

Immortal 1091

Chapter 1091: Tacit Understanding

Zu An was speechless. Why was he always pissing off so many big shots no matter what he did?

That Jian Yanyou really was pitiful. His own younger brother had wanted to inherit his wife and authority, and even his trusted aide had had similar thoughts.

I even spent a few days in the Duke Manor with his identity...

Pah! I'm not deranged like those two fiends!

Yu Yanluo felt ashamed and embarrassed when she heard Uncle Ming's explanation. She exclaimed, "You rascal, you actually had such filthy thoughts!" Jian Yanyou's younger brother wanted her, and now, even Yanyou's servant wanted her? Was there no end to it?

"Hmph, you were nothing more than a bonus reward. Jian Yanyou and his brother might have worshiped you like a goddess, but for me, you might not even be able to compare to a beautiful parasite," Uncle Ming said with a sneer.

Yu Yanluo and Zu An were speechless. A beast is a beast after all; even their tastes are strange.

Yu Yanluo took a deep breath to calm herself down. She then asked, "Then what about Yanyou? Are you suppressing him right now?"

Uncle Ming snorted and replied, "The original plan was to wake him up after waiting a bit longer when the Milk of Purple Frost fully formed, then use that to temper his body and allow for a complete rebirth. He would then undergo a complete transformation, with even the earth immortal rank becoming imminent.

"But I never expected the two of you to hide in the cold pool and do those illicit things..."

A blush crossed Yu Yanluo's pretty face when she heard those words. She initially wanted to say that they hadn't, but after thinking about it, there was no need to explain all of that to such a freak. As such, she didn't say anything in return.

Uncle Ming continued, "Furthermore, in his despair, that trash Jian Taiding kept blabbering about how Zu An messed up the inner chamber's harem. It was already close to Jian Yanyou's waking time, and his consciousness was starting to wake. With that stimulation, he woke up ahead of time.

"And yet in the end, he didn't even freaking break through to the grandmaster rank!" Uncle Ming exclaimed furiously. He stepped on Jian Taiding's decapitated head and ground it viciously under his feet. "This guy really isn't good at anything but messing things up!"

Zu An thought to himself, No wonder Jian Taiding was slaughtered so ruthlessly just now. So that was where the resentment came from.

Even though Jian Yanyou had been just a hair away from the grandmaster rank, he still wasn't a true grandmaster. That was a bottleneck most people in the world would never break through in their entire lifetime.

Yu Yanluo frowned and said, "Enough; he is already dead. Why is there a need to humiliate him further?"

"If it weren't because there are still more uses for his corpse, I would've already trampled his head like a melon underneath my feet!" Uncle Ming spat at Jian Taiding's corpse, then continued, "Because Jian Yanyou's spirit was starting to ripple intensely, and was about to wake up, I was forced to push through with the possession ahead of time."

Yu Yanluo's expression changed. She asked, "So the one that woke up at first was indeed Yanyou?"

"It was just a fragment of his damaged soul." Uncle Ming sneered. "My seed had already been planted inside of his body, so he couldn't resist my possession at all. It was only because his early rising disrupted my plans, that a fragment of his soul even leaked out in the first place. Now, his soul has long since become nourishment for me, hahaha!"

"You...!" Yu Yanluo's expression turned extremely cold. Her World Painting swept out, lengthening with the wind. It was as if it really had become a world with mountains and seas, and it seemed about to capture Uncle Ming. Furthermore, lightning and thunder was wreaking havoc in its world. It was clear that Yu Yanluo's killing intent had been stirred.

Uncle Ming laughed disdainfully and said, "I might've been a bit scared of your tricks when I was in that old man's body, but now..."

His sleeves swept out. The unfolding world seemed to be surrounded by an invisible power, and gradually folded up again. In the end, it turned back into a scroll, appearing in his hand.

Uncle Ming fiddled with the World Painting. He clicked his tongue in wonder, exclaiming, "You clearly haven't even reached the master rank, and yet you can still create a domain like the ones grandmasters can release. It really is quite a marvel! All of that is probably due to the power of this item. But this treasure will be mine from now on."

"Pff!" A mouthful of blood sprayed out of Yu Yanluo's mouth. Having her treasure seized dealt her severe injuries.

At that very moment, an arc of electricity flickered. The Tai'e Sword in Zu An's hand turned into a streak of lightning as it stabbed toward Uncle Ming's vitals. He didn't even give Yu Yanluo a single look to avoid losing out on such a rare opportunity.

Uncle Ming's expression changed slightly. He quickly raised his palms to face his opponent. Even though they were flesh, they were as tough as metal. They collided with the Tai'e Sword, releasing the sound of clashing blades.

After the exchange, Uncle Ming reappeared several zhang away. He raised his hand and looked at his ripped sleeves. He couldn't help but exclaim in surprise. He said, "Brat, there really is more to you than meets the eye. No wonder Jian Taiding was defeated."

"I've underestimated you, but that won't happen anymore," he continued. As soon as he finished speaking, he rushed over ferociously.

At that instant, Zu An felt as if the very air around him had become viscous. He felt a mountainous pressure pushing against him from all directions. Even so, he had faced cultivators of the highest level before. He didn't panic and responded accordingly.

His movement technique was treacherous, able to create three or four identical copies each time. But before someone with near-grandmaster level strength, such tricks wouldn't be of too much use. Uncle Ming could easily locate his real body.

However, Zu An didn't entrust all of his hopes on those mirages. Rather, he used all sorts of techniques to disorient Uncle Ming. For a moment, the two sides were actually on equal footing.

Unfortunately, the cultivation gap between the two of them was just too great. Zu An was constantly forced to go on the defense, and that would only lead to eventual defeat. If it weren't because his body had already been tempered by primordial ki several times, he might have already been crushed into a bloody paste by Uncle Ming's palm.

But he didn't panic. Instead, he was prepared for such a scenario. The Poisonous Prick stabbed toward his opponent's body.

Unfortunately, to his disappointment, his opponent seized the dagger even though it approached at a tricky angle. Zu An's expression changed.

Meanwhile, Uncle Ming said with a sinister smile, "Your body is as tough as expected. Jian Taiding was defeated because he didn't expect you to trade blow for blow. Do you think I would make the same mistake?"

"What's going on with this dagger? It actually makes even my current self feel the threat of death. I didn't expect you to have this divine weapon too, on top of that other sword you had." Uncle Ming clicked his tongue in amazement. "But the more treasures you have on you, the better. You're merely giving me free equipment!"

He was about to seize the Poisonous Prick for himself when suddenly, Zu An activated the Tai'e Sword's Domain of Power. Uncle Ming's expression changed and he was momentarily distracted. Zu An took the chance to thrust out with his Poisonous Prick.

However, Uncle Ming's body instantly dispersed, turning into countless black wasps. After a moment, the swarm of black wasps gathered again nearby, reforming into Jian Yanyou.

"You've actually forced me to use my life-saving trump card..." Uncle Ming exclaimed, still feeling some lingering fear. He asked, "What was that just now? How could you possess such powerful pressure?"

"What do you think?" Zu An shot back. Inwardly, he felt incredible regret. He even managed to dodge that?

Uncle Ming snorted coldly. However, Zu An was just way too strange. Together with his apprehension toward the Poisonous Prick and Zu An's close combat abilities, he became reluctant to approach. As such, his hands spread out. Endless white silk shot out everywhere, flying toward his opponents.

Zu An was actually a fan of white silk. But as he saw white silk cover everything, he worried that he might develop some trauma from it.

He didn't dare to get careless, however. He immediately activated his Flame Blade when he saw the attack, bringing it down ferociously at the silk.

Uncle Ming roared with laughter, boasting, "This is the silk used for the Golden Silkworm Art's transformation! Do you really think it fears the elements like normal silk?" However, he paused and exclaimed, "Wait, your flame is a bit strange... It can actually burn through?!"

But Zu An wasn't having as easy a time as the other party made it sound. Even after hacking at it several times, he was only able to cut some of the silk. He couldn't burn everything down the way he had imagined. There was just way too much white silk coming at him, covering everything.

Soon, the entire cave seemed to have become a world of silk. Both he and Yu Yanluo were pressured into a corner with no more room to evade.

Just then, Yu Yanluo's brush moved. Soon, the Empress Lantern appeared above her. The silk immediately stopped as gentle light surrounded them. She exclaimed, "Ah Zu, hurry!"

Zu An tacitly understood what she was trying to say. He took out the imperial edict and intoned, "I make an offering to the heavens, accepting the Mandate of Heaven to speak his majesty's imperial order..."

Chapter 1092: Annihilated

Uncle Ming's expression changed. Only then did he remember that Zu An still had such a ridiculous trump card at his disposal. He instantly charged over.

The Empress Lantern slowly rose, bathing him in its radiance, making his body freeze. However, he sneered and remarked, "Do you really think a fake Empress Lantern can trap me?"

As he spoke, he swept one of his sleeves outward. Endless silk rushed out, instantly wrapping up the lantern. Not even a bit of light could penetrate it. Then, he reached out his hand. The silk tightened, and the lantern was instantly crushed to pieces.

Yu Yanluo groaned. A strand of blood trickled out from the corner of her mouth. Creating such a treasure through art would bring about a huge rebound to begin with, let alone now that it had actually been destroyed.

Uncle Ming smiled maliciously and pounced at his two opponents. Powerful winds swept over them and made it difficult for them to even breathe.

Zu An's expression changed greatly. He knew that, as Uncle Ming's strength was now comparable to a grandmaster's, there was no way he could finish chanting the rest of the imperial edict in such a short amount of time.

He was about to grab Yu Yanluo and evade when he suddenly saw Yu Yanluo's hair bun disperse. Her black hair moved around her. A terrifying aura surged through the entire cave.

Because Yu Yanluo was in front of Zu An, with her back to him, he didn't see that a dark red light had suddenly appeared in her eyes.

"You're..." Uncle Ming began as his eyes rapidly narrowed. However, his voice came to a screeching halt. He felt as if his entire body had become incredibly heavy, and the surface of his skin had even begun to

harden. He was horrified. He quickly used his own ki to dispel the strange transformation and didn't have any time to waste on speaking.

Fortunately, Yu Yanluo's cultivation and strength weren't great enough. Otherwise, he would have been instantly petrified. The Golden Feathersilk Art surrounded his entire body, and he struggled free from the technique in a split second.

"Hahaha, I never expected this! I didn't think I'd make this kind of discovery today! You're mine; everything that belongs to you is mine!"

He rushed forward as if he had gone crazy. His ki seemed to have reached the absolute peak, and he didn't hold back in the slightest when he attacked.

But because Yu Yanluo had bought him time, Zu An managed to finish the imperial edict's chant. A terrifying wave of aura condensed in the cave, and a golden face that vaguely resembled the current emperor appeared overhead.

"Noooo!" Uncle Ming screamed in horror. He couldn't be bothered with the two of them anymore and immediately turned tail to run. At the same time, endless silk surged outward, creating layer after layer of defenses behind him.

The golden figure in the air moved. He slowly opened his eyes, and two streaks of golden light fired outward. The silk that seemed impervious to all elements seemed like white snow before a blistering sun, instantly melting away.

No matter how fast Uncle Ming was, he couldn't move faster than the speed of light. He was instantly struck by the streak of golden light. He screamed miserably, and his entire body erupted into flames. As his body was overcome by a raging blaze, he turned into a ball of fire, screaming miserably.

Suddenly, however, a black mist flew out from inside the fireball. Upon closer inspection, it wasn't a black mist, but rather a cloud of black wasps. The parasites didn't gather together and instead dispersed in every direction.

"No! That's the Parasite race's life-saving skill! If even one gets away, there will be a chance for his return!" Yu Yanluo exclaimed worriedly.

There were just far too many wasps, and they all flew in different directions. They had already flown far away in the blink of an eye. The pair couldn't stop them even if they wanted to.

"Don't worry, his majesty wouldn't be worthy of his title of the most powerful if he really did let him get away," Zu An said in consolation.

Sure enough, before he even finished his sentence, the golden face in midair became blurry. Then, it turned into the form of a sun, and countless golden rays fired outward. There wasn't a single place to hide from its radiance.

The parasites screamed miserably. At almost the same instant, smoke came out of every single one, and they were all lit ablaze. They were burned to dust in just a few breaths of time.

A powerful cultivator of an age had been completely annihilated in just a few seconds.

The golden face in midair gradually dissipated after the attack concluded, and its terrifying pressure also gradually faded.

Even though Zu An had fought against the emperor's split soul in the dungeon, he still couldn't help but gulp down saliva when he saw such a scene.

"This Uncle Ming was full of schemes, but he actually met his end in such a way," Zu An said with a great sigh.

"It's a pity that Yanyou's remains were destroyed though," Yu Yanluo said, her eyes full of grief when she saw the ashes on the ground. She wanted to say something else, but suddenly staggered and collapsed.

Fortunately, Zu An moved quickly, supporting her and preventing her perfect face from hitting the floor. He asked, "Madam, what's wrong?"

Yu Yanluo's complexion was extremely pale, without a shred of color. But she didn't respond no matter how Zu An hollered at her. Sensing how faint her ki was, Zu An jumped in fright. Why were her injuries so serious?

There was no time to return to Cloudcenter City. He took out some medicine and fed it to her. Then, he infused his ki into her to treat her injuries. Fortunately, although her injuries were serious, there was no danger to her life. It wasn't anything close to a hopeless situation.

Zu An's fourth layer of the Primordial Origin Sutra was perfect for treating injuries. He didn't waste any time and sat down to open up Yu Yanluo's meridians, guiding the medicinal effects through them.

But it would be a problem to keep her seated in the cave. He knew that her body naturally rejected the cold. Furthermore, because of the Bull's Cream, the process of expelling the drug had made her condition much weaker than usual too.

If she were to sit on the ground, the cold would invade her wounded body very quickly. It might even leave behind some irreparable conditions.

It had been a similar situation when Chu Chuyan was suffering from her own cold condition. If it weren't because of his diligence day after day, she might have long since perished. He couldn't just use that method to save Yu Yanluo, though, could he?

Forget about whether she was willing or not, he wasn't the kind of person to take advantage of someone in such a situation. He wouldn't leave behind any hidden illnesses just so he could use them as a pretext to obtain her body.

But for some reason, the cave was incredibly cold. He couldn't even find a single spot in it that was closer to a normal temperature.

Helpless to do anything else, Zu An could only sit down on the frozen surface and take her into his embrace, using his own legs to support her. One hand pressed against the center of her body, while the other pressed against her belly. He began to use the Primordial Origin Sutra, sending in an endless amount of ki to treat her.

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Meanwhile, in the faraway Imperial Palace, inside the Imperial Study, the emperor opened his eyes. He looked toward the northwest and muttered, "It seems Cloudcenter's situation is about to be settled."

He thought for a bit, then summoned Eunuch Wen and ordered, "Pass down my decree. Order Yi Commandery's troops to immediately return to their station. They are not allowed to enter Cloudcenter Commandery."

"Furthermore, issue a secret decree reprimanding Sang Hong and saying that he is not to willfully transfer the troops of a king."

The emperor continued to issue several decrees. When Eunuch Wen left, a lesser eunuch came to report, "Your majesty, the crown princess seeks a meeting with you."

The emperor frowned. After all, he had always quite liked that 'daughter-in-law' of his. She was pretty, and she had the demeanor of someone befitting her status. She was also the next empress candidate he had chosen for himself.

But ever since his split soul had perished in the dungeon, he felt a bit uneasy when he looked at her. He didn't know whether he should continue to see her as his future wife, or if he should see her as his daughter-in-law.

"Your majesty, the crown princess seeks an audience with you." Seeing that the emperor was absentminded and hadn't replied for a long time, the lesser eunuch thought the emperor hadn't heard him, so he carefully repeated his report.

The emperor snapped out of his daze and waved his hand, indicating that he had heard what the eunuch said. He commanded, "Call her in."

Soon afterward, the splendidly-dressed Bi Linglong walked in. She greeted him in a natural and proper manner.

The emperor nodded inwardly. The crown princess really did exude grace with every movement. There weren't any problems that could be picked out of her behavior. His expression eased a bit as he thought that, and he asked, "Why has Linglong come here tonight?"

Bi Linglong said with a smile, "Replying to Father Emperor. Just now, I sensed that there was a disturbance in the world; it seems someone has used the imperial edict to summon Father Emperor's power. The power of each use of the imperial edict is no small matter. Is there a chance that something unexpected happened to our Imperial Envoy in Cloudcenter Commandery?"

The emperor's eyes narrowed. His expression became somewhat dangerous, and he asked coldly, "Are you worried about the Imperial Envoy, or are you worried about Zu An?"

Chapter 1093: Share Your Highness' Burdens

Bi Linglong replied calmly, "I am indeed a bit worried about Sir Zu."

"Oh?" The Emperor hadn't expected her to actually admit to it. He was actually momentarily stunned. He asked, "Why?"

"After all that has happened, Sir Zu has already become a key figure of the crown prince's Eastern Palace. At the very least, in the eyes of outsiders, to a certain degree, he already represents the Eastern Palace," Bi Linglong replied. Even though she was nervous, she had enough political wit to know that avoiding the answer forever wasn't a solution, so she had instead chosen to calmly admit to it. She continued, "That is why, if something were to happen to him, the crown prince would lose a great general. The Eastern Palace would immediately suffer a huge blow to our prestige and influence."

"Of course, apart from Sir Zu, I am also worried about the Imperial Envoy's situation. King Qi's faction continues to pressure us, so we are already at a point where we cannot give up anything more." Bi Linglong clenched her fist. Her expression turned somewhat cold as she continued, "If my suspicions are not wrong, Father Emperor has sent Sir Sang to take drastic measures against the Yu clan, to clip King Qi's wings. That is why I naturally do not wish for anything unexpected to happen to the Imperial Envoy."

The Emperor raised his brows, a smile returning to his cold face. He replied, "Not bad, not bad. You are worthy of the title I have given you. Ruizhi is destined for greatness with a good wife such as yourself."

"All of this was because of Father Emperor's protection and guidance," Bi Linglong said. She bowed with a smile, but inwardly, she felt completely cold. If it weren't because she had seen his true face inside the dungeon already, she might have just been moved to tears.

She felt overwhelming nausea and disgust when she thought about how her father-in-law actually lusted after her.

No, it's not lusting after me. With the emperor's status, there's no need for him to lust after me. He merely arranged for something that couldn't be opposed.

But the more she thought that, the more disgust she felt.

Considering how powerful the emperor was, there were countless women who admired him. With Bi Linglong's nature, even if he had taken her in as his concubine in the past, she might not even have been so against it. For the sake of her clan and her lifetime of ambition, she might even have done everything she could to support the idea.

But once she recalled how the emperor had possessed the crown prince, and even wanted to seize his own daughter-in-law forcefully afterward, she only found that nauseating.

The Emperor didn't know that the gracefully smiling crown princess actually hated him that much. As he heard the way she didn't claim credit for herself or speak arrogantly, instead thanking him for his kindness and protection first, he became more and more satisfied. He said, "Linglong, there is no need for you to worry. The situation in Cloudcenter Commandery will stabilize soon."

"As for that brat Zu An, I gave him the imperial edict. Since he managed to successfully use it, I have already destroyed the enemies, no matter how powerful they are. There is naturally no need to worry."

Bi Linglong was happy to hear that Zu An was fine. However, she instead praised the emperor. "Father Emperor is wise and brilliant after all..."

Even though the emperor was already immune to most subjects' praises, who could reject the gentle praise of a charming daughter-in-law? He quickly felt pleased. Together with the fact that everything

had been settled in Cloudcenter Commandery, he was so happy he gave the crown prince and princess ample rewards.

Bi Linglong subsequently left after expressing her gratitude.

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There were no walls that the wind couldn't pass through. News of what had happened quickly reached the Palace of Peace.

"The Crown Princess left the Imperial Study with a happy expression..." Eunuch Lu stooped down as he explained the situation to the empress.

The voluptuous empress was lying on her side. Because of her posture, her exaggerated curves were even more alluring. When Eunuch Lu saw her, he couldn't help but feel envious of that brat Zu An. To ride on such rich and fertile lands, just how wonderful of a thing was that?

The empress didn't expose his greedy expression, but instead felt quite proud of herself. She loved showing off her feminine charms in front of him. Whenever she saw his bitterness over being able to see, but unable to partake, she always felt amazing.

"Zu An is quite popular with that brat he follows. Since she is happy, it seems there has been good news in Cloudcenter Commandery." There was a hint of excitement in the empress' expression as she spoke.

Eunuch Lu knew why she felt that way. He felt incredibly jealous, but his lips didn't sell him out as he said, "Congratulations, your highness, congratulations. Once that child returns, your highness will be able to receive his treatment again."

The empress didn't know whether to laugh or cry as she looked at him. She asked, "Are you sincerely congratulating me, or are you just jealous?"

Eunuch Lu said respectfully, "It is sincere, of course. This old servant is incapable and cannot share in your highness' worries. Since Sir Zu is so capable, I naturally wish for your highness' happiness."

"Tsk, not a trace of manliness in you." The empress harrumphed, but she began to reminisce to herself. She continued, "But you are quite right. Since Sir Zu is so 'capable' in certain ways, this empress has indeed begun to miss him a bit."

Eunuch Lu felt dejected when he heard her emphasize a certain part. That Zu An's ancestors must be blessing him from the afterworld! Just what did he do to deserve such a blessing?

Although the empress teased him for a bit, she lost her interest when she saw that he wasn't producing much of a reaction. She instead asked, "Right, how is that thing I had you prepare going?"

"Please do not worry, your highness. I have already contacted the temple. Everything is already in order. I have found a quiet room within the temple as well. As long as you do not stay inside for too long, it will not draw any attention. I have already found someone else to arrange the temporary residence outside as well. As long as we avoid the guards at night, there will not be too much of a problem," Eunuch Lu said with his head lowered.

“Look at you. Is this empress someone who has no self control? Why would I need a quiet room in a temple?” the empress berated him. The main issue was that religious activities mostly happened during the daytime, and several guards and maids would be present to follow her. It would be far too easy for her to be exposed.

Eunuch Lu explained, “Even though it is somewhat dangerous, that kind of situation will be even more stimulating. In my opinion, even though Sir Zu looks civil and proper on the outside, he definitely has a rebellious nature deep down. Did we not fail to invite him before? I believe he will instead be tempted if we do something like this.”

“Is the Empress a woman who needs to sell herself like this? Do I need to stoop to such lowly practices?” the empress replied unhappily. But after thinking about it, doing it in broad daylight with guards and servants everywhere waiting outside, having an intense battle in such a situation, seemed... somewhat interesting?

She coughed lightly when she thought of that. She asked, “Is that private room of yours reliable? Do the people inside know the truth?”

Seeing that she had been tempted, Eunuch Lu revealed a satisfied expression. He replied, “Does your highness not trust this servant in taking care of matters? That private room is definitely safe. The temple only believes that it was prepared for a rich and powerful individual. They would not associate it with the palace at all.”

“That is good, then.” The empress nodded in satisfaction. At the same time, she gave him a strange look and asked, “Little Lu, where did you learn these things from anyway? You are clearly a eunuch, and yet you seem to know quite a bit.”

Eunuch Lu had a flattering smile on his face as he replied, “As long as the Empress is happy, this servant will always be happy.”

The Empress harrumphed and said, “Go and arrange those things then. I can stay the night over there a few times. We just have to wait for Sir Zu to come back.”

“Understood!” Eunuch Lu lowered his head. He felt extremely conflicted inside. On one hand, he didn’t really want Zu An to come back that quickly, and yet he was also strangely looking forward to this.

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At that point, however, Zu An was completely focused on treating Yu Yanluo in the frozen cave. He found the situation somewhat strange. Was the rebound of letting the Empress Lantern you drew get destroyed really that great?

The situation inside Yu Yanluo’s body was an absolute mess. If it weren’t because Zu An just happened to have the ability to treat others with the fourth layer of the Primordial Origin Sutra, she might not have recovered for several years. There could even be permanent lingering aftereffects!

Right, her hair seemed to have scattered in midair, and her power seemed to have increased drastically for a moment. What’s up with that?

Uncle Ming clearly could have interrupted my chant, but he seemed to have frozen in place for a moment for some reason.

And he seemed to have said 'You're...' What did he want to say?

While Zu An was confused, he heard a sudden groan. Yu Yanluo was gradually beginning to wake up. Zu An's treatment using his ki had clearly been effective.

Yu Yanluo discovered that she was in the arms of another man as soon as she woke up. Her expression immediately changed. She was just about to struggle when she heard a voice next to her ear. "Don't move randomly. Your injuries are severe; I definitely don't want all of my efforts to be for nothing."

Yu Yanluo's entire body relaxed when she heard that it was Zu An's voice. She blushed and said, "Thank you. You have saved me again."

"It was also thanks to your help earlier that we won," Zu An said with a smile.

By then, Yu Yanluo had fully awoken. She quickly examined herself, discovering that her wounds were indeed extremely serious. It looks as if the choice I made earlier... was really pushing my limits.

She felt grateful for Zu An's prompt rescue. But she still couldn't help but ask quietly, "But why do we have to be like this?"

Zu An replied, "Your injuries were too severe at the time, and for some reason, it's exceedingly cold here. The cold would easily enter your body if you sat on the ground. That would leave behind permanent damage, so I had to do this..."

He couldn't help but tease her a bit after he finished his explanation. "Is madam embarrassed?"

Yu Yanluo looked away and didn't respond to him.

Zu An said, "We were even more intimate than this when we were in the cold pond. This shouldn't be a problem, right?"

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "Hmph! If you were going to explain it like this, you might as well not have explained!"

Chapter 1094: Milk of Purple Frost

"I don't feel any guilt; let heaven and earth serve as witnesses. Madam, please don't misunderstand," Zu An said with a strange expression.

Yu Yanluo harrumphed and replied, "Are you not scared of being hacked apart by heavenly judgment?"

Who is the one... the one prodding me with your sword? she thought. Of course, she was too embarrassed to say these words.

Zu An noticed that as well. He said with a bit of embarrassment, "My heart is clear, but my body's reactions are my instincts; it's not something I can control. I really apologize for offending the madam."

Yu Yanluo's cheeks burned up. This guy is being such a rascal; how am I even supposed to respond here? She decided not to say anything in the end.

Fortunately, Zu An did act rather respectfully, not moving his hands or feet randomly. He only helped her transfer her ki.

The two tacitly chose not to say anything. A hint of warmth entered the frigid cave.

But Yu Yanluo's expression quickly changed, because there she sensed a familiar pounding within her. She bit her teeth and harrumphed, exclaiming, "Are you messing with me on purpose?"

Zu An was stunned, asking, "What do you mean?"

Seeing that his reaction hadn't been faked, Yu Yanluo pursed her lips and replied, "Your ki always makes me feel really strange."

Zu An replied, "Ah, I don't know what's going on either. I haven't treated many people with this method yet..."

Yu Yanluo interrupted him, asking, "Have you treated another woman with this technique before?"

Several figures appeared in Zu An's head. However, Chuyan hadn't been treated with the fourth layer of the Primordial Origin Sutra. Strictly speaking, only Tang Tian'er had been treated the same way before, and she seemed to have had a similar reaction.

However, he wouldn't be so unromantic as to speak the truth. He quickly said, "The madam is obviously the first. That's why I don't know why it's like this. Perhaps the madam's constitution is especially sensitive?"

Yu Yanluo's eyebrows curved when she heard she was the first one. A hint of a smile crept into her expression.

However, her face heated up when she thought of that. She wasn't sure if it really was because of her, because her body was indeed very special. The feeling only became stranger and stranger. She didn't want a repeat of what happened in the cold pool and quickly changed the topic. "I really didn't expect the main instigator behind all of this to be that Bright Blackeye Parasite! Without his instigation, Jian Taiding wouldn't have been so daring."

Zu An said with a sigh, "I can't help but feel that you and his brother spoiled him a bit too much, and that was why he got so out of control. Always satisfying and pampering him wasn't good for him; it instead harmed him."

"You are right, but I still have a guilty conscience. If it were not for my appearance, the two brothers might not have fought to that state." Yu Yanluo sighed. She felt a bit like a femme fatale.

"Men's desire will always be endless. Even without you, with Jian Taiding's nature, he would still have wanted to take Jian Yanyou's place in the end. Furthermore, with Uncle Ming egging him on, regardless of whether you were there or not, the conclusion wouldn't change," Zu An said in consolation.

"I know that you are consoling me, but I must still thank you," Yu Yanluo said gently. However, she still felt great grief when she looked at the pile of ashes in the distance. She continued, "But Yanyou still died in the end, and he met such a miserable ending."

"In reality, the conclusion was already decided when he was targeted by the Bright Blackeye Parasite. Even with the Golden Silkworm Art, he ended up encountering the Parasite clan, his natural enemy." Zu An sighed with great regret. He wondered, "But how do we wrap up this situation? Should we declare the entire truth to the world?"

Yu Yanluo also began to think to herself. After a long time had passed, she said, "Many of the scenes we recorded cannot be shown to the world. Let us just push all of the crimes onto that Bright Blackeye Parasite, saying that he was the one who bewitched Jian Taiding and conspired against the duke. Either way, since the Imperial Edict has defeated him, no one will suspect his identity."

"But wouldn't that be letting Jian Taiding off too easily?" Zu An replied with a frown.

Yu Yanluo replied, "He has already died a tragic death, so that can be considered a proper punishment. Furthermore, he already promoted many of his own trusted aides in the Martial Affairs Manor. If he were declared as the chief culprit, his subordinates would feel that they were in danger. Who knows what a group of cornered dogs will do? It would instead make the situation trickier to deal with."

Zu An nodded inwardly. In his previous world, if it weren't because the emperor of the Han Dynasty had ordered Dong Zhuo, a top general of late Han, to slaughter everyone down to the very last man, it wouldn't have stirred up so many grievances that Western Liang's legions would slaughter their way back to the capital, making the entire later Han dynasty's situation become irremediable.

"Madam really does have penetrating insight after all. I'm left in admiration for your wisdom." Zu An sighed in amazement. This woman looked as if she didn't really get involved in many different matters, but she was still a clan leader after all. If she had just been a pretty flower vase, she would have long since been devoured by the starving wolves of this world.

A strange sound emerged from Yu Yanluo's throat. However, she quickly changed the topic, continuing, "That is why you cannot publicly declare the news of his death; otherwise, Jian Taiding's crimes would still be too great, and that would be more difficult to take care of later. Using Yanyou's reputation, all of Cloudcenter Commandery will instead quickly stabilize. Furthermore..." She turned to give Zu An a look and didn't finish her sentence.

"What?" Zu An asked curiously. The next part seemed to have something to do with him.

"If we declared that Yanyou had already been plotted against by the two of them, how would we explain the duke having returned to the manor in the past few days? I even personally declared that there was no way I would not recognize my own husband. Liu Ji and the others have also helped you so much." Yu Yanluo took a deep breath and continued, "It would be one thing for me, since I was independent to begin with. No one can do much to me. But what would we do about Liu Ji, Chu Ji, even Zhang Ji and the others? Everyone would know that they had stayed with a fake duke, and that they were no longer pure. How would they continue living then?"

"Um..." Zu An sighed and said, "I've let them down."

"Both of us have let them down," Yu Yanluo added. "That is why I need you to remain as the duke for a period of time, at least until things settle a bit."

Zu An said with a frown, "I won't shirk my responsibility to help them deal with the aftermath, but in the end, I'm also a part of the imperial envoy and need to return to the capital. There's no way I can stay here for too long."

With his identity, there was no way he could remain as the duke forever. He had only done that before because he had no choice.

Yu Yanluo explained. "I do not think it will take too long. Once things stabilize a bit, you can inform the world that you are resting in seclusion. Then, you will not have to see anyone for a long time. After a while, once we have replaced Jian Taiding's subordinates with our own people and the situation is within our grasp again, you can declare that the duke was unable to recover from his injuries and passed away. At that point, everything will have already settled and it would not have much of an effect on anything. That should be enough time for Liu Ji and the others to plan accordingly."

"Alright. I'll do what I can," Zu An replied, nodding.

At the same time, he was thinking about something else. The one he had offended was the emperor. Should they end up becoming hostile, Cloudcenter Commandery could very well become a base where he would have resources at his disposal. As such, there was no harm in setting such things up beforehand.

"That is good then... Mmm..." Yu Yanluo let out a soft and silky moan. As she made that sound, however, her skin began to feel as if it were burning. She immediately jumped out of Zu An's embrace.

However, because she was weak and seriously injured, she almost collapsed right onto the ground. Zu An jumped in fright and quickly supported her.

Yu Yanluo quickly backed up while pushing him away. "You had better not come over!"

Zu An was confused, asking, "Why are you acting like this, madam?"

"You still have the nerve to say that?!" Yu Yanluo exclaimed, glaring at him angrily. "Forget it; I do not want you to treat me anymore. Your ki is just far too strange."

"But you haven't healed from your injuries yet!" Zu An protested worriedly.

"Your treatment has already helped me recover a bit. I will just slowly nurse myself later." Yu Yanluo felt lingering fear and didn't dare to let him even touch her again.

"Alright then." Zu An couldn't really persist after she had said that. Otherwise, it would seem as if he were taking advantage of her because of the situation. Meanwhile, Yu Yanluo sighed in relief when she saw that he didn't insist on continuing.

Suddenly, a strong wave of spiritual energy filled the cave. When the two breathed it in, they found that it was fragrant and sweet, making every pore in their bodies relax as if cheering for joy.

Zu An and Yu Yanluo exchanged a look, exclaiming, "The Milk of Purple Frost!"

Chapter 1095: Imminent Peril

"We need to hurry!" Yu Yanluo exclaimed, pointing at the giant icicle hanging above the cold pond. Some mist swirled across the surface of the icicle. Then, it slowly condensed, forming a drop of milky white liquid at the very tip. The water droplet was extremely small at first, but it grew at a visible rate.

The spiritual essence in the frozen cave became denser and denser. At that point, even an absolute fool could tell that the drop of liquid was a rare treasure.

The droplet at the very tip of the icicle grew larger and larger. Eventually, it began to wobble, as if it might fall at any time.

Zu An quickly rushed forward to collect it, but Yu Yanluo stopped him and said, "The Milk of Purple Frost is a miraculous and divine substance. It must be fully mature in order to provide the greatest effects. If we try to collect it beforehand, it will not be much different from other ordinary liquids. It will only be a little stronger than the world's natural spiritual essence."

"Then we can only collect it once it drops?" Zu An asked. He hadn't spent too much time in this world, so he didn't know as much about such secrets as the clan leader Yu Yanluo.

Yu Yanluo nodded and replied, "Indeed. You must wait until it completely matures and falls from its host, but the timing is important. After all, this substance will dissolve into water and disperse into the earth. It must be collected the moment before it falls into the cold pool."

Zu An nodded. Even though the amount of time it would take for the droplet to fall from the icicle into the cold pool was extremely short, it wasn't too big of an issue for cultivators. With his current cultivation, forget about a single drop, he could catch every single drop even if several hundred droplets fell at the same time.

"It is not as simple as you think," Yu Yanluo warned him. "You really want this, right?"

Zu An answered frankly, "Indeed. There's someone extremely important to me who's seriously injured and in imminent peril. That person must have this to save their life. That's why I must have this Milk of Purple Frost. However, this was something I discovered with the madam, so in theory, we should be splitting this in half... But I have no choice. I can only compensate for madam's loss some other way. I hope madam can forgive me."

Yu Yanluo smiled and replied, "You have saved my life several times. Compared to what you have done for me, what is a trifling Milk of Purple Frost? Furthermore, I do not even need this thing. You can just take it; you do not need to repay me at all."

Zu An didn't refuse out of politeness and said, "Thank you for your help, madam. I'll never forget madam's kindness for the rest of my life!" He knew there was no way Yu Yanluo could have absolutely no interest in something like the Milk of Purple Frost. This was a favor he would definitely keep in mind.

Yu Yanluo blushed and replied, "What are you even talking about? Who wants your gratitude... Here, take this. Use this thing to collect the Milk of Purple Frost."

She handed over a soft and smooth bottle. It was clearly made from the highest level jade.

"What is this?" Zu An asked as he received it.

Yu Yanluo explained, "The Milk of Purple Frost is not an ordinary object; it cannot be stored in other containers, and will instead through and turn into nothingness. Only a vessel like jade can store it safely. That is something I deduced from the records I found when the previous Cloudcenter Duke offered the Milk of Purple Frost to his majesty."

Zu An was overjoyed when he heard that, saying, "Then I really have to thank the madam. Otherwise, I would just have to watch as this once in a lifetime chance passed by."

Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "You should get ready. It seems as if it will fall any time now."

Zu An nodded and became completely focused on the drop of Milk of Purple Frost. The drop became larger and larger, wobbling at the very edge of the icicle. After a few more minutes, it finally fell. Zu An rushed out like a streak of lightning when he saw that, quickly appearing below the icicle. He readied the jade bottle right where it was going to fall.

As the droplet was about to enter the jade bottle, Zu An and Yu Yanluo both smiled. However, their smiles quickly froze on their faces.

The drop of Milk of Purple Frost actually passed straight through the jade bottle and continued to fall!

Zu An was horrified when he saw that. He immediately dropped down to try and collect the droplet with the bottle, and yet after trying two more times, the result was the same as before!

"Madam, did you make some mistake?!" he exclaimed.

Yu Yanluo was also shocked, replying, "There should be no mistake! It should be this jade bottle that can collect it! How could it be like this?"

Zu An quickly took out all sorts of other vessels from his Brilliant Glass Bead to test them out. However, the drop of Milk of Purple Frost seemed as if it were invisible, passing straight through. Not a single vessel could store it.

"What the hell is going on?!" Zu An exclaimed, breaking out into a cold sweat. If he really missed out on this chance to collect the Milk of Purple Frost, he probably wouldn't have another chance to find a second droplet.

Don't tell me I just have to watch as Mi Li dies?

But he had already tried everything he could, and yet he couldn't store that drop of Milk of Purple Frost at all! The drop of liquid was now only a foot away from the cold pool. It was probably going to completely disappear a second later.

"What do I do?!" Zu An's entire body turned cold.

Wait. I can't take that droplet even though I'm still able to move, but Jian Yanyou was dying. Why was he so certain he could obtain the Milk of Purple Frost?

After all, there was no way Jian Yanyou could have been certain that he could wake up in time when the Milk of Purple Frost fell. According to what Uncle Ming had said, it seemed he would only have been able to wake up once he received the nurturing of the Milk of Purple Frost.

However, Jian Yanyou hadn't even woken up, nor could he move. How would he obtain it then?

Could it be that the Milk of Purple Frost would fall into the pool, and then nourish his body?

No, Yu Yanluo mentioned before that water would quickly dissolve the droplet.

Perhaps it was because he had already been on the brink of death too many times, but the more critical the situation was, the calmer he became and the quicker his mind moved.

Wait... He looked down to examine the cold pool. Because of Blue Mallard, his perception toward the water element was powerful. He just felt that the pool was a little strange.

"It's all over..." Yu Yanluo watched as the drop of Milk of Purple Frost reached just a hair away from the surface of the pool, and yet Zu An still hadn't found a solution. She was incredibly anxious, and also blamed herself greatly.

Zu An already said he needed this to save an extremely important friend of his, and yet now, because I didn't find the right information, we are going to lose out on this once-in-ten-thousand-years miracle...

Even if he does not blame me, I cannot take this myself...

She was wondering how to console Zu An when she suddenly saw him move. He reached out his hand, creating a large gap in the water's surface.

Is he trying to prolong the time before the droplet hits something else? Yu Yanluo thought. She had to admit that was a good decision. But if they couldn't find a way to store the droplet, it would at most buy a bit of time. In the end, it would still be meaningless.

Her eyes suddenly widened. She saw Zu An hold the jade bottle upside down above the water surface, and the drop of liquid suffused with spiritual essence flew straight into the bottle. As he closed the lid, the spiritual essence that filled the frozen cave immediately became weaker. Even the cold that was spreading in all directions vanished without a trace. The cold pool also began shrinking at a visible rate.

"We've... succeeded?" Yu Yanluo exclaimed in disbelief.

Zu An kicked off with his toes, then returned while treading on the surface of the pool. He said, "It was thanks to madam's guidance that I was finally able to collect the Milk of Purple Frost."

Yu Yanluo replied in surprise, "But why did you keep failing before? And later on, it almost felt as if the Milk of Purple Frost flew upward from below!"

Zu An gave the icicle a look and said, "It's because that's just a pretense. The legend of the Milk of Purple Frost is well known, so people would subconsciously think it comes from this frozen stalactite. Uncle Ming even gave it a look on purpose, but that was actually to mislead us."

"But why did we clearly see the droplet condense overhead?" Yu Yanluo asked, still confused.

"That was just an inverted image made by the water as it cast its reflection toward the icicle. In other words, the true Milk of Purple Frost is formed from a stalagmite at the bottom of the cold pool, then floats upward," Zu An explained. "I thought it was strange from the very start. Jian Yanyou was already in a half-dead state, so how was he going to receive the Milk of Purple Frost? I remembered that his

remains just happened to be under the icicle, so I suddenly realized he had placed his body in the spot where the Milk of Purple Frost would definitely appear. He would have received the nourishment of the droplet without even needing to move at all.”

“But wasn’t the Milk of Purple Frost rumored to dissolve in water? How could it exist in water?” Yu Yanluo asked, having realized another problem. That was why she had never suspected it would come from underwater.

“That’s because it was surrounded by rich essence, isolating it from the pool’s water. However, as it rose, the essence protecting it would quickly scatter. If I hadn’t promptly parted the waters, it might have already dispersed away.” Zu An said, sounding relieved.

“People say that divine things choose their own owners. It seems this thing really was fated to be yours.” Yu Yanluo sighed in relief. She patted her chest, still feeling some lingering fear.

Zu An was about to say something when he suddenly heard noisy footsteps in the distance.

“Why did that strong spiritual essence suddenly disappear?”

“Huh? There’s a cave over here. Let’s take a look.”

Chapter 1096: Proof

Inside the cave, Zu An and Yu Yanluo’s expressions changed. Yu Yanluo quickly said, “They seem to be people from Cloudcenter Commandery.”

Zu An nodded and added, “There are also people from the imperial envoy.” He recognized some familiar voices.

“What do we do now? Should we use your real identity or the duke’s?” Yu Yanluo tidied up the cave a little as she spoke.

Zu An thought for a moment and replied, “Let’s use the duke’s identity. Otherwise, it’ll be hard to explain why I’m here with you, and also where the duke has been all this time.”

Yu Yanluo was still a bit worried, asking, “But how will we explain the imperial edict then? Everyone knows that is something only you possess.”

“Don’t worry, I have a solution for that,” Zu An said while changing his appearance into Jian Yanyou’s. Even though it wasn’t the first time, Yu Yanluo was still incredibly shocked by the process.

At almost the instant Zu An completed his transformation, the footsteps reached the cave entrance.

A group of people appeared in the cave soon afterward. Those in front included Sang Hong, Xu Yu, and Pei Shao, who were all big shots in Cloudcenter Commandery’s court. The previous battle had clearly caused quite the commotion, so they had all rushed over to see what was going on.

“Duke! Madam!” Sang Hong sighed in relief when he saw the two of them. He was happy to see them.

But the expressions of the other Cloudcenter officials were strange. It was hard to say whether they were expressing happiness or grief.

Yu Yanluo was alarmed. She knew that Zu An had to first pretend to be a girl and fool a man in order to get the voice right. How was he going to get through the current situation? She reacted quickly and said before Zu An said anything. "Greetings, everyone."

"May I ask why the two of you are here?" Sang Hong asked.

Yu Yanluo gave Zu An a look and was the first to reply, "The duke was injured, and a surge of ki and blood harmed his throat. He cannot speak right now. I will speak in his place to prevent his condition from worsening."

Zu An nodded inwardly. Yu Yanluo was sharp, saving him a lot of time and effort.

The onlookers were shocked, and someone exclaimed. "Duke, your wounds were actually that serious?"

Meanwhile, Sang Hong was looking all over the place for Zu An. But of course, he didn't find him. When he had sensed the eruption of the imperial edict's power, he had immediately rushed to Zu An's room in alarm.

Even though Zu An had said not to disturb him, that matter was too important for Sang Hong to ignore. However, there had been no response even after he called out for a long time. He couldn't find Zu An even when he barged in. As such, he had been worried that something had happened to Zu An.

Yu Yanluo sighed and said, "It seems misfortune has struck our clan."

As she was incredibly beautiful, the worry in her sigh naturally drew pity from those present. They immediately felt a desire to protect her, exclaiming, "Madam, please speak your mind. We will definitely help you!"

Of course, there was no lack of intelligent people present. As Yu Yanluo had mentioned the clan, was she referring to Jian Taiding?

Yu Yanluo thus said, "Because the duke returned suddenly, some people did certain shameful things. Out of guilt, they returned to where everything had happened. Yanyou and I secretly followed them..."

Then, she slowly recounted the story she had prepared beforehand. Uncle Ming had deceived Jian Taiding, and they had schemed against Jian Yanyou together. However, Jian Yanyou had actually cultivated the Golden Silkworm Art, allowing him to revive himself. Uncle Ming and Jian Taiding had investigated the cave in alarm, but they had ended up being exposed, so both sides had begun a great battle.

Jian Taiding had realized that he had been tricked, so at the last moment, he had turned to help his older brother defeat Uncle Ming. However, they hadn't expected Uncle Ming to be a Bright Blackeye Parasite. Uncle Ming's cultivation was extremely high, and because Jian Taiding had been seriously injured to begin with, he had been ruthlessly killed by the enraged Uncle Ming...

She pointed toward a certain direction. Only then did the others see the headless corpse of Jian Taiding. They were all alarmed.

Many of them had been in the court with Jian Taiding for many years. They hadn't expected him to meet such a tragic ending and couldn't help but feel some pity. Some thought that with Jian Taiding's death, all of Cloudcenter Commandery was going to change. Finally, there were also some who stared at the

two suspiciously, wondering if this was a plot they had set up. Perhaps they had fooled Uncle Ming and Jian Taiding into coming over, then brutally slaughtered them.

Those present all had their own speculations. That was why, apart from the few officials who had been close to Yu Yanluo and Jian Yanyou to begin with, the others all remained quiet.

In the end, Pei Shao said, "Madam Yu, since you said that Bright Blackeye Parasite was so formidable, how did you two survive?"

Sang Hong also said in agreement, "Indeed. I sensed his majesty's aura just now. If my suspicions are not wrong, I believe someone used the imperial edict. Where is he?"

What he was most worried about at the moment was Zu An. He had immediately rushed over when he sensed the aura of the imperial edict. With Zu An's cultivation, he wouldn't use the imperial edict unless he faced an enemy he absolutely couldn't defeat.

He had rushed all the way over, and yet couldn't even see any sign of him. He had reason to suspect that Zu An had been framed by these two. Considering the fact that Jian Yanyou was seriously injured and couldn't speak, could that have been Zu An's final retaliation? His expression immediately became unkind when he thought about how Ah Zu might have already died.

Yu Yanluo was shocked. That question was what she had been the most worried about. Zu An had said he had a solution. But he couldn't speak at the moment, so Yu Yanluo had absolutely no idea what he was going to do!

Suddenly, her ears moved slightly and she heard a familiar voice. She remained calm, enduring the urge to turn around to look at Zu An. She knew he was communicating through ki.

"Madam?" Sang Hong began to panic when he saw that Yu Yanluo didn't reply.

Yu Yanluo said in response, "I do not know how to explain this. I was in a life and death crisis, but then a mysterious person suddenly appeared. He was the one who killed Uncle Ming."

"What mysterious person would be that formidable?" Pei Shao asked, obviously not believing her explanation.

Yu Yanluo gestured with her hands and explained, "He wears a mask and is dressed in embroidered clothes. He was probably an Embroidered Envoy. Furthermore, the cloud designs on his clothes were embroidered with golden silk."

"A Golden Token Envoy?" Pei Shao and the others exclaimed, shocked.

"Golden Token Eleven!" Sang Hong obviously knew who it was.

The mysterious Golden Token Eleven who had come with them never showed himself. They hadn't expected him to suddenly appear here. He was his majesty's trusted aide, so it was completely expected for him to carry an imperial edict.

Sang Hong quickly asked, "Then has the madam seen Sir Zu at all?"

"I have not. Is he here too?" Yu Yanluo didn't reveal any gaps in her explanation. At the same time, she found the situation strange. She had heard rumors that Sang Hong was ruthless, and that he always acted alone in the court as well, not getting along with anyone. And yet, his concern for Zu An didn't seem faked at all. Is that guy really so charismatic that even someone as rock-hard in nature as Sang Hong was convinced?

Sang Hong sighed in relief when he heard that Zu An hadn't shown up. Meanwhile, when the others heard that Golden Token Eleven was the one who had acted, and paired that with the pile of ashes on the ground, they all sighed in admiration toward his majesty's power.

But some remained suspicious. Pei Shao voiced one of his own suspicions. "Madam Yu, all of this is merely your one-sided story. Do you have any proof?"

The officials who were close to the Yu clan immediately objected. "The duke and Madam Yu are both here, and there is even a Golden Token Envoy to serve as witness. How can this still be fake?"

Sang Hong frowned. The biggest headache had previously been Jian Taiding. Now that he was dead, Cloudcenter Commander would quickly stabilize. On the contrary, he still hadn't completed the mission to cripple the Yu clan. Should I make use of this opportunity?

For some reason, Xu Yu remained quiet the entire time.

When he saw the tacit agreement of the two elders, however, Pei Shao felt more and more certain that he was correct. "Madam Yu, why are you not saying anything?"

Suddenly, Zu An coughed intensely and looked as if he were about to collapse. Yu Yanluo quickly supported him. She was sharp, quickly playing along and saying, "If you want proof, I obviously have it. But the duke is seriously injured right now and urgently needs treatment. Let us bring him back first."

Her recording mirror was ironclad proof, but there were some parts that were unsuitable for public distribution. That was why she needed time to return and process it. Fortunately, Zu An was quick on his feet, or else she really wouldn't have known what to do.

Sang Hong and the others wanted to check his pulse, but Yu Yanluo firmly refused. No one was too suspicious, however, because the court and Cloudcenter Commandery didn't get along too well to begin with. Not even the locals would want the Imperial Envoy checking the pulse of their duke.

Jian Yanyou was still the duke, after all. Now that he was seriously injured, the top priority was his treatment. With such a proper reason, they couldn't say anything else. As such, their group escorted Zu An back to the Duke Manor.

...

The entire Duke Manor entered an uproar. They sought out doctors and began to prepare medicine.

Zhang Ji and the others weeped endlessly, begging to visit the duke. Zu An felt his scalp turn numb when he saw so many women acting like that.

Fortunately, Yu Yanluo stopped them for him and personally watched over the duke's quarters. With her status as the main wife, no one could say anything. They could only wait outside.

After the door was closed, Yu Yanluo quickly took out the recording mirror from before. Then, she took out a few other recording stones. She drew some formations, then began to work quickly.

Zu An was stunned when he saw the scenes fly around. This world even had video editing?

However, his thoughts quickly returned to the Milk of Purple Frost. He wanted to call Mi Li out, but he was also worried that it might be unsuitable with Yu Yanluo present. As such, he got up and said, "Madam, since I don't need to be here right now, I'm going out for a bit."

Yu Yanluo frowned and exclaimed, "No, you cannot leave right now!"

Chapter 1097: Request

Worried that Zu An might be unhappy, Yu Yanluo quickly explained, "There are so many people waiting outside. What if they suddenly burst in and you are not here? What will I do then?"

"Don't worry. This is the Duke Manor, after all. Gong Pan, Maid Xing, and the others have already come to watch the surroundings. Those Cloudcenter officials can't come in," Zu An replied. "The main reason is because, judging from Sir Sang's words, I can assume that he's already noticed that I am not in my room. If I don't show myself, he might blow the situation up more than necessary out of concern for me. It'll be bad if he associates my disappearance with Cloudcenter Duke."

Yu Yanluo had a strange look on her face. "Is this Sang Hong not a bit too concerned about you? It almost seems as if you are his son-in-law or something... But I have heard of some rumors about you and the Sang clan's daughter-in-law. Would it not make more sense for him to hate you?"

Zu An was alarmed. Women's sixth sense truly was terrifying. He really was a bit speechless. He just decided to change the topic, saying, "Well, there are even rumors that the two of us have a thing."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. She blushed and said, "Hmph, no good words can be expected from a scoundrel."

Zu An coughed lightly and said, "Apart from my worries that Sir Sang is looking for me, I need to fool a man too." He pointed at his throat, indicating that he wasn't using Jian Yanyou's voice at the moment.

Yu Yanluo immediately burst out laughing. "Your technique is far too strange. A grown man has to pretend to be a girl? If news of this got out, you might just be too embarrassed to see anyone in public ever again."

"If you don't tell anyone and I don't tell anyone, who will know?" Zu An replied, looking at her with a smile.

Yu Yanluo couldn't help but feel alarmed. She shifted her gaze and asked, "Can you not make us sound like some illicit couple? Hurry and go then."

Zu An was confused. What's going on? Why are you suddenly getting embarrassed? But time was pressing, so he didn't delay. He secretly left through a hidden passage.

Jian Yanyou's room led to Jasper Lane in the city. There were many people there, and it was quite lively, so it was easy for him to move undercover.

Zu An quickly returned to the official residence. He saw that Sang Hong had already returned as well, and was currently asking Pei You and Xiao Jianren nervously, "Has there been any news regarding Sir Zu's whereabouts?!"

Zu An felt warm inside. This man really did see him as his own.

"There isn't. We've already searched everywhere, but we didn't find him," Pei You said worriedly.

Xiao Jianren was a bit calmer. He said, "Sir Sang, please do not worry. Sir Zu's cultivation is high, and he is intelligent too. He must be taking care of some urgent matter if we cannot find him right now."

"Oh?" Sang Hong was a bit worked up because of his concern. With that, he remembered some things and began to think to himself. "Ah Zu disappeared, and Golden Token Eleven appeared. The missing Cloudcenter Duke has also returned..."

Zu An was alarmed, worried that he might really make the connection. He quickly showed himself, exclaiming, "I've made Sir Sang worry!"

Sang Hong was shocked and happy to see him. He asked, "Are you alright?"

"I'm fine." Zu An nodded.

"Where have you been all this time?" Pei You grumbled. He had been having a great time in Jasper Lane, but he had had to leave that wonderful place to look all over for Zu An.

"Being inside all the time was too stuffy, so I went out to get some medicine to clear up my mood. Just now, I seem to have sensed that someone used an imperial edict, so I quickly went back to take a look. Just what is going on?" Zu An replied, pretending to not know a thing.

Sang Hong was half convinced, half skeptical as he said, "Jian Taiping has died; Sir Eleven interfered..." He gave a rough recount of all the information he had just received. He then asked, "Ah Zu, what do you think about all this?"

When he saw Sang Hong's changes in expression, Zu An mumbled to himself for a bit before saying, "This Yu Yanluo seems to be hiding something."

"Indeed, that is what I am thinking too. I just feel that she is hiding something." Sang Hong nodded.

Pei You felt endless regret. If he had known he would be able to see Yu Yanluo this time, like hell he would still go to some Jasper Lane! No matter how pretty the girls at Jasper Lane were, how could they compare to Yu Yanluo?

But he quickly changed his mind. No matter how pretty Yu Yanluo is, he couldn't touch her. That made him feel that the Jasper Lane girls were much more friendly and understanding.

Zu An instead frowned inwardly. Sang Hong really is an old fox after all... He immediately noticed the gap in our story.

Worried that Sang Hong might still be suspicious, he deliberately tested the waters and said, "I feel as if there's something suspicious about that Cloudcenter Duke too."

"Indeed. He did not say anything the entire time; it was always Yu Yanluo who spoke. Even though she said that the duke was injured and could not speak, I could not help but feel that something was not right." Sang Hong continued, "I just discussed things with Xu Yu and the others, and they agree that this Cloudcenter Duke might be fake, and that he is a puppet Yu Yanluo found."

Zu An was alarmed, but he didn't show it on the surface. He said, "Indeed. If he doesn't speak, it might be because they're hiding something. We'll know the truth once we make him speak."

"Indeed. Yu Yanluo might be able to use his injuries as an excuse today, but there is no way the duke will still be unable to speak tomorrow, right? We shall see how she deals with this when the time comes." Sang Hong harrumphed.

Zu An sighed in relief. Thank goodness I came out here today, or else everything would've been over by tomorrow.

The two chatted for a while, and Zu An returned to his room again. When he closed the door, he looked around and frowned. A beautiful figure entered through the window. Surprisingly, it was Daji.

Zu An sighed in relief and said, "Thank goodness you're still here. I thought you went missing."

Daji blinked, looking somewhat wronged. Even though she didn't say anything, Zu An still smiled and said, "Alright, I know it's not your fault. They barged in, so you obviously couldn't continue to pretend you were me. Leaving was the right choice, or else it would have become more troublesome if they saw you."

Daji smiled when she heard him say that, as if she were becoming a bit excited. But when Zu An looked at her more closely, her expression had returned to normal, as if it had never changed before.

Zu An didn't pay too much attention to that and instead thought of something more important. He called out Mi Li and exclaimed, "Big sis empress, big sis empress?"

A while later, the red-clothed Mi Li appeared on the bed. She gave him an annoyed look and shot back, "You're becoming more and more undisciplined. Call me master!"

Her appearance wasn't inferior to Yu Yanluo's at all. There was also a valiant and formidable air between her brows. She gave off the prestige of a queen.

"Sure, big s... Ahem, master." Zu An quickly changed his tone when Mi Li glared at him. However, he quickly asked out of concern, "What happened to your projection? You've become so much smaller."

Mi Li's brows shot up. She exclaimed, "What did you say to me?"

"I said your figure seems to have become a bit smaller, and your outline seems to be much blurrier." Zu An frowned. Mi Li looked as if she might scatter if even a slight breeze blew against her.

Mi Li fell silent. Only after some time passed did she say with a sigh, "My soul has been severely damaged. In the future, our meetings will become finite."

She had often boasted about not fearing death, but for some reason, she suddenly felt a little reluctance. She wasn't even sure what exactly it was she was reluctant about.

Her lonely expression made Zu An feel pained inside. He had originally planned to tease her a bit, but he wasn't in the mood anymore. He quickly took out the jade bottle he had prepared beforehand, saying, "Master, I've already found the Milk of Purple Frost for you."

"What?!" Mi Li had just been lazily reclining in his bed, her eyes half-closed. She immediately sat up straight when she heard that.

Zu An didn't waste any time and just handed her the bottle. At the same time, he released his ki to form a protective screen around them; otherwise, the spiritual essence would leak out and be sensed by the others in the temporary residence.

Mi Li was shocked and overjoyed when she smelled the rich spiritual essence. She exclaimed, "It really is the Milk of Purple Frost! How did you manage to find something so incredible?"

The Milk of Purple Frost had been something exceedingly rare even in her time, let alone in this age where natural ki had already declined so much.

Zu An smiled and said, "It's a long story. Master, hurry and treat your injuries and don't waste any more time. I'll tell you all about it later."

"Alright." Mi Li received the Milk of Purple Frost. At the same time, her expression was somewhat troubled. A while later, she said, "This empress has always separated gratuities and grudges clearly; I hate to owe others favors. Since you've found something so precious for me, it's equivalent to saving my life... How about this? I'll agree to one of your requests as reciprocation."

"Is any kind of request okay?" Zu An's face lit up.

Chapter 1098: Invitation

Mi Li raised a brow, her expression becoming somewhat dangerous as she replied, "What kind of request are you thinking of?"

Zu An laughed in embarrassment and said, "I haven't thought of it yet... Ahem, isn't it right and proper to treat your own master's injuries? Talking about this makes us seem like strangers, doesn't it?"

Mi Li's expression finally eased somewhat. She said, "At least you have some filial piety. But this empress never owes favors. If I said I'll agree to something, I'll agree to it. If you haven't thought it through yet, you can bring it up in the future when you've decided on it. As long as this empress can do it, I'll definitely give my consent."

Zu An's expression turned strange. How can you make a promise like this? Don't you know that there are some people whose filial piety is completely warped...

Mi Li opened up the jade bottle and brought it to her lips. She then licked the contents with her small tongue. Afterward, she closed her eyes to adjust her breathing and transfer her ki.

Zu An was a bit puzzled, asking, "Why aren't you directly ingesting the Milk of Purple Frost?"

Even though there was only a single drop, just licking a bit of it would make him feel like a penny-pincher not willing to eat the meat he had bought.

Mi Li harrumphed and replied, "What do you know? The Milk of Purple Frost is a divine substance that contains the essence of heaven and earth. If I directly ingest the drop, in my current state, a large amount of the essence will be wasted. That's why I need to repair my soul bit by bit using it."

"Then doesn't that mean the process will take a long time?" Zu An replied with a frown.

"What, is that too inconvenient for you?" Mi Li shot back, looking completely calm.

Zu An laughed and replied, "What is master saying? Why would I find that inconvenient? I just wanted you to heal up faster."

"That's more like it." Mi Li nodded in satisfaction. "But I was almost gone for good, so a quick recovery isn't too likely. I need some time to rest and recover. It will take three months at the earliest, and half a year at the latest. I should be able to return to my former state by then."

"It's actually going to take that long?" Zu An exclaimed. Even though Mi Li had already given him a heads up ahead of time, he still hadn't expected it to take that long.

Mi Li said with a serious expression, "An injury to one's soul is no small matter. Furthermore, I was almost completely killed from my wounds. Just the fact that I'll be able to recover within a few months is already proof of the power of the Milk of Purple Frost."

"Alright then. You should focus on your recovery. I'm about to wrap up the Cloudcenter Commandery situation on my own too," Zu An added. He suddenly recalled that Yun Jianyue's soul had also been injured by the emperor's attack. Even though she had been able to recover a bit from the Imperial Hospital's medicines, judging from what Mi Li was saying, she probably hadn't fully recovered yet.

Mi Li gave him a look. A hint of praise appeared in her eyes and she remarked, "Even though you look all sloppy and lustful, you're pretty good at taking care of things. You haven't let down the title of my disciple."

Zu An was speechless. This woman always has to give me a pinch in the balls whenever she compliments me. I guess that's just how she is...

Mi Li reached out her hand and checked his pulse. Then, she nodded and said, "Not bad; you haven't been so obsessed with women you forgot to cultivate. Your soul is already taking shape from practicing what I told you before. It isn't far from fully forming now. Tsk, brat, your cultivation speed is pretty ridiculous, as expected of my disciple."

Zu An sighed and replied, "Cultivation hasn't been easy these days."

"Oh? How do you cultivate every day?" Mi Li asked, immediately taking an interest. She had been focused on her recovery to prevent her soul's collapse, and obviously didn't know what Zu An had been doing.

"I meditate for an hour when I wake up, and I meditate for an hour before I sleep no matter how tired I am," Zu An replied. He thought about the times when even though he had just had an intimate session with Big Manman, leaving him completely exhausted, he had still forced himself to cultivate. Of course, he didn't dare to share that pain with Mi Li, or else she'd immediately make fun of him.

"And then?" Mi Li replied with a frown.

“And then?” Zu An repeated, stunned. He thought for a bit and added, “Oh, I meditate a bit if I have some free time. There’s just been too many things that have happened recently in Cloudcenter Commandery. I’ve been so caught up in things, and yet I still remembered to cultivate. I’ve worked hard, right?”

“That’s it?” Mi Li remarked with a strange expression.

“Were you expecting anything else?” Zu An asked, confused. “Master, don’t tell me you worked even harder than me when you tempered your soul in the past?”

“I...” Mi Li felt as if she were going to vomit blood. However, she said unnaturally with a rigid expression, “Of course I didn’t work that hard back then. Your master was an incredible genius; I didn’t need to spend time meditating at all! Just sleeping was enough.”

“Ah! Master, hurry and teach me how you did it!” Zu An exclaimed excitedly. He really did care about that, because which man wanted to still cultivate after they had just embraced their girl? That was supposed to be the most relaxing and comfortable time, after all.

Mi Li’s face heated up. Like hell she knew how to meditate while she was sleeping. Her talent might have been good, but when she had tempered her soul in the past, even with endless resources, she had still spent an entire year of time.

Yet this guy had only spent so little time, an amount that was completely negligible in her opinion. He had actually reached such a level of soul cultivation in just a month or two! The worst part was that he still acted as if he were extremely hard-working. It really was infuriating.

There was no way the usually prideful Mi Li would admit the truth. She could only come up with a lie to fumble her way through, saying, “If your mind is clear and without distracting thoughts, then you can enter meditation when you sleep.”

“Okay, I’ll give it a try,” Zu An said, a look of longing on his face.

Mi Li thought to herself, Knowing this guy, don’t tell me he’ll really manage to figure out sleep meditation? But she immediately threw that thought away as soon as it appeared in her head. That’s impossible!

After thinking for a bit, she tapped Zu An’s body, and Zu An immediately felt a wave of powerful energy surging within him.

“This is...” Zu An was shocked as the wave of familiar energy passed through him.

“These are Old Mi’s past cultivation and the soul fragments that were previously sealed inside you. Use this chance to completely digest everything. It should be enough for your soul to fully condense,” Mi Li said.

Zu An exclaimed in surprise, “Huh? I thought I was going to use this cultivation to help me break through into the master rank!”

Mi Li shook her head and said, “Your cultivation methods are strange. Whether in terms of quality or quantity, they’re far above that of others at the same level. That’s why you were able to face master ranks while only being at the ninth rank.

“That’s also why you need a tremendous amount of ki to break through the master rank bottleneck. I’ve already unsealed a large amount of Old Mi’s cultivation; there’s only about half of it left. This amount isn’t enough for you to break through. However, because some of his soul fragments still remain, it’s perfect for the construction of your soul.”

Zu An knew that with her cultivation and knowledge, Mi Li wouldn’t make the wrong decision. He said, “Thank you for your guidance, master.”

Mi Li smiled and said, “I can’t have you calling me master for nothing. Teaching you is what I should do. Right, even though Old Mi’s soul has already dispersed and there’s no risk of being possessed, he was still a master rank cultivator in the end. His soul fragments carry some pieces of fragmented will. Be careful and don’t let your mind become corrupted.”

Zu An nodded and became much more cautious. After all, the subject of the soul was no small matter. He didn’t dare to show any carelessness.

Seeing that Zu An didn’t underestimate the matter, Mi Li praised him inwardly. She said in consolation, “However, you don’t need to be too worried. As long as you’re careful, they’ll only become nourishment for your own soul.”

Then, she taught him how to construct his soul before once again disappearing into the Tai’e Sword to focus on her own recovery.

Zu An put his room in order, then secretly left again. Before leaving, he visited Pei You and fooled him with the Kawaii Waifu Voice Changer again.

Good bros have to be loyal to each other. Who else would I look for to do this kind of thing but you?

...

When Zu An returned to the Duke Manor, Yu Yanluo sighed in relief, her eyes red as she said, “You are finally back.”

“Did anything happen?” Zu An asked, surprised.

“No, but I was worried that something might have happened to you outside.” Yu Yanluo sorted out her somewhat messy hair and continued, “I just cannot feel at ease without you at my side.”

She immediately realized that those words were unsuitable when she said them. Her face reddened and she quickly added, “I was scared that the people outside might insist on barging in. We would have been exposed if you had still not returned.”

Zu An smiled and said, “I’ve made madam worry. But I’m already back. Madam has already worked all day, and you’re still seriously injured. You should take the chance to get some rest for now.”

Yu Yanluo felt a wave of fatigue overtake her when Zu An reminded her how tired she was. Her injuries had been quite severe to begin with, and she had just spent a long time focusing on the scenes in the recording stone. Indeed, she couldn’t hold on for much longer, and she rocked back and forth.

Zu An quickly moved to support her, picking her up and placing her on the bed. Yu Yanluo's body froze up a bit when she felt his touch, but she didn't say anything. Only when he helped her cover up did she feel a bit relieved. I really am overthinking things. He is a gentleman.

When he saw her pale complexion, Zu An asked in a concerned tone, "Madam, do you need me to treat your injuries?"

Yu Yanluo trembled from deep within. She immediately pulled her covers closer and exclaimed, "I do not!"

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle when he saw how alarmed she was. He replied, "Then madam should rest well."

"Where are you going?" Yu Yanluo asked as soon as she saw him turn around.

"Don't worry, I'm not going anywhere. I'll just be meditating here," Zu An replied.

Yu Yanluo bit her lips when she saw how worn out Zu An was. She had a conflicted expression, but in the end, she still quietly said, "You should sleep in the bed too."

Chapter 1099: Cultivating in His Sleep

Zu An was stunned. The capital's former number one beauty was lying within the covers, and she was calling him over bashfully to sleep with her. Which man in this world could resist such a temptation?

Yu Yanluo quickly explained when she saw his strange expression, "Do not think any random thoughts. I am only saying this because you have worked hard for an entire day, and you are still injured too. You have also used up so much energy helping me, so you need to rest. Sleeping on the bed would at least allow you to rest a bit better."

Only then did Zu An sigh in relief. Even though he was narcissistic, it wasn't to the point that he believed others would throw themselves at him just like that. He chuckled, then began to strip down, saying, "Then I'll have to thank the madam."

Yu Yanluo began to panic when she saw him remove his clothing near the window. At the same time, she was regretting her decision. Why did I have to invite him over just now? Her voice trembled as she murmured, "Why did you not refuse even once..." If he had refused her, she could still use that chance to take back her invitation.

"Refuse?" Zu An exclaimed, stunned. "Could it be that madam doesn't actually want me to agree?"

Yu Yanluo was a bit at a loss for words. Zu An had saved her several times, and he was only so exhausted and worn out because he had worked so hard to treat her. How could she just let him sit on a chair for the entire night? She bit her lip, then gently shook her head in the end, saying, "Of course not."

Zu An smiled and didn't say anything. He then took off his pants too.

Yu Yanluo looked away as she blushed. Good thing he is not going to go so far as to take everything off. Zu An was about to get in bed, but she quickly stopped him. Under his shocked gaze, she hesitated and said, "You should recover your original appearance, or else I will feel really awkward."

Zu An laughed and said, "I changed into the duke's appearance because I was worried that the people from the manor might find out." As he spoke, however, he returned to his original appearance. Yu Yanluo sighed with relief, and also retracted her hand.

Zu An had a strange expression as he thought, This woman wouldn't let me get in bed with the appearance of her husband, and instead let me in. Why does this feel so weird?

The bed sank a bit, and Yu Yanluo knew that Zu An had gotten on the bed. She moved aside to give him some space, but said, "Just to make this clear, you cannot do anything disrespectful at night. Also, you have to find your own covers." She immediately wrapped the entire blanket around herself, scared that Zu An might just get into her covers.

Zu An was starting to get a headache. He asked, "How am I supposed to get covers in this kind of situation? Do you want me to go outside and ask for them? Won't that just completely expose our relationship?"

Yu Yanluo turned around. There was an ambiguous smile in her eyes as she said, "You are a bad person; I do not trust you."

Zu An was dissatisfied as he replied, "I'm a bad person? Then I wouldn't have gone through all that effort to help you get rid of the poison's effects and would instead have used my body to do it."

Yu Yanluo's face turned red when she remembered the intimacy of that process. It was not even that different from really doing it... But she had to give him credit for that. She said, "You were indeed a gentleman in that matter, but you are thinking naughty things right now."

Zu An was stunned. Yu Yanluo sighed and said, "You even have clothes in your storage pouch, and you told me that you had prepared all types of essential goods. I refuse to believe that you do not have covers."

Zu An was speechless. Why the hell did I kick myself in the foot?! I wouldn't have bragged about that to her if I knew it would be like this.

He was about to deny it, but when he saw the clear expression in her eyes, he was too embarrassed to lie. He could only take out some covers and lie down, looking depressed. Yu Yanluo grinned when she saw his dejected state, feeling quite proud of herself.

Zu An lay down. His ears were a bit itchy for some reason. When he turned around, he saw that Yu Yanluo's hair had scattered off to the side. Her hair was soft and sleek, giving off a faint fragrance. Zu An couldn't help but reach out and twirl a bundle of her hair.

Yu Yanluo's breath quickened. She said in alarm, "I am too tired, so I am going to sleep. You should rest early too." She closed her eyes and pretended to sleep, but her trembling eyelashes sold her out.

Zu An chuckled. This woman was always surrounded by all sorts of men, and had fooled all of them. She always gave off a calm and unhurried demeanor, making them feel as if she were neither close nor distant. But now, she didn't seem all that unreachable anymore.

From the dating sims he had played, he knew it was the best time to farm points with her. If he was too impatient and crossed the line, it would instead make her attitude toward him plummet.

He had his own affairs to take care of, so he laughed and said with a smile, "Goodnight, madam."

He closed his eyes and began to cultivate using the method Mi Li had passed onto him. He thought, Right, Mi Li seemed to have said that she could cultivate even in her sleep. If she can do it, there's no reason why I can't!

As such, he began to try her method. Unfortunately, the more he relaxed and cleared his mind, the more random thoughts came in, disturbing his meditation. All of his attempts ended in failure. Out of helplessness, he could only give up. Is my aptitude really inferior to hers? I guess it makes sense. There were probably many people with transcendent aptitude back in her age.

He didn't let it bother him too much and stopped thinking about it. Seeing as his thoughts were messy, he didn't force himself to cultivate. Instead, he began to count sheep.

One sheep, two sheep, three sheep...

He didn't count them in a simple way, but rather clearly visualized every single sheep that passed by. Some were cute little sheep, and some were mischievous big black sheep.

Whenever he counted a sheep, it would then return to its pen. The big black sheep that were naughty were put in another pen, and he gave them a kick.

Sure enough, by the time he counted up to seventy or eighty, he unknowingly fell asleep.

...

Huh? I'm asleep, right?

But why is my consciousness still clear?

There was nothing else for him to do, so he tried to meditate. He was pleasantly surprised to discover that his soul really did start to slowly grow stronger.

My aptitude wasn't inferior after all! The next time I see her, I'll be sure to tell her that her method really is great.

If Mi Li had been awake, she would be completely flabbergasted by such a thing. She didn't even know such a sleep meditation method herself. She had just said what she said to show off. Never would she have thought that with Zu An's transcendent aptitude, he would actually somehow succeed!

After doing it for some time, Zu An got used to the meditation method, but he wasn't satisfied with it alone.

Didn't Mi Li release Old Mi's leftover cultivation and soul fragments? I'll just use this chance to refine it all away.

If other cultivators knew what he was doing, they might just curse him for courting death. After all, tempering the soul was something only those at the master rank could do. Only when the body was strong enough could it protect the weak soul. Trying to cultivate the soul before reaching the master rank was equivalent to courting death for most cultivators.

Zu An was relying on his strong body and ki reserves that far surpassed others of his level in order to barely be able to train his soul. But he hadn't reached the proper cultivation rank, so he was still taking a huge risk.

And yet, he wasn't using a seclusion room to do so, and no one was watching over him. Instead, he was choosing to condense his own soul in his sleep? And he chose to do it while sleeping in the same bed as the capital's number one beauty?

How could any normal man resist such a tremendous temptation? Wasn't this just willingly letting himself be destroyed? The final trial of soul condensation wasn't something that permitted the slightest bit of distraction!

But Zu An wasn't someone from this world. He didn't know a lot of common cultivation knowledge. As such, he decided to just try it.

Yu Yanluo had thought that Zu An would find a reason to get closer to her. She had been a bit distressed, wondering how she was going to refuse him. If it were anyone else, she wouldn't feel such a headache at all. She was more than proficient in rejecting men.

But this guy was completely different from other men. She didn't want him to feel hurt or discouraged from her rejection, worrying that it might ruin their relationship. Of course, if it had been any other man, there was no way she would have let anyone else sleep in the same bed as her anyway.

But even though she was conflicted for so long, Zu An didn't do a thing. She couldn't help but secretly open her eyes a crack, looking at the man beside her.

"He fell asleep?" Yu Yanluo exclaimed, stunned. After all, she had experienced too many underhanded methods from other men, so her first thought was that he was pretending to fall asleep, that he was doing so to gain her favor.

But she was a cultivator. She quickly discerned that he really was asleep. Now, it was her turn to question life. She subconsciously rubbed her own cheeks, thinking, Do not tell me I am so worn out I have already lost all of my charm?

But she quickly laughed at her own behavior. When had she suddenly become like a young lady, worrying about such things?

She turned around to face Zu An. This was the first time she'd had a chance to carefully examine his face. She looked at his handsome face that looked as if it had been carved out of stone. This brat is pretty handsome.

She recalled the young man she had met back then on Brightmoon City's outskirts. At the time, he had vowed that he was going to become her man. Of course, he had still been so weak back then, so she hadn't treated such 'bold and visionary' words as a big deal.

But the whims of fate loved to toy with people. Now, she had actually ended up sleeping with that young man in the same bed. When she realized that, a blush filled her cheeks, making her look even more charming and moving.

Suddenly, Zu An appeared to be having a nightmare. He suddenly groaned in pain.

“What’s wrong?” Yu Yanluo exclaimed, jumping in fright. She quickly moved over to check his condition. She had never expected Zu An would reach out and grab her.

“Ah!” Yu Yanluo’s bashful and angry cry echoed through the room.

Chapter 1100: Secrets of the Previous Dynasty

Zu An began absorbing Old Mi’s cultivation, using it to temper his own soul. When he felt that the preparation work was done, he began to absorb the soul fragments.

Only then did he realize just how deep and unmeasurable Old Mi had been. He had been quite the powerful individual even among master rank cultivators. Even though he had already perished, every single soul fragment still carried traces of his former power.

Any normal person would immediately go insane and die. However, Zu An’s soul foundation was already firm. Together with the absorption method Mi Li had passed onto him, he could greatly reduce the dangers.

But Mi Li had warned him before that he had to be careful, and that he couldn't let Old Mi’s lingering will corrupt him. Even though there was no danger of possession, there was still a chance for his mind to suffer a powerful backlash.

There was no way Zu An would go into the process recklessly. He didn’t dare to absorb too much at once either, and instead tried to just absorb a single fragment first.

Then, he felt his vision blur. Many complicated scenes appeared in his mind, seemingly recounting the life of a young man. Zu An knew they were memories of Old Mi’s youth. However, everything he saw was blurry, so he wasn’t affected too much. He simply watched with the eyes of a bystander.

But the scenes quickly became clearer, and it was as if he were there experiencing those moments himself. He saw that Old Mi had been so poor he couldn't even survive on his own, and had had no choice but to sell himself into the Imperial Palace. Entering the palace in that way meant one had to become a eunuch.

Then, Old Mi had been sent to the legendary castration room. The interior was extremely hot, and miserable screams filled the air from time to time. One after another, eunuchs were being created. When he had seen the strange smiles of the old eunuchs around him, Old Mi panicked, beginning to struggle.

It was all too real. Zu An had clearly been watching Old Mi’s suffering, and yet a second later, it felt as if he were the one to experience it himself! It was like a first person virtual reality experience...

His arms and legs were bound to the bed. Then, an old eunuch holding a shining trowel turned toward him, a sinister smile on his face. After that, a group of lesser eunuchs hurriedly removed his pants. The old eunuch slowly walked over with the sharp tool. Zu An could feel the sharpness of the blade even from far away. It seemed as if it could easily slice through flesh and bone.

Even though he knew what Old Mi had gone through, the first person view still made Zu An shiver. He had originally felt that his mind was already tough enough to endure any kind of pain and suffering. But never had he expected to encounter such a trial.

“Noooo!”

As the old eunuch approached closer and closer, he could even feel the chilliness of the blade on his exposed skin. Zu An instinctively began to struggle. He was completely immersed in the memory. He couldn't even tell what was real and what was fake anymore.

His limbs were still bound to the bed. It was as if he were dreaming. He had forgotten all of his cultivation. At that moment, he was as powerless as a normal person.

As his pants were undone and the blade crept closer to his thighs, the ice-cold sensation made all of his fine hairs stand on end.

He didn't know where he had gotten the strength, but he finally managed to free one hand. He frantically reached out to stop the other party.

Huh? Why does it feel so soft?

He instinctively moved around. The thing in his hand seemed a bit too soft and flexible. However, he couldn't be bothered to think about it too much. The only thing he was focused on was escaping the absolute tragedy he was facing.

...

Meanwhile, Yu Yanluo looked at the man next to her. For some reason, the longer she stared at him, the more pleasing she found him. After some time, however, she suddenly realized that something wasn't right. He seemed to be in pain, as if he were experiencing something terrifying.

“Ah Zu, what is going on?” she called out, quickly moving over to take a look.

However, she couldn't have expected that he would suddenly raise his hand. She was so startled that she couldn't even evade it, and so the hand landed straight on target.

Her mind instantly went blank. She didn't even know what to think anymore. But what was happening to her finally snapped her out of her daze. This scoundrel dares to even fondle that?

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

She instinctively raised her palm to slap him. But she quickly noticed that his eyes were still closed, and he was in pain.

“Has his cultivation deviated?” she murmured, alarmed. As a cultivator, she naturally knew the dangers of such a thing. If she struck him in that situation, the consequences would be devastating.

She finally became clear-headed again. She had spent a lot of time with him so far, and he had always been a gentleman through and through. His sudden rude action was definitely unintended.

She felt relieved when she thought of that and didn't feel as angry as before. At the same time, she tried to think of ways to help him.

She wanted to help him infuse ki, but she didn't know what he was experiencing, so it could make things worse instead. But if she tried to call out to him, she could disturb him at a crucial point.

In the end, she was disappointed to discover that all she could do for him was to wait helplessly by his side and not disturb him.

But his hand is surprisingly honest, not holding back in the slightest.

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

...

Meanwhile, inside the illusion, Zu An's hands and feet had been bound again. He felt despair as the shining blade descended.

Suddenly, a string of Rage points entered his mind.

Huh?

Yu Yanluo, Rage points...

Who am I? Where am I?

At that instant, a large amount of information returned to his mind. His eyes quickly cleared up again.

The one being tormented is Old Mi, not me!

The moment he realized that, it was as if all of his cultivation had returned. He shook off the lesser eunuchs, then kicked the old eunuch with the blade, sending him flying.

Then, he became clear-headed again and the scene disappeared. He had completely absorbed the soul fragment.

Zu An sighed in relief. He hadn't expected the process to be so dangerous! Even though the blade might not have dealt any true physiological damage to him, it might very well have left an indelible trauma. He definitely didn't want to personally go through what Old Mi had experienced.

Then, he began to absorb the second piece. After his previous experience, the second went much more smoothly.

Huh? Wait, what was that soft sensation earlier?

A steamed bun?

Why would Old Mi remember something like that?

A veteran like him obviously knew what else it could be, but a eunuch like Old Mi definitely wouldn't have such an experience. As such, he abandoned the thought.

Old Mi had probably worked some odd jobs around the Imperial Palace at first. He might have had to knead dough in the kitchen. That was probably his happiest memory, or else Zu An wouldn't have felt any happiness.

Sigh, this Old Mi really didn't have any prospects. The happiest thing he did in his entire life was just kneading some dough in the kitchen?

He collected his thoughts and continued to absorb the other soul fragments. Subsequently, he saw all kinds of scenes. The Imperial Palace was quite different from the one he was used to. At first, he thought it was a different Imperial Palace. But some parts of it were identical, so he realized it was the same palace.

Huh? Did the Imperial Palace really change that much over the years?

Then, various maids, concubines, and even the emperor appeared one after another. The most shocking thing was that the emperor wasn't the one he was used to.

Is this the former emperor?

No, that's not it.

His expression changed, because he saw that the emperor's robes were completely different from the current emperor's.

During his time in the Imperial Palace, he had learned that there were strict regulations for each person's uniform. There was no way the difference would be so large.

Then, he heard some indistinct terms of address and finally realized what was happening. This was before the Zhou Dynasty; he was seeing the Meng Dynasty's emperor!

The current government had always kept all records of the Meng Dynasty confidential. But Zu An had become part of the upper echelon, so he had gained much more authority than a regular person. He knew that the emperor of his own dynasty had seized power from the Meng Dynasty, and the way he had done so wasn't the most honorable. But not even someone like him knew any more details than that.

"Huh? This Old Mi seems to have lived through several emperors," Zu An remarked, feeling somewhat shocked as he watched the scenes go past.

However, he was confused as he watched the scene unfold. Other than the first emperor, the others all seemed to be quite young. It seemed all of the first emperor's children had died prematurely. Later on, he himself had been seriously injured and afflicted by an illness, so the threat of having no successors had become extremely real. As such, the first emperor could only choose his successor from the royal family.

The empress wasn't his first wife, but rather someone he had raised out of his concern for her. She was quite young. If they chose a fully grown member of the royal family, the young empress would be left in quite the awkward position. As such, they had ended up choosing a young nephew as their adopted son.

Zu An was confused. Shouldn't these have been Old Mi's most unforgettable memories? Only the most powerful lingering will could be left behind as fragments after the original owner passed on. For example, the scene of being castrated was something completely understandable. But why was Old Mi's memory of this scene so clear?

Several more scenes surrounded him. He saw a young emperor lead a group of eunuchs and maids, brandishing his weapon as he charged at an important minister. The minister was cold and detached,

and didn't need to do anything as his subordinates killed all of the eunuchs and maids. Even the young emperor died in the battle.

Zu An was alarmed, because he saw that the important minister's appearance was somewhat familiar. He had seen a picture of him before in the Imperial Palace.

The minister was the founding emperor of the Zhou Dynasty!

No wonder Old Mi had recalled the scene of the Meng Dynasty so clearly. So that was what had happened!

...

He absorbed the soul fragments piece by piece. In the end, there was only one piece left. Just as he started absorbing the last fragment, however, endless flames surged before him. A terrifying pressure descended, and a massive phoenix surrounded in blazing flames appeared in the darkness.