deep in the mountains. I was fortunately able to keep my life, but some of my previous memories are missing. I cannot remember why I went missing either."

The officials had their own thoughts when they heard his reply. Those who were relatively slow were simply as to which expert could leave the duke in such a state. Those who were relatively sharp had already begun to ponder whether it really was amnesia, or if he was deliberately concealing what had happened in the past. Regardless of which one it was, there was too much room for one's imagination to go crazy.

A good number of them suspected his identity. However, he was exactly the same as the Jian Yanyou they remembered. Even though there were face changing techniques, they were definitely not at this level.

Sang Hong was even more amazed. Now that Cloudcenter Duke had come back, a lot of the dangers in Cloudcenter Commandery would now be alleviated. They didn't need King Yan's army to make a huge fuss anymore. However, it had instead become a bit more difficult to fulfill the emperor's mission, to strip the Jian and Yu clan of their authority.

Zu An took the chance to understand more about the current military situation. He used the title of Commander-In-Chief to remove the lockdown on the temporary official residence. Doing that would make things much easier for the Imperial Envoy.

Sang Hong was overjoyed. He quickly expressed his thanks.

...

Zu An rejoined Yu Yanluo after sending them off. Yu Yanluo was still worried about Zu An, so she decided to reside in the manor too. As the duchess, she had her own special courtyard in the manor to begin with. As such, her decision didn't seem too abrupt.

Then, she had Zu An summon some of Jian Yanyou's past trusted aides. After all, he was completely alone at the moment. Dealing with Jian Taiding was still a bit out of his reach and power. However, as long as he controlled the Martial Affairs Manor, Jian Taiding would be within his grasp.

...

Meanwhile, in Jian Taiding's room, he was sitting in bed. His complexion was pale and gloomy.

"The imposter is currently summoning his former trusted aides," Uncle Ming said, sitting on a stool next to him. As the manor's general manager, the things that went on wouldn't escape his notice.

"Furthermore, Madam Yu has decided to stay in the manor too. In the past, she has never stayed here overnight. It seems this imposter is someone she found."

"She is probably worried that we might decide to silence that fellow" If it were any other time, Jian Taiding might have just fainted from happiness to hear that his stunning sister-in-law was staying in the manor. But at the moment, he had no trace of such feelings. He asked, "How is the investigation going?"

Uncle Ming shook his head. "I have sent over the maids and servants who served him before. The imposter looks exactly the same as the master, and practically everyone in the manor is already convinced."

"Don't tell me my older brother came back to life?" Jian Taiding shivered. After all, at least within his knowledge, there were no such miraculous transformation skills. His sister-in-law couldn't have the ability to find such a person even if they existed.

Uncle Ming gave him a look and asked, "Does the second master feel that is possible? After all, we personally saw..."

Jian Taiding nodded and said, "You are right. That guy is definitely an imposter. But we are the only ones who know, so it is useless. After all, there is no way we can reveal the truth. We have to look for other proof."

Uncle Ming replied with a crafty smile, "Has the second master forgotten that you still have some younger sister-in-laws? He might be able to imitate some parts, but there is no way he would be able to perform exactly the same in bed, right?"

Chapter 1066: Change of Plans

Jian Taiding frowned slightly, saying, "Liu Ji and Chu Ji were both sent by Madam Yu. Even though they have not contacted each other over the years, and their relationship with us is good, I still do not feel at ease entrusting this kind of matter to them."

Uncle Ming replied, "Second master, do not forget that there is still Zhang Ji. Zhang Ji is one of our people."

"That..." Jian Taiding hesitated, his expression conflicted. After all, even though the concubines were no Yu Yanluo, they were still cream of the crop beauties. Because they were his sister-in-laws, it only made that improper desire within him stronger.

However, he still understood what was important. After all, if he went after his brother's wives as soon as something happened to Jian Yanyou, his reputation wouldn't be very good if news of that got out. It wouldn't be favorable for his inheritance of his brother's legacy either.

Furthermore, because of his admiration for Yu Yanluo, he worried that going after those concubines would ruin her impression of him.

That was why his plan had always been to completely bring the Military Affairs Manor and Cloudcenter Commandery under his control. Once he obtained Yu Yanluo, he would then play around with his other spoils.

The concubines were part of the duke's harem anyway. There was no way he was going to let them remarry. Once he had them in his own personal harem, wouldn't he be able to do whatever he wanted with them? Who else would even know anything?

But the imposter had immediately ruined all of his plans!

Don't tell me I have to sacrifice some of my sister-in-laws whom even I didn't dare to touch just to test him?

And the worst part is that we all know that he's fake!

It made him feel as if he were personally sending his own women another man's way... Even though they were his older brother's concubines, he already considered them his exclusive property.

Uncle Ming could more or less guess his thoughts. He coughed and said, "Second master, please consider the greater situation. They are just some girls. Once this situation is over and you become the duke, you can have any woman you want.

"On the contrary, if we allow some mishaps on our part and everyone really does come to trust that fake, we will end up losing everything."

Jian Taiding had still been hesitant before, but he finally gathered his resolve when he heard that. He replied, "Fine, we will just have that Zhang Ji sound things out then!"

...

Meanwhile, after Zu An met with and sent off Jian Yanyou's former trusted aides, he returned to Yu Yanluo's guest room to discuss what to do next.

When Zu An told her the results of his discussion and people's reactions, Yu Yanluo said with a sigh, "There has always been the saying that when people leave, the tea turns cold. That is precisely the situation, as expected."

Zu An nodded and said, "According to my observations, even though many of them offered kind words, they were clearly speaking ambiguously. If they were really asked to do something for us, only a fourth of them would be willing to make any commitments. This Jian Yanyou really wasn't too good at reading people."

Yu Yanluo shook her head and replied, "That cannot really be blamed on him. According to what you have just described, none of them were actually Yanyou's trusted aides, but rather more neutral individuals. The real trusted aides have either perished, scattered, or been transferred far away. The fact that even a fourth remained is already quite good."

"Even though those people you just saw previously declared their loyalty to Yanyou, the one who raised them to their current high positions was Jian Taiding. If they were to really make a choice, they would naturally side with Jian Taiding. After all, if the previous group of people regained authority, would they be willing to go back to their previous positions?"

Zu An said with a sigh, "Eliminating outsiders and promoting your own people, that really is human nature. What do we do now, then?"

They had previously planned to use Jian Yanyou's identity to stabilize the current situation, but even Jian Yanyou's trusted aides were pretty much gone. He almost felt as if things were slowly slipping out of his control.

Yu Yanluo added, looking deeply worried, "There is another problem. Judging from today's circumstances, it seems Uncle Ming and Jian Taiding are definitely working together. With those two working together, we might not be able to find anything even if we stay in the manor."

Zu An was about to say something when he heard a knock from outside.

"Who is it?" Zu An and Yu Yanluo both called out, tacitly agreeing to temporarily pause their conversation.

"Master, we heard that you returned safely. We came to see you," several charming-sounding women called out from outside.

Zu An gave Yu Yanluo a look. The women's voices were identical to those of the concubines he had practiced on in Yu Manor. He felt admiration for Yu Yanluo's art skills once again. Not only were her drawings extremely accurate, she could even reproduce their voices. He really wondered how she did it.

When the women received permission to enter, they quickly opened the door. Three lovely ladies rushed in, striving to outdo each other. They immediately entered Zu An's embrace when they came in, sobbing as they spoke of their yearning for him.

Zu An's expression turned strange. He discovered that he had praised Yu Yanluo a bit too early. Even though Yu Yanluo's drawings were accurate, they didn't have real bodies. However, the shockingly soft and supple feeling and the smell of cosmetics surrounding him immediately made him feel as if he were frequenting a brothel.

However, these girls weren't prostitutes, but rather the wives of a duke. Their statuses were much higher than mere courtesans.

Yu Yanluo coughed lightly from off to the side. Zu An seemed to snap back to reality. He composed himself and dealt with the girls the way he had practiced. After some socialization, he finally sent the girls away. He was so tired that he was covered in sweat.

Yu Yanluo nodded in satisfaction, saying, "Not bad, you reacted quickly. There were several times where you almost exposed yourself, but it is a good thing that your mind is sharp."

Even though they had practiced a lot beforehand, a plan would never keep up with new variables. Furthermore, she didn't know everything about Jian Yanyou's concubines either, so there was no way to make a perfect copy. The rest had to depend on Zu An's own performance.

Zu An had clearly done quite well.

"I've only managed to deal with them for now; there will definitely be some issues if this persists. They are the true wives, after all, so how can it be that easy to fool them?" Zu An gave Yu Yanluo a look as he spoke. If it weren't because of your extraordinary drawing skills, these concubines might have been even more likely to expose me.

"That is indeed a problem. Furthermore, earlier, they even talked about serving you." Yu Yanluo's pretty brows furrowed; she seemed to be thinking about something complicated.

"But I refused them all! How can a gentleman like me take advantage of the situation?" Zu An immediately expressed his innocence. Yu Yanluo was so worried that he might end up playing around with Jian Yanyou's harem, she had even warned him ahead of time.

"You can refuse them once, but you are not only going to be here for a single day." Yu Yanluo looked as if her head hurt. "I have just received news that Zhang Ji spent a long time by Jian Taiding's side before he came to see us. She definitely has a mission to test you, and she will not stop until she achieves her objective."

"Can't I just say I'm still injured? It should be enough to get by for now," Zu An replied. He didn't know why she was feeling so conflicted. Wasn't this something the two of them had already decided on beforehand?

"Not anymore, because the course of events has changed." Yu Yanluo got up and walked over to the window. When she saw that there was no one outside, she continued, "The general manager Uncle Ming and Jian Taiding are definitely working together. That means the chances of you finding any clues in this manor are slim. Furthermore, Yanyou's trusted aides have practically all been removed from the Martial Affairs Manor. Even if you were to raise a call for action, there might not be many who would listen. That is why the power of your identity will not be as useful as we initially thought."

"Then what do we do?" Zu An was also feeling a bit of a headache. He couldn't just impersonate Jian Yanyou forever! If they couldn't find out anything, or control the Martial Affairs Manor, going through so much trouble would be meaningless.

Yu Yanluo muttered to herself, "Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming definitely know that you are a fake. So why do they still need Zhang Ji to test you..."

“To prove to everyone else that I’m a fake,” Zu An said as he walked over and stood next to her. While they stood side by side, the two of them really did seem like a good match.

Yu Yanluo’s eyes suddenly lit up. She suggested, “How about we try to beat them at their own game? We can make it so that not only will they fail to find any evidence, they will instead start to doubt themselves and think you are real.”

“How are we going to do that?” Zu An shook his head. That sounded like a complete fantasy.

“You just need to make Zhang Ji completely trust that you are Yanyou.” Yu Yanluo was getting more and more excited as she continued, “Wait here for a bit. I will be back soon.” She then raised her dress and left quickly.

Zu An was stunned. Considering how close those concubines are to Jian Yanyou, it’d already be pretty good if I can act normally without slipping up. How am I going to make them completely trust me?

Yu Yanluo came back soon afterward. Two completely cloaked individuals were following her. When they entered the room, however, they lowered their hoods. Zu An recognized them to be the 36D bust Liu Ji and A4 waist Chu Ji.

“Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming have too many pairs of eyes and ears in the manor. We have no choice but to adopt this plan,” Yu Yanluo explained.

“Do master and madam have any important things to tell us by bringing us out here?” The two girls exchanged a look. They both saw how serious the mood was.

Before Zu An could say anything, Yu Yanluo said, “He is not your master. Your true master has already died.”

Zu An was speechless.

Chapter 1067: Revenge for Their Husband

Zu An was completely dumbfounded. The two of them had practiced so much to earn the trust of the Duke Manor, and yet now, Yu Yanluo had just told them that he was a fake! What meaning did their previous efforts have left?

“What?” Liu Ji and Chu Ji were both shocked. They turned pale when they looked at Zu An. No matter how they looked at that person, wasn’t he the duke?

Yu Yanluo sighed and said, “The two of you came from my manor, so I will not lie to you. He is indeed not the duke, because the real duke was schemed against by Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming...” She then gave them a rough summary of everything that had happened.

When the two women were convinced she wasn’t joking around, they couldn’t help but start sobbing, “Duke...”

After the two of them grieved for a bit, they wiped away their tears and looked at Zu An. They said in astonishment, “But he really is too similar to the duke...”

"The two of you know my skills in the arts. I drew the duke's appearance for him, then used a secret method to hide his real face. That is why he looks just like the duke. However, these methods are temporary. They will lose their effects as time goes on," Yu Yanluo explained in a way that was easier for them to understand than the truth.

"Madam could have hidden this from us. What do you want us sisters to do by telling us the truth now?" Liu Ji asked as she wiped away her tears.

Neither of the concubines were stupid. They had already realized that they had definitely been called over for a reason.

"About that..." Yu Yanluo trailed off.

A4 waist Chu Ji said gently, "Madam does not need to have any misgivings. Both of us came from your respected self's manor, so we are naturally loyal to you."

"I suppose it is fine." Yu Yanluo sighed and said, "I just received news that Jian Taiding has assigned Zhang Ji to investigate. Even though I managed to make him look like the duke on the surface, there is no way to fool one's partner in bed."

"Ah..." The two girls cried out in alarm. They had never expected the conversation to be something like that. Even though they were already married, now that they knew Zu An wasn't the real duke, talking about such things in front of another man was a bit embarrassing.

36D bust Liu Ji bit her red lips. She secretly gave Zu An a look and said, "Madam, we can teach him some of the duke's particular characteristics in bed, but that can only take him so far. Zhang Ji has always been rather sharp, so we might not be able to fool her."

They naturally understood that Yu Yanluo and the duke hadn't had that kind of relationship. That was why the responsibility to teach him obviously fell on them.

Zu An didn't know whether to laugh or cry either. How was such a thing something that could just be taught? It was a pity that Daji's fox charm only worked on men with lower cultivation than her. Otherwise, if she could fool Zhang Ji, or even Jian Taiding, everything would be easily solved.

Yu Yanluo nodded and said, "Indeed. If you two only teach him through words, Zhang Ji will definitely see through it. That is why I hope you two can personally instruct him."

Liu Ji and Chu Ji were both speechless.

Zu An was stunned. He had just been listening from the side, curious as to what kind of incredible plan she had. In the end, he had heard such absolutely shocking news. Who was the one who kept warning me that I couldn't touch Jian Yanyou's wives, because that would be letting him down?

He had almost been forced to make a vow because of that. Yu Yanluo had even chosen to stay in the manor with him precisely because she had worried that he would cause trouble in the harem. And yet now, she was actually the first one to suggest something like that?

Liu Ji and Chu Ji exchanged a look. Their faces were already completely red as they stuttered, "How... How can this be alright..."

Yu Yanluo's expression was completely normal. She calmly said, "This was something I could have fooled you two into doing. The two of you would have been tricked, and yet happily done what I asked of you. But after thinking about it, I did not want to do something like that and instead told you the truth. After all, you two have lived together with the duke all these years. Even though you are only concubines in name, you are his real wives. You two have the right to know the truth.

"Our original plan was to use the duke's identity to make our way in, but we did not expect even Uncle Ming to have colluded with Jian Taiding. Furthermore, the officials in the Martial Affairs Manor have practically all been swapped out, so we no longer have the advantage. The original plan will not work, so we can only take risks out of desperation and ask the two of you to do something like this...

"The choice is yours. If you two are unwilling, I will not force it upon you. However, since you know this secret, I will have to ask the two of you to please not leave. Do not worry; I will not silence you. This is just to prevent secrets from leaking out. We will let the two of you go after this matter passes."

Chu Ji bit down on her red lip and said, "We obviously know what kind of moral character you have, madam. If the madam wanted us to help with something, we would do it without batting an eyelid. But this matter is too... too..." She wasn't able to find the words she was looking for even after a long time, but her entirely red face and bashful expression explained everything.

Yu Yanluo sighed helplessly and replied, "It is fine, this matter is a bit personal. How about this? The two of you can return. I will send someone to keep an eye on you. However, the two of you cannot have contact with anyone outside." A hint of worry appeared between her brows. She was a bit puzzled as to what to do.

A4 waist Chu Ji had already stood up, but 36D bust Liu Ji didn't move. There was a bit of hesitation on her face, but in the end, she said, "Madam, I am willing to help."

Yu Yanluo was shocked. She exclaimed, "Really?" She hadn't had much hope that the plan would work out, because the request really was a bit outrageous.

"If the duke really was harmed by them, even though I am merely a woman, I still want to help him get revenge." Liu Ji was a bit embarrassed and awkward at first, but her expression became firmer and firmer as she continued, "Actually, even if we did not help this time, we could still imagine our final fate. We would most likely be forced to continue residing in the Duke Manor, until the second master... Ahem, until Jian Taiding became the new duke. When have we ever had any freedom?

"As women, we are actually quite sensitive to such things. Even though Jian Taiding has hidden it well, I can still sense the desire hidden deep within his eyes. That is why I know we would most likely be forcefully seized by him. Then, we would most likely become canaries trapped deep within his courtyard. What chance would there be left to rebel?"

Chu Ji's eyes turned red when she heard all of that. She had also thought about those things recently. She couldn't help but feel broken-hearted when she thought about her dismal fate.

A resolute expression appeared on Liu Ji's face. She exclaimed, "Since I cannot remain faithful to the duke anyway, rather than devoting myself to the one who killed my husband, I would rather use my body to help the duke get revenge!"

"Sister Liu is right. If we can get revenge on the duke, how can I still cling onto something like this!?" Chu Ji's originally weak expression was replaced with resolve.

Yu Yanluo looked conflicted. She looked at the two of them for a long time, but eventually said, "Yanyou was really blessed to have such loyal women at his side. I am sure that he will be grateful even in the afterlife."

The two concubines could no longer hold back. They wept while hugging each other. Yu Yanluo also felt a bit broken-hearted from the mood. She walked over and took them into her arms, gently patting their shoulders in consolation.

The concubines finally calmed down a while later. Yu Yanluo turned to look at Zu An and said, "I will leave him to the two of you, then."

Chu Ji's face turned red; she was clearly the shyer one of the two. She looked away and couldn't look straight at Zu An. Liu Ji was clearly the one with the stronger nature, however. She voiced her agreement, saying, "I will definitely do my best to teach him to become... just like the duke."

Zu An said weakly, "I don't think anyone has asked me if I'm willing..."

Yu Yanluo's brows shot up. She shot back, "What, you mean to say you are unwilling?"

"It's not that I'm not willing," Zu An replied somewhat uncomfortably. "It's mainly because everything has changed way too quickly. I still haven't properly taken everything in yet."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed and retorted, "Even we are willing; what is a grown man like you being all embarrassed for? These are outstanding women who are willing to step forward and get revenge for their husband; are you not bringing disgrace to their sincerity?"

Then, she pushed the two girls into his arms and said, "You should head to the inner room. I will stand guard outside, and no let anyone disturb you all. Make sure you focus and do not think any strange thoughts."

Zu An was speechless. How can you tell someone doing this kind of thing to not have any strange thoughts?

Chapter 1068: Teaching by Example

When Zu An entered the inner room and saw Liu Ji and Chu Ji, he couldn't help but feel awkward. He began, "The two of you..."

However, Liu Ji stopped him and said, "Do not use someone else's voice. You are the duke right now. This will make it a bit easier for us too."

Zu An was speechless. He couldn't even use a different voice in his current state even if he wanted to. After using the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer, if he changed his voice, he would have to pretend to be a cute girl again. He really didn't want to do that kind of thing more than he had to.

He coughed and said, "I have made the two madams worry in the time I've been away." With things already the way they were, being shy about it was already meaningless. He needed to seize the moment to not waste their sincerity.

The two women's eyes lit up when they heard him speak. A hint of bewilderment appeared in Chu Ji's eyes and she muttered to herself, "You really are just like him, almost exactly the same as the duke..."

Liu Ji tugged on her sleeve and remarked, "What do you mean, he is just like the duke? He is the duke."

Chu Ji's pretty face turned red. She knew that Liu Ji was reminding her to play the part. After all, the man before them was exactly the same as their husband. As long as they didn't suspect him of being someone else, it would make the following events much easier to accept.

Zu An sighed in amazement when he saw their entirely different reactions. Chu Ji was just like a bashful young married office lady from his previous world. Even though she was already married, she would still be embarrassed if one joked with her even a little bit.

Liu Ji was more like a passionate and unrestrained mature sister. After getting married, she had become passionate and begun taking the initiative. She would instead be the one who made younger colleagues at the office blush.

Liu Ji said, "Your voice is the same, but the way you refer to us is wrong. The duke would not call us madam. Madam is a title only she uses." She looked in Yu Yanluo's direction, her gaze filled with envy.

"Oh. Then what should I call you?" Zu An asked. He figured that made sense as well. How could any outsiders know how the duke addressed his concubines in private?

When she heard what he said, Liu Ji blushed for the first time. After some hesitation, she said, "You should call me 'precious'."

Zu An's expression turned strange. He wanted to laugh, but he held himself back. However, that was still a normal term of endearment between husband and wife.

Chu Ji voiced her surprise, then said softly, "He normally calls me 'darling'..."

Liu Ji's expression also turned strange. After all, their nicknames were similar, but also entirely different.

Darling is darling, precious is precious... Zu An thought to himself, This duke really knows how to play around.

"I really don't know what to call Zhang Ji then," Zu An said. He was getting a headache. Judging from how the other two were acting, Zhang Ji definitely had her own unique nickname.

"I know her nickname," Chu Ji said weakly.

Now, even Liu Ji was surprised. She really didn't know how Chu Ji knew something she didn't.

When she saw their curious expressions, Chu Ji sounded a bit flustered. She said, "The duke calls Zhang Ji 'my beloved'. Zhang Ji bragged about it in front of me before, so I ended up knowing about it."

"Beloved..." Liu Ji immediately felt a little jealous. "Why does she get to have a nickname that is slightly different?"

Zu An was stupefied. This duke seems a bit like a playboy!

After the interruption, the two girls gradually forgot about their initial embarrassment and slowly calmed down. They began to teach him how to address them, the tone he should use when calling out to them, and other such things, gradually correcting his behavior.

Zu An was becoming more and more like the real deal. Together with his appearance being identical to the duke's, they began to look more and more infatuated. It was almost as if the real duke were right beside them.

However, a strange silence eventually descended on the room. They had taught him everything he should say, but how could words alone fool Zhang Ji? An ambiguous mood filled the place.

Chu Ji's face became entirely red. She stared at her toes. It was almost as if she were trying to find a hole to hide herself in.

In the end, it was Liu Ji who broke the silence. She took a deep breath, and a dazzling smile appeared on her face as she said, "The duke has worked hard today. Let this humble one serve the duke before you sleep." She walked over to Zu An's side tenderly, and began to help him undo his clothes.

Zu An's entire body went rigid when he felt Liu Ji's touch. He had never experienced such a thing before. At that moment, he felt the situation was a bit absurd.

Liu Ji chuckled when she sensed his nervousness. If the other party had been a sex-hungry pervert in a rush to take advantage of her, even though she was doing this for revenge, she wouldn't feel very good about it. But since the other party had gotten nervous first, she instead gathered some courage. She even felt like teasing him, saying, "We've been apart for so long, but the duke doesn't seem to be all that excited."

Chu Ji couldn't help but raise her head. Her misty eyes were wide open. Big Sister Liu is so amazing... I'm about to die from embarrassment, but she can still joke around.

Zu An sighed. He gathered his thoughts, then played along. "We've been apart for so long that I've missed my precious to death."

When she heard the familiar way of address and saw the other party's identical appearance, Liu Ji couldn't help but become stupefied. It was as if nothing had happened, and that things were the same as before when she used to often spend time with the duke.

But everything had already changed. There was no going back. She quietly wiped away the tears at the corners of her eyes and pulled herself together. She helped him remove his clothes while saying, "Little sister Chu also misses the duke a lot. Why are you still staying over there, little sister?"

"Ah? I..." Chu Ji nodded in a daze. Her head was completely blank. She could only instinctively obey Liu Ji.

Liu Ji secretly moved over to Zu An's ear and said, "Even the duke never experienced this kind of treatment before. You're really lucky today."

Zu An felt something stir within him. She really was an alluring woman who knew how to tease him!

The world was just that strange. Someone with Liu Ji's personality, in theory, should have already been in cahoots with Jian Taiding, and yet she wasn't. Instead, she had firmly made her decision to get revenge for her husband.

Zu An felt deep admiration for her. The only thing he could do was to cooperate and become as much like the duke as possible, so as to not let them down.

...

Meanwhile, Yu Yanluo was still standing outside. She began to mutter to herself, "Yanyou, will you blame me for doing this? But we are all trying to get revenge for you. If you are going to blame anyone, then blame me alone. Please do not blame them."

After she thought things through, her expression turned resolute as well. She was no longer conflicted over the morality of the matter.

However, her ears couldn't help but prick up after she calmed herself down. She was curious about how things were going inside. She could still hear what was happening inside at first, but later on, their voices clearly became softer.

For some reason, although she was usually calm, was starting to feel a bit ill at ease. She didn't know why she was feeling so annoyed either. She paced back and forth around the room restlessly.

A cry of alarm suddenly emerged from inside the room. Her expression changed a bit. Was Zu An starting to pressure them forcibly? That rascal!

She was about to go inside to take a look, but Liu Ji suddenly ran out while covering her chest, her clothes messed up. She was alarmed. Even the optimistic and cheerful Liu Ji had such a reaction...

Yu Yanluo quickly stopped her and asked, "What happened? Did that guy do anything to you two?"

Liu Ji shook her head and replied, "That is not it... but I really cannot teach him anymore!"

Yu Yanluo was completely confused. Didn't you agree just now? How can you suddenly go back on your word? But she still respected Liu Ji's decision. "Since you are no longer willing, I will not force you anymore. You two should hurry back to your rooms."

However, she was also confused. Why hadn't Chu Ji come out yet?

"It is not that we are unwilling, but that we really cannot teach him..." When she saw Yu Yanluo's confusion, Liu Ji felt a bit conflicted. In the end, she moved over to Yu Yanluo's ear and said, "It is because he is too... As long as Zhang Ji is not blind, she will immediately be able to tell that he is not the duke. That is why it is meaningless whether we teach him or not."

Yu Yanluo was speechless. Her face became completely red. Even with all of her calculations, she had never expected that to be the reason.

Even though she was the duchess in name, she had never experienced a normal, passionate romance. How could she have foreseen those details? She couldn't help but feel a bit embarrassed. That guy looks pretty refined and cultured with his clothes on, but why is he like a donkey down there?

"Call over Chu Ji and go back then," Yu Yanluo said. She had already completely given up on the plan. It seemed she had to think of another way.

Chu Ji left the room just then. Liu Ji quickly repeated the madam's words to her.

However, Chu Ji didn't follow her and instead tugged on her sleeves. Her expression was strange, and her voice was shaking a bit as she said, "He said he has a secret skill called the 'Wukong Staff'. I do not know what that means either... but he seems to be able to control its size..."

Chu Ji could only be more straightforward when she saw that Liu Ji didn't understand. "You should go in and take a look. It is now already... the same as the duke's."

Liu Ji and Yu Yanluo were speechless.

Chu Ji didn't know where she had gotten the courage either, but she pulled Liu Ji back. She almost tried to bring in Yu Yanluo too, but she pulled her hand back after reaching out halfway. She felt it was a bit inappropriate.

After the two of them left, another cry of alarm followed. Chu Ji's shock was even greater than before.

Even Yu Yanluo was a bit alarmed when she heard it. She almost couldn't hold back the urge to take a look herself. But although her feet moved a few times, in the end, she didn't go inside.

She waited for the people inside to give her an explanation, but even as she waited and waited, no one came out. On the contrary, she heard some hushed voices, sounding almost as if they were about to cry.

Yu Yanluo's expression changed at first; she thought Zu An was bullying the girls. However, she wasn't some naive little girl. Even though those sounds left her a bit flustered, she quickly reacted.

She harrumphed and took out a paintbrush. The brush rushed quickly across the page, filling up the scroll. She extended her hand and that scroll extended on its own, quickly forming an incorporeal screen that separated the inside and outside of the courtyard. That way, no one outside could hear anything they shouldn't hear.

...

After a long time passed, Zu An finally came out.

Yu Yanluo looked behind him, but didn't see Liu Ji or Chu Ji at all. She frowned and asked, "what are the results?"

Zu An nodded and replied, "The two little madams were righteous and honorable, teaching by example. I have confidence in fooling Zhang Ji and Jian Taiding now. He will definitely think that his older brother has come back to life."

Yu Yanluo sighed in relief and said, "That is good then. I hope you do not let down their efforts."

Chapter 1069: Liven Things Up

Meanwhile, Jian Taiding had just heard his subordinate's report. He immediately frowned and asked, "Yu Yanluo brought two people to that imposter's room, and they only came back out after a long time? Do you know who the two of them are?"

"We do not. Those two were cloaked the entire time, so we could not see who they were. We were not even able to discern their gender." That subordinate said.

"Useless! You cannot even find out something like that in my manor? What is the use in even keeping you all around?!" Jian Taiding was furious.

He normally wasn't so irritable. However, he had been severely injured a few days before. If it were just that, it would be fine since he could regain complete control of the manor once he healed. But today, a freaking imposter had shown up, completely ruining all of his grand dreams. How could he not become restless?

The subordinate lowered his head apologetically. It was instead Uncle Ming who advised Jian Taiding, "Second master, there is no need to trouble him. Madam Yu is the Yu clan leader. She has always been a mysterious person. How could this subordinate know their identities if she wanted to hide them?" He gestured toward the subordinate, saying, "You can withdraw for now."

The subordinate had a grateful expression. He bowed toward the two of them before quickly leaving.

Jian Taiding didn't say anything. Only when that subordinate left did he say to Uncle Ming, "I really cannot understand this sister-in-law of mine. She has clearly always responded well to my concern for her. She always welcomes me with a smile as well. No matter what I say to her, she always has a kind and warm expression, which is why I never really pressured her to do anything. But now, it seems she has been playing me as if I were some monkey! I have no idea where she found this feral man to ruin all of my plans!"

His anger wasn't completely unfounded. He had already completely seen Yu Yanluo as his personal property; and yet, not only had Yu Yanluo brought in this imposter duke to oppose him, she had even acted like that with him in front of everyone! It was almost as if she had done so to disgust him!

Uncle Ming sighed and said, "In the past, Madam Yu was known as the world's number one beauty. Untold numbers of outstanding heroes have proposed marriage to her. It is rumored that even his majesty felt something for her, but he still had no way to get close in the end. That means she definitely has her own methods. Second master might have underestimated her previously." He actually spoke rather tactfully. He could have said that Jian Taiding was so blinded by infatuation that he had become a complete bootlicker.

Jian Taiding's face heated up as he said, "I indeed underestimated her a bit before. That woman is too formidable. She suddenly came up with this new scheme... I really have no idea where she found this ridiculously similar imposter. If we did not know the truth, we might have been fooled too."

"That is why it will all depend on Zhang Ji now," Uncle Ming said with a calm expression. "As long as she finds proof, we will immediately inform everyone and make sure the imposter is completely doomed. We might even be able to use this as a pretext to act against the Yu clan."

"You are absolutely right!" A fierce and determined expression flashed through Jian Taiding's eyes. Hmph, they dare challenge me, the overlord of Cloudcenter Commandery?! I need to teach them a painful lesson so the rest of this world knows who the real master of Cloudcenter Commandery is.

The two of them discussed some more details. However, as he saw Uncle Ming out, for some reason, Jian Taiding suddenly said, "Uncle Ming, do you think it is possible... I am just saying, but what if... my older brother did not die? That person is just too similar, after all!"

Uncle Ming's expression turned serious as he replied, "Second master, what you are feeling is a bit of paranoia. How could the duke still be alive? Both of us saw that with our own two eyes... Hmph, furthermore, even if he really is alive, so what? Cloudcenter Commandery has already changed. Even the truth can be changed into lies."

He couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed. He had previously found the second master more ambitious and formidable than the first master, thinking he could achieve something great. But now, the other party was already so flustered by something so small. Really... Could his will have gotten weaker because he was injured?

Jian Taiding was alarmed, but his expression also became steadier as he replied, "Thank you for the reminder, Uncle Ming!"

...

Afterward, the two waited for news from Zhang Ji. Unfortunately, the imposter didn't have Zhang Ji serve him during the first day. That was within their expectations, however. If this person was a fake, there was no way he would dare to have intimate relations with Zhang Ji. He would delay it for as long as he could.

In the following days, they began to secretly instigate some trouble. Some rumors and slander began to spread through the Duke Manor and even Cloudcenter Commandery, saying Cloudcenter Duke was a fake because he didn't dare to share a bed with his wives, that he was scared of being exposed.

People just laughed it off at first. But as time went on, the returned duke continued to refuse interactions with the concubines. Their attitudes gradually changed.

Don't tell us that fella really is fake?

...

Zu An, who was at the center of everything, obviously knew it was all just gossip. He felt admiration for Yu Yanluo's plans.

The enemy had already prepared everything, and they had made him look as if he had a guilty conscience, preventing him from interacting with Zhang Ji. Now, forget about the entire Duke Manor, even the rest of Cloudcenter Commandery was paying attention to the matter. People were all waiting for the answer to the riddle.

But the more they doubted him at present, the more confident they would be that he was real afterward. Jian Taiding thought the situation was perfectly within his grasp, thinking he had them by the reins, and yet he had no idea that he was playing right into Yu Yanluo's plans.

In people's eyes, Zu An had already been pressured into an impossible situation; thus, he would have no choice but to agree to Zhang Ji's service, to see if he could somehow bluff his way through.

...

Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming were secretly watching outside the courtyard, waiting for Zhang Ji to rush out through the door.

After all, Zhang Ji had special status herself, being the duke's concubine. Jian Taiding could only ask her to check whether the duke was real or fake, but not for her to really accompany that imposter in bed.

Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming were already lying in wait surrounded by trusted aides, however. Once they received confirmation, they would immediately act according to their plans. They would first arrest the imposter, but also simultaneously detain Yu Yanluo. Then, news would reach outside the manor, ensuring people all knew what was happening.

In reality, it wasn't just Jian Taiding. There were many powers who had planted spies in the manor, or had people stand guard nearby. They were all waiting for the result of the private meeting.

Jian Taiding stroked his goatee as he stared at a bright light in the distance, muttering, "That is the light I told Zhang Ji to leave on ahead of time, so the imposter could not try to turn off the light and bluff his way out."

"Second master is wise!" Uncle Ming also smiled. It seemed that although Jian Taiding slipped up sometimes, he was still a good candidate overall.

They had planned things out for so long already. Now, the dust was finally going to settle. However...

"Why hasn't she come out yet?" They were getting more and more nervous. Even Uncle Ming couldn't help but become a bit anxious, as he couldn't see anything happening.

But Jian Taiding, who had seemed a bit irritable recently, instead became extremely calm. He poured a cup of tea for Uncle Ming and commented with a smile, "Uncle Ming, why are you losing your cool? Do not panic. Everything is within our grasp. How about I play a song on the xiao^[1] for you to help you relax?"

He took out an elegant jade xiao afterward and brought it up to his lips. He played it as he looked toward the nearby courtyard. The xiao music was actually the secret signal he had agreed on with Zhang Ji, telling her to hurry up. Otherwise, if something unexpected happened, she was supposed to give the signal for them to come to her aid.

The trusted aides smiled when they saw Jian Taiding play his xiao under the moonlight. He looked confident and at ease, just like an elegant man in a world of chaos. His graceful bearing really was enviable. All of them thought to themselves that if they could have even a tenth of their second master's elegant style, wouldn't they be able to get any girl they wanted?

Only Uncle Ming frowned inwardly. He felt that Jian Taiding was trying too hard to appear artistic and intellectual. This was just some useless popular trick young masters from influential clans would learn.

As the xiao music spread through the entire Duke Manor, even the leaders of the different powers outside were moved. Jian Taiding must have been fully prepared. It was clearly a message from Jian Taiding to everyone in Cloudcenter Commandery, telling them he was still the ruler!

But as time went on, Jian Taiding's smile also gradually froze. His lips were starting to turn dry from blowing the xiao. Why hadn't Zhang Ji come back out yet?

He forced a smile when he saw Uncle Ming's confused expression, saying, "This is fine. I suppose she was just delayed by some minor things. After all, that man really does look pretty similar to my older brother. How about I switch to a different song?"

And yet, even after Jian Taiding's next song ended, Zhang Ji still didn't come out.

Jian Taiding could no longer remain calm. He wanted to redeem himself somehow, and yet he didn't know what to say. He continued to wait with an overcast expression. There was no way he could still be in the mood to play songs! He stared rigidly at the courtyard's entrance.

As they continued to wait, the horizon began to pale, and yet Zhang Ji still didn't come out.

Damn this adulterous couple; don't tell me they ended up using my songs as their backdrop to play harder?

Even the chickens were starting to crow. Jian Taiding finally broke down. How could he continue to wait? He stormed off with an ashen expression.

A long time after the sky brightened, Zhang Ji finally came out from the courtyard. Her complexion was completely rosy. Her resentment from being left alone for the past year was nowhere to be seen. Instead, she had a sweet and satisfied smile. Those watching knew the result even without asking.

News quickly spread throughout Cloudcenter Commandery: Zhang Ji had personally tested the duke out. He was the authentic Cloudcenter Duke!

Cloudcenter Commandery's entire court was shaken up by the news.

But the story that spread among ordinary people was something else entirely. It was said that the duke and his wives had been separated for so long that when they met again, it was like dry firewood meeting a raging inferno. Meanwhile, his second brother Jian Taiding had stayed outside the window the entire night, playing his xiao to liven things up.

Chapter 1070: Suspicion and Paranoia

"He really cares a lot about his older brother and sister-in-law. As a younger brother, he actually went to play the xiao for them? Their relationship really is great!"

"Nonsense! Is that something an ordinary person would do? He clearly likes his sister-in-law."

"You have a point. Hey, he was even playing the xiao toward their window. I really wonder how he felt as he watched the girl he likes do that with his older brother..."

"If he hadn't been a weirdo to begin with, would he have been playing that xiao right outside?"

...

Jian Taiding had the entire Military Affairs Manor under his control, so his authority in Cloudcenter Commandery was almost limitless. He naturally had his own efficient information channels.

When he heard the random rumors going around, he almost exploded from anger. He sent all of the teacups and vases in his room smashing into the ground, not leaving a single one intact.

"Disgraceful, absolutely disgraceful!" Jian Taiding's face was about to turn purple from anger. He had wanted to show off a bit the previous night; and yet, not only had he failed, he had instead become the laughingstock of the entire commandery.

He had already built the event up quite a bit, and the previous night, he had even told everyone to witness the exposure of the imposter. And yet, in the end, all that had done was make him seem like a little clown.

How could he, a proud and arrogant man, tolerate that?!

Uncle Ming's face twitched. He couldn't figure out what had gone wrong either. All of their arrangements had been made properly, so why had such a ridiculous mistake happened?

"Is Zhang Ji still not here?" Uncle Ming asked. The key issue was Zhang Ji. He wanted to find out just what exactly had happened last night in that room.

"She seems to have arrived. She's waiting outside of the room right now," a subordinate reported.

"Why aren't you bringing her in yet?!" Jian Taiding cursed. He had previously thought that his subordinates were quite competent, so why did they all seem as slow as pigs now?

Zhang Ji was quickly invited inside. Unlike Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming, whose expressions were overcast, she was radiating happiness.

"Second uncle!" She immediately bowed respectfully to Jian Taiding. She wasn't the main wife, after all, and she was someone who had been raised by Jian Taiding. She carried herself humbly before him, not believing that he would really treat her as his sister-in-law.

When he heard the words 'second uncle', Jian Taiding's eyes twitched. Normally, he would secretly admire her long legs, but now, all he could think of was of these long legs being ravaged by another man.

However, he endured his rage and put on a pleasant expression, asking, "What happened last night? Why have you only returned in the morning?"

Zhang Ji blushed and replied, "Second uncle, do you not already know the answer to that? The duke told me to serve him, so how could I not do my job properly?"

Even though he'd already had his suspicions, Jian Taiding still felt as if thunder were crashing in his mind. He could no longer hold back the rage within him. His voice rose as he exclaimed, "Did I not tell you he was an imposter?! Would you sleep with any random wild man who told you to sleep with him?"

Zhang Ji looked somewhat unhappy. Even though she had been raised by Jian Taiding, she had already been part of the duke's harem for so long. In the past, Jian Taiding would have had to treat her with respect and gifts. When had he ever suddenly become hostile like this?

She might have just swallowed her anger if the duke were still missing, but now that the duke had already returned, she had someone to support her. There was no way she would act as cautiously as before. She shot back, her face entirely red, "Second uncle, please conduct yourself properly. I have always carried out my duties as the duke's wife properly. Apart from the duke, I have never had another

man. I do not even converse with other men normally. Second uncle cannot slander me with such words.”

“You...!” Jian Taiding was furious. This woman really thinks she is completely independent and grown up now! Does she not know who the true lord of Cloudcenter Commandery is?

Uncle Ming quickly got up to stop Jian Taiding from losing his composure further. After all, they still had to rely on Zhang Ji for many things. As such, he said to Zhang Ji in an amicable manner, “Third madam, we have our sources that tell us this man is fake. Why do you think he is real?”

“Fake?” Zhang Ji frowned and replied, “That is impossible. Do you think I would not even recognize my own man? He is the duke through and through.”

“But how is that possible?!” Jian Taiding obviously didn’t believe that. He even began to suspect that she had already been bought out by Yu Yanluo beforehand, and that they were working together to fool him.

Uncle Ming thought more meticulously. He asked, “How did the third madam confirm that he was the duke?”

“How else...” Zhang Ji trailed off as she blushed, looking bashful.

Uncle Ming could only change the topic a little, asking, “Can you tell us some more details? For example, some secret lovers’ words between husband and wife that only the two of you know of?”

“Of course we have those. Only the two of us know what the duke calls me. There are all kinds of other details too. He is exactly the same as before,” Zhang Ji replied.

“Do you think that secret name he used for you could accidentally have been revealed to someone else?” Jian Taiding asked. He was also starting to calm down. Compared to raging helplessly, it was more important to understand where the problem lay.

“Of course not. Why would I randomly talk about our private affairs to other people?” Zhang Ji began to panic too. She began to worry about whether she looked like a gossip in the eyes of others.

Jian Taiding frowned. If this woman is telling the truth, what the hell went wrong? It seemed as if this woman were colluding with that imposter, no matter how one looked at it.

Uncle Ming asked, “Apart from your nickname, is there any other proof? For example, certain traits of his body?”

Zhang Ji replied with a strange expression, “His body was the same as the duke’s. He has a few moles on his body, and they are all exactly the same.”

“Those would be easy to mimic. I am talking about some things he cannot copy.” Uncle Ming was a bit embarrassed, but with how things were, he couldn’t make too much of a fuss. He continued, “For example, his... size. Also, his degree of intimacy. There is no way he could have imitated those things, right?”

“Those things were all exactly the same.” Zhang Ji’s face reddened. If not for Uncle Ming leading the discussion, she would already have become upset long before if she had been asked those things. “It is

not just his body's... traits. How he becomes intimate, and even how long he lasts before he... comes, it is all exactly the same. You are worrying too much. He is the duke; why do you two keep calling him fake? Do you think I could not tell who my man is and would sleep with anyone?"

Zhang Ji was starting to feel embarrassed. She had clearly confirmed his identity, so why were they still insisting the duke was a fake? Don't tell me they don't want the duke to come back, and instead want to continue dominating the Duke and Military Affairs Manor... As someone who had resided in such a place for so long, she wasn't stupid either. When she realized those things, her face paled and her happy expression faded.

Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming exchanged a look, seeing the shock in each others' eyes.

"Were you perhaps drugged?" Uncle Ming asked with a frown.

"What drugs? Did you not keep warning me over and over yesterday? I did not eat anything after I went in, nor did I drink anything. There were no strange smells inside either. How could I have been drugged?" Zhang Ji blushed. She had gone inside the previous day as if she were facing a prisoner, acting incredibly fussy. Fortunately, the duke was generous and hadn't blamed her too much. When she remembered his generosity and warmth, as well as that hot feeling, she felt her heart begin to pound.

"If you were not drugged, could he have used some kind of illusion?" Jian Taiding muttered to himself. Zhang Ji wasn't a normal woman; she was trained in espionage skills too. Normal drugs wouldn't escape her notice.

Uncle Ming's eyes lit up. That was indeed a possibility. He quickly asked Zhang Ji some probing questions, but she was sober and calm. Furthermore, she remembered all of the details from the previous night clearly. There wasn't any chance she had been mesmerized. Even the most powerful illusion arts left some traces; there was no way such techniques could have no flaws.

Zhang Ji's expression turned cold when she finished explaining everything to them. She turned around to leave. After all, she was sure the other man was her husband, and yet the two men continued to say he wasn't.

Would she really let herself be fooled by an unfamiliar man? It wasn't as if she was blind.

Everything from the previous night had been so real. When she recalled what had happened then, she felt her legs suddenly become weak, and her body felt somewhat uncomfortably sticky too. She left to take a bath and change her clothes before seeking out the duke again.

...

After Zhang Ji left, Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming looked at each other in dismay.

"What does second master think?"

"Do you think she was bribed by Yu Yanluo?"

"That is impossible. We know everything about Zhang Ji, and she has always remained under our control in this time, so when would Madam Yu even have a chance to contact her? Furthermore, if she really had been bribed, she definitely would not have said such stupid words in front of us." Uncle Ming shook his head after thinking to himself for a bit.

“What you say makes sense.” Jian Taiding’s expression suddenly changed. He continued, “If what Zhang Ji says is true, this person’s appearance, behavior, and even bedroom preferences are exactly the same as those of my older brother. Do you think there is a chance that he really is my older brother?”

Uncle Ming harrumphed and replied, “What are you getting all flustered for? He has clearly already died.”

“But he had such high cultivation. What if he had some trump card? Perhaps some miraculous revival is not completely impossible... Otherwise, how do you explain this man in our manor right now?” Jian Taiding asked, swallowing with great difficulty.

Uncle Ming’s expression was also overcast. He didn’t object as firmly as he had before.

“How about we go and investigate this ourselves?” Jian Taiding suggested. Even his voice was starting to tremble.

Uncle Ming remained silent for a while. In the end, he nodded and replied, “Fine!”