

Immortal 1101

Chapter 1101: Soul Condensed

Old Mi felt fear and trepidation, but Zu An instead felt a sense of intimacy. He realized something. The technique he had learned was the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. As the name implied, it had something to do with a phoenix. Was this it?

The feelings of fear and intimacy combined together, giving Zu An an extremely strange and inexplicable sensation.

The scene changed just then. The phoenix seemed to be angry. It waved its wings, raining down fireballs from the skies. The dark space was immediately engulfed in a sea of lava. Many of Old Mi's companions went up in flames, screaming as they fell into the lava, never to be heard from again. Even though all the members of their group were competent individuals with their own special skills, no matter what they tried, they still couldn't deal with the phoenix's large-scale attack.

In the end, only Old Mi and a few others could escape. However, most of them were injured. And yet, none of them felt a sense of defeat; they instead became excited. They all looked toward a book bound in golden silk.

Even though the scene was indistinct, Zu An immediately recognized the book. It was the first secret text that had completely altered his fate, the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra!

What followed were things Zu An had expected. Old Mi had felt a sudden wave of greed overwhelm him and suddenly attacked the survivors. After killing all of them, he took the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra with him and escaped far away.

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"So that was what happened!" Zu An thought to himself. These were indeed the most unforgettable moments in Old Mi's memory.

Of course, one other thing was definitely hard to forget; it was the moment when Zu An had retaliated and killed him instead. But that had happened too suddenly, and Old Mi had passed away before that memory even solidified.

Zu An digested the memories while fully absorbing the soul power within the fragments. His soul finally began to condense and take form according to the method Mi Li had passed onto him. In the process, he experienced several attacks on his mind. But after what had happened previously, they were child's play to deal with.

Soon afterward, his soul gradually took form. His soul was no longer something imaginary; rather, it gradually became tangible. A miniature person appeared inside him, looking exactly the same as him.

Mi Li didn't have a flesh body and always interacted with him in her soul body form. That was what she relied on.

But why is my soul so little?

Mi Li's is a perfect replica of her real self, but mine is like a freaking infant...

I'm too embarrassed to even show it to Mi Li.

At the same time, however, he discovered that his own perception was gradually becoming clearer. Before, he had needed to use the jade badge to sense most of his surroundings. But after, he could clearly sense the movements of every tree and every blade of grass around the courtyard.

Maid Xing and Gong Pan were standing guard at the entrance, as well as various guards and maids. There were also people from several different factions waiting outside. He even had a feeling that as long as he wanted it, the very lives of everyone around him would be within his control.

He sighed in amazement. No wonder those at the master rank felt a natural superiority toward those who were beneath that rank. It wasn't just the strength that came from their level of cultivation; the experience of being at that level simply beyond the imaginations of all those who hadn't reached it yet.

If one's every action and movement could be perceived by the opponent, they could already sense what one was going to do as soon as one thought of it, long since anticipating the attack. What would be the point of fighting in that case?

When he had fought against Jian Taiding previously, even though he had all sorts of miraculous skills, and his cultivation wasn't even truly inferior, it was precisely because of that sense that he had always been at a disadvantage during their battle. Fortunately, he had used his own body as bait. Meanwhile, Jian Taiding had never expected his body to be that tough. That was why Zu An had been able to turn things around.

Now that his soul had already been condensed, even though no one had taught him how to properly use it yet, he could start figuring out most of it himself. That meant he didn't have to be scared of any opponents anticipating his attacks beforehand anymore. Of course, the side with the stronger soul would definitely have an advantage, but it wouldn't be as exaggerated as before. The battle would depend more on his own skills.

He now understood why Mi Li had been so set on focusing on his soul, and why she hadn't rushed him into breaking through to the master rank, making him condense his soul instead.

Even if he broke through into the master rank, he would still have to condense his soul bit by bit. He would still have just as much trouble if he faced a veteran master rank opponent then. But now that he had condensed his soul first, even if he faced someone at the late stage of the master rank, he wouldn't be fighting a losing battle from the start.

He had an advantage in cultivation because of the secret manuals he cultivated to begin with. Every bit of progress required a sea of ki, so the amount of ki he had accumulated so far was no joke. As such, he wouldn't be inferior to a master rank cultivator at all.

Forget about the fact that he had already condensed his soul ahead of time, once he did break through into the master rank, compared to other cultivators, his future would be limitless.

The miniature copy of him began floating around, as if it were about to leave him.

Mi Li had previously told him that once the soul formed, it could leave the body for a short period of time. It wouldn't be too dangerous as long as it didn't go too far. Of course, to remain in soul form for a long time the way she did was something only a grandmaster could hope to do.

Zu An tried to let the copy go. Sure enough, the soul left his body through his head. Seeing himself from a third person perspective really was a strange feeling. It was like watching a soul leave a corpse...

Pah pah pah! What the hell am I thinking?

"I wonder if Yu Yanluo is asleep yet," Zu An muttered, looking toward her out of curiosity.

Suddenly, his eyes narrowed; he was so scared that he almost passed out. He saw that his hand was right in front of her chest, her eyes were completely red, and she was about to cry. She was clearly in pain from his grip. But she was just biting down on her lip, not uttering a single sound. She remained quiet, clearly having felt wronged the entire time.

What is going on?

Zu An finally realized that the softness he had felt wasn't Old Mi's memory; rather, he had been groping Yu Yanluo!

Who knew how many men in this world wanted to do something like that? And yet, only he alone had the honor of doing such a thing. If other men were to see him, just the Rage points alone would have been enough to drown him to death.

But he was a bit surprised. Why hadn't Yu Yanluo resisted? According to their interactions, he knew she was definitely no weak bunny rabbit.

When he saw the look of worry in her beautiful eyes, however, he immediately realized what was happening. She had probably done so because he was at a crucial stage of cultivation, worrying that his cultivation might deviate if she did anything. Zu An felt warm inside when he realized that.

Suddenly, a wave of dizziness came over him. He felt his entire body start to become weak and powerless. Countless sharp, tearing pains attacked his body. Only then did he discover that he was already unknowingly floating back into his own head. It was clear that with his current cultivation, his soul couldn't move too far from his body yet.

After such an experience, he couldn't help but admire the truly powerful cultivators Mi Li had spoken of, and how their souls could wander tens of thousands of li in a single night. He was still too far off from that.

As such, he didn't dare to act carelessly at all. He quickly used the method Mi Li taught him to guide his soul back into his body.

Yu Yanluo had been paying close attention to his condition, so she immediately sensed the change and exclaimed, "You have awoken?"

Zu An pretended to have a headache and reached toward his forehead as soon as he opened his eyes, groaning, "Ah, my head hurts."

Seeing that Zu An had retracted his naughty hand, Yu Yanluo sighed in relief. She asked with a blush, "How do you feel?"

"I was cultivating my soul just now and experienced a bit of a backlash," Zu An said as he opened his eyes.

"What?! You are actually starting to cultivate the soul? That is too dangerous!" Yu Yanluo jumped in fright. She quickly warned him not to be so reckless and impatient, or else his body and spirit might scatter.

"Thank you, madam, for your concern." Zu An couldn't really explain the situation to her, so he could only change the topic. He asked, "Did anything happen just now?"

Yu Yanluo pursed her red lips and decisively said, "Not at all."

Zu An was stunned. He had thought that she might criticize him, but she actually just pretended that nothing had happened. He felt both moved and conflicted when he realized that.

Yu Yanluo continued, "I have heard that cultivating the soul could easily lead to heart deviation, and that you would see all kinds of illusions. If you were to make even a single mistake, you might be trapped inside forever. Just what kind of illusion did you see?"

Zu An felt extremely moved. When he heard that, he instinctively replied, "Soft steamed bun."

Yu Yanluo was stunned.

Zu An screamed inwardly, 'I screwed up!' He quickly said, "Ahem, I was sent to do odd jobs around the kitchen in the illusion and was constantly harassed by the head chef. I was forced to knead buns from morning until night. My hands felt as if they were about to fall off from how sore they were."

"Why would you experience such a strange illusion?" Yu Yanluo ground her teeth. The one who is sore is clearly me, okay?!

Chapter 1102: Predicament

Zu An's expression stiffened. When he saw Yu Yanluo's look of suspicion, his mind moved faster than ever before. He said, "It might've been because I was just too poor when I was little, so I had no choice but to help out in the local restaurant. I didn't expect my resentment from my childhood to be so strong and become a vice."

Yu Yanluo had also looked into Zu An's background, so she knew that he had been without parents growing up. He and his aunt and uncle had been mutually dependent on each other for survival. Not long afterwards, even those relatives had passed away. His childhood really had been bitter and difficult.

She was filled with a motherly impulse and subconsciously wanted to take him into her arms to hug him. But she knew it was inappropriate as soon as she raised her arms, and pulled back awkwardly. Instead, she said, "Those unhappy memories are already in the past. Everything will be better."

"Thank you, madam, for comforting me." Zu An felt a bit guilty as he replied. He hadn't expected her to believe him so easily.

"Since there is nothing else, you should hurry and rest. It is not early anymore." Yu Yanluo covered her mouth and yawned. She had been seriously injured to begin with. After spending so long about Zu An, she had used up a lot of mental fortitude and felt extremely tired.

"Okay. Goodnight, madam," Zu An replied with a nod.

Yu Yanluo lay down again, facing away from Zu An. Then, she secretly rubbed her chest under the covers. This brat really is unreasonably strong.

Zu An's soul had already formed, so her secret movements didn't escape his detection. He couldn't help but feel utterly embarrassed.

Meanwhile, Yu Yanluo really was tired. She was still a bit tense at first, but she fell soundly asleep soon afterward.

But Zu An wasn't so lucky. There was a faint lingering aroma, and the covers didn't do much to hide Yu Yanluo's stunning figure. He couldn't fall asleep no matter what he did...

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The next morning, Yu Yanluo woke up. She jumped in fright. When had she fallen asleep last night? She lowered her head to look at her clothes. She sighed in relief when she saw that everything was still in order.

She pursed her lips. She had actually shared the bed with another man, and she had fallen asleep? Just a few days prior, that would have been something unimaginable for her.

She secretly turned around to look at Zu An. However, what she saw was a pair of reddened eyes. She jumped in fright and asked, "What's wrong? Why are your eyes so red?"

"I couldn't sleep at all..." Zu An sighed. This woman really is unguarded. She just slept right next to me. Is she trying to test me?

"Huh? Why couldn't you sleep?" Yu Yanluo asked, puzzled.

"The world's number one beauty was lying down next to me. I don't think any man in this world could fall asleep in that situation." Zu An sighed.

Yu Yanluo blushed. She harrumphed. "Look at you... If I had known it would be like this, I wouldn't have called you over to sleep in this bed." She started to get up, but she immediately lay back down with a startled cry.

"What's wrong?" Zu An exclaimed, alarmed. He thought she had been hurt somewhere.

Yu Yanluo gave him a resentful look and replied, "You're on my hair!"

Zu An was alarmed and immediately moved aside.

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Maid Xing was outside, but she could hear the activity inside. She was about to enter, and ask if the madam needed help getting dressed and cleaned up, but she heard 'You're on my hair!' and jumped in alarm. The madam and the duke slept together?

As Yu Yanluo's personal maid, she obviously knew that the madam and the duke were only husband and wife in name. Why had they suddenly slept in the same bed?

Could it be that the madam's feelings changed with the duke's return, and she decided to sincerely accept him?

But that cannot be! I have already served the madam for so long. The madam should have no romantic feelings for the duke!

She didn't know what was happening inside. After a bit of hesitation, she decided to stay outside to prevent any awkwardness

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A while later, the door opened from inside, and Yu Yanluo emerged alone. Maid Xing quickly greeted her when she saw her.

Suddenly, all of the officials who had been waiting outside swarmed over. They all cried out, saying they wished to meet with the duke. At first, Maid Xing and Gong Pan could still hold them back. However, as Sang Hong, Xu Yu, Pei Shao, and the others rushed over, the situation quickly grew out of control.

"Madam Yu, we didn't pressure the duke because he was injured. But after a night to rest and recover, is the duke still unable to speak?" Pei Shao harrumphed. "Is he really unable to talk because of his injuries, or did you tell him not to speak? Or was he an imposter to begin with?"

The other officials began to whisper among themselves when they heard what he said. When they looked at Yu Yanluo, their gazes were full of alarm and suspicion.

While Yu Yanluo was at a loss for what to do, Zu An walked out and called out, "Who wishes to meet with me?"

Zu An had already used Face of a Thousand Identities to regain Jian Yanyou's appearance. The onlookers were shocked when they saw him. They hadn't expected it to really be the duke!

The officials who were closer to the Yu clan immediately began to greet him. Pei Shao and the others were still suspicious, asking, "Are you really the duke?"

Zu An laughed and retorted, "If I am not, could it be that you are?"

A wave of aura swept out, and those present felt a powerful divine will sweep over them. They immediately trembled in fear.

The onlookers were all intelligent. They quickly realized that was a power only master ranked cultivators could have. They were all horrified, convinced that the person before them really was the duke. Even though he was injured and his strength had regressed a bit, the pressure that originated from his soul still remained.

Pei Shao obviously didn't dare to question him anymore, but Sang Hong wasn't convinced. He spoke out again. "Last night, Madam Yu said that it was Uncle Ming who incited Jian Taiding to do those things. Does the duke acknowledge what she said?"

Zu An sighed and replied, "Indeed. It is just a pity that Taiding was fooled by a villain. Fortunately, he was able to return to the right path at the last minute, fighting together with us. He is worthy of his

status as a member of the Jian clan, worthy of being my younger brother..." As he spoke, he sounded incredibly emotional, as if he were filled with grief.

Yu Yanluo was shocked. This brat's acting skills really are something else! Was he also just tricking me before? But when she remembered all of the things that had happened, she still discarded that thought.

Now that they had confirmed the identity of 'Jian Yanyou', and that his brotherly affection for Jian Taiding wasn't fake, those gathered were fully convinced. Even those who had come to criticize Jian Taiding didn't suspect anything anymore, only cursing Uncle Ming.

After all, as far as they could tell, Jian Taiding had been quite close to Uncle Ming for some time. However, It turned out Uncle Ming was a deceiver who was concealing malice.

Then, Yu Yanluo took out the edited recording stone for the others to see. When they saw Uncle Ming's confessions, their last hints of suspicion also completely disappeared.

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All that was left was for Yu Yanluo to deal with assorted details of the aftermath.

Zu An excused himself, saying that he was injured and was entering seclusion. He didn't draw much suspicion. However, being left alone all of a sudden made him feel like he had nothing to do. For some reason, though, he just felt that he had forgotten something.

What did I forget?

He couldn't think of what he had forgotten even after a long time. Everything was taking a turn for the better, so he didn't think too much about it either. He found a chance to change his appearance and secretly return to the imperial residence.

It just so happened that Sang Hong knocked on his door, looking for him not long after he had just snuck back in. When Zu An opened the door, Sang Hong said somewhat apologetically, "Ah Zu, it isn't that I want to disturb your rest, but rather that I really have some things I need to discuss with you."

"Respected uncle is too courteous. Hurry, come in," Zu An replied. They naturally had to address each other a bit more intimately when it was just the two of them.

Sang Hong sighed several times after he came in. He seemed about to say something, but couldn't bring himself to speak. Zu An chuckled when he saw that and said, "Respected uncle, just tell me if you have anything to say. With our relationship, there's no need to feel any reservations."

Sang Hong felt warm inside when he heard that. He said, "Ah Zu, you aren't an outsider, so I won't beat around the bush. I've just received a decree from the capital."

"Oh? What did his majesty say?" Zu An asked. He knew that there was a way for the capital and the Imperial Envoy to quickly communicate with each other.

Sang Hong sighed and replied, "His majesty berated me quite ruthlessly, telling me to focus on my own mission."

"Why would he berate you?" Zu An asked with a frown.

“Even though his majesty didn’t say it outright, according to all of the information I’ve gathered, King Yan’s troops have already stopped in Yi Commandery. I reckon his majesty wasn’t happy that I privately transferred a king’s troops,” Sang Hong said with a bitter smile.

Zu An felt some injustice on Sang Hong’s behalf. He remarked, “His majesty is just being an armchair expert right now. The tension in Cloudcenter Commandery was at its worst and on the verge of erupting, and was at its most dangerous. That was why respected uncle transferred over King Yan’s troops. Who could have known that things would be settled afterward like this?”

Sang Hong laughed in self-mockery and replied, “His majesty doesn’t care about that very much; he only cares about the results. What can we do as subjects? Of course we can only endure the criticism.

“The key is that our mission still hasn’t been completed yet. What his majesty wanted was to reclaim the Yu clan’s authority and clip one of King Qi’s wings. But now that Jian Taiding has already died and Cloudcenter Commandery has stabilized, I can’t do anything to the Yu clan even if I want to,” he continued. That was what he was the most distressed about. The reason why he had called over King Yan’s troops was because he had planned to take out the Yu clan at the same time. However, his plans couldn’t keep up with reality.

Zu An knew that Sang Hong had always been on the emperor’s side. Even though Sang Hong had felt a bit of dissatisfaction and had certain thoughts after Sang Qian’s death, it wasn’t to the point that he would fully betray the emperor. That was why Zu An couldn’t tell him to just spare the Yu clan.

But he couldn’t completely ignore the matter either. After all, Sang Hong had been acting as the Imperial Envoy to redeem his past sins through achievements in the first place. If he messed things up, the Sang clan would most likely be done for once he returned. And whether it came to Zheng Dan or Sang Qien, the downfall of the Sang clan wouldn’t bring Zu An any benefits.

Zu An remained quiet for a while. Then, he said, “I have a solution!”

Chapter 1103: Horrifying Discovery

Sang Hong’s eyes lit up and he asked, “What solution?”

Zu An didn’t directly respond to what he was saying and instead asked, “Respected uncle, what do you think of what Madam Yu said? That Jian Taiding wasn’t the main culprit, but rather that Uncle Ming was the main instigator?”

Sang Hong remained silent for a moment, then said, “From what I’ve seen, Jian Taiding was arrogant and despotic. He hid the truth from the masses in Cloudcenter Commandery. There’s no way he was forced to do anything. I believe the reason why Madam Yu said what she said was because she was worried that Jian Taiding’s faction would do something desperate in alarm. She said those things to convince the masses.”

Zu An sighed in admiration. Sang Hong was a crafty old fox in politics after all. He had immediately seen through the most important points.

He said seriously, “Indeed, that’s what I think too. But even if they can avoid capital punishment, they won’t escape punishment. Madam Yu and... ahem, and Cloudcenter Duke will definitely deal with Jian Taiding’s surviving faction members. Even if they don’t carry out a great purge, they’ll replace some vital

positions. For example, as far as I know, the Yu clan's elder Yu Xuanqing was extremely close to Jian Taiding. He definitely played a huge part in the smuggling deal with the fiend races.

"And from what I've seen in my short time in the Yu clan, Yu Yanluo probably doesn't know about these matters, or perhaps turned a blind eye to everything. She's definitely not the main culprit. As such, Yu Yanluo will probably go against a double-crosser like that too.

"Judging from the current situation, it wouldn't be too realistic to deal with Yu Yanluo either. However, if we act against Yu Xuanqing, someone who's in the top three positions of the Yu clan, it should also weaken the Yu clan to some extent. Once we return to the capital, that result will be satisfactory for his majesty. What does respected uncle think?"

Sang Hong was immensely pleased when he heard Zu An's analysis. He replied, "Ah Zu, I really have a whole new level of respect for you! Even though I knew you were quite intelligent before, I never expected your insight in the field of politics to also be so sharp. You actually carved a new path through this tough situation! We have a way out of this predicament now."

Yu Xuanqing wasn't only the third-ranked figure of Cloudcenter's Yu clan; he was also an important figure in Cloudcenter Commandery's court. His official post was only below Magistrate Zuo Su and Vice Magistrate Xu Yu. He was in charge of important matters like promotion.

If such a person were overthrown, it would definitely deal a huge blow to the Yu clan. At the same time, it would affect King Qi's influence. At the very least, it would be more than enough to take care of his majesty's assignment for them.

"Respected uncle overpraises me." Zu An waved his hands humbly, but he sighed inwardly. It wasn't that he had sharp and vicious insight in the field, but rather that he had the intelligence from both the Imperial Envoy and Yu Yanluo's side. By working together with the two sides, he had been able to figure out a solution more easily than others.

The people of this world weren't stupid. If they had his level of information, most of them would come to rational and proper conclusions. But unfortunately, not everyone had access to a complete set of information. They were often misled by one-sided perspectives instead.

Sang Hong discussed some more details with Zu An, then rushed out excitedly. Zu An wondered if he should take the chance to seek out Big Manman. She must have been extremely worried for some time.

Suddenly, a figure snuck in. Once he entered, he even secretly checked if anyone tailed him. Only then did he lock the door again.

When he saw that it was Pei You, Zu An scolded him playfully. "What the hell are you doing? Why are you acting all sneaky like this?"

Pei You carefully moved over to Zu An's side and said in a hushed tone, "I won't hide anything from you since we're bros, but I think I'm being haunted by a ghost..."

Zu An was speechless. Pei You opened his mouth several times, but he didn't know how to really describe it. "I think I've been haunted by a female ghost..."

"A female ghost?" Zu An suddenly realized something. Don't tell me...

Once he began to talk about it, it became easier for Pei You to talk about the rest. "Yeah, I think I've been dreaming or something, but I always hear a sweet girl talking to me. Whenever I reply enthusiastically, I find out that it's just a dream."

"Are you just hearing things?" Zu An's expression was somewhat unnatural as he replied.

"I don't know either. I can even almost make out the girl's appearance... Even though it's not clear, the feeling she gives off is that she really is pretty. I'm sure that not even Yu Yanluo can compare to her..." Pei You had a stupid infatuated look on his face, as if he were recalling something wonderful.

Zu An thought to himself, Daji is indeed extremely beautiful, but saying that Yu Yanluo can't compare to her might be a bit too much. The two are clearly on the same level.

Pei You grabbed his arm and said, "What's even harder to forget is that the girl's voice is just too beautiful! How can someone have such a beautiful voice in this world? Her personality is definitely gentle and sweet..." He subconsciously rubbed something with his hand as he spoke.

Zu An shivered and pulled his arm away, replying, "Didn't you already say you thought you were dreaming? Don't think about all of that rubbish."

Pei You scowled and replied, "That's why I'm wondering if I was possessed by a female ghost! After all, I've never met her in person, and there's no way her voice can be that pretty."

Zu An forcefully endured his urge to laugh. How will he react if he finds out that the 'sweet girl' was actually me?

Even though he really wanted to see Pei You break down, he still decided against it in the end. After all, that would also decide his own social suicide. He coughed twice and quickly changed the topic. "Maybe you've been too tired recently and you're starting to hallucinate. Like hell there are female ghosts in this world."

"Maybe," Pei You replied. He still felt a bit dejected.

Zu An said with a chuckle, "I heard you've been visiting Jasper Lane quite frequently recently; you've probably been working at it quite hard. How can you still have the mental room to think about any sweet female ghost?"

Pei You grumbled, "Remember that Ms. Pink I really liked the last time we went to Jasper Lane together? I was helping her out with her business pretty often. I tried to see her several times after that, but then I heard that she had already left Jasper Lane. It was really a pity, so I had to look for other girls in Jasper Lane. However, none of them were quite as good as Pink."

Zu An had planned to just enjoy the story at first, but then his smile gradually froze. He asked seriously, "That Pink you're talking about isn't there anymore? What do you mean?"

"That she's not there anymore, of course," Pei You said. "She seemed to have ransomed herself and said she was going to return home. The brothel keeper was grumbling about how she had no conscience, that she had actually hidden so many private funds. Hmph, in my opinion, that brothel keeper is just greedy and doesn't want to let a moneymaker like her go."

"F*ck!" Zu An suddenly got up. He finally realized what he had forgotten about. He suddenly felt a chill.

When he saw how Zu An was acting, Pei You became nervous as well, asking, "What's wrong?"

"Let's head to Jasper Lane for now. I'll fill you in along the way." Zu An took the lead and rushed out.

"Stop scaring me like that! What's going on?" Pei You asked as he quickly followed along. Why did it seem as if his random visits to Jasper Lane had actually created some huge problem?

Zu An sorted out his thoughts while saying, "Why were we able to find out that Zuo Su and Jian Taiding were the ringleaders of the smuggling deal with the fiend races so quickly?"

"Because we found the proof Chen Zhou left behind," Pei You subconsciously replied.

"Did he give us the proof?" Zu An asked.

"Of course not. He previously had it stored in the Zhenyuan Merchant Group." Pei You was stunned.

"Don't tell me you think the Zhenyuan Merchant Group secretly gave us the wrong item?"

Zu An shook his head and said, "No. I have connections with the higher-ups of the Zhenyuan Merchant Group. They seemed to not have even been aware of this book's existence, just treating it as something an ordinary guest stored with them. There are so many guests that enter and exit the Zhenyuan Merchant Group. If Chen Zhou deliberately concealed his identity, then it would be difficult for their staff to know."

"Who could it be, if not Zhenyuan Merchant Group..." Pei You's expression suddenly changed halfway through his sentence. "Are you suspecting Pink? That's impossible!"

"How is it impossible?" Zu An replied coldly. "So far, everything we've investigated has been informed by her. If there's something wrong with her, doesn't that mean our entire investigation was flawed? The fact that she suddenly vanished is probably because she has a guilty conscience."

"I should've guessed that a long time ago! The secret passage where Cloudcenter Duke disappeared led to Jasper Lane. Pink was in Jasper Lane. How could this world have such a great coincidence?!"

Chapter 1104: Accidental Meeting

Pei You was completely stupefied when he heard that. He asked in disbelief, "Her feelings for Chen Zhou were so strong; don't tell me all of that was fake?"

Zu An sighed and replied, "It's precisely because her acting was so good; otherwise, we wouldn't have been fooled so easily."

If Pink had remained there, he wouldn't have thought anything more of it. But she just happened to have left just then. That definitely pointed at a guilty conscience!

Pei You was still unconvinced. He replied, "But Cloudcenter Duke has already returned safely. Can't we just ask him about anything we need to know?"

When it came to why there was a secret passage from the Duke Manor to Jasper Lane, wouldn't the duke know best?

Zu An's expression stiffened. He replied, "The duke is currently nursing his injuries and won't meet outsiders. Furthermore, he might not even tell us the truth if we ask him."

I am the freaking duke right now! How would I ask myself?

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As they chatted, they quickly arrived at Jasper Lane. Zu An sought out the brothel's madam and asked about Pink.

The madam had thought that the two had arrived to play at first, so she was a bit aloof. But Zu An didn't waste any time and showed her his status as an Imperial Envoy. The madam's expression immediately changed and she replied, "Sirs, I was just going to say that there was something wrong with Pink! That girl's business wasn't even that great; how could she have enough money to ransom herself?"

"When did she come to Jasper Lane?" Zu An asked.

Under the madam's guidance, the two of them arrived at Pink's room. It was a familiar scene. Though the things remained the same, the people had already changed.

"That girl... I think she came from the neighboring commandery two years ago. We normally don't take such people, but she had such a sob story, and she was quite pretty too. Since we wouldn't be losing money by taking her in, we agreed." The madam observed the state of the room and explained, "We were planning to give this room to another girl. We haven't had the time to clean it up properly yet."

"Hmph, she probably bribed you to let her in." Pei You was a veteran of the place. He knew a place like the brothel normally wouldn't randomly take in a mature girl from outside.

The madam laughed awkwardly and said, "That girl Pink knew how things worked around these parts, so how could we refuse her?"

"Two years ago..." Zu An began to think to himself. The incident with Jian Yanyou had happened more than a year prior. It seemed Pink had arrived ahead of time to arrange things. He continued, asking, "Which commandery was that neighboring commandery you mentioned?"

"Yi Commandery, of course," the madam replied.

"Yi Commandery?" Zu An stopped cold. Even Pei You realized that something was strange.

"What's wrong with Yi Commandery?" the madam asked in confusion.

"It's nothing." Zu An didn't want her to know too much. He looked through the room and noticed that many clothes had been left behind. He frowned and asked, "Pink didn't bring all of these clothes with her?"

The madam replied, "That's completely normal. In our line of trade, those who want to leave often don't wish to be burdened by their past and won't bring these clothes back with them. After all, who would dare to wear this kind of revealing clothing in public?"

"Did Pink return to her hometown? Where is that hometown?" Pei You asked. He was quite pissed now that he found out that the girl he cared so much about had actually fooled him.

"I think she's from Yi Commandery's Qianshui City," the madam added.

"It's Yi Commandery again?" Pei You frowned.

That wasn't what Zu An was paying attention to, however. Even if it were a normal brothel girl, they might not even reveal their true hometown, let alone someone who had arrived on a mission.

Zu An gave the madam a look and asked, "Who is your boss? Bring h... Bring us to meet with him." He wanted to ask her to bring him over, but he was worried that news of their arrival would leak out, so he decided to head over personally.

The madam didn't dare to disobey him. She quickly brought him to the rear courtyard.

Soon afterward, a man who seemed like a landlord welcomed them. Zu An observed the man; he seemed to just be an ordinary merchant who wouldn't have any information he needed.

However, Zu An suddenly thought of something before leaving and asked, "Has the duke ever had anyone he was close to in Jasper Lane?"

The boss replied with an apologetic smile, "Sir, your respected self must be joking! The duke's concubines are all stunning beauties, and he even has a goddess like Madam Yu as his wife. Why would he possibly favor a mundane place like our Jasper Lane?"

Zu An thought, You have no idea that this number one beauty you're talking about wasn't someone the duke could even touch. He only worshiped her one-sidedly, so Jian Yanyou still has a motive.

But he couldn't just tell the man that for various reasons, so he could only say to Pei You, "Once we get back, look into Jasper Lane's background. There's no way a business this big wouldn't have any kind of background. Check and see who the one behind them is.

"Also, assign someone to investigate Pink's whereabouts. Look into the hometown she mentioned and any other possible places," he added. Even though there wasn't too much hope, he still didn't want to abandon any possibility.

Suddenly, a clear female voice called out, "Young master Zu?"

Zu An turned around and saw a young lady with dimples wearing yellow. She had a sweet smile on her face as she waved toward him. Zu An's eyes lit up. He walked over and greeted her, asking, "What are you doing here?"

Pei You was confused, but then he suddenly realized something and pointed at the young lady, exclaiming, "Aren't you... Aren't you the Hub of Freedom's..."

Tang Tian'er gave him a bow and replied, "Greetings, young master Pei. I didn't expect the young master to still remember me."

Pei You thought to himself, Who would forget someone this pretty? Moreover, someone who did 'that' with Brother Zu in the private room... He quickly pulled Zu An aside and asked, "Brother Zu, why would she follow you all the way over here? Don't tell me the Hub of Freedom is involved here?"

Zu An patted his shoulder and replied, "Don't worry; she's my friend. You can go back for now, but look into the things I've told you about. I have some things to take care of, so I'll come back in a bit."

Pei You was bitter as he watched the two leave while chatting happily with each other. He muttered, "Hmph, no loyalty when it comes to love. He has a date with a beauty, while I have to break my back working..."

Even though he wasn't too happy about it, considering their friendship, he wouldn't really take it to heart. He quickly returned to the temporary residence to take care of his assigned tasks.

...

Meanwhile, Tang Tian'er teased Zu An. "Young master Zu, it's still broad daylight, but you're going to a place like that. Isn't that a bit too... much?"

"I was just investigating some things," Zu An said with a smile. He didn't bother explaining too much.

Tang Tian'er moved over to his side and got on her tiptoes, giving his shoulders and chest a sniff. Then, she smiled and said, "There's no smell of other girls. Looks like the young master really is a gentleman."

Zu An's mood couldn't help but improve when he saw her brilliant and sweet smile. He asked, "Why has Miss Tang come to a brothel? There's no way you came here to play, right?"

"Isn't it because someone I know left without saying anything after getting what he wanted? You never even came to see me, so I went for a stroll to see if I could find that heartless rat," Tang Tian'er replied. She played with her hair as she looked at Zu An with a smile. "Young master Zu is so amazing, after all; won't you help me look for that heartless rat?"

The scene of Zu An hiding in her bathtub reappeared in his mind. Tang Tian'er's skin had been smooth and glowing like jade, and there had been that bright design on her skin. He couldn't help but cough awkwardly a few times and say, "Apologies, Miss Tang; I've really been too busy these days. I had to recover from my injuries, which was why I didn't visit you."

"Hmph! You don't have a shred of sincerity. If you really cared, you would definitely have found a way to at least send me a message." Tang Tian'er harrumphed. However, her expression brightened up soon afterward and she said, "But someone like me wouldn't be so petty. A meeting isn't as good as a chance encounter, after all; so why don't you keep me company on a stroll today?"

Zu An hesitated and replied, "Um... I still have important matters to take care of. I fear..."

"Treat me well, and who knows, I might just have an answer for what you're most worried about," Tang Tian'er said with a wink.

Zu An happily began, "Do you know..."

Tang Tian'er pressed her finger against his lips before he even finished his sentence, saying, "You haven't kept me company yet, so you're not allowed to ask anything."

Zu An knew that her status was special. She might actually know something. He was just about to agree when a soft and lovable voice called out. "Look at these two lovebirds. Did I come at a bad time?"

Zu An's entire body trembled as he quickly turned around.

A young lady dressed in red and black was standing nearby. Her oval face was tender and beautiful, an ambiguous smile hanging from her red lips. A great ripple moved across her chest as soon as she began to walk. The eyes of all the passing men were immediately drawn to her.

How can there be a woman so charming in this world? Don't tell me this is that brothel's best?

If she really is, then I have to give her a try even if I have to squander away my entire family fortune!

Next to the charming young lady was a cute maid with chubby cheeks. At that moment, she was staring at Zu An and Tang Tian'er with a glare and a pout.

You have successfully trolled Hong Zao for +55 +55 +55...

Who else could they be but Big Manman and her servant?

Chapter 1105: Male Honey Trap

"What a coincidence." Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. Only then did he notice that Tang Tian'er finger was still on his lips, however, He quickly took a step back.

He really was depressed. Why am I experiencing one of those clichéd romantic drama scenes?!

"Exactly! What a coincidence. I was just on a stroll, and yet I ended up seeing young master Zu flirting with another beauty." Pei Mianman had a big smile on her face. There wasn't the slightest bit of anger in her expression. But Zu An knew she was getting angrier and angrier by the second, because the amount of Rage points coming in through the backend was rising exponentially.

Tang Tian'er raised a brow. Her sixth sense immediately told her that there was more to these two than met the eye. As such, she grabbed Zu An's arm and asked, "Big brother Zu, who is this girl?" In reality, though, judging from the woman's beauty and her distinct way of dressing, she already had a good guess as to who she was. She just pretended to not know anything.

Zu An coughed and said, "Ahem, this is Miss Pei, my good friend."

He wasn't scared of being honest about their relationship, but Pei Mianman had requested for him to keep it a secret. This world was a bit more open-minded than ancient China, but there was still a limit. Sleeping together before marriage would definitely have an effect on the girl. Meanwhile, the Pei clan wasn't a small clan, so they would care about such things even more.

Even though Pei Mianman knew about their arrangement too, she still couldn't hold back her rage when she saw Zu An acting like this with another girl.

"Could this be young master Zu's newest concubine?" she remarked as she walked over with a smile. Next to her, Hong Zao was still fuming. She couldn't understand why her master hadn't become hostile yet.

Tang Tian'er heard the sarcasm in Pei Mianman's voice, directed toward her physical contact with Zu An. But she didn't mind, and instead looked even more amused. These two... are interesting.

Zu An began to sweat buckets when he sensed the jealousy in their voices. He exclaimed, "Manman, you're misunderstanding! She's Zhenyuan Merchant Group's Miss Tang, and we're investigating a case! I have some things to ask her."

"What are you explaining that to me for? Young master Zu can just do whatever you want." Pei Mianman said emotionlessly.

Zu An was speechless. Didn't you ask me who she was?

Tang Tian'er explained softly, "Miss Pei, Big Brother Zu and I really have nothing between us."

Pei Mianman's heart leaped. You're even calling him Big Brother Zu, and yet you say there's nothing going on between the two of you?

Hmph, you're pretending to look all weak and pitiful. Are you trying to make me look like an intimidating villain who doesn't understand?

Women were naturally sensitive toward the green tea bitch[1] behaviors of other girls. But even though she could see through all of that, she couldn't just become hostile on the spot. Otherwise people might look down on her. Still, the more that was the case, the angrier she got.

You have successfully trolled Pei Mianman for +233 +233 +233...

Suddenly, Zu An sent her a ki transmission. "Manman, this woman is clearly trying to drive a wedge between us. Don't fall for her tricks."

Pei Mianman grinned when she heard his explanation. Hmph, at least this guy isn't too stupid. She knew that he was on her side, so most of her anger disappeared. But she still fired back through ki transmission, "I don't care if you're investigating a case, but do you have to kiss her finger? Do you have to hold onto her that tightly?"

Zu An was speechless. Even though it was just a coincidence, those things had still happened. It really was a bit hard to explain...

Pei Mianman then began to relax. She began to size up Tang Tian'er with amusement. "Your legs are quite nice, but your chest is a bit small. Hmm, I guess you're pretty enough; not too bad to keep around as a bed warmer. If you want to join his harem, you'll have to get Chuyan's personal approval first."

Now it was Tang Tian'er's turn to become speechless. Why the hell is this woman talking to me like a main wife talking to a concubine? But she reacted quickly as well, replying, "Is Miss Pei talking about Chu First Miss? But if I recall correctly, she has already divorced Big Brother Zu, right?"

"That was only done to fool others. The two of them are closer than ever." Pei Mianman had only planned to amuse herself with the situation, but she couldn't help but feel a bit sour when she said that.

Tang Tian'er's eyes shone as she continued, "But why does it feel as if Miss Pei is even more enthusiastic than Miss Chu?"

Pei Mianman obviously picked up on the mockery in her voice. Tang Tian'er was implying that the main wife hadn't even said anything yet, so what kind of a relationship did a girl from the Pei clan have with Zu An, for her to speak out like this?

Because of Zu An's explanation, however, she didn't get angry. She instead replied with a smile, "It's because Chuyan is my good friend, of course. She isn't here, so I have to keep an eye on her husband. Otherwise, some vixens might just come after him."

Zu An's expression darkened. He had discovered that Pei Mianman really liked playing the role of Chuyan's close friend. It seemed to always bring her a sense of stimulation without fail.

Tang Tian'er was also left at a loss for words. Never had she expected this woman's mental fortitude to be so great, and for her retaliation to be so vicious.

She was wondering what she should say when Pei Mianman said with a smile, "I still have to do my shopping, so the two of you can slowly enjoy your stroll. I won't disturb you any longer."

She bowed toward the two of them, then turned around to leave. When she walked past Zu An, she gave him an ambiguous smile. Zu An forced a smile in return. Even though Pei Mianman hadn't said anything, her intentions were already clear enough.

...

When the master and servant left, Hong Zao finally couldn't hold herself back anymore. She asked, "Young miss, why did you leave just like that?"

"What, was I supposed to throw a tantrum and make a scene?" Pei Mianman replied with a chuckle.

"Young miss, how can you still laugh? That Tang girl is all over the young master, and she... even pressed her chest up against the young master's arm! How shameless." Hong Zao angrily voiced indignation for her master. She just felt as if her precious master had been tainted somehow. She continued, "The young master really is to blame too; he actually didn't push her away."

"He's investigating a case. It's natural for him to use a male honey trap," Pei Mianman replied; she didn't seem to mind. She continued, "I'm already relieved now that I've seen that he's safe and sound."

"So it was a honey trap! I was going to say, the young master is so great, so why would he be that kind of man?" Hong Zao nodded as if she suddenly understood.

Pei Mianman rolled her eyes. Looks like Zu An's constantly feeding her is now doing work. Why do I have such a dummy for a maid? She even believed some random excuse I made up?

...

Meanwhile, Tang Tian'er had a pensive look on her face as she watched Pei Mianman and Hong Zao leave. She remarked, "Young master Zu, your relationship with Miss Pei seems to be quite good."

"We were fellow students back in Brightmoon City, so we're indeed quite close." Zu An's expression turned serious and he asked, "Miss Tang, why did you have to act like that earlier?"

Tang Tian'er naturally knew that he was unhappy. As such, she put on a sweet smile and began to act cute. "You know, I only did that because I like the young master too much. I got a bit jealous..."

"Oh? You like me?" Zu An replied, looking at her with scorching eyes.

Tang Tian'er's heart skipped a beat, but she still maintained her smile and replied, "Of course I do."

"That's good then." Zu An reached out and grabbed her waist, saying, "Let's reserve a Jasper Lane room and properly get to know each other." Then, he headed towards Jasper Lane.

Sure enough, Tang Tian'er began to panic. As someone who worked in a place like the Hub of Freedom, she obviously knew what Zu An meant. She leaped away and pleaded, "Young master Zu, I was wrong! I won't do that again in the future..."

Zu An gave her an indifferent look, replying, "I don't want to see a repeat of what just happened in the future."

Tang Tian'er pursed her lips. In the end, she could only helplessly voice her agreement. However, Zu An finally revealed a smile and replied, "That's better. We're already friends, so isn't it better to be a bit more sincere with each other?"

"Am I not sincere enough to you yet..." Tang Tian'er mumbled. She had already shown him everything in that bathtub. Of course, there was no way she would say that out loud.

Zu An had obviously thought of the same thing. His expression softened a bit when he looked at her, and he asked, "Alright, where do you want to go?"

Tang Tian'er's eyes lit up. The cute dimples returned to her face as she replied, "Anywhere is okay, as long as it's with you."

Zu An frowned. He just felt that Tang Tian'er was acting a bit too close, but that she probably had an ulterior motive. But when he recalled how she had saved him last time, he felt that she had sacrificed a bit too much to have really done so all because of some ulterior motive.

...

Zu An accompanied Tang Tian'er around Cloudcenter City just like that, touring nearly half of the city.

Eventually, Tang Tian'er said meaningfully, "I feel really happy today. I've never felt so carefree in all these years."

Zu An realized that whether it was the Hub of Freedom or the Zhenyuan Merchant Group, Tang Tian'er indeed didn't have many opportunities to relax. He couldn't help but feel a bit of a soft spot for her. At her age, she would still be a carefree student in Zu An's previous world. He said, "I'll keep you company again in the future if there's a chance."

Tang Tian'er shook her head. She said somewhat emotionally, "There might not be a next time."

Zu An was stunned. He was just about to ask why when Tang Tian'er spoke up again. "Alright, alright. I know you've wanted answers for a while now. You've been a bit absent-minded while you were around me, so I'll just tell you. Jasper Lane's boss is nothing but a figurehead. The real boss is the Pegasus Merchant Group."

"The Pegasus Merchant Group?" Zu An had a strange expression as he spoke. These two merchant groups really were arch-enemies! They immediately threw dirt at each other whenever they had the chance.

Tang Tian'er sighed and replied, "I know what you're thinking, but I'm really not speaking out of a personal grudge, and I really am trying to help you." She continued, "Right, Pegasus Merchant Group's background is quite formidable too, so you have to be careful." Afterward, she gave him a wave and showed him a sweet smile. Then, she quickly disappeared into the street.

Zu An began to ponder to himself. He had investigated the Pegasus Merchant Group before, and they seemed to be quite connected to the Devil Sect.

Sigh, don't tell me I have to antagonize Qiu Honglei, Yu Jianyue and the others...

Chapter 1106: One Behind the Scenes

He decided to first seek out Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei to find out what was going on. Unfortunately, even though he looked for them for a long time where they would usually be in Cloudcenter City, he didn't find either one of them.

He looked around the city for a bit longer without having much luck. He sighed. The Devil Sect's people really are hard to track down...

When he returned to the temporary residence, Sang Hong sought him out, saying, "I brought some people over today to arrest Yu Xuanqing."

"Oh, Madam Yu didn't interfere?" Zu An asked.

Sang Hong shook his head and replied, "She did not. However, when we found Yu Xuanqing, he had already committed suicide to escape punishment."

"Suicide? Was he forced to commit suicide?" Zu An frowned.

"According to the current situation, it does look like a suicide." Sang Hong harrumphed. "But Yu Xuantao also died when we were trying to arrest him. For two such instances to happen consecutively, how can there be such a coincidence? I suspect that Madam Yu is actually completely different in private, and that side is definitely not honorable."

Zu An recalled Yu Yanluo's exceptional beauty. From their time together, Zu An knew that she was a proper clan leader. She wasn't as harmless as she seemed in public. But if one were to say that she was the one who had silenced Yu Xuanqing, then he wouldn't be too convinced.

"Right, we also found some evidence in Yu Xuanqing's residence. Now, it seems Zuo Su and Uncle Ming carried out the smuggling deal with the fiend races through him. All transportation of the goods was entrusted to the Pegasus Merchant Group. I am about to lead a group to arrest the Pegasus Merchant Group's people and bring them back for interrogation, to verify if that is the truth," Sang Hong said seriously.

"The Pegasus Merchant Group..." Zu An was shocked. Never had he expected their Imperial Envoy to be acting against the Pegasus Merchant Group so soon. But as the Imperial Envoy, their decision was reasonable and he couldn't stop them. As such, he said, "Then why don't I go with respected uncle?"

He was worried that Qiu Honglei would suddenly appear and save the Pegasus Merchant Group's people. It would be really bad if she ended up getting hurt then. If Yun Jianyue made an appearance, on

the other hand, he would become worried about Sang Hong instead. However, with him to mediate things, he could at least prevent the worst from happening.

Sang Hong was a bit hesitant, replying, "But you are still injured..."

"It's fine as long as I don't do any fighting. It's just a merchant group; the Armed Escort is enough to deal with them," Zu An explained.

Sang Hong thought that made sense as well, replying, "That is fine then. When the time comes, stay close to me so that no evildoers can harm you."

Zu An felt warm inside when he sensed his concern. The world was just unpredictable that way. The two of them had been irreconcilable back in Brightmoon City, and yet now, the Sang clan already pretty much considered him family.

...

Sang Hong thus led a group of people to the Pegasus Merchant Group. For extra protection, he even transferred over some of the Civil Affairs Manor's troops. Gao Ying was currently the officer who presided over them, so it wasn't too hard to transfer those troops to their control.

The Pegasus Merchant Group hadn't realized what had happened yet. At first, the one in charge outside shouted aggressively, screaming 'Do you even know what kind of place this is'. However, he was quickly taught a lesson on how to behave by the Armed Escort.

Sang Hong didn't waste any time speaking to him and instead had his subordinates rush in. They intended to seize all the people there and the proof they needed. As such, the soldiers stormed in like a pack of wolves.

The Pegasus Merchant Group had quite a few guards and warriors inside. They were ready to fight, expecting some scoundrels who had arrived to start trouble. But when they saw that it was the court's officials and even the Imperial Envoy, they all immediately lost confidence. They were just here to make a living; none of them had any thoughts of rebelling against the court!

Sang Hong wasn't the kind of person to wantonly slaughter the innocent for no reason either. He quickly stepped forward and said that the Pegasus Merchant Group was involved in the scheme against the duke and smuggling goods to the fiend races. Those who didn't know about the matter were to drop their weapons and surrender, and the court wouldn't pursue them afterward.

His words quickly broke down the will of most of the guards. None of them dared to receive such a criminal title! They quickly dropped their weapons and surrendered.

But that wasn't all. Some of the Pegasus Merchant Group's important individuals saw that the situation was unfavorable and tried to escape. Soon, the sounds of intense fighting broke out from inside.

Sang Hong harrumphed and rushed straight toward the rear courtyard. Zu An worried that it was Qiu Honglei and the others, so he quickly followed along as well.

...

Zu An sighed in relief when he arrived at the rear courtyard. He saw that the Armed Escort were surrounding a dozen or so of the Pegasus Merchant Group's men, and they were fighting fiercely. The ones who were surrounded were all men; he didn't see Qiu Honglei.

The Pegasus Merchant Group's people weren't weak. But the Armed Escort had the advantage of numbers and formations, so they were evenly matched.

Zu An noticed that there were two familiar people in the group. One was a chubby man dressed in dark yellow clothes who looked like a rich local tyrant. He was brandishing the abacus in his hands fiercely. The other had green hair. From time to time, several thistles and thorns rushed out to disrupt the Armed Escort's formations.

If they hadn't been present, the entire group might already have been subdued by the Armed Escort a long time ago.

"Solitary Gold and Solitary Wood," Sang Hong said with a snort.

He recognized the two people as well. The two had been part of the group that had attacked his party while they were being escorted to the capital in the past. He couldn't help but recall his son's tragic death when he saw them, and a look of displeasure quickly crossed his face.

Solitary Gold reached out a hand and struck the abacus. Its beads immediately flew toward the Armed Escort like scattered flower petals.

The Armed Escort screamed miserably, and many of them collapsed. Fortunately, their armor contained special formations that greatly improved their defense. But even though there was no danger to their lives, they still lost their fighting strength for some time.

Solitary Wood also reached out just then, clawing at the air. The trees in the courtyard rustled and their leaves flew outward, shooting toward the Armed Escort like sharp blades.

Sang Hong released a cold snort. He rushed forward powerfully, and with a sweep of his sleeves, he collected all the leaves in them. He then flung his sleeves outward again, crushing the leaves to powder.

Sang Hong didn't stop at all. He rushed quickly toward the center of the battlefield like a streak of lightning. He took down Solitary Gold and Solitary Wood with just a few moves. Then, the Armed Escort swarmed around the two, pressing their blades against their necks. The others became discouraged when they saw that, so they were also quickly detained.

Zu An was amazed. He was so used to seeing master rank opponents that he had forgotten Sang Hong's cultivation was also top-tier among people in the martial world.

The Armed Escort then searched through the merchant group. They discovered that all of the accounts were gone; it was impossible to tell whether they just happened to not be there, or if they had been brought away ahead of time because the Pegasus Merchant Group had received news of the Armed Escort's arrival.

There were too many people and too much material evidence to seize, so Sang Hong didn't waste any time. He began his interrogation right there at the merchant group.

...

Zu An wasn't too used to the sight of torture, so he didn't participate in the questioning. Instead, he found an empty room and began to meditate.

Soon afterward, Sang Hong approached him with a grave expression, saying, "Ah Zu, things are troublesome now."

"What is it?" Zu An asked. He knew Sang Hong wasn't someone who would be shaken up so easily. Anything that could leave him so distressed definitely wasn't a small matter.

Sang Hong said with an overcast voice, "Even though many remained stubborn and refused to assist in the earlier investigation, some didn't last. The Pegasus Merchant Group is actually acting under King Yan."

"What?!" Zu An exclaimed, shocked. Doesn't this mean Qiu Honglei and King Yan are actually in cahoots with each other?

But Qiu Honglei was clearly caught by King Yan back in Yi Commandery!

"We found some letters, account books, and Yi Commandery government documents in the rooms. Even though there is no concrete evidence, that is most likely the case." Sang Hong lowered his voice and continued, "King Yan and the Devil Sect are actually working together. They are also involved in the smuggling case with the fiend races."

Zu An said with a frown, "But King Yan and the Devil Sect have continuously fought wars over the years. They're supposed to hate each other bitterly..."

"They have just been doing all of that for show." Sang Hong sneered. "Hmph, King Yan is surprisingly sharp. He used that as an excuse to continuously request for resources from the court, but was simultaneously doing this to strengthen himself and his army."

Zu An was alarmed. No wonder even though Qiu Honglei had been caught, she didn't seem to have suffered any real mistreatment.

He had wanted to bring it up, but stopped when Qiu Honglei had asked what he would do if she lied to him, and whether he would blame her. He had thought she had meant something else before. Now, it seemed this was what she had been talking about.

No wonder they had been intercepted by the Devil Sect right there and then, the moment the criminal escort fleet had left Yi Commandery.

Golden Token Seven had long been investigating that matter, and yet he hadn't dared to say it outright. That might have been precisely what he was looking into. After all, it involved a king figure. Without proper proof, making such an accusation would only lead to his own execution.

Sang Hong said gravely, "This matter is too important. King Yan has powerful troops on his side. If he decides to rebel, even if we manage to survive and escape to the capital, we will still be executed by his majesty."

He understood the emperor's political methods too well. What the emperor cared about wasn't who was right or wrong, but rather the potential effects on his own imperial authority. For the sake of

pacifying King Yan, he might even just decide to silence their group of 'liars who have misled the public' to quell King Yan's wrath.

Zu An naturally knew that as well. At the moment, the emperor's enemy was King Qi. He definitely didn't want more side issues to keep growing. He sighed and asked, "Then what do we do from now on?"

The country looked rich and powerful on the surface, but there were dangers lurking around every corner. As such, just a single spark might lead to a huge disaster.

"We cannot continue investigating this case. We will just proclaim that the Pegasus Merchant Group has colluded with Uncle Ming and helped the fiend races with their illegal smuggling. At the same time, we will claim that the one behind the scenes was the Devil Sect. Either way, they have more than enough dirt directed at them, and they were indeed involved in the matter." Sang Hong's expression was extremely cold as he spoke.

Zu An felt a huge headache. He knew the proposed method was their best option. The problem was that he was close to Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei.

Chapter 1107: Aiming for His Life

Sang Hong had to remain at the Pegasus Merchant group to deal with the aftermath. Zu An didn't want to be held up by all the complicated matters, so he found a random excuse to leave. Sang Hong thought he was still injured, so he didn't keep him.

When Zu An left Pegasus Merchant Group, he didn't return to the temporary residence and instead headed to Yu Manor.

Following Jian Taiding and Uncle Ming's death, the situation in the Duke Manor had already mostly been settled. There was no need for Yu Yanluo to continue staying in Jian Manor. She was a woman, and she feared the cold. Her home was naturally more comfortable.

Zu An and Yu Yanluo were already close friends, and the maids and servants in the manor were familiar with him too, so there was no need to relay any messages when Zu An entered and exited. When he entered Yu Yanluo's room, he saw that she was lying on her side as usual, her eyes half-open. Her posture was incredibly moving, and a faint fragrance wafted through the room. She was just like a goddess from a painting.

Zu An was somewhat curious. He had noticed that Yu Yanluo liked that position. At first, he thought she was sleeping, but upon closer observation, she was taking in and releasing ki through her lips, which meant she was cultivating.

Cultivators usually meditated while sitting. Only that position would allow for the best exchange of ki between their bodies and the surrounding environment. Why did Yu Yanluo find such a position the most comfortable while cultivating?

"You're here." Yu Yanluo sounded calm and natural, as if she were talking to her own husband. She asked, "Did something happen?" She knew that with how things were at the moment, Zu An shouldn't have been in the Duke Manor, but instead with the Imperial Envoy. There should have been no reason for him to suddenly seek her out.

Zu An poured a cup of tea for himself in a familiar manner. Yu Yanluo's red lips opened. That was the cup she usually drank from; she had never let anyone else use it. But in the end, she didn't say anything and instead reminded him, "Drink slowly."

Zu An drank three cups of tea before finally saying, "I just came back from the Pegasus Merchant Group..." Then, he gave her a rough summary of everything that happened. He asked, "Why would Jian Taiding work with King Yan? I thought he was working together with the Zhenyuan Merchant Group."

Zu An refused to believe that the Yu clan didn't know about the Pegasus Merchant Group's connection to King Yan. Sure enough, Yu Yanluo wasn't surprised at all, replying, "That is because top-level clans never place all of their eggs in one basket."

Zu An frowned. He couldn't help but feel that she seemed to be implying something, and yet he couldn't really figure it out. Yu Yanluo continued, "I just did not expect King Yan's ambitions to be so great. He was unsatisfied with just transporting the goods, and instead wanted to completely take the Zhenyuan Merchant Group's place."

Zu An gave her a strange look and said, "I thought you might have been kept in the dark at first, that you were just a harmless and timid little bunny rabbit. But now, it seems you actually knew many things."

"A harmless and timid little bunny rabbit?" Yu Yanluo couldn't help but laugh. She continued, "Anyone who remained a little bunny rabbit in a position like mine would already have been devoured a long time ago. But please do not think of me so highly. There are actually many things I do not know about; it was only through your help that I gradually reached the truth."

Zu An remained silent, seemingly trying to separate truth from lies in what she said. Yu Yanluo continued, "Your relationship with the Devil Sect seems to be quite good."

Zu An hesitated, but in the end, he nodded. Whether it was about Yun Jianyue's appearance or the matter of Qiu Honglei, he might be able to fool normal people, but it wouldn't be hard for someone like Yu Yanluo to figure out the truth.

Yu Yanluo said, "Then I will do you a favor here. Most of King Yan's cooperation with the Devil Sect has just been King Yan taking advantage of what he could. For example, the smuggling of court goods over the years has been blamed on the Devil Sect."

Zu An recalled what Qiu Honglei had mentioned to him back then. He replied, "You're right. All these years, the Devil Sect has been wondering who's been making them take on so much blame and hatred."

Yu Yanluo smiled and said, "King Yan knew who it was, but he did not tell the Devil Sect, instead using them to help him deal with the Zhenyuan Merchant Group. Meanwhile, he himself was focused on gaining complete control over the smuggling network between Jian Taiding and the fiend races."

Zu An was shocked, asking, "Just who exactly was that person?"

Yu Yanluo gave him a look. There was a somewhat complicated expression in her beautiful eyes. She said, "I could tell you that I do not know, but I do not want to deceive you. I know who it is, but I cannot tell you."

Zu An's brows furrowed as Yu Yanluo continued, "Please do not get angry. Every clan has their own principles. I cannot damage the clan because of my personal relationship with you. After all, there are endless people under the Yu clan who are relying on my protection."

Zu An instead smiled optimistically and said, "I'm already grateful that madam can tell me these things. Why would I be so ungrateful and get upset at you?" He knew that if it weren't because of everything they had gone through together, there was no way she would tell him so many things.

Yu Yanluo had been expecting him to blame her. When she heard what he said, she was stunned. Then, a smile filled her gaze. This man really understood her well, making her feel increasingly intimate with him.

She was about to say something when Zu An's expression suddenly changed. He summoned Grandgale, instantly arriving next to Yu Yanluo and grabbing her. The two tumbled off the bedside.

Yu Yanluo had been feeling moved moments before, but then she had felt shocked and disappointed a split second later. However, she also quickly realized that Zu An might have had a reason for doing what he did.

Sure enough, a masked woman in white appeared where they had originally been. Her black hair fluttered around; her skin was fair and her eyes were sharp. Even though there was a mask covering her face, anyone could tell that she was an incredible beauty. However, there was a hint of chilliness and arrogance in her expression, which would make it hard for anyone to feel any sense of intimacy.

"Huh?" The white-clad woman clearly hadn't expected Zu An to react so quickly; he had actually been able to seize her target ahead of time.

"So it was Sect Leader Yan. Arriving uninvited and launching a sudden ambush like this doesn't seem to really match your style," Yu Yanluo remarked, having recognized her as well. She knew that Zu An had just saved her, and gave him a grateful look. Then, she looked coldly at the white-clad woman.

The white-clad woman was the sect master of the White Jade Sect and Chu Chuyan's master, Yan Xuehen. She retracted her hand and said indifferently, "I only planned to detain you to ask you some questions."

"Who asks questions this way?" Yu Yanluo replied coldly; she was clearly extremely dissatisfied.

Yan Xuehen ignored her and continued, "How did Jian Taiding die?"

Zu An was alarmed. It seemed she was here to get revenge for her junior brother.

Yu Yanluo replied indifferently, "I have already explained his death. With Sect Master Yan's ability, I believe you have already been informed. Why is there a need to ask any further?"

"I do not believe you," Yan Xuehen said simply. Her eyes stared daggers into Yu Yanluo. She believed his death had something to do with the woman. After all, she was a survivor from the incident.

"There is not much I can do if you do not believe me," Yu Yanluo replied, equally unhappily.

Zu An thought to himself, You're facing a freaking grandmaster! How can you just clash with her head-on like this?

Don't tell me beauties are naturally incompatible? How the hell am I going to convince my harem in the future then...

Just then, Yan Xuehen's gaze fell onto Zu An. She asked, "Does she feel good in your arms?"

Only then did Zu An realize that because he had been looking at Yan Xuehen the entire time, he had never let go due to his excessive shock.

Yu Yanluo was in the same situation. Perhaps because they had already engaged in intimate contact before, she hadn't instinctively reacted like before. With that reminder, she quickly moved away. There was a faint blush on her sparkling skin.

Yan Xuehen's gaze wandered between the two suspiciously. She just felt that the two of them were acting a little strange. A suspicion appeared in her mind and she asked, "Are you the one who colluded with her in killing my junior brother?"

Zu An cried out indignantly, "What does this have to do with me?!"

Yu Yanluo also spoke up for him, saying, "He was not at the scene of the crime; it has nothing to do with him."

"Is that so?" Yan Xuehen only felt even more suspicious of Zu An's behavior. She said, "It should be easy enough to test."

Her figure flickered, and she thrust her slender, jade-like finger at Zu An's forehead. At that instant, a powerful pressure surrounded him, simultaneously cutting off all routes of escape.

Zu An was alarmed. His forehead was a vital point; he wouldn't dare to let her strike it. He immediately kicked off and moved a zhang backward.

"Hm?" Yan Xuehen was shocked. She exclaimed, "You have already broken through into the master rank? But that should not be..."

Normally speaking, any cultivator under the master rank would have no chance of evading the attacks of a grandmaster like herself. At that instant, she had felt Zu An's soul neutralizing a portion of her own ki field.

But he clearly hasn't reached the master rank yet!

Zu An chuckled and replied, "Sect Master Yan, aren't I pretty talented? You should just approve of my relationship with Chuyan."

"Mischievous and deceptive; you do not seem like a good person," Yan Xuehen replied with a cold look. As someone from the righteous faction, she naturally disliked someone frivolous like Zu An. As such, she didn't hold back at all in her next move.

Zu An immediately felt the pressure increase drastically. Thanks to the soul he condensed before, he had avoided being put in a completely passive situation. It was to the extent that he could even retaliate a bit. But compared to a grandmaster, he was still at an absolute disadvantage. It was only a matter of time before he was overwhelmed.

He was alarmed. Why did this woman always act so ruthlessly? It even seemed as if she wanted him dead!

Chapter 1108: Sect Master Yan's Anger

When Zu An had fought against Mi Li before, he had had the Heiress Ball of Delights. He had been extremely weak at the time, so Mi Li hadn't gone all out.

Yan Xuehen was completely different, however. Perhaps because of Zu An's increase in cultivation, she didn't hold back at all. Zu An was forced to use everything he had, and only then could he barely hold on. But he knew that he wouldn't last long if things continued.

Yu Yanluo quickly summoned the World Painting when she saw that. She knew it wouldn't be able to stop a grandmaster, so she didn't try to capture Yan Xuehen. Instead, she only used it to provide Zu An with support.

At the same time, her brush quickly moved through the air. Zu An immediately felt the pressure around him decrease greatly. It was as if at that moment, he had been given several buffs.

Yan Xuehen's beautiful brows furrowed when she saw that. She remarked, "Hmph, your relationship is definitely strange."

Even though Yu Yanluo looked gentle and soft on the outside and carried herself gracefully, she was actually a cold person deep down. She wouldn't treat another person with such care. And yet, the worry and anxiety in her eyes at that moment were definitely genuine.

Yu Yanluo harrumphed. "Your respected self attacked my guest without proper reason. How can I just watch from the side without doing anything?"

Yan Xuehen snorted, clearly not believing Yu Yanluo.

With Yu Yanluo's help, Zu An gained some breathing room. He took the chance to say, "Sect Master Yan, we're all close already. Is there a need for us to fight like this?"

Yan Xuehen's expression turned cold as she exclaimed, "Who is close to you?" Afterward, she attacked even more viciously.

She was extremely confused, however. In theory, a grandmaster should have had an overwhelming advantage against cultivators of lower levels, and yet this fellow was just way too strange. His strength was far above that of others at his level. The bag of tricks he had also gave her a huge headache.

But that was as far as it went. Such a vast cultivation gap was like the difference between heaven and earth.

Yan Xuehen swung her sleeves outward. Yu Yanluo groaned, the World Painting dropping from the air as she lost control over it. The buffs she had provided Zu An disappeared as well.

Yu Yanluo knew Yan Xuehen was being lenient. Otherwise, even if she hadn't died, she would still have been seriously injured by the attack. The other party still felt some reservations toward her status as the Yu clan's master; that was her way of telling her not to get involved any further.

She tried to raise her brush, but her entire body suddenly went limp. Only then did she notice that her acupoints had already been sealed. She was horrified. Yan Xuehen's casual attack had simultaneously restrained her. Such an insane level of cultivation made her feel more and more worried about Zu An's safety.

Without Yu Yanluo's support, Zu An immediately felt the pressure around him increase tremendously. He struggled to fend Yan Xuehen off while shouting, "Your disciple is going to end up a widow if we keep fighting! Do you want her to blame you for the rest of her life?"

Yan Xuehen was completely unaffected and replied, "Hmph, if you die, that will be for the best. That way, Chuyan's will can no longer be swayed. Even if she blames me in the beginning, once she comprehends the true essence behind the oneness of heaven and humanity, she will appreciate it as her master's consideration."

Zu An was speechless. This woman really did seem as if she intended to kill him! He didn't have any more reservations when he realized that, and fired a round of curses straight at her. "Hmph, old nun, you must think you're pretty good looking, but you can't compare to Madam Yu! You couldn't stand that her relationship with me is good and got jealous, so that's why you're attacking me with more and more anger! Even if you can't get what you want, why are you stopping others from obtaining it?"

At first, Zu An had been worried since she was Chu Chuyan's master, so he hadn't used any of his most dangerous methods. But since Yan Xuehen wanted to kill him, he couldn't be bothered to care about that anymore. The difference in strength was apparent. If he wanted a chance at a comeback, he had to first infuriate her and see if she slipped up at all.

"Old nun?" Yan Xuehen started breathing quickly when she heard that form of address.

The White Jade Palace was a sect of the daoist school. Furthermore, she looked young and beautiful, but she was the master of an entire sect. She was a senior who had been famous in the martial world for many years. As such, the title wasn't completely inappropriate.

But she was a woman in the end. How could she not care about such a thing?

Furthermore, because of her status and exceptional appearance, she would be treated with respect wherever she went. There were some who even called her a goddess. Even though she remained humble on the surface and told them there was no need for them to call her that, she would still feel happy inside.

Yet now, she had been cursed as an 'old nun' by a young brat, and he had even said that she was acting out of jealousy toward Yu Yanluo! It was absolutely preposterous.

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +222 +222 +222...

Yu Yanluo's expression was strange. She thought to herself, Zu An really is daring! He actually dares to lecture a grandmaster this way! A hint of worry appeared on her face as she thought to herself, Won't he be in even more danger now?

Sure enough, Yan Xuehen became a bit faster. On several occasions, Zu An couldn't evade in time, and he was soon covered in wounds. Fortunately, his body was tough, so he didn't lose all his fighting strength.

Zu An wasn't startled; instead, he was happy. However, just that level of rage wasn't enough. A suitable amount of rage would increase one's strength, but an excessive amount would cause them to easily make mistakes.

As such, he added to the heat, shouting as he dodged, "I get it now! Old nun over here is in a bad mood because of her period, her menopause syndrome! That's why you're jealous that your disciple found such a good husband while you're just an old spinster. That's why your heart and mind are so abnormal right now!

"You want your disciple to feel your pain too! You can't accept that your disciple will be happier than you! Are you even human?!

"If you're jealous, just admit it! I can help you experience what it feels like to have a relationship as a favor for Chuyan. Why do you have to kill over this?"

...

"Period? Menopause syndrome..." Yan Xuehen almost fainted on the spot. Why is this little rascal so shameless and hateful? Is Chuyan blind?

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +999 +999 +999...

"Shameless scoundrel, die!" Yan Xuehen didn't hold back at all anymore. Her entire body rose into the air. Her black hair flew all around her, and a frigid domain began to spread in all directions.

Zu An's expression was grim. He began to prepare his own trump cards, and also prepared to deal the fatal blow with his Poisonous Prick.

Yu Yanluo bit her red lip tightly. A resolute look appeared in her eyes. Her pupils began to change color as well. If one were to look at her, they would find that her pupils were starting to become slender and deep.

Suddenly, someone snickered from off to the side. "Tsk tsK tsK. You're a glorious grandmaster, and yet you're releasing your domain against the younger generation. Do you really have no sense of shame?"

Still floating in midair, Yan Xuehen frowned when she heard that voice. She restrained her domain and didn't continue to attack. Instead, she turned around to look at a woman leaning against the window.

An exceptional beauty was looking at Yan Xuehen with an ambiguous smile. Her long hair reached all the way to her bottom.

"Yun Jianyue!" Yan Xuehen harrumphed. She knew that if she continued to act against Zu An, her arch-enemy might just ambush her. She exclaimed, "Why are you here?"

"Even you're here, so why can't I be?" Yun Jianyue chuckled and remarked, "Did you build Cloudcenter Commandery?"

Yan Xuehen frowned and said, "We will settle our matters on a different day. I have to clean up some matters of my sect first; do not interfere."

"Cleaning up some matters? Little Ah Zu over there is my good friend. When did he become part of your sect?" Yun Jianyue remarked in dissatisfaction, while giving Zu An a look. She almost gave him a huge thumbs up right at that moment. This kid really knows how to curse someone! No wonder even the usually aloof and indifferent Yan Xuehen was about to explode from anger.

Yu Yanluo had already lowered her head to hide the changes that were taking place in her eyes. At the same time, she was shocked. This Zu An has so many friends! And they're all incredible beauties?

"This shameless man is your friend?" Yan Xuehen exclaimed. She seemed to have heard a joke. She really couldn't imagine a demoness like Yun Jianyue being friends with a young junior like Zu An.

"Not only are we friends, he is also the sweetheart of my beloved disciple." Yun Jianyue jumped down from the window, casually stepping into Yan Xuehen's domain as she said, "Our Holy Sect isn't so self-righteous and ignorant that we have to break up couples that form. I'm actually quite satisfied with the husband my disciple chose."

Chapter 1109: Man Stolen

"What?!" Yan Xuehen's brows shot up when she heard what Yun Jianyue said. She exclaimed toward Zu An, "You're still not satisfied with Chuyan? You're still seducing women outside?"

Yu Yanluo's eyes widened. She couldn't help but feel that this woman was suggesting something else.

But she was also shocked. The Devil Sect's disciple was their saintess. It was rumored that she had to maintain a virgin body. Zu An had even managed to fool around with such a woman? What was even more shocking was that Yun Jianyue, the Devil Sect master, didn't seem to object to it at all!

Is there something wrong with this world?

Yun Jianyue looked calmly at Zu An, watching the scene like a drama that had nothing to do with her.

Zu An felt his scalp turn numb. He obviously knew that she was waiting for him to state his own opinion. If he didn't admit to it, Qiu Honglei might be hurt if news of this matter reached her ears. As such, he braced himself and said, "Honglei and I have gone through life and death together several times; we are each other's joy. Chuyan has known for a while, and she's even mentioned taking her in."

Yan Xuehen was so angry she laughed, retorting, "Do you mean you actually want to have both of them?"

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

Yu Yanluo thought to herself, What do you mean, 'both'? From what I know, this brat is definitely not just limiting himself to those two.

"You deserve praise for your courage; you didn't let down Honglei's affection for you." Yun Jianyue nodded in praise. Then, she gave Yan Xuehen a look of disdain and said, "What do you mean both? That disciple of yours suffered a huge catastrophe, and under the emperor's pressure, she already divorced him. The two of them have nothing to do with each other anymore. Of course, if our relationship improved, I wouldn't mind letting Honglei agree to her becoming a concubine."

"A concubine? Are you dreaming?!" Yan Xuehen exclaimed in utter fury. "Chuyan has already completed the ritual kneeling with him to become the main wife; she has spoken to me about the divorce too. That was only something both of them agreed on to protect the Chu clan, and not a true divorce!"

She didn't like Zu An, and she didn't want her disciple to be bound by her feelings either. But the fact that she didn't like it was one thing; the man being stolen by someone else was another.

If it were anyone else, she might not have gotten upset. She might even take advantage of the situation for her own benefit. But Yun Jianyue was different. The White Jade Sect and Devil Sect opposed each other. The two sects and the two sect masters had already fought each other for so many years. She could lose to anyone but Yun Jianyue.

Her disciple was going to become a concubine, while Yun Jianyue's disciple was going to become the main wife? Even someone like her who was usually emotionless felt incredibly annoyed.

Zu An's expression was strange. Why are these two now acknowledging their disciples' relationships?

Yun Jianyue clicked her tongue and remarked, "Who would've thought that the White Jade Sect the people have admired for so long was a sect that stole men! What an eye-opener."

"What did you say?!" Yan Xuehen exclaimed. Her expression turned cold and her aura instantly surged. The room that had previously been quite warm because of the heating instantly began to freeze.

Yun Jianyue also summoned her Wheel of the Crescent Moon. She remarked with a smile, "What, now that I've exposed you, you're planning to silence me?"

Yan Xuehen's expression gradually faded. She calmly said, "Yun Jianyue, angering me is not a smart decision. You are still wounded. If we fight to the death, you will definitely not be my match."

Yun Jianyue didn't refute her and instead said, "Indeed, I can't defeat you in my current state. But what if I work together with my precious disciple son-in-law?"

"Disciple son-in-law?" Zu An exclaimed, speechless. What kind of a mess of a title was that?

Yan Xuehen was stunned and couldn't help but give Zu An a look. She had to admit that even though he couldn't compare to her, he was strong enough to interfere in her battle against Yun Jianyue.

Yun Jianyue continued, "Furthermore, with Madam Yu's help... This is the Yu clan, after all. You cut off any aura from leaking out earlier, which was why the manor's guards didn't react. But if we fight, will you be able to still fool them? If the Yu clan's experts rush in, you might even die here."

Now that Yu Yanluo had become involved, she said impatiently, "Your personal grudge has nothing to do with me. Do not drag me into this."

Even though she didn't like Yan Xuehen, she didn't have a good opinion of Yun Jianyue either. The woman's ambiguous smiles, and how she treated Zu An as if he were unquestionably her disciple son-in-law, made her a bit uncomfortable.

Of course, she rationalized it as being because she didn't want to be related to the Devil Sect in any way.

Yun Jianyue seemed to have seen through her thoughts. She said with a giggle, "It's to be expected that you won't help me, but once we do start fighting, will you choose to not help Zu An?"

Yu Yanluo was stunned. Indeed, she couldn't just watch without doing anything at that point.

Yun Jianyue said, "Don't worry; I'm not as domineering as these White Jade Sect people. As a favor for your loyalty to little Ah Zu here, I'll permit Honglei to allow you into the harem too."

Yu Yanluo's face suddenly reddened. She protested, "What kind of nonsense are you saying..."

Zu An felt a huge headache. Yun Jianyue was from the Devil Sect, so she didn't feel many misgivings in anything she did. She just wanted to see the entire world in chaos.

Yan Xuehen also reacted just then. "Why do I feel as if you sound like some great madam? Are you the one helping your junior choose his partners, or are you choosing your own sisters?"

The entire room became quiet after Yan Xuehen spoke those words. Yu Yanluo gave Yun Jianyue a suspicious look. Zu An was completely stupefied.

Yan Xuehen was from the orthodox sects, so why was her retaliation so fierce? Her words really were vicious!

Sure enough, a bit of annoyance flickered through Yun Jianyue's eyes. But she reacted quickly too, suppressing her rage and saying with a smile, "So what if that's the case? For our Holy Sect, what we care about the most is strength and talent. We're extremely satisfied with Ah Zu, so I'm treating him as one of our own. Rather than pleasing another man, Ah Zu would be a better choice.

"Miss stone cold heart, why don't you come and become one of these sisters too? Master and disciple playing together would be quite fun, you know? There's no way we would allow an ordinary person into the Zu clan, but even though you're a bit old, you still have some looks and barely qualify. As a favor for our friendship, I'll just let you in as a concubine."

Forget about Yu Yanluo, even Zu An was stupefied. He thought to himself, Big sis, are you being serious right now?

Yan Xuehen was already so angry her entire body was shaking. She exclaimed, "You're a Devil Sect succubus after all! You can even say something like that so naturally?!" She couldn't hold herself back anymore. Her flying sword left its scabbard and rushed toward Yun Jianyue.

Yun Jianyue laughed and continued, "What, you want to be the eldest sister in the harem? Sorry, but that won't do." Even though she was smiling, however, she didn't show any carelessness. Her Wheel of the Crescent Moon rushed out.

The flying sword and crescent wheel clashed more than ten times, sword ki flying in all directions. The room couldn't endure the clash between two grandmasters; it began to break apart and collapse.

Yu Yanluo's expression changed. It was difficult for her to evade at the moment because Yan Xuehen had previously sealed her acupoints.

A figure rushed toward Yu Yanluo to protect her. Ordinary pillars and debris were one thing; the shockwaves of a battle between grandmasters weren't so easy to defend against. Blood immediately splashed across Zu An's back. He groaned, blood spilling out from the corner of his lips too.

Yu Yanluo stared at the man in front of her in a stupor. She felt brokenhearted when she saw the blood coming out from his mouth. She quickly took out a handkerchief to wipe away the blood.

Suddenly, Yun Jianyue called out, "Alright, stop. I don't want to fight anymore."

As a grandmaster, she naturally sensed the things that had just taken place. The two of them were fighting to the death, while they were helping another woman steal that man? Such a feeling really wasn't great.

When Yan Xuehen saw the Yu clan's experts approaching from a distance, she clearly didn't plan to continue fighting anymore either. She only gave Zu An a deep look and said, "It was you that night after all."

Yun Jianyue raised her eyebrows. Her desire for gossip burned fiercely within her.

That night?

Don't tell me this stone cold woman also has a thing with this damn brat?

Chapter 1110: A Gift

Yu Yanluo waved outward, gesturing that the Yu clan's experts weren't permitted to approach. At the same time, her expression became strange when she looked at Zu An. Does this guy have some strange power over women? Why does even someone like Yan Xuehen have something to do with him?

Zu An was also confused. He called out, "Sect Leader Yan, the two of us know each other, but that's it! You can't talk like that and make others think strange things! When did we ever stay together for a night?"

With Yun Jianyue there, he obviously didn't need to fight to the death anymore. There was also no need to anger Yan Xuehen more by calling her an old nun either.

"What kind of nonsense..." Yan Xuehen's pretty brows furrowed together. Only when she saw Yun Jianyue and Yu Yanluo's strange expressions did she realize the ambiguous meanings in what she had just said.

A blush appeared on her fair cheeks. Fortunately, there was a veil over her face, so it was hidden from view. She harrumphed and said in annoyance, "I meant that that night, it was you who interfered at the Great Snowy Mountain."

You have successfully trolled Yan Xuehen for +146 +146 +146...

"Sect Leader Yan must be joking! According to what I know, it was Golden Token Eleven who helped Madam Yu and the duke," Zu An replied, alarmed. Did she already guess that Golden Token Eleven was me?

"Indeed. I was there at the time, and the duke can testify as well. I do not know what the sect master is saying." Yu Yanluo naturally spoke up to help him.

"Your relationship is definitely strange, almost like a couple defending each other." Yan Xuehen harrumphed. "Only the most foolish would believe everything they hear. People like us naturally need to come to our own conclusions.

"I did not hold back much just now. There were several times when that brat's life hung by a thread. And yet, in such a dangerous situation, he did not use the Imperial Edict. That means he has already used up his Imperial Edict." Yan Xuehen paused before continuing, "And recently, the only time an Edict was used was in Great Snowy Mountain. That is something everyone knows."

She stared rigidly at the two of them and exclaimed, "Speak! Why are you pushing this onto Golden Token Eleven? What are you all hiding?"

Yun Jianyue's expression became dangerous as well. From their time in the Imperial Palace, she obviously knew that Zu An was Golden Token Eleven. But she had thought that was a secret shared only between them. Back then, even though she hadn't said anything when he shared such a great secret with her, she had been quite moved.

But now, it seemed other women also knew about that identity! Is this kid using this to chase after girls? Her expression became a bit unkind when she thought of that.

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +248 +248 +248...

Zu An gave Yun Jianyue a surprised look. He didn't understand why she was suddenly getting angry. But the top priority was still resolving Yan Xuehen's suspicions, so he said, "The situation back then was related to the deaths of several important individuals in Cloudcenter Commandery. If I used my identity, the consequences would spiral out of control.

"But Golden Token Eleven never showed himself, and I was worried that if the fact that I had used up my Imperial Edict were exposed, some people might no longer feel any misgivings and attack us. That's why I borrowed Golden Token Eleven's name to make others think I still have an Imperial Edict on me."

Yun Jianyue's expression eased up a bit when she heard Zu An's explanation. It seemed he hadn't told anyone else about his status as Golden Token Eleven.

"Is that so?" Yan Xuehen replied. She was still skeptical, but his explanation made sense. She then looked at Yu Yanluo and said, "Your relationship with Madam Yu is quite good. Does the duke know about this?"

Yu Yanluo was alarmed. She naturally sensed the implications behind what Yan Xuehen was saying. She calmly replied, "This was something we already discussed with the duke beforehand. We considered everything in terms of the bigger picture."

Seeing that Yan Xuehen intended to ask more questions, Zu An was worried that the duke being a fake would be exposed. He quickly said, "Sect Master Yan, your junior disciple's remains are still intact. You can personally examine them. With senior's cultivation, I believe you will be able to tell who killed him."

“Hmph! I will obviously look into it myself.” Yan Xuehen sneered. “You were calling me an old nun just now; I do not think I can accept the address of ‘senior’ from you.”

Zu An immediately said with an upright expression, “Senior is so beautiful and outstanding. If we were to walk side by side along the streets, people might be surprised if I called you my big sister and would think you were younger. Which rascal would call you an old nun?”

Yu Yanluo and Yun Jianyue were speechless.

Yan Xuehen was also a bit embarrassed. She brushed her sleeves and stormed off, exclaiming, “Why does Chuyan like a shameless brat like you?!”

Zu An immediately waved toward her receding figure and called out, “Take care, big sis master! Tell my Chuyan I’ll come and see her soon!”

Yan Xuehen staggered and almost dropped out of the sky.

‘Old nun’ had become ‘Sect Master Yan’, and now it had become ‘big sis master’?

How is this guy so shameless?!

She worried that she might hear something even more ridiculous if she stayed, so she left without even turning around.

...

Zu An sighed when he saw Yan Xuehen really leave. The pressure a grandmaster gave off really was no joke. With this frozen mountain standing between me and Chuyan, it seems our relationship won’t be that easy...

While standing a short distance away, Yun Jianyue beckoned to Zu An with a finger, saying, “Ah Zu, come with me, darling. This one has something to say to you.”

Zu An gave Yu Yanluo a ‘don’t worry’ look, then quickly rushed over to Yun Jianyue.

Judging from what had just happened, Yu Yanluo naturally knew that the two of them were friends and not enemies. Furthermore, they even seemed a bit closer than normal friends.

She had heard how Yun Jianyue seemed to have been injured during the Devil Sect’s invasion of the Imperial Palace. Does this mean Zu An frantically searched for the Milk of Purple Frost for her? She felt a bit uncomfortable when she thought that.

The servants who came to clean up the ruined area saw Yu Yanluo’s expression turn cold. They just assumed that she was upset that her room had been destroyed, so they kept quiet for fear that they might suffer her wrath.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An looked at the long-haired beauty before him. A sincere smile appeared on his face as he said, “Big sis sect master, I trust that you’ve been well since we last met.”

“You seem to call quite a few people ‘big sis’, hm? You have a ‘big sis master’ over here, and now it’s ‘big sis sect master’.” Yun Jianyue turned around. Her expression was no longer as flirtatious and enthusiastic as when she had been in front of Yan Xuehen, instead replaced with a hint of intimidating fearlessness.

Zu An gulped. No wonder everyone in the martial world fears this woman. She really is pretty scary when she’s not smiling. He said, “Yan Xuehen is Chuyan’s master, after all, so I didn’t want things to be too awkward. I was cursing her a bit too heavily, so I had to find a chance to repair our relationship a bit.”

“What kind of a person is that stone cold woman? Why would she be appeased by a few words from you?” Yun Jianyue harrumphed. “But you are pretty brazen. You actually dared to curse her.”

Zu An had a strange look on his face. Stone cold woman? That’s is a pretty fitting description. But why are you calling her a stone woman...[1]

Yun Jianyue finally revealed a smile, remarking, “But your curses have made me quite pleased. That stone cold woman has always acted like some high-up immortal, being kissed up to by everyone everywhere she goes. It’s absolutely nauseating. But brat, you are worthy of being my... disciple’s love interest.”

Zu An thought to himself, You’re probably just pissed that she’s being received well everywhere while you’re being cursed by everyone. However, he said, “It’s all thanks to big sis sect master arriving quickly, or else I might really have been done for.”

Yun Jianyue replied with a smirk, “At least you have some conscience. By the way, I heard that your people recently launched an assault on the Pegasus Merchant Group?”

Zu An thought, As expected, this question was unavoidable. He replied, “Yes. They colluded with the fiend races in the smuggling plot, so Sir Imperial Envoy went to carry out arrests. I was worried about you and Honglei so I rushed over, but fortunately, neither of you were there.”

“Hmph, how could those good-for-nothings hurt me?” Yun Jianyue waved her hand, and a person appeared as she said, “I have a gift for you.”