

Immortal 1131

Chapter 1131: Right Up to His Door

Jiang Luofu had been staring at Zu An as she spoke. She only saw that he was a bit startled at first, but then his expression calmed down. She couldn't help but feel a bit surprised, asking, "You don't seem to be worried or scared...?"

"What's there to be worried or scared about? Either way, I've already seen this kind of thing happen many times," Zu An replied. He thought back to how Qiao Xueying was from the Elf Race, and Kong Nanwu was also a fiend race individual. He was already used to it.

Jiang Luofu thought he was just talking about Yu Yanluo, so she didn't feel too much suspicion and continued, "Third brother chased after her, then successfully seriously injured her. But later on, by coincidence, he learned that she had never harmed anyone before and instead saved many people. Furthermore, because of the feelings he harbored, he couldn't kill her and instead let her go.

"After that battle, he developed doubts toward his own convictions. The reason why his sword had been unrivaled was precisely because of his unwavering faith. After his principle of slaying all evil was shaken, his sword was no longer as sharp anymore."

Zu An's expression became strange. He recalled a popular phrase from his previous world's web: 'Only a girl will affect my speed of unsheathing.' He hadn't expected that to really be the case in reality...

"At first, that wouldn't have been too big of an issue. With third brother's aptitude, he would be fine after spending some time to steady his mind again." Jiang Luofu lowered her teacup and sighed, continuing, "Unfortunately, something happened afterward..."

"Because of her injuries, Pei Mianman's mother wasn't able to protect herself. She was seriously injured while being pursued by an enemy. Even though third brother rushed over promptly, it was already too late. She was poisoned and beyond saving, passing away soon afterward.

"Third brother believes he was the reason for her death, so he's always felt torn up inside. Furthermore, because it was the death of someone he loved, it became a two-fold blow. His mental state completely collapsed, and he sank into depravity for many years. People all thought he had already died, and only recently did he show himself again."

Zu An quickly asked, "Just who was it that harmed Manman's mother?"

Jiang Luofu shook her head and replied, "That person's origins were unclear. Furthermore, it happened so long ago. I don't know who that person was either."

Zu An began to think to himself. Was it the humans who were pursuing her, or was it the fiend races who wanted to eliminate her? The key issue was, why had she married Pei Shao? Pei Shao hadn't known her identity as a Demon race person either...

"Hm?" Zu An suddenly realized something. He asked, "By the way, after she was injured, how much time passed before she gave birth to Manman? I feel as if the time doesn't really match up somehow."

Jiang Luofu replied, "She gave birth before she was injured, of course. She was injured by third brother not long after Manman was born."

Zu An was stupefied.

If I'm not mistaken, didn't Xiao Yao like Manman's mom? She had already given birth at that point?!

He liked married women, and those who already had kids, at that?

That Xiao Yao seemed like an honest guy, but he was actually that kind of person!

But jokes were jokes. He still had to solve the problem. He said, "Even so, he clearly knows Yu Yanluo is his junior sister, and yet he still did this. Is he not scared of his past regret repeating itself?"

Jiang Luofu sighed and said, "The events of the past have always been his inner demon. He won't back down here."

"Then what are you going to do? You can't just leave your junior sister to die, right?" Zu An asked. He thought, There's no way that old fox libationer didn't plan a single thing, right?

Jiang Luofu hesitated, then said, "I can help you, but I need you to give me something."

Zu An was shocked. He replied, "What the heck is this? She's your junior sister, not mine. Why does it suddenly seem as if I'm the only one who wants to save her?"

Jiang Luofu showed him a crafty smile and said, "By now, you should understand well that the master takes in disciples of all different ages and backgrounds. There are many whom even I don't know the real identities of, let alone having met them. Yu Yanluo is precisely one of them. We're fellow disciples, but we don't share any real affection. Our relationship is definitely not as close as yours. I've been wandering around Cloudcenter Commandery these days, and I've heard quite the rumors about you two."

She sounded shocked too when she said that. Yu Yanluo's beauty had stunned the entire world for many years. Even his majesty had been one of her admirers, and yet she had never truly gotten close to anyone. Even though she had always greeted others with warm smiles, anyone with a discerning eye could tell how estranged she actually was.

Only this guy, Zu An, seemed to be closer to her. There had even started to be gossip about the two of them in the street stalls.

Even though some people had noticed that ever since the duke had come back, the married couple seemed to have grown closer, for most commoners, that was completely normal behavior between a husband and wife. It was instead a third party like Zu An that drew the most attention. Such secret adulterous relationships were the most stimulating.

Zu An's forehead creased when he heard that. The libationer's disciples really were each more abnormal than the next. Even Jiang Luofu was completely indifferent; no wonder Xiao Yao didn't feel any misgivings even after finding out Yu Yanluo was his junior sister. He asked, "What do you want?"

Jiang Luofu looked at him with a cool and elegant gaze. After a while, she spoke. "The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra."

"What?!" Zu An exclaimed. No matter how firm his will was, his expression still couldn't help but change greatly.

Jiang Luofu sighed and said, "I know you're shocked right now. I'll be honest with you, I'm asking this because of someone else. They want the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra from you."

"King Qi?" Zu An asked quietly.

"Madam Qi. But that's no different from King Qi asking for it," Jiang Luofu said. "They know about our relationship in Brightmoon City, so they wanted to somehow get the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra from you through trickery. I've always been quite distressed over this matter."

"But after thinking about it, I really didn't want to fool you, so I just decided to tell you directly. That way, regardless of what the result is, you won't blame me too much in the future."

Zu An couldn't help but laugh. He replied, "Big sis principal, do you know what the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra signifies? How could it be something that can be randomly stolen?"

"Of course I know that, and many people do too. Otherwise, someone like you who had obtained such a powerful cultivation in just a year or two of time, ranking up from an ordinary person that way, would've already been captured and locked up for research a long time ago," Jiang Luofu said. She leaned backward, her legs changing positions again. "But the more that's the case, the more people covet the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. It's only because of their fear of the emperor that King Qi alone is able to act on such thoughts."

"Ah Zu, you're an intelligent person. You should understand that treasuring a jade ring can become a crime. I don't know why his majesty would let you go, but with his majesty's nature, his tolerance will soon run out."

"Rather than facing his majesty alone, you should let King Qi face him. King Qi has already schemed for many years; the only difference is his individual cultivation. If he could obtain the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, he could then fully face his majesty. At that time, they would be evenly matched, and you would become safer. Your value would also climb higher."

Zu An asked indifferently, "Are you speaking as a mouthpiece for King Qi right now?"

Jiang Luofu shook her head and replied, "Even though the Jiang clan has always been on good terms with King Qi, we haven't completely sided with them. Everything I am saying right now is solely from the perspective of your friend. Your situation right now is too dangerous. Whether it's the emperor or King Qi, neither side is likely to let you go. That's why you need to have a plan of your own."

She continued, "You can choose to refuse me; I just need to report that to Madam Qi." She looked worried as she said, "But if you choose to do that, King Qi will view you as a thorn in his side. You've caused him to lose a lot of the resources he's accumulated over the years too. If it weren't for this, he might have already come after you. His majesty could also find a justification to use King Qi to get rid of you, as that wouldn't tarnish his reputation then."

Zu An couldn't help but say with a sigh, "Big sis principal, you are the academy's lawyer after all. You're able to come up with all kinds of reasons one after another. Now, it almost sounds as if it's in my best interest to hand the secret text over."

Jiang Luofu leaned forward and said, "Regardless of whether you believe me or not, I'm considering things from your perspective. Actually, this is a mission I received a long time ago, but I've never done anything about it. Only recently did I realize that this was in your best interest.

"I know my request will definitely make you feel extremely disappointed... Forget it, I'll just refuse her. However, you really need to be careful. Whether it's his majesty or King Qi, neither side is a kind sort. They'll act against you soon." She got up to leave after speaking. However, Zu An grabbed her and stopped her from leaving.

Jiang Luofu turned around. When she saw Zu An grabbing her arm, she was a bit confused.

However, Zu An said calmly, "Why are you in such a rush to leave? I didn't even say I wouldn't agree." He took out a book and handed it to her, saying, "This is what you're looking for."

Jiang Luofu was shocked. She replied, "You actually agree to it?"

She hadn't had high hopes for the idea to begin with. Even though she had indeed been considering things for Zu An's sake, she knew that such an exceptional secret manual was something no one would be willing to give up.

Zu An smiled. "If it were anyone else, no matter how reasonable and fair their words, I would still only spit in their face. But big sis principal is different. As long as you want it, I'll give it all."

He had been wondering just how he was going to give the fake Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to King Qi. And yet now, a solution had come right up to his door!

Jiang Luofu was stunned at first. Her expression that had remained serious and ice-cold for so long because of her role as the academy principal now turned visibly red.

Chapter 1132: Ambush

Jiang Luofu couldn't help but scoff, remarking, "Do you slather your mouth in honey everyday or something? No wonder you have so many girls around you all the time."

Zu An pretended to be shocked as he replied, "Don't tell me big sis principal had a taste without me knowing? You even know that my lips are sweet."

Jiang Luofu finally couldn't take it anymore. She said, "Hmph, you're clearly doing all of this to save Yu Yanluo, and yet you're making it sound as if you're doing it for me."

Zu An said seriously, "If it weren't you, even if I wanted to save someone, I wouldn't have handed over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra for it."

Jiang Luofu's heartbeat sped up when she saw his scorching gaze. She had only treated this guy as a naughty and underripe junior when he first entered the academy, and yet now, he was already so mature...

She lowered her gaze slightly, then said with an ambiguous smile, "You've been holding onto me all this time without letting go. Do you know that such an action would already be enough to be considered sexual harrasment if it were done toward a married woman?"

Zu An said with an upright expression, "Big sis principal, that's where you're mistaken. You haven't even gotten married yet, so how can this be considered harassing a married woman?"

Jiang Luofu said seriously, "According to the Zhou Dynasty's laws, all women who have completed maidenhood are referred to as married women in the legal texts."

Zu An was speechless. Only then did he recall that Jiang Luofu was ranked number eight in the academy, and her specialty was law. No wonder her entire presence changed as soon as she talked about such things! What was he even doing trying to mess around in her field of specialization?

Jiang Luofu retracted her hand and put the secret manual away. She said, "I'll store this manual away and hand it to Madam Qi. No one else will see it. Of course, even I won't look at it myself."

Zu An chuckled and said, "I don't mind big sis principal looking, but this technique is harmful for women. That's why it's best if you don't look at it."

The manual was the fake Phoenix Nirvana Sutra the emperor had modified. Cultivating it was definitely extremely dangerous, but he couldn't tell her directly. As such, he could only warn her that way.

Jiang Luofu chuckled. She didn't say too much and stored the manual in a case right in front of him. Then, she placed a seal on it.

The seal was created by the academy, and was often used to transport military and court documents. If it were ever undone, others would immediately know.

She had done so to show that she wouldn't secretly read it. After doing all that, she then put the case in her storage pouch.

Zu An retracted his gaze. He asked curiously, "I've already given you everything, but how are we going to save Yu Yanluo?"

Jiang Luofu replied in a direct and efficient manner. "Jailbreak."

Zu An was stunned. Do I need you to tell me such a simple and crude method?

Jiang Luofu explained, "Right now, Yu Yanluo is being heavily guarded by Xu Yu and the Imperial Envoy's people. Xu Yu is someone meticulous in thought, and Sang Hong is an old fox as well. Trying to pull a fast one over them is like trying to scale the heavens. We might as well break her out through brute force."

Zu An frowned. And said, "Xu Yu has the Imperial Edict, and he has tons of troops at his side. Xiao Yao, the Sword Immortal, is even standing guard. How would we even go about breaking her out? And most importantly, how would we deal with the aftermath of breaking her out?"

He wasn't ready to be a wanted criminal yet. If he were chased by the court and bore the accusation of colluding with the fiend races, everything he had gathered up until then through all of his hard work would completely collapse. The worst part was that there would be no future for him; there wouldn't be any place left for him in this world!

"That's where I come in," Jiang Luofu said. She leaned backward into her chair, fully displaying her elegant curves. Her mood was quite good since everything had gone smoothly. She continued, "But I need to make some preparations first. I'll contact you in a few days."

“Alright.” Zu An needed some time to send Yu Yanluo’s clansmen away first, anyway

If it were someone else who had made such a bold promise, Zu An definitely wouldn’t trust them. However, Jiang Luofu was different; he trusted that she wouldn’t lie to him.

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When he watched as Jiang Luofu left, Zu An sank into his own thoughts.

At first, he had planned to ally himself with King Qi to defeat the emperor. However, according to the series of events that had taken place in Cloudcenter Commandery, there was no way their two sides would fight on the same front. Even if they looked friendly on the outside, it was impossible.

King Qi’s forces that had been carefully planted here had been completely swept away by him. One he returned to the capital, no, even before he returned to the capital, King Qi’s revenge would already begin.

If he pretended to not know anything at the final reckoning, there would be a chance of avoiding all that. However, he couldn’t bring himself to ignore the ruthless killing of the innocent villagers, including the murder of Chen Zhou’s wife and son.

Cultivation... Even though it brought many superhuman powers, if that power made one even forget about basic human decency, what meaning would be in cultivation?

He couldn’t just watch as King Qi Manor and the Pei clan became tied in marriage either. Thus, he would just borrow the fake Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to solve everything.

No matter how powerful the emperor was, he couldn’t defeat time. He wasn’t far from his absolute limit. At worst, Zu An could just hide for a few years. But King Qi was in the prime of his life. If he really won against Zhao Hao and seized the imperial throne, Zu An’s own circumstances would be dire.

He smiled when he thought through all those things. He left behind some money for the tea before leaving.

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Zu An changed into Jian Yanyou with ‘Face of a Thousand Identities’ again. When he returned to the Duke Manor, he quickly issued all kinds of orders. He gathered a large number of carriages, as if he were going to carry out a huge business transaction.

Now, even Zhang Ji was alarmed. She ran over and asked with a worried expression, “Duke, what is your respected self going to do?”

“Too many things have happened recently, so many goods that should have been dealt with have accumulated. Since the situation has stabilized a bit, we should send them out to where they should go.” Zu An explained.

Zhang Ji sighed in relief and said, “My duke, even though I do not understand these things, I know that your mood is not great since the madam has just been arrested. How can you be in the mood to take care of backed up businesses? If even I do not believe that, others will definitely not believe it either.”

Seeing that he had remained silent, a distressed smile appeared on her face. She said, "My duke, I know I was brought in by the second master before. That thing happened between the second master and your respected self... That is why you do not trust me as much as you trust Liu Ji and Chu Ji.

"But regardless of whether the duke believes me or not, this concubine is wholeheartedly devoted to you. Only if everything goes well for you can I follow in your glory.

"You have often visited Chu Ji's courtyard as if you were discussing something with her. But regardless of what it is, the disturbance that has been created will not escape the eyes of those who are watching us. If something does happen, not only will the duke fail to help the madam, you will also be in danger yourself!"

Zu An sighed inwardly. These women weren't easy to deal with after all. Even though they hadn't said it directly, they had clearly guessed something was up. He could only say, "Do not worry; I know what I am doing."

Seeing as he still hadn't told her the truth in the end, Zhang Ji opened her mouth several times. However, in the end, she didn't say anything and left dejectedly.

Zu An felt a bit of a headache when he saw her leave in distress. He had originally planned to meet with them as little as possible, yet now, because something had happened to Yu Yanluo, he had no choice but to frequently make appearances in the Duke Manor. It really was a pain to deal with.

Over the following two days, he successively arranged for some ordinary goods to leave the city. His subordinates reported that each batch was strictly inspected, but he didn't care too much.

On the third day, he suddenly increased the amount of goods that left the city. He arranged for a large number of carriages, and they left the city from different directions.

It was clear that the city guards hadn't expected such a situation. All of the city gates became a flurry of activity.

Zu An changed his outfit and personally escorted one of the carriages out.

The Jian clan had operated in Cloudcenter Commandery for many years, so they naturally had their own trusted aides. The general who guarded one of the exits in the west was one of their people.

Zu An had never made use of that asset before, and only used it at such a crucial conjecture. The general secretly let Zu An's group out of the city by borrowing the chaos.

Those from the Jian clan sighed in relief. But before they could feel happy, several troops swarmed in from all directions, surrounding them.

"Should the duke not be resting at home? Why are you in such a rush to leave the city? Are you trying to transport some important goods?" Xu Yu asked. He rode his horse out of his fleet, and on his face was an 'I've been waiting for a long time already' expression.

Chapter 1133: Luring the Tiger Away from Its Domain

Zu An's expression changed. He asked, "Sir Xu, why are you still here?"

Xu Yu felt inwardly refreshed when he saw that expression. But as a shrewd person, he restrained his smile from showing. He replied, "I am here after receiving a tip-off that there have been some Fiend race individuals who are using this chance to stir up havoc; that is why I brought some men here to look around. Duke, you need to be careful! You absolutely cannot let yourself be connected to these Fiend races."

Even though he was warning Zu An while sounding concerned, both sides knew why he was there. He might as well just outright accuse Zu An of colluding with the Fiend races, and say that he should follow them back to be interrogated.

But Zu An remained calm, saying, "This duke has already overseen Cloudcenter Commandery for many years. I have fought countless battles against the Fiend races and they hate me bitterly. Why would any of them be at my side?"

Xu Yu thought to himself, Your acting skills are pretty good. He said, "The duke really is formidable. Right, we need to carry out a routine inspection, so I hope that the duke does not mind." Hmph, let's see how you'll deal with this situation now!

He gestured with his eyes. His subordinates were already prepared for the situation. They ran towards the carriage, intending to examine what was inside every single carriage.

Zu An quickly roared, "What are you all trying to do?!"

The Duke Manor's guards brandished their weapons along with the soldiers. A battle was on the verge of breaking out.

Xu Yu chuckled and said, "Please do not misunderstand, duke. In order to prevent the fiend races from harming the common people, we have to strictly inspect every single carriage that enters and leaves the city, no matter whether they are ordinary people or high officials. Even people like us need to set an example, no?"

There were some commoners watching in the surroundings. When they heard that, they all began to clamor among themselves. It seemed as if, if Zu An didn't let them inspect his carriages, he would be abusing his authority.

Xu Yu smiled when he saw the crowd's reaction. That was precisely the reason why he hadn't chased away the commoners. He took the chance to move closer to Zu An and quietly said, "There is no need for you to worry, duke. We are only going through the motions a bit to convince them."

Zu An thought to himself, Like hell I'll believe that. But he had to admit that he was starting to admire these court officials more and more. They were lying through their teeth, and yet there wasn't even a single opening to exploit.

He replied coldly, "Then what if you do your inspection, but Sir Xu does not find what you are looking for?"

Xu Yu said with a serious expression, "What is the duke saying? I am just carrying out a routine inspection. Why would there be something I am trying to find?"

Zu An harrumphed. "Is that so? But in my opinion, Sir Xu seems to have your heart set on this."

Xu Yu said apologetically, "I know that this is a bit disrespectful toward you. How about this? If there is nothing wrong, I will offer a formal apology to your manor if there is nothing wrong at all."

But he was just saying that to say it. If the investigation were carried out and they found those Snake race people, Jian Yanyou's guilt would be set in stone. Even though he wouldn't be killed because of his status, his title of duke would definitely be gone. At that point, why would he need to still give an apology?

"I hope that Sir Xu does not regret your choice then," Zu An said with a sneer.

Xu Yu chuckled and didn't reply. Instead, he gestured toward his subordinates with his eyes to begin. He also secretly went on guard against a sudden assault from the other party.

He had been investigating with his men for some time, and was certain that this man was transporting the Snake race. Now that he had caught Jian Yanyou red-handed, he worried that the duke might act out of desperation. That was why he secretly held the Imperial Edict, ready to use it to subdue the other party at a moment's notice.

His subordinates investigated the carriage in an extremely crude manner. They even stabbed their weapons into the piles of goods.

Zu An frowned and remarked, "Is there a need to be so rough? What if you end up damaging the goods?"

Xu Yu thought to himself, You're just worried that those Snake race individuals will die, right? But instead, he said, "The duke is right; I will talk to them."

He moved over to the carriages and berated his subordinates for acting roughly. Meanwhile, he reached out his hand and placed it on the carriage, sending ki inside.

However, the smile on his face quickly froze. There were no living things in the carriage. His subordinates also quickly returned, indicating with their eyes that they didn't find anything.

How can this be? Xu Yu was shocked. He ran over and tore away the covers of the carriages. Sure enough, there were all sorts of goods, but there wasn't a single Snake race person.

He suddenly turned around to look at Zu An, but instead saw him staring back with a smile. Zu An asked, "Sir Xu, have you finished your investigation?"

Xu Yu knew that he had been done in by Zu An's plot. However, he was still unconvinced. He walked toward the largest carriage. He ignored the people who tried to stop him and flung away the curtains.

Two cries of alarm followed. Two pretty young married women looked back at him in alarm. They were dressed in extravagant jewelry. Upon seeing their pretty faces, even the ordinary people watching from a distance cried out in alarm.

Xu Yu obviously recognized that the two were Cloudcenter Duke's favorite concubines. He quickly lowered the carriage curtains, saying, "I've treated all of you irreverently. I ask the madams for your forgiveness."

Zu An quickly walked over and roared furiously, "Sir Xu, what are you looking for exactly? To actually forget even your court manners..." He used this chance to berate the man viciously.

Xu Yu felt incredibly wronged while being berated that way, but he had been completely defeated and couldn't say anything. He could only continuously apologize.

Zu An said coldly, "We will do things the way Sir Xu said before; go and make a formal apology. I will call upon the others later to confirm it."

Xu Yu's expression changed. Anger raged within him too. I'm clearly the one investigating you, but now I'm the one being troubled by you?

You have successfully trolled Xu Yu for +316 +316 +316...

But he had said he would do so himself, and the other party's status was higher than his. He couldn't even retort against it.

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Zu An continued to mock him for a bit, then boarded the carriage and left.

The surrounding soldiers looked at each other in dismay, but they didn't find it too strange. The other party had captured the duke's wife, and now had even run all the way over to investigate him. It would be stranger if the duke treated him nicely.

When Zu An entered the carriage, Chu Ji and Liu Ji leaned over with worried expressions, asking, "Will that Xu Yu not be very angry this time since you treated him so ruthlessly? What if he decides to keep eyeing us?"

Zu An chuckled and replied, "I'm more worried that he won't be distracted by us." He saw through the jade badge that sure enough, Xu Yu was still following them from afar, clearly wishing to find out what exactly he wanted to do.

Chu Ji couldn't help but pat her chest, saying, "I was so scared. I thought we were exposed just now! Where are you hiding them, really?"

Zu An smiled and didn't say anything. I'm sending them out through Tang Tian'er's people, of course.

A sly individual had more than one plan to fall back on. The Zhenyuan Merchant Group was so big, there could be no way they hadn't made rainy day preparations. They no doubt had secret channels that took them out of the city. The matter of transporting the Fiend race people out was a big deal, so they wouldn't dare to take any risks. As such, they were using those secret channels to bring Maid Xing and the others out.

But Xu Yu had been on high alert the entire time, which was why Zu An sent out so many carriages. It had looked as if he were attempting to use the number of carriages to confuse everyone, then use one of them to bring the Snake race people out.

Xu Yu thought that he had seen through the plan, and yet he hadn't realized that it was all just to draw his attention.

“Where are we going now?” Liu Ji asked curiously.

“You should all keep going and pretend that I’m still in the carriage. When you reach the neighboring commandery, stay there for a while,” Zu An replied as he changed his appearance. He had obviously caused such a disturbance not just to cover for Tang Tian’er as she brought the Snake race people out, but also to use chance to lure the enemy away from their territory. He had created a chance to save Yu Yanluo.

Liu Ji and Chu Ji blushed. Even though they had already had a physical relationship, they knew this person wasn’t the real duke. They had their guesses as to his real identity, but neither of them chose to see his true appearance. Only then could they convince themselves that it was okay...

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Soon afterward, Zu An took the chance when the carriage stopped to resupply to leave secretly. The fleet was so large that with his current cultivation, no one noticed anything amiss.

He sprinted back to Cloudcenter City and arrived at the place Jiang Luofu had been staying at. There was no one in the room, only a specially sealed letter.

He took out the keepsake Jiang Luofu had given him before and pressed it against the seal. Both sides matched up, and the letter flickered with radiance. They converged into a string of characters in the air:

“I’ve already drawn the drunkard away; you have two hours of time...”

Chapter 1134: Hoodwink

Jiang Luofu had been cautious, not even using any real names. The drunkard she was talking about was obviously Xiao Yao. He had his wine gourd behind him all the time, and was constantly intoxicated. The term couldn't be any more fitting.

“I found a chance to enter the prison, and left behind a little toy inside. It should be able to help you...”

Then, a chess piece fell out from a ring of light. Zu An reached out his hand and caught it, discovering that it was quite similar to the Sacrificial Piece he had gotten from Hei Baizi before.

“This is the newest toy fifth brother has researched. Its name is Hoodwink. Two pieces make up a pair. Using one piece as a coordinate, as long as you aren’t too far away, while holding the other piece you can immediately reappear next to the matching piece.”

Zu An was incredibly shocked. Those academy people were always coming up with the strangest things. The most important part was that they were even extremely useful!

With the Hoodwink to help him, he could infiltrate the prison, saving him the time needed to break in. If he charged in from outside, the guards would have more time to prepare against an attack. At that point, both Xiao Yao and Xu Yu would immediately rush back once they received news. Things would become troublesome then.

Of course, he could also set the coordinate to be outside. As long as he could sneak into the prison, he could bring Yu Yanluo out without anyone noticing. Unfortunately, Xu Yu’s thoughts were meticulous. The security around Yu Yanluo was extremely tight, making it impossible to sneak in.

He could change his appearance to sneak in, but if someone investigated after the fact, his Face of a Thousand Identities skill would be exposed. That would draw more suspicion toward Jian Yanyou, and the chain reaction that ensued would be a price too great to pay.

That was why he decided to sneak in with the Hoodwink piece. Once he saved Yu Yanluo, the two of them would use their strength to break out.

Sigh, why didn't you make a second set of these chess pieces? We wouldn't have to go through all this trouble then.

Of course, he knew that such a thing was definitely precious. A single set was already hard enough to obtain; hoping for two was just wishful thinking.

He silently memorized the method Jiang Luofu had provided to activate it. Then, he put on a human skin mask before leaving. He couldn't expose his Face of a Thousand Identities skill, so he had to put the masks he had gotten from Chen Xuan in the past to use again.

When he arrived near the residence Yu Yanluo had been locked up in and saw the patrolling soldiers, he had to admit that even though Xu Yu was rather treacherous, he was quite talented. His arrangements really were seamless.

He went to a hidden place and took out the white piece. He used it the way Jiang Luofu had told him to, smashing it with his hand. Then, everything around him rippled. A few seconds later, he instantly vanished from where he had been standing.

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Inside the courtyard, a few guards were chatting.

"I was finally able to take a look at Madam Yu today. She really is pretty!"

"Hmph. What are you making such a big fuss for? I've already seen her a few times. She even smiled toward me last time."

"Say, do you guys think a woman this beautiful could really be from the fiend races?"

"It's hard to say. The fiend races are the best at deception. Her beautiful exterior might just be fake."

"No way, right? Don't tell me her pretty appearance could really be fake?"

"Who knows. But if she looks like that, I couldn't care less if it's real or fake. I'd still hit it."

"Keep dreaming, punk."

...

The men released vulgar laughs, their voices growing more and more lively as they chatted. They began to look at the inner courtyard. They really wanted to go inside and sneak a few more looks. Even if they couldn't really do anything, just appreciating her beauty felt as if it could even lengthen their lifespan by a few years.

But there was a seal made by the Embroidered Envoy inside. That was something Sang Hong and Xu Yu had both arranged in order to keep each other in check, and also to ensure Yu Yanluo's safety.

While the guards felt disappointed, they didn't notice a black chess piece resting on a nearby table beam crumbling into fine powder. Then, the nearby air began to ripple. A figure appeared in the room out of thin air.

The people who had been assigned to guard the place were the elites of the Vice Magistrate. They immediately sensed that something was wrong and moved their hands to the weapons at their waists. One of them reached out his hand to pull the alarm next to him. None of them acted foolishly; instead, the first thing on their mind was to contact the others in the manor. That way, they could complete their mission.

Xu Yu's arrangements really were formidable. If it were someone else who had barged in, forget about whether or not they could win against such powerful guards; even if they won, they wouldn't be able to stop the guards from setting off the alarm.

Unfortunately, Zu An had long been studying the defenses of the place. With his status, it hadn't been too difficult to learn the layout. As such, he immediately charged at the one who moved to pull the alarm as soon as he appeared.

His soul had already taken form, so every single movement the guards made was within his perception. He was able to even predict how every single one of them was going to move. All the guards felt everything before their eyes blur, and they lost sight of their target.

Meanwhile, the one who had tried to sound the alarm found that he couldn't move the hammer in his hands even half an inch further. He raised his head in shock and discovered that the mysterious intruder was already in front of him. He subconsciously tried to retaliate with his other hand, but the enemy clamped down on his acupoint. A strange force poured in, and everything before his eyes darkened.

The others intended to come to his aid, but they found that their eyes couldn't keep up with the intruder's speed at all. One by one, their vision darkened, and they collapsed onto the ground. Zu An supported them before they fell, then gently placed them onto the ground to prevent any sound from alerting those outside. He didn't stop and charged straight into the inner courtyard.

Yu Yanluo was still a woman, and furthermore an extremely beautiful woman. That was why there were no guards arranged inside the small courtyard. Instead, there were only two maids there to tend to her.

The two maids were both ordinary people. They normally resided in a side room, and were easily subdued by Zu An.

Only after doing all that did he arrive at the room deepest inside. There was a seal left by the Embroidered Envoy on the door; if Zu An wasn't mistaken, it was the work of Xiao Jianren. Such seals were difficult for outsiders to break through, and an alarm would go off if anyone else tried to undo them. Any others in the manor would immediately rush over.

Xu Yu had planned against an attack from Zu An, but he had thought that even though the Embroidered Envoy was also a part of the Imperial Envoy procession, their status was special. They were absolutely loyal to the emperor and definitely wouldn't collude with Zu An for such a thing.

What he had thought was indeed the case. For Embroidered Envoys like Xiao Jianren, forget about Zu An, they couldn't even be bought over by a powerful official like Sang Hong.

But no matter how crazy Xu Yu's imagination was, he definitely wouldn't have been able to predict that Zu An had another identity as one of this world's few golden token envoys. The seal established by the silver token envoy Xiao Jianren was completely useless against a higher-leveled golden token envoy!

Zu An took out his Embroidered Envoy golden token and placed it against the seal. The seal let out a noise like a lock opening as it was undone.

"Who?" a voice shouted from within. Yu Yanluo had been thrown into prison, so her vigilance was at its highest level. Even though her cultivation had been sealed, her powerful instincts warned her that something was off.

"It's me," Zu An replied as he closed the door behind him and removed his mask.

"Ah Zu!" Yu Yanluo had been completely on guard, but when she saw him her hands immediately dropped. She was filled with shock and happiness as she asked, "How... How did you get in?"

"There's no time for that right now. Hurry and strip down," Zu An quickly said.

Yu Yanluo's smile immediately froze. She was speechless.

Zu An took out another set of clothes and said, "Change into these."

Only then did Yu Yanluo realize that it was one of the guards' uniforms, seemingly identical to the ones who were standing guard outside. Then, she realized that she had misunderstood him. Her face turned red. She quickly asked a question to cover her embarrassment. "What is going on? If you save me, there will not be a single place in this empire where you will be safe anymore!"

Zu An couldn't help but feel warm inside when he heard the concern in her voice. She was saying that because she was thinking about him, and was scared that she would be dragging him down with her.

"Don't worry, I've already made some arrangements. If everything goes smoothly, I won't be exposed," he replied. Seeing that she had more questions, he laughed and said, "If you keep asking questions and stalling, it might not go smoothly anymore."

"Alright!" Yu Yanluo replied. She wasn't an unreasonable woman. She didn't delay any longer, picking up the uniform and beginning to undo her clothes.

Chapter 1135: Medusa's Gaze

Zu An was surprised. He asked, "You're going to change just like that?" With me right here?

Only then did Yu Yanluo realize what was going on. She requested, "Can you please turn around?"

Zu An was speechless. He could only say, "I'll wait for you outside." Even though he really wanted to tease her and ask why he couldn't just look at her, time was pressing.

"There is no need for all of that. Just turn around. I trust you," Yu Yanluo said, her face reddening. When they had been in that frozen cave and he had treated her, never mind looking at her; he had already

touched her in places he shouldn't have touched. She obviously didn't feel as guarded against him as she would with other people.

Zu An was a bit surprised. But he didn't think too much about it and turned around. Then, he heard rustling from behind him. With how close they were, he could even smell the faint fragrance in the air.

He couldn't help but recall a certain choice from the classical scriptures of his world: To be a beast, or to be worse than a beast. He hadn't expected he would really experience that for himself one day.

Yu Yanluo asked from behind him, "How are Maid Xing and the others?"

Zu An knew she was worried about the safety of her clansmen. He said, "Don't worry; I've already sent them out of the city..."

He took the chance to give her a rough summary of how he had drawn Xu Yu's attention elsewhere, and how the Zhenyuan Merchant Group had escorted them out.

Yu Yanluo was incredibly shocked. She exclaimed, "You are just too incredible! You have managed to come up with this 'one stone, three birds' tactic... But what I am more curious about is why the Zhenyuan Merchant Group's Miss Tang would take such a risk for you, and why she would help you at such a crucial juncture."

Colluding with the fiend races was something incredibly dangerous. A single slip-up and the entire merchant group might be done for. There was no way Tang Tian'er would help unless their relationship was really special.

Zu An replied a bit absent-mindedly, "Because she is my good friend."

He was actually quite puzzled too. His relationship with Tang Tian'er really was too strange. If one were to say that she really did like him, there was no way he would believe that. After all, they had known each other for way too short a time.

And yet, he couldn't explain her attitude toward him otherwise. He couldn't just say that she was really just doing it because of the happiness she felt when he treated her, right? In the end, he could only attribute it to her deliberately getting close to him, and that she hadn't even hesitated to make it look as if she liked him to achieve such a result. But he couldn't figure out her real objective at the moment.

"A good friend?" Yu Yanluo asked. Her movements had clearly stopped. Then, a hint of worry appeared between her brows. She continued, "Like our relationship?"

Zu An subconsciously replied, "Of course it's not on our level." He really couldn't feel at ease before figuring out Tang Tian'er's intentions.

A smile unknowingly appeared on Yu Yanluo's sullen face when she heard that, like the first melting of snow, or a flower in full bloom. Unfortunately, Zu An had his back to her and couldn't see it. She replied, "You should not say that. She has helped us so much and is taking such a risk. You have to properly thank her once all of this is over."

"Got it," Zu An replied, stunned. He thought to himself, Why was her tone so different before and after? It was almost as if she had been a good friend of Tang Tian'er for many years.

A sweet scent brushed past him, then Yu Yanluo appeared in front of him, saying, "I'm done." She even did a little turn in front of him afterward, as if she were asking him how her outfit was.

Zu An propped his chin on one hand and sized her up, saying, "Your pectoral muscles are a bit exaggerated..."

"Pah, pervert!" Yu Yanluo scoffed, blushing. However, she continued, sounding wronged, "I already did my best to bind them with cloth; I cannot bind them any tighter..."

Zu An thought to himself, This woman really is astonishing... Just the thought alone was hard for him to endure. He coughed and quickly said, "I'll undo your body's seals first. Once you recover, you should be able to change your form a bit. Right, have you gotten rid of that poison you were affected by last time yet?"

"That poison lost its effectiveness a few days after, but the Embroidered Envoy set a special seal on me. This seal might not be so easily undone." Yu Yanluo sighed. The Embroidered Envoy were known for their Soul Reaping Chains. Once bound, there were some who were never able to use their cultivation again for the rest of their lives.

For some people of special status, being bound by those Soul Reaping Chains wasn't the prettiest sight, so the Embroidered Envoy would instead use a higher-level seal. Those seals had an even stronger restrictive effect than the chains.

"The Embroidered Envoy..." Zu An muttered with a strange expression. His finger shot out like lightning, striking several of her body's acupoints. He said, "This should do the trick."

Yu Yanluo was confused, but her expression quickly changed. She could sense that her sealed acupoints had begun to recover their usual flow!

"Why do you even know how to undo the Embroidered Envoy's seals?" she exclaimed. She really was shocked now. After all, the Embroidered Envoy was different from the other branches; they were the emperor's loyal hounds. No one else could influence them in any way.

This man is way too mysterious.

"Shush!" Zu An covered her mouth and said through ki, "They're changing the watch now. We have to restrain them immediately and can't let the people outside hear anything. Be careful; none of these people are weak."

Yu Yanluo was also extremely intelligent. She immediately understood why he had made her change into a guard's uniform. But the hot sensation coming from his hand made her expression complicated. No one else would ever have a chance of covering her mouth, and yet he had done it. She clearly didn't feel the slightest bit of rejection toward him. Don't tell me I'm already used to his touch?

But in order to hide her embarrassment, she quickly said through ki, "Leave them to me."

Zu An was stunned. He clearly hadn't expected her to say that. Yu Yanluo moved his hand away with reddened lips. Then, she kicked off the ground lightly and landed in the guard room outside.

Zu An quickly followed along, but he saw that her expression had already returned to normal. Instead, there was a mysterious, awe-inspiring sensation in the air.

“Do not look into my eyes,” Yu Yanluo warned him.

Zu An was alarmed. Don’t tell me...

The guards pushed open the door and entered. When they saw the situation inside, however, their expressions changed greatly. Some drew their blades, and others prepared to sound the alarm. But when they saw Yu Yanluo’s eyes, all their movements stopped.

Yu Yanluo’s normally beautiful eyes now carried a hint of harsh intent. Waves of yellow light flickered in her eyes. Then, the guards began to visibly petrify, turning to stone a moment later.

Even though he had had his suspicions, Zu An still sighed inwardly when he saw it for himself.

Yu Yanluo retracted her gaze. When she opened her eyes again, they were once again clear. When she saw Zu An’s complicated expression, she quickly explained, “I only petrified them temporarily. They will return to normal in an hour, but they will be sick for a few days.”

Zu An was stunned. He asked, “You can even control the power of your skill?”

Yu Yanluo nodded. “I still have human blood within me, after all. I do not want to kill people either.” However, she looked at him nervously and asked, “Do you not feel disgust now that you have seen me use the Medusa’s ability?” After all, in this world, the Medusa was synonymous with the word ‘wicked’.

Zu An subconsciously replied, “Why would I? It’s pretty stimulating, actually.”

Yu Yanluo was stunned.

Zu An’s face heated up and he said, “I’m saying that I’m different from other people. I don’t care about what others think when I make friends with someone; I instead look at one’s character. Even if they’re of a different race, we can still be friends. Otherwise, if their character is vile, they’ll be my enemies even if they’re human.”

Yu Yanluo wasn’t stupid; she obviously wouldn’t be fooled by his explanation. She said with a strange expression, “Why do I feel as if you are only incredibly daring because of your perversion?”

Zu An said with an upright expression, “You’re misunderstanding! I’m just face blind; I can’t tell what is pretty and what isn’t. For example, my wife was clearly Brightmoon City’s number one beauty, but I didn’t stay with her just because I thought she was pretty. I just didn’t know if she was pretty or not!”

Chapter 1136: Wait

Yu Yanluo was speechless. If anyone else had said such a thing, she would definitely have spat in their face. But she couldn’t really object because Zu An was saying it. She just thought of it as Zu An hiding his embarrassment.

She kindly changed the topic, asking, “So what do we do now? Even though we have changed into these guards’ uniforms and are just two people, there is no way for us to escape under everyone’s prying eyes.”

Zu An replied with a smile, “That’s not too difficult at all.” He summoned Daji afterward, then woke up the guards he had knocked unconscious previously.

Yu Yanluo was shocked when she saw someone appear out of thin air. Is this some spatial summoning ability? Zu An's cultivation was already at this level?

But her attention was quickly drawn to Daji herself. Daji's devastatingly beautiful features made even a woman like her skip a heartbeat. She thought to herself that if her future husband had a mistress like this, she might not even be able to feel any thoughts of jealousy.

Daji was dressed in a moon-white gown, giving off an otherworldly and aloof air. But there was also a hint of seduction in her expression that seemed as if it could turn the entire world upside down.

Previously, Yu Yanluo could never have imagined that those two entirely different temperaments could exist in the same body, and furthermore blend them in such a natural and harmonious way. It really created a completely unique kind of charm.

Yu Yanluo had long been the publicly-proclaimed number one beauty of the capital. She had absolute confidence in her own appearance. And yet, when she saw the foxy yet also pure woman before her, she immediately felt a sort of danger.

The guards were already waking up one by one. When they saw the situation, they were all shocked. They were just about to fight back when Daji's eyes targeted them.

Those eyes were just too beautiful, like the brightest stars flickering in the night sky, or the most precious gemstones in the world. If the Medusa's eyes were beautiful and dangerous, these eyes were so charming one wouldn't be able to stop themselves.

The guards' eyes quickly grew vacant. Their wary expressions were nowhere to be seen, having been replaced with a bewitched smile.

"Stand over there," Zu An ordered. He and Daji were already mentally linked, so she would immediately repeat his orders.

Sure enough, the guards obediently gathered their belongings and lined up by the entrance, looking as if they were about to get off of work.

Yu Yanluo was stupefied. She was knowledgeable about many things and quickly reacted. "Is this a kind of mind-controlling eye technique?"

"Indeed," Zu An replied with a nod. Even though Daji's fighting ability wasn't great, her mind-controlling ability was way too useful.

The higher her cultivation became, the more people she could control. He had to level her up as quickly as possible. Daji was already at the peak of the sixth rank; he had already prepared most of the other breakthrough materials, and only lacked two things.

He had entrusted the Hub of Freedom to help him look for the Blue Earthflower. A few days prior, Tang Tian'er had told him that they already gained some idea of its whereabouts and would likely be able to obtain them very soon.

The remaining item was the Wuyang Jade. He had initially wanted Yu Yanluo to help him look for it, but she was in trouble herself, so it didn't seem as if he'd be able to get his hands on it anytime soon.

Yu Yanluo was even more shocked when she received his confirmation. She asked, "Is this woman also a fiend race individual?"

Eye techniques were innate skills of the fiend races. Different races had different eye techniques. The eyes were the human race's weakest part; it would be difficult for humans to produce any powerful eye techniques on their own.

Daji didn't reply to her and instead only calmly stared at Zu An, as if she would only follow him blindly.

Zu An thought for a bit, then replied, "I guess she could be considered a fiend race individual, to a certain degree."

Daji wasn't a creature of this world, but her original form was a nine-tailed fox. Using this world's classification, she was indeed part of the fiend races.

"May I ask what the lady's esteemed surname is? What race do you belong to?" Yu Yanluo asked. She immediately felt a sense of intimacy when she heard that Daji was a fiend race individual. But Daji still ignored her no matter how enthusiastic she was.

Yu Yanluo didn't get angry, because she sensed that the way Daji looked at Zu An was extremely strange. It didn't seem like ordinary friendship, but rather a far more intimate attachment, to the point that it resembled the look of a servant toward a master.

Seeing her confusion, Zu An replied, "She's named Daji; you could say she's my maid. She's quite introverted and doesn't like to speak, so please don't mind it too much."

The stunning empress of an entire generation had been called an introverted and quiet young maid? Zu An could clearly sense the discontent in her eyes. But what else was he supposed to say? That she was mute?

"A maid..." Yu Yanluo immediately felt a huge mental blow. A gorgeous beauty like this, whose appearance wasn't inferior to hers at all, was actually just a maid? Furthermore, it didn't look as if she were being forced to do anything either. Instead, it was as if Zu An being her master were something dictated by heaven's law.

If such a woman showed herself in public, just how many kings and princes would kneel down and propose marriage to her? How many young heroes would bend their backs for her sake? Yet she was just fine being Zu An's maid!

Just what kind of charm does this man have?

While she was feeling shocked, she suddenly remembered how he had said that he was face blind, and that he didn't care about how pretty a girl was at all. Back then, she had thought that he was just being shameless.

But now that she had seen Daji, she was suddenly somewhat convinced. If he even had such a beautiful woman as a maid, how could he be someone who would act rashly because of beauty?

Sigh, I have really committed an offense... I have been wondering if he has only been so nice to me because I am pretty. I have really been evaluating a true gentleman's behavior as the attitude of a lowly person...

He is the first one who does not care about my appearance. It looks as if it really was because our souls were compatible that we became such good friends.

Ah Zu really is a wonderful man!

She had always felt burdened by her beautiful appearance, thinking that if she were a bit more ordinary, her life would be a bit easier. But now, for the first time, she became worried that she wasn't pretty enough. Ah Zu was face blind, so she was probably no different from other girls in his eyes. What did she have to do to make herself stand out compared to others in his eyes?

"Put this on. We need to be careful not to be recognized later," Zu An said as he put on a face mask and gave Yu Yanluo one too.

When she received the thin mask, Yu Yanluo obviously knew what kind of item it was, as well as how precious it was. But compared to the shocking things that had just happened, something rare and precious like it instead became ordinary.

The two of them quickly merged into the group and headed toward the outside of the manor. There were guards patrolling everywhere. There were many hidden guards that the two only noticed after passing by them. Zu An and Yu Yanluo were incredibly shocked. Xu Yu really did go all out here... The security here is greater than in most areas in the Imperial Palace!

After all, the Imperial Palace was so large; there was no way every inch of it would be guarded 24/7. But the manor had managed to accomplish that. There wasn't a single corner that was neglected! Not even a fly could sneak in.

Yu Yanluo sighed in amazement. If it weren't for the fact that Zu An was just too incredible, the two of them might already be fighting a bitter battle at that moment.

Since it was around the time the guards usually switched shifts, they didn't notice anything out of the ordinary. Those who were close by even greeted Zu An's group. The guards under Daji's control replied stiffly. Zu An and Yu Yanluo lowered their heads, hiding within the group.

On several occasions, they were almost exposed. Some guards couldn't help but turn around to look at Yu Yanluo's bottom. They couldn't help but feel that the guard's rear was somewhat seductive, that they almost wanted to take him into their arms...

They jumped in fright as soon as that thought emerged. They were scared that they might be starting to swing that way, so none of them dared to say anything. That was how Zu An and Yu Yanluo got away.

Zu An started to relax a bit when he saw the gate grow closer and closer. He said through ki, "You really are way too charming! You've made so many people turn around even while crossdressing."

Yu Yanluo harrumphed and said, "What a pity that someone is face blind, unable to tell whether I am even pretty or not."

Zu An was speechless. He hadn't expected those words to come back and bite him.

When they left through the exit, the two of them sighed in relief. But just then, a mounted troop came over, calling out, "Wait!"

Chapter 1137: On the Verge of Being Exposed

Zu An was alarmed, because he could tell it was Sang Hong's voice. Yu Yanluo's expression changed. A failure at the final juncture really would be hard to swallow.

But both of them knew what Sang Hong was thinking. They worried that he might notice something, so they both lowered their heads.

Sang Hong quickly led a group of men over and asked, "How is Madam Yu doing?" Zu An had entrusted her to his care, so he obviously didn't want anything to happen to Yu Yanluo.

"Everything is fine," the guard leader replied. He was still brainwashed by Daji and had forgotten everything that had just happened. For him, he had just finished work as usual.

Yu Yanluo was full of admiration. That mysterious woman really was formidable! Even though her own eye technique possessed devastating power, there were many situations where it wasn't as useful as Daji's skill.

Sang Hong nodded. He then turned around and headed toward his courtyard. Zu An and Yu Yanluo sighed in relief, thinking they had managed to get through.

But Sang Hong suddenly stopped after taking a single step. He turned around and shouted, "Wait! The two of you in the middle, raise your heads. Why have I not seen either of you before?"

Zu An cursed inwardly. He really hadn't expected Sang Hong's thoughts to be so meticulous, to the point that he even remembered the appearance of every single guard. Sigh, if I knew it was going to be like this, I wouldn't have asked him to look after Yu Yanluo.

"We're new..." Zu An said. However, he knew such an explanation wouldn't work against Sang Hong. He tugged on Yu Yanluo's arm, preparing to run.

"Arrest them!" Sang Hong commanded. He had always been a cautious person. He signaled for his men to get ready as soon as he spoke.

The guards fired several crossbows at the two as soon as they charged outward. The military crossbows the academy had created could pierce through the fiend races' leather armor, and they could even penetrate the elemental barriers of cultivators. They were normally only supplied to the most elite troops in the army. Zu An hadn't expected Xu Yu to invest so much into this matter, having actually transferred over so many military crossbows.

Zu An brandished the blade at his waist, deflecting all the arrows. Even with his current cultivation, his fingers were a bit sore afterward. It was easy to imagine just how shocking the crossbows were.

At that instant, Sang Hong quickly arrived in front of the two of them, blocking their path. The guards behind him also drew their blades.

The defensive perimeter Xu Yu had created immediately moved. Alarms rang out inside the manor. A chaotic array of sounds quickly spread throughout the entire Cloudcenter City.

At the same time, fireworks flew up from the highest point of the manor as a form of insurance. It warned all those nearby, summoning any available forces near and far for assistance.

...

South of the city, the commoners who walked past White Cloud Lake glanced toward a gazebo by the lake from time to time. Inside was an incredible beauty; her black silk-covered legs were especially striking. Many people even thought that if they were stepped on by those legs, it would definitely feel amazing...

But they could only think about it. There were some perverts who had such ambitions, but they were all tossed into the lake by the foul-smelling drunkard with the beauty. In such a cold place, being tossed into the river would leave one half-dead.

Sigh, why would that beauty with those incredible long legs end up favoring a sloppy drunkard like that?

Many people sighed in pity. Why did pretty women all seem to be blind?

Xiao Yao had an ugly expression on his face. He remarked, "These fellas' mouths are too vulgar. I'm going to go and teach them a lesson."

Across from him, Jiang Luofu stopped him with a smile. She said, "Even I'm not upset by their curses, so why is senior brother getting angry?"

Xiao Yao harrumphed in annoyance, his expression unhappy. However, Jiang Luofu continued, "So? What do you think about paying your respects to teacher again and becoming his disciple?"

Xiao Yao fell silent. A while later, he said, "I hold the utmost respect for teacher, and I also miss those days I spent in the academy. However, there are still things I have to do. If I return now and become an academy disciple again, it might instead make those things more difficult to do.

"Furthermore, my actions might easily implicate the academy and teacher. That's why I think I should stay like this for now. The world can continue to think that the past Xiao Yao has already died."

Jiang Luofu sighed and replied, "Senior brother, aren't you looking down on teacher too much? With his cultivation and status, why would he be scared of being implicated by you?"

Xiao Yao said seriously, "Of course teacher isn't scared, but as a disciple, I've already been unworthy. I cannot bring more trouble to him."

Jiang Luofu was about to continue persuading him when the faint ringing of bells echoed in the distance.

Xiao Yao's expression changed. He said, "Damn, something has happened over there." As soon as he spoke, the sword at his waist flew outward. He stood on the sword and took flight, vanishing into the distance as a black speck.

"Hey!" Jiang Luofu reached out her hand, but lowered it in the end. She muttered to herself, "I wanted to buy him some more time, but who would've thought that senior brother would be that fast? Ah Zu, did you succeed or not?"

...

Meanwhile, Xu Yu had been secretly following the Duke Manor's carriage, his brows furrowing deeper and deeper. The carriage had stopped several times, acting extremely secretively. He had secretly

continued his investigation, but he hadn't found anything. Eventually, he had even begun to think that the other party was just bringing his concubines on a leisure trip.

Suddenly, he sensed something. He turned around and looked toward Cloudcenter City, seeing fireworks rising into the sky. His expression quickly changed greatly. He cursed, "F*cking hell! They were just luring me away"

He turned his horse around and sped back toward Cloudcenter City. After what had just happened, he couldn't be bothered with Jian Yanyou's carriage anymore.

Because he had followed the carriage the entire time, it had created a blind spot in his thinking. He had believed that there was no way Jian Yanyou could have left under his watch. Instead, he had been worried that if he tried to inquire about it, he would be held up by Jian Yanyou.

inside the carriage ahead, Liu Ji and Chu Ji sensed the activity from the city. They were both worried, and inadvertently both spoke at the same time.

"I wonder if the duke (he) succeeded."

The two girls were stunned when they heard each others' voices. They both sensed the concern in the other's voice, but they knew that person wasn't the duke. They both felt awkward when they realized that.

...

Zu An was in the middle of a chaotic battle. He obviously knew that if he was surrounded and kept in one spot, more and more powerful cultivators would show up. Eventually, he and Yu Yanluo would be crushed.

The worst part was that if his identity was exposed, the consequences would be tremendous. That was a situation he couldn't afford to let happen. As such, when he saw Sang Hong stand in his way, he didn't dare to continue fighting. He sent the other party flying with a palm strike. Then, he took Yu Yanluo and quickly disappeared beyond the walls.

Sang Hong crawled back up in a sorry state. He felt several energies running amok within him. He almost couldn't stand still and was forced to quickly readjust his internal ki. He was horrified. That person's cultivation was actually so terrifying?

But his expression quickly turned strange, because he keenly sensed that the other party had had a chance to injure him seriously, and yet he had used a kind of gentle force, as if he had been scared of harming him.

That person had the motive to save Yu Yanluo, his cultivation was high, and he didn't want to hurt me... Sang Hong was alarmed, thinking, Don't tell me that was Ah Zu?

The other guards had already surrounded him, asking, "Sir Sang, are you okay?"

"I am fine. Help me examine Madam Yu's situation first. Everyone else, continue chasing after those two who escaped," Sang Hong said. He thought to himself, I can only secretly help him like this. I can't just tell them to stop chasing the intruders, right?

He quickly entered the courtyard. He saw guards lying everywhere on the ground, and sure enough, Yu Yanluo was nowhere to be seen. He was extremely worried. A single mistake and Ah Zu would be completely done for!

With a loud sonic boom, Xiao Yao appeared in the room and asked, "What happened?"

"Someone broke Madam Yu out." Sang Hong harrumphed. "Sir Xiao, why were you not in the manor at such a crucial time?" He knew how great Xiao Yao's cultivation was. He was worried for Zu An's safety and did his best to stall the man.

Xiao Yao's expression changed. Jiang Luofu appeared in his mind, and she had just happened to pick this day to chat with him... But she was his junior sister, and she wasn't a Medusa like Yu Yanluo. He obviously didn't want to involve her. He exclaimed, "Where did that bastard go?!"

Sang Hong wanted to stop him, but someone quickly pointed in the direction Zu An had left in. Xiao Yao's figure flickered, and he instantly flew out again on his sword.

Sang Hong's brows furrowed deeply. He hadn't been able to stall Xiao Yao at all. After thinking about it, he quickly followed along.

Xu Yu also returned alone soon afterward. He couldn't be bothered to gather all of his forces first, instead using his movement technique to travel faster. He quickly ordered various troops to intercept the two who had fled. At the same time, he asked the people at the manor about the situation regarding Yu Yanluo's rescue.

He was in complete disbelief when he heard about what had happened. The well fortified defensive line he had created had actually silently been broken through?

Just who in all of Cloudcenter City had such ability? He suddenly thought of someone.

"Follow me!" he called out, then gathered his subordinates and rushed toward the temporary residence.

Chapter 1138: To Hide

Xu Yu quickly brought a group of people to the temporary residence. Pei You's Armed Escort troop stopped them, asking, "Excuse me, what is Sir Xu trying to do?"

The other party had a vicious expression on his face, and he had come with so many subordinates. He clearly hadn't come with good intentions.

Xu Yu asked indifferently, "Where is Sir Zu?"

Pei You frowned. He didn't like Xu Yu's overbearing appearance, but the other party had the Imperial Edict in hand, and he was pretty much the person with the most authority in Cloudcenter Commandery at that point, so Pei You didn't want to offend him. He could only reply, "Sir Zu was injured a few days ago, so he is resting inside."

"Bring me to meet him then." Xu Yu pressed forward as he spoke.

Pei You panicked and exclaimed, "Ah, Sir Xu! Sir Zu is seriously injured and recovering in seclusion. He warned us to not let anyone disturb him, or else his cultivation might deviate!"

"He is recovering in seclusion?" Xu Yu sneered. "He even participated in the meeting a few days ago, looking as lively as could be. I really couldn't tell that he needed rest."

Pei You explained, "Sir Zu ended up overexerting himself then, causing his wounds from when he fought against Jian Taiding to worsen. He had no choice but to enter seclusion again."

His excuse was reasonable, but Xu Yu obviously wouldn't believe it. He replied, "Oh? That means I have some responsibility for Sir Zu's injuries too, so there's even more of a need for me to visit him."

Pei You wasn't stupid. Even though he didn't know why, he could sense that Xu Yu wasn't there with good intentions. He worried that Zu An's recovery would really be disturbed and quickly tried to think of ways to stop Xu Yu. Unfortunately, Xu Yu's ranking was higher than his, and his cultivation was greater too. He even had the Imperial Edict in hand, so Pei You couldn't stop him even if he wanted to.

As they got closer and closer to Zu An's room, Pei You finally couldn't take it anymore and braced himself. He stood in front of the door and said, "Sir Xu is a cultivator as well; you should understand what kind of consequences there are when you disturb someone's seclusion. I hope that Sir Xu won't force us to do things we don't want to do."

Xu Yu replied with a chuckle, "Of course I do. I don't wish for anyone to be disturbed in this matter either. However, something just happened by the prison and someone broke Yu Yanluo out. We still have no idea who it was. I heard Sir Zu An's investigative abilities were incredible, so I came to ask for some guidance."

"Someone broke out Madam Yu?" Pei You replied, sounding incredibly shocked. He had noticed the disturbance taking place in the distance too, with tolling bells and fireworks everywhere. He had thought that there might have been an attack, but he never would have expected the intruder to have really succeeded! After all, the security over there was basically an inescapable net! Just who had the ability to rescue her?

Madam Yu really was devastatingly beautiful. The instant Pei You learned that she had escaped, he didn't know whether to feel happy or disappointed.

Xu Yu said, "I understand that you're scared that I might be disturbing Sir Zu. How about this? I'll just exchange some words with him through this door, and I'll leave after I ask for his opinion. Is that okay?"

"Um..." Pei You hesitated. He didn't know if Zu An had gone to save Yu Yanluo either. The other party was here to catch him in the act. But seeing as Xu Yu's suggestion was reasonable, Pei You didn't know how to refuse either.

Seeing that Pei You's attitude was no longer as resolute, Xu Yu sneered. Then, he prepared to holler from outside.

Just then, however, a voice interrupted him. "What is Sir Xu trying to do here?" It was Sang Hong, having suddenly arrived with a group of people.

Xu Yu was stunned. He then repeated his explanation again.

Sang Hong was obviously not so easily fooled. He replied with a smile, "Sir Xu came at such a great time. I just chatted with Sir Zu not too long ago. He cannot take any visitors right now because of his injuries,

so I fear that he will not be able to hear your voice outside. If you enter and disturb him, it will easily cause his cultivation to deviate.”

“You chatted with Sir Zu just now?” Xu Yu’s voice rose when he heard that. His expression was full of suspicion.

“Indeed. Didn’t something happen where Madam Yu was being held? My first thought was the same as Sir Xu’s; I went to ask for Sir Zu’s opinion.” Sang Hong seemed to be recalling what had happened. “But before I was able to ask him about it, he mentioned that his injuries had worsened and he needed to rest. He entrusted me with the task of allowing no one to disturb him. Out of concern that he might be distracted, I did not tell him about the matter of Madam Yu being broken out.”

Xu Yu’s expression darkened. He asked, “Sir Sang, do you know what your words represent right now?”

Sang Hong replied, sounding shocked, “What is Sir Xu trying to say? Could it be that you are doubting the words of this humble official?”

Xu Yu and Sang Hong exchanged a look. Then, a smile appeared on Xu Yu’s serious face and he said, “Haha, Sir Sang must be joking. You are an honorable Imperial Envoy; how could you publicly say false things to shelter others? After all, if that were the case, you would be in deep trouble too.”

Sang Hong remained unfazed, replying, “What is Sir Xu saying? I do not understand.”

Even Pei You could sense that something wasn’t right. He secretly moved his hand to his blade handle. At the same time, he gave the Armed Escort some glances, telling them to get ready. They were all members of the Imperial Envoy, so they would obviously stand on Sang Hong’s side.

Xu Yu also sensed their movements. He said with a smile, “Forget it. It is a pity that I cannot speak with Sir Zu, so I will go and chase after the criminal now.”

Sang Hong said with a fake smile, “Seeing that Sir Xu is here right now, I thought that you had already captured the criminal. It turns out you have not yet done so.”

Both sides had attacked each other from various angles, cursing each other for being old foxes.

When Xu Yu left the temporary residence, Sang Hong’s smile immediately vanished. He ordered his subordinates, “Watch the surroundings and record every single person who enters and leaves. Pay attention to Zu An in particular. If anything happens, issue me a report immediately!”

“Understood!” His trusted aides understood what he meant. They quickly left to convey his commands.

...

Xu Yu asked his subordinates, “Has Sect Master Yan left Cloudcenter City yet?”

“She has not. She is currently in a cold and cheerless monastery,” a subordinate said.

“Alright. Come with me to ask for Sect Master Yan’s help,” Xu Yu said seriously.

“Hero Xiao has already chased after the intruders. Could it be that sir is worried that Hero Xiao isn’t enough?” a trusted aide asked.

Xu Yu looked worried as he replied, "Judging from the description given by the manor's people, that person's cultivation is deep and profound. If Yu Yanluo and the Snake race's other experts get involved, Xiao Yao alone might not be enough." As he spoke, he mounted a horse, heading toward the monastery Yan Xuehen was staying at.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An and Yu Yanluo borrowed the city walls and other obstacles to quickly shake off the pursuers. He intended to bring Yu Yanluo to the Duke Manor to hide her there for a while, but an incomparably sharp wave of sword ki rushed in their direction.

"Xiao Yao!" Zu An exclaimed. He had faced him before. The other party's distinctive traits were too clear and easy to recognize.

"You should leave the city first, or else it might affect your identity as 'Jian Yanyou'," Yu Yanluo suggested. With the speed at which Xiao Yao was coming after them, they might be caught the moment their toes touched the Duke Manor's gates.

They could borrow physical structures to throw off ordinary soldiers, but it was different if a master rank targeted them. Even though they were still far away and the attack's precision wasn't the greatest, it had still accurately tracked their general location.

If the story of Jian Yanyou's return they had crafted with such difficulty were exposed here, the consequences would be too severe. Zu An knew how important it was. He didn't hesitate at all and took Yu Yanluo in another direction.

As she saw the buildings and trees rush past them, Yu Yanluo was amazed. He is way too fast, not slower than a master rank at all! But there should be no way he could be this fast at his current level...

A while later, she slowly realized something. It wasn't that Zu An had always been so fast; many times, he had used instantaneous movement skills before slowing down for a while. However, he would then quickly follow up with another instantaneous movement. She had seen him fight a few times before, and knew that his movement technique was special. She thought to herself that even if she exerted herself with everything she had, she still wouldn't even be close to his speed.

Even so, the two couldn't completely shake off Xiao Yao. No matter how they changed directions, he continued to remain on their tail.

Yu Yanluo frowned and remarked, "Is this drunkard tired of living? If the two of us join hands, there will be no chance for him to survive if we stake it all."

She had had too many misgivings before because she didn't want to expose her identity. But if she really were forced to that point, just her alone, using the Medusa's eyes at full power, was something even Xiao Yao might not be able to deal with; let alone in the current situation where she had Zu An's help.

She was still a clan leader, after all, and she had the Medusa's blood within her. She was full of vexation from being locked up for so long. Now, she was being chased relentlessly, leaving her incredibly annoyed.

Zu An shook his head and said, "Xiao Yao's character is still worthy of respect. Unless absolutely necessary, I don't wish to fight against him. Besides, he's the libationer's disciple. For better or for worse, offending the academy and the libationer isn't a wise choice. Furthermore, his sword skills are brilliant, and I don't have any way to take him down quickly. If the army from the city arrives, we'll be in a difficult spot."

Apart from that, because of Xiao Yao's relationship with Manman's mother, as well as how he had secretly protected Manman for so many years, there was no way Zu An would ever choose to kill him.

"Then what do we do?" Yu Yanluo asked, slowly calming down.

Zu An suddenly noticed a splendid building in the distance: Jasper Lane. He thought of something, saying, "I have an idea!"

His figure appeared to split into many that headed in different directions at the same time. He jumped off the eaves, then took out two sets of clothes to cover both of them. Then, he snuck into Jasper Lane.

Chapter 1139: Teamwork

Whenever Zu An had used the Sunflower Phantasm before, even though his clones had the same aura as the original, those at the master rank and above didn't look only with their eyes, but rather sensed everything with their souls. That made it difficult to fool them with such tricks.

But now, Zu An's soul had been condensed. He could send a strand of his soul into the clones too. That way, it would be very difficult for even master rank cultivators to notice any differences. Furthermore, there had been some distance between Xiao Yao and himself so far anyway, further limiting Xiao Yao's senses.

As soon as Xiao Yao reached the spot where Zu An had vanished, he sensed the other party's aura in several different directions. He frowned. He didn't rush off blindly in one direction, but instead quietly sensed the differences in each direction.

Soon afterward, a smile appeared on his face. He muttered, "Hmph, you have some skills. If it were just you alone, I really might have been fooled, but you still have Yu Yanluo with you!"

Zu An could change his own aura to be the same, but there was no way he could do the same so seamlessly for Yu Yanluo. As one of the most brilliant swordsmen of the past, someone even the libationer had praised, how could Xiao Yao be someone that easy to fool? He quickly jumped down from the eaves and walked straight toward Jasper Lane.

"Oh my, has this master come to play?" the brothel keeper asked. It was already evening, when Jasper Lane's business was at its best. The keeper stood by the entrance, trying to attract guests with all types of gorgeously dressed women.

As soon as she saw Xiao Yao, she had subconsciously moved closer to entice him. But when she sensed the strong smell of alcohol and saw his sloppy appearance, clearly not that of someone with money, she immediately lost interest and said, "Go, go away. Where did this drunkard come from?"

Xiao Yao asked indifferently, "Did anyone enter just now while dressed in guard uniforms?" According to earlier intelligence, the two had been impersonating guards when they fled.

The keeper rolled her eyes and replied, "If you're going to beg, go somewhere else. Stop disturbing our business."

Xiao Yao's reply was direct; the longsword at his waist shot out and pressed against her neck. He said, "I don't want to have to ask you again." He didn't need his longsword to defeat a trifling ordinary person. Just a bit of pressure from his master rank cultivation was already enough.

The keeper quickly pleaded, "Great warrior, please spare my life! I didn't see any guards go in! Who would dare to come here in their uniforms? That wouldn't do them any favors! They all come here dressed casually!"

Xiao Yao frowned. He figured that made sense, so he changed his tone. He asked, "Which guests entered in the last fifteen minutes or so? Bring me over to see them."

"Absolutely no problem at all. Great warrior, can you move your sword a bit? You might cut this poor girl's neck if you're not careful." The keeper carefully walked forward.

Xiao Yao harrumphed, and his longsword returned to his waist. It wasn't his style to threaten ordinary people, anyway. Since she was willing to cooperate, there was no reason to trouble her further.

"There are eight guests who have just arrived," the keeper explained with an apologetic smile. In this line of work, recognizing people and a strong memory were essential, or else one wouldn't even recognize familiar guests. That would result in easily offending people.

"How many people came in as a pair?" Xiao Yao asked as he looked around. The cosmetics and perfumes made him frown. Comparatively speaking, he liked the smell of alcohol more.

"Great warrior, almost all of those who come here are with companions. Few people come alone," the keeper hurriedly explained.

"Then bring me to every single room," Xiao Yao said. He sent his ki into his surroundings while he spoke. Unfortunately, there were just too many people. The place was too chaotic. Furthermore, there was a lot of obscene music in the background that interfered with his spiritual senses to some degree. He could vaguely sense that the two he was pursuing were nearby, but he couldn't tell exactly where.

"Yes, yes, yes." The keeper didn't dare to refuse and quickly called over her colleagues, asking them where those people had gone. She was usually outside attracting customers, so there was no way she would know which guests had sought out which girl.

She quickly brought Xiao Yao to the rooms one after another. Screams of alarm and curses quickly followed. Xiao Yao's eyes twitched, as the scenes he saw really were a bit offensive to the eyes. He didn't find his target even after searching the rooms one after another, however.

Soon enough, there was only one room left. His hand was already resting on his hilt, and he was ready to attack at a moment's notice. But when he saw the scene inside, he was still stunned.

The woman on the bed was lying down, while the man behind her was grabbing her hair and plowing away. Even though both of them were covered by a blanket, he could vaguely see her fair, snow white shoulders. And judging from the clothes that had been tossed all over the place and the red underwear, it was clear that neither of them were wearing anything.

The woman screamed when she saw Xiao Yao. She grabbed the obscene piece of clothing next to her and covered her face. However, the man was so scared he trembled all over. He turned around and cursed, "What the hell are you all doing? Get the f*ck out!"

Xiao Yao turned around expressionlessly. Even though the woman's movement had been quick, he had still seen what she looked like in that instant. It wasn't Yu Yanluo. The most important part was that he didn't think Yu Yanluo would take off all of her clothes and do that kind of thing beneath another man.

Don't tell me the two of them have already left this place? Xiao Yao thought as his brows locked together. He quickly leapt on his sword and searched in another direction.

"Master, please take your time and enjoy yourself. We apologize for disturbing you. The alcohol will be on the house today; we hope that can help you calm down." The brothel keeper gave the people inside an apologetic smile, then closed the door considerately behind her.

But she was a bit confused, thinking, Is this a new girl? Why does she look a bit unfamiliar? But Jasper Lane was quite big, with new girls coming in every day. She didn't know every single one of them.

When the others left, the room entered a strange state of silence.

The man jumped out from under the covers. What was strange was that even though his upper body was naked, he was wearing pants. He said apologetically toward the woman, "Sorry, I've offended you."

The woman also removed the covers. Her upper body was wrapped in tight cloth, which was why she had only revealed her shoulders to give off the illusion that she was naked. She said, "It's fine. We managed to fool Xiao Yao without even having to fight. This was the simplest and most efficient choice." She calmly put on her clothes. However, the faint redness coming from her skin showed that she definitely wasn't as calm as she sounded.

The two were obviously Zu An and Yu Yanluo. Zu An had known that there was no way he could fool Xiao Yao with just the clones, and had thus come up with a plan to buy him a bit of time. Once he entered Jasper Lane, he had taken out two sets of clothing from the Brilliant Glass Bead, and he had even changed their masks. That was why they had been able to fool Xiao Yao.

To hide her embarrassment, Yu Yanluo said, "It was thanks to your quick wit, or else we really might have been in trouble."

Zu An shook his head and replied, "The one I should thank is you. The reason why Xiao Yao was fooled so easily is because he didn't expect that you would allow yourself to be underneath a man."

Yu Yanluo was speechless. This guy really was poking her sore spot! But she had to admit that if it were someone else, she would rather fight to the death than use such a trick. But with Zu An, she didn't seem to reject it that much. Still, his acting had been a bit too much; she even felt a bit sore.

"What do we do now? Should we leave?" she asked with a frown. She felt extremely uncomfortable hearing the sounds of pleasure coming from their neighbors.

Zu An thought for a bit, then said, "Xiao Yao should still be nearby. Without the cover of Jasper Lane's activity, we'll easily be discovered... Ah, I thought of something. Follow me."

Then, he grabbed her hand and jumped through the window. Yu Yanluo looked at her own wrist, but after a bit of hesitation, she didn't struggle free. His palm was warm, giving her a mysterious sense of peace.

Soon afterward, the two of them arrived at a dried-up well. Yu Yanluo's eyes lit up, knowing what he was planning. It was the Duke Manor's secret tunnel, so they could clearly use it to approach the Duke Manor. It would be extremely difficult for Xiao Yao to find them if they used the tunnel as cover.

...

Meanwhile, in a monastery on the city outskirts, an ice-cold beauty garbed in white looked at Xu Yu emotionlessly and asked, "Why do I have to help you?"

Over the past few days, Xu Yu had been acting domineeringly in Cloudcenter Commandery, but he remained respectful in front of the woman. He said, "Sect Master Yan, White Jade Sect and the court have always had friendly relations. His majesty cares a lot about this case as well. It would be best if nothing happened to influence the court's opinion of the White Jade Sect."

He thought inwardly in praise that this woman wasn't inferior to Yu Yanluo at all; it was just that her presence was a bit more cold and aloof, and she wasn't as warm and approachable as Yu Yanluo. However, her cultivation was high, and she had her own pride. He wondered just what kind of man would be able to subdue her in the future.

The white-clad beauty was naturally Yan Xuehen. When she heard his words, her expression turned cold and she replied, "Are you threatening me?"

Chapter 1140: Alone and Dejected

The biting cold pressure made Xu Yu feel like an ordinary person stuck in a raging snowstorm. He immediately replied, "Sect Master Yan, please do not misunderstand! All I meant was that the court and the White Jade Sect have always mutually benefited..."

However, even after such polite phrases, the other party was still unfazed. He could only change his strategy and say, "According to this humble official's sources, the White Jade Sect and the Jian clan have partnered in a lot of businesses over the last few years."

Yan Xuehen's eyes narrowed and she retorted, "What? Are you going to investigate that? All of our businesses are proper. We have never feared the court's investigation."

"They may be proper, but that does not mean they follow the laws. The scale of your business far exceeds that of what the court allows..." Xu Yu began. Seeing that the other party's expression was turning unpleasant, he changed the topic again. "There is no need for the sect master to be worried. Now that something has happened to Jian Taiding, as well as Madam Yu's matter, the Jian clan's downfall is inevitable. Your business obligations will not last for long."

"Should things go as expected, this humble official will still be in Cloudcenter Commandery and remain in charge of political matters. I can continue to permit this business."

Yan Xuehen added coldly, "Are you not scared of his majesty finding out about this?"

Xu Yu cupped his hands and said, "His majesty is brilliant and wise; he will naturally be able to empathize with our hardships. I do not think he will be too critical."

Yan Xuehen was feeling extremely vexed. If she acted on her usual temper, she would already have sent this old fox of an official flying with a wave of her sleeves. But she wasn't alone; she had a massive sect behind her. Cultivation required a tremendous amount of resources. Forget about cultivation resources, just the basic necessities like food, drink, and other lifestyle goods totaled up to a huge figure.

Seeing that her expression had eased up a bit, Xu Yu quickly said, "Sect Master Yan, according to what I know, your junior brother died because of the fiend races in the great war between the humans and fiend races back then. The fiend races have already infiltrated the human world this time; this is a big deal! If Yu Yanluo is allowed to return to the fiend races, who knows how many of our secrets she will take with her, and how many innocent lives it will affect as a result?"

Sure enough, Yan Xuehen was shaken when she heard that. Those from the righteous faction like her viewed the elimination of evil as their responsibility, not to mention that there really was a great blood feud between them and the fiend races.

She finally nodded after thinking about the situation, saying, "Fine, I will make an exception and personally interfere this once."

As soon as she spoke, she quickly headed out of the monastery. She seemed to be walking on thin air, disappearing into the horizon step by step.

Xu Yu exited as well. When he saw her beautiful white-clad figure disappear, he couldn't help but say with a sigh, "Just like a goddess..."

...

Meanwhile, Zu An and Yu Yanluo had returned to Jian Yanyou's secluded room through the secret passage. The secret room had a special seal arranged around it, so they didn't have to worry about anyone else using it.

Zu An said, "Madam must have felt quite alarmed these past few days. You should rest in the manor for a bit."

But to his surprise, Yu Yanluo instead shook her head and said, "I cannot. Xu Yu's men are searching for me; their investigation will bring them here eventually. I cannot involve you in this too."

Zu An laughed and replied, "You're treating me like an outsider here. Why would I be scared of getting involved with you?"

Yu Yanluo looked at him in a daze. A blush crossed her pretty face as she said, "The Yu clan has already fallen. Your duke status is the only chance we have of a comeback. That is why I cannot drag you into this."

Zu An figured that what she had just said made sense. The Yu clan was definitely going to take a huge blow. Many of their properties might be swallowed up by greedy bullies. As long as he remained the duke, he could at least help them a bit.

"I will only be a source of danger for you if I stay here, so it would be best if I leave for now. Furthermore, I am worried about my clansmen too." Yu Yanluo continued.

"Where would you go? The fiend race territories?" Zu An asked.

Yu Yanluo replied, "Even though I do not want to go there, the way things are, there is no other choice."

Zu An noticed that she had subconsciously wrapped her arms around herself, seeming somewhat cold. He knew she wasn't lying.

It was winter at the moment. Cloudcenter Commandery was already so cold, let alone the fiend race territories even further north. Meanwhile, the Snake race was known to fear the cold. Yu Yanluo had to stay inside a geothermally heated room everyday, so Zu An could imagine what it would be like in the fiend race territories.

"Then I'll help you leave the city. I don't think the defenses have completely closed up yet," Zu An replied, looking in the city gate's direction. There had been too many Snake race people before, so there was no way he could break them all out himself. But if it were just one person, it wasn't too difficult to break through the city defenses.

Yu Yanluo was about to instinctively refuse, but when she looked at his face, for some reason, she didn't. She thought, Sigh, I actually don't want to be separated from him so soon...

The two of them secretly left the Duke Manor. Even though the city walls' defenses were rather tight, Cloudcenter City was too large. There was no way Xu Yu could have made its borders airtight like the residence Yu Yanluo had previously been locked up in. With their cultivations, and because Yu Yanluo's cultivation had been unsealed, they quickly found an opportunity to slip past.

However, they sensed a sharp sword intent roaming the skies soon after they left.

Zu An couldn't help but curse, remarking, "Does that guy not know when to stop?"

Yu Yanluo said quietly, "He probably lost track of us and continued to investigate around the city walls, waiting for us to walk straight into a trap. But we were quite lucky and he didn't notice us when we emerged."

Zu An was still worried. He said, "We should get out of here as quickly as possible. A master rank cultivator's soul is extremely powerful. We won't be able to get away once his aura locks onto us."

"Okay," Yu Yanluo replied. Her cheeks turned red. The scene from Jasper Lane appeared in her mind. There was no way she would be doing that again.

...

Yu Yanluo led Zu An all the way north. Zu An sighed when he saw the majestic mountains in the distance, asking, "Are we going to the Great Snowy Mountain?"

Yu Yanluo shook her head, replying, "No, we are going to one of the Yu clan's ore veins. There is a small path that leads to the fiend race territories inside. My clansmen should be there right now."

Zu An's expression changed. The fiend races actually had passages that led straight into the humans' territory?

As if she had guessed what he was thinking, Yu Yanluo said, "The fiend races do not know about this secret tunnel, and I have set up a special seal. Without the key, the entire secret passage will collapse on itself if anyone tries to open it. I have human blood within me too, so I do not want to see this side of the world in chaos either."

Even though she had never admitted to it in public, there was no reason for her to hide her Medusa side when just the two of them were alone.

Zu An also relaxed a bit now that they were out of danger. He said mischievously, "I'm really curious what your original form is like. For example, if you drink some realgar wine[1], will you return to your normal form?" He glanced toward her bottom when he said that, as if he were checking to see if she had a tail.

Yu Yanluo was speechless. She replied impatiently, "There is no way that could be the case. I have always had a human body. Only when I use my Medusa's Eye at full power does my hair manifest some small snakes. But according to the Snake race's ancient texts, if my power becomes stronger and my bloodline's strength gradually awakens, when I use all of my power, my legs might turn into a snake tail..."

She became worried as she spoke, continuing, "I do not want to become like that; I would feel so ugly. Would you avoid me then?"

"Of course not," Zu An replied.

"Really?" Yu Yanluo was a bit confused as she said, "But from what I know, other humans are quite scared of such a form."

"That's normal people; I'm different. I've already met Zhao Ling'er, Lady Bai, the Medusa Queen... They're all incredibly beautiful," Zu An replied, as several classic silhouettes emerged in his mind.

"Who are Zhao Ling'er and Lady Bai?" Yu Yanluo asked, confused. She continued, "And you've met my mother?" She clearly thought that the 'Medusa Queen' Zu An had mentioned was her mother.

"Ahem, you've misunderstood. I wasn't talking about your mother, but rather a story from my hometown," Zu An said. "If you want to hear the story, I can tell you about it along the way."

"Sure, I want to hear Zhao Ling'er and Lady Bai's stories too," Yu Yanluo replied, and her eyes flickered like gemstones.

...

The two of them headed toward the ore veins. Zu An told her about the stories of 'Chinese Paladin', 'Legend of the White Snake', and 'Battle Through the Heavens'.

"Zhao Ling'er is just too pitiful. Is that Li Xiaoyao not just a despicable player?"

"Uh, he lost his memory."

“But that is not okay even if you lose your memory! And that name keeps reminding me of that stupid drunkard. I don’t like him.”

“...”

“And what is with that Xu Xian? Lady Bai was so good to him, and yet he colluded with Fahai to harm her. He really is a fickle-minded and shameless person.”

“Um... I agree with that one. But Xu Xian is just a normal person, so you can’t have too high expectations of him.”

“Also, that Xiao Yan, is he not just taking advantage of their difficulties?”

“Huh? But they were a pretty good match at the tie...”

“Why is it that no matter how stunning these Snake race women are in these stories, they all end up with such despicable playboys? Is this our fate or something?” Yu Yanluo lowered her head as she spoke. The faint moonlight scattered down across her cheeks, making her look incredibly sad and lonely.

When Zu An saw that the stories had actually brought her down, he quickly said in consolation, “Don’t worry, I’m different from them!”

Yu Yanluo raised her head and looked at him in a daze. Her cheeks gradually reddened. In the stories Zu An had spoken of, the male and female leads were either married couples or had physical relationships. Was he hinting at something?

...

Yan Xuehen floated over Cloudcenter City. She scanned the city that was full of splendid lights with her powerful divine will.