

Immortal 121

Chapter 121: Whatcha Staring At? (1)

Zu An was amused. “Why do you like to raise flags so much? Have you noticed that you have already said those words many times now? Are you a parrot? Or are those words the only ones you know?”

“What’s raising flags?” Yuan Wendong was stunned for a moment before realizing he was getting too absorbed into Zu An’s words for no reason. So, he roared angrily, “All you have is that sharp mouth of yours!”

Despite his vehement rebuttal, he dared not to let his guard down anymore. He immediately executed the strongest sword art he knew to attack Zu An.

“Frenzied Dance of the Roaming Dragon!”

Yuan Wendong’s body suddenly hastened, rushing toward Zu An like a bolt of lightning. He wasn’t just charging in a straight line here. His direction was constantly changing, moving leftward at one moment only to change rightward in the next. This made it hard for Zu An to predict his movement, and it had the effect of cornering Zu An too, leaving him with nowhere to escape.

The trajectory of his sword left behind after images, making it look like a dragon roaming around the battlefield. With incredible ferocity, his sword gushed toward Zu An, threatening to tear him into pieces.

Chu Huanzhao nervously gripped her older sister’s words whereas Chu Chuyan watched the scene attentively, prepared to dive in to save Zu An if he fell into a desperate position. It was just that she had been severely injured by Wu Di earlier, so she wasn’t sure if she could make it in time.

Zu An also drew his sword and executed the only sword art he knew: Brightmoon Academy’s Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay.

Given the powerful momentum Yuan Wendong was coming at him, he wouldn’t be so foolish as to clash head-on with him. However, the issue was that Yuan Wendong had sealed off the surrounding area with silhouettes formed out of his sword ki, leaving him little space to maneuver around.

Zu An was able to dodge most of the sword ki, but there were still quite a few that he was unable to dodge. For those, he had no choice but to gather his ki and try to fend against it.

Jarring metallic reverberations echoed in the air as Zu An was forced to retreat several steps. He felt his ki crashing all over his body from the rebound, and his hands felt numbingly painful too. He nearly lost his grip on his sword even.

Zu An frowned. It looks like there’s a larger gap between a third rank cultivator and a fifth rank cultivator than I thought.

On the other hand, Yuan Wendong stood firmly on the spot, not yielding any space to Zu An at all. The earlier direct clash had affirmed his strength. That’s all Zu An has. To think I nearly got scared by him earlier on!

His face began to heat up thinking up to this point. You actually embarrassed me so much despite having only this much to you. I'll make you regret having been born in this world!

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +768 Rage!

Zu An was speechless. This fellow gets angry whether he wins or loses. He really is a match for Qin Wanru's fiery temper.

Nods of agreement could also be seen amongst the crowd too.

"I knew it. How could Zu An possibly be able to defeat the fifth rank young master Yuan? As soon as they start facing one another properly, the difference between them is made clear!"

"But I think Zu An is pretty formidable too. Is he really a good-for-nothing like what you all said?"

"Even if we underestimated him previously, how powerful could he get? Based on his ki pulsation, he's only a third rank cultivator at the very most. There's no way he could match young master Yuan!"

"It looks like he has been hiding his strength all this while, gritting his teeth to bear with the insults from the crowd all in hopes of showing his worth in this tournament. Had it been anyone else, it might have just worked. Unfortunately for him, his opponent is the fifth rank Yuan Wendong."

"My gosh, what a scheming man he is! It's no wonder why he managed to marry Chu First Miss. He must have plotted for it!"

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There were quite a few people who shared the same thoughts as well. City Lord Xie Yi shot a deep look at Chu Zhongtian. This guy always puts on an honest and righteous look, but it looks like he's a wily old fox too.

Sang Hong also made use of this opportunity to teach his son a lesson. "Do you see that, Qian'er? I told you that this person isn't as simple as we thought him out to be, right? He has hidden his true strength all this while."

Sang Qian nodded in response, but in his heart, he was thinking that Zu An was still no more than a third rank. He's no threat to us anyway.

The fight on the dueling ring couldn't pique his interest anymore, so he decided to take this time to admire his beautiful fiancée instead. So, he turned to look at Zheng Dan, only to see the latter staring at Zu An intently. His face immediately darkened.

Zheng Dan was oblivious to the fact that her fiancé was looking at her. At this very moment, she was staring at the person on the dueling ring with amazement in her eyes. "That guy is actually a third rank cultivator! A man who can resist my seduction can't possibly be any ordinary person. However, why did he bet on his own loss then? Did he think that he was bound to lose today, or does he have a deeper reason behind this?"

Hardly anyone thought that Zu An would win the battle, but Chu Huanzhao was one exception. "My brother-in-law is incredible! He's actually able to stand his ground against Yuan Wendong in a direct clash."

Beside her, Chu Chuyan explained kindly, "That's because Yuan Wendong is afraid of his movement skill, so he opted for a wide range attack. That resulted in the dispersion of his strength, thus allowing Zu An to barely cope at the moment."

Chu Huanzhao was taken aback. "Doesn't that mean that my brother-in-law stands no chance at victory?"

Chu Zhongtian sighed deeply. "I thought that he might have a powerful combat skill that's similar to his movement skill; if so, he might have still stood a chance. However, he's only using the Elementary Swordplay of Brightmoon Academy. While the Elementary Swordplay has been refined time and time again over the years, its flaws are very obvious too. It works well against normal people, but against cultivators, it's still lacking."

"Ah..." Chu Huanzhao started getting nervous after hearing her father's words.

Hong Xingying, who had pricked up his ears to listen to the conversation, heaved a sigh of relief. When he saw how Zu An curbed Yuan Wendong's army of swords earlier with his bizarre weapon, his heart nearly pounded out of his chest.

If this fellow really defeats Yuan Wendong, how can I keep my head up in the Chu clan from this day onward? Fortunately, even the patriarch doesn't think that he can win now. That's good...

Back onto the dueling ring, Yuan Wendong had started embarking on another wave of attacks toward Zu An, not wanting to give the latter any chance to catch a breather at all. He was determined to use his cultivation to crush Zu An into the ground.

Zu An used the Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay to protect himself. While it was a little awkward, he still managed to barely hold on for the time being.

"Hm? Can the Elementary Swordplay be used in such a manner too?"

"I must say that Zu An is not as weak as I thought after all."

"But no matter how adept he is at it, it's still the Elementary Swordplay in the end. The threat it can pose toward young master Yuan is limited."

...

Putting aside the crowd, even the powerhouses shared the same thoughts too.

Sang Hong was surprised to see how Zu An, despite his young age, was able to grasp sword ki, an ability that most cultivators only comprehended later on in their cultivation. His aptitude is honestly amazing, but it's a pity that he's already in the Chu clan. I wonder if it's possible for us to bring him over to our side.

Jiang Luofu, on the other hand, frowned. If that earlier attack from him had been just a bit faster and inched leftward a little, its prowess would have been far greater. Is he still lacking in practice?

Meanwhile, Zu An was feeling incredibly frustrated. There were many times that he was tempted to use his self-created Bixie Swordplay, but thinking of Old Mi's warning, he couldn't help but hesitate. If even

Old Mi was wary of revealing the existence of the skill, it was likely to be a threat far beyond what he could deal with.[1]

He couldn't be certain that no one here knew of Sunflower Phantasm, but at the same time, he knew that he couldn't defeat Yuan Wendong if he didn't use it.

As he had managed to push back other fifth rank cultivators like Snow and Pei Mianman in the past, he ended up underestimating just how powerful Yuan Wendong, someone who had just barely reached the fifth rank too, was.

Now that he thought about it, his fights with Pei Mianman and Snow were quite desperate. He was on the verge of dying, which led to the activation of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, enhancing his ki, speed, and strength to be far greater than normal. This time around, however, he was fighting with a fifth rank cultivator under his normal condition.

Yuan Wendong was also starting to get impatient after seeing that his attacks weren't getting through. He had been thoroughly humiliated later on, so if he couldn't regain his reputation here, he would never be able to keep his head up in Brightmoon City anymore.

Unable to take it any longer, he decided to resort to his strongest skill to defeat Zu An once and for all.

"Ravage of the Golden Dragon!"

Yuan Wendong's body suddenly began spinning swiftly, causing the air on the dueling ring to gather so densely that it almost felt palpable. The torrential winds left Zu An feeling as if he was surrounded by massive waves that were ready to devour him whole.

Yuan Wendong's movements began to blur out as well. In the blink of an eye, he suddenly appeared right behind Zu An, aiming his sword straight toward a ki meridian on Zu An's right hand. Once a cultivator's ki meridian was destroyed, no matter how high his cultivation used to be, he would be crippled for good.

Of course, there were also treasures in the world that could heal severed ki meridians, but those were incredibly hard to find. On top of that, who would bother wasting such a precious treasure on a cripple?

You have tolerated the insults coming from the world for so long, hoping to turn everything around through this tournament. You wanted to awe the Chu clan and the entire Brightmoon City. Unfortunately, you met me. I shall beat you down to the trash you are. You have gotten used to being trash over the years anyway!

"Stop!" Chu Zhongtian noticed Yuan Wendong's intention, so he quickly headed toward the dueling ring.

However, both Wu Wei and the patriarch of the Yuan clan were prepared. They stepped forward to stop his path. "Brightmoon Duke, why do you keep trying to interfere in the fight between juniors?"

"You two!" Chu Zhongtian was infuriated. He unhesitatingly attacked the duo before him with all his might, but the Sunspring Duke was equally matched with him, not to mention that Yuan Zhengchu was supporting him by the side. Even if he were to break through their defense, he still wouldn't be able to get to Zu An in time.

By this moment, the tip of Yuan Wendong's sword was already on the verge of piercing into Zu An's wrist. But all of a sudden, Zu An shouted out loud, "Whatcha staring at?"

Yuan Wendong was stunned. Is this man sick in the head? Why is he asking such a question in the midst of the battle? Nevertheless, he still ended up replying reflexively, "I'm staring at you, shithead!"

What's going on?

Yuan Wendong was stunned. He wasn't planning to answer Zu An's question at all, but those words came out of his mouth as if he was possessed.

In just this brief lapse in concentration, Zu An's sword suddenly darted forth, and Yuan Wendong felt a stabbing pain in his wrist at the next moment. He lowered his head in disbelief, only to see Zu An's sword plunged into his wrist. Blood was trailing down from his wrist down to the floor.

On the other hand, his own sword was only a few centimeters away from piercing into Zu An's wrist. Such a distance could have usually been covered just by him exerting a bit of force on the tip of his finger, but today, it felt like a gorge between two worlds.

His face kept twitching as he tried his best to push his sword forth, but he suddenly felt utterly powerless. He couldn't even hold onto his sword anymore.

What's going on? Have I... been crippled?!

Yuan Wendong was flabbergasted. Everything that had happened today was so ludicrous that he didn't even want to believe what he was seeing was real.

121.5: Whatcha Staring At? (2)

It was also at that moment Wu Wei and Yuan Zhengchu turned around to look at the results of the battle, expecting to see Yuan Wendong crippling Zu An. However, what they saw instead left both of their mouths agape.

Yuan Zhengchu was taken aback for a moment before abruptly flying into a state of rage. With a ferocious look on his face, he leaped toward Zu An, roaring, "How dare you hurt my son? Die!"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +1024 Rage!

Even though Yuan Zhengchu's cultivation was beneath that of the two dukes, killing Zu An was still a walk in the park for him. Without holding back in the least, he struck forth with such powerful momentum that Zu An couldn't even dodge even if he wanted to.

However, there was no need for Zu An to dodge at all, for a towering figure appeared before him in the next moment. Chu Zhongtian stopped Yuan Zhengchu attack, and with a mocking smile on his lips, he replied, "Patriarch Yuan, this is a fight between the juniors. Don't you think that it's beneath you to interfere here?"

Having been able to return these words to the dastardly Yuan Zhengchu left him feeling greatly soothed on the inside. He was a good person, but that didn't mean that he would allow anyone to trample over

him. The Yuan clan had been acting smugly for the entire day now, and it was time for them to suffer the consequences of their actions.

“You!” Yuan Zhengchu was infuriated, but his cultivation was lower than Chu Zhongtian, so he couldn’t breach the latter’s defense.

Fortunately, Wu Wei stepped forward at this moment. However, instead of making a move toward Chu Zhongtian, he walked over to Yuan Wendong’s side to first stop the bleeding. Then, he examined the wound with a livid face.

Out of fear of Zu An’s safety, he positioned himself to ensure that neither Yuan Zhengchu nor Wu Wei could hurt Zu An without going past him.

Yuan Zhengchu also quickly rushed over to his son’s side to support him. He took out a few recovery pills and popped it into the latter’s mouth. Then, he turned to Zu An and bellowed, “Doesn’t the rule of the Clans Tournament state that the fighters shouldn’t harm their opponents? Yet, you viciously crippled my son! How vile is your heart?!”

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +999 Rage!

Toward that, Zu An shrugged casually and replied, “I’m afraid I don’t understand what you’re saying here. There’s only a fine line between victory and loss in a fight between cultivators, and it was just moments ago that I witnessed the glorious splendor of young master Yuan’s swordsmanship. I thought that he might have some other trump cards that he hasn’t utilized yet. As a third rank cultivator, you can’t expect me to hold back against a fifth rank cultivator. How am I to know that young master Yuan would be far weaker than I thought. Haa, I shouldn’t have put him on the same pedestal as my wife, Chuyan!”

These were the words that Yuan Wendong said mockingly earlier on when Yuan Wenji intentionally injured Chu Huanzhao. Zu An was just returning the favor now.

“You!” Yuan Wendong bellowed in fury before abruptly passing out from the severity of his injuries and his agitation.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wendong for +1024 Rage!

“You bastard! You dare to...” Yuan Zhengchu was maddened, but he couldn’t think of a reason to refute Zu An’s argument.

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +1024 Rage!

It was then that Chu Zhongtian spoke up, “Patriarch Yuan, Zu An is the son-in-law of our Chu clan, not a bastard. Out of consideration for your injured son, I’ll let it slide this time, but know that our Chu clan won’t allow anyone to insult our family members!”

“You!” Yuan Zhengchu’s face flushed red, but in terms of standing or cultivation, he was far beneath Chu Zhongtian. As angry as he was, he was unable to make a move here.

Wu Wei took over the baton and turned to the judges of the tournament. “Judges, it’s a rule of this tournament that fighters aren’t to hurt their opponents intentionally. In the earlier battle, while Yuan Wenji had harmed Chu Huanzhao, her injuries aren’t severe and will recover with some time. However,

Zu An has viciously crippled Yuan Wendong in this round. I ask of you to annul his qualification as a fighter and declare it as the Chu clan's loss!"

"A load of rubbish!" Chu Zhongtian bellowed. "Wu Wei, do you take everyone to be blind? It was Yuan Wendong who tried to exploit the battle to cripple Zu An earlier, only to end up suffering a counterattack. His fate is nothing more than a work of karma he brought upon himself. He has no one to blame for his plight!"

There were some amidst in the crowd who had clearly seen what happened earlier too, and they roared in agreement. "That's right! It was Yuan Wendong who tried to cripple Zu An first!"

However, the supporters of the Yuan clan immediately fought back. "Rubbish! Why would young master Yuan do that? A fifth rank cultivator like him needs not to pick on a third rank cultivator like Zu An! Zu An exploited his moment of carelessness to deal a vicious blow! What a sinister person he is!"

In truth, most of the spectators were ordinary mortals or low rank cultivators, so they weren't able to clearly see what happened earlier on. They could only listen to the analyses of those coming from both sides and decide a side to support.

Meanwhile, instead of expressing his stance first, Sang Hong turned to Xie Yi and Jiang Luofu and said, "City Lord Xie and Principal Jiang, what do the two of you think?"

Old wily fox, Xie Yi thought in his mind. If he expressed his stance at a moment like this, he would only end up offending one side no matter what. However, as someone who had dabbled in politics for many years, he knew how to maneuver such situations too. "Pardon my weakness, but I'm unable to tell how young master Zu managed to strike young master Yuan ahead of time with the most basic Elementary Swordplay. I have to ask Governor Sang to enlighten me on this."

His words voiced out the doubts in many of those present too. Anyone could tell that Yuan Wendong was in an advantageous position earlier on, but why would the tables be turned on him at the last moment?

"That trash! Why did Yuan Wendong answer Zu An's question at that critical moment? He deserves to be crippled!" Shi Kun gulped down a cup of a tea, but his agitated heart simply wouldn't calm down. He had made many preparations in order to ensure that Yuan Wendong would be able to get rid of Zu An, but his plan had been completely foiled.

Snow tried to console him, "It could be that Zu An is simply too hateful, such that Yuan Wendong failed to hold himself in."

"A trash indeed!" Shi Kun tightened his grip, crushing the teacup in his hand.

Seeing this, Snow immediately fell silent. She wouldn't want to be implicated in Shi Kun's wrath at a moment like this.

Amidst the crowd, Ji Dengtu narrowed his eyes.

That lad sure has a potent mouth. He's actually able to get that Yuan guy to answer him at that critical moment. But again, what's that movement skill he used? Somehow it looks a little familiar to me. Have I seen it somewhere before?

But why can't I remember it? Is it because I tired myself out reading the booklet recently that it's starting to impair my memory? Hmm, it looks like I must curb myself a little. I should prepare some medicine to nourish myself up.

The only one in the crowd who wasn't surprised by Zu An's victory was Pei Mianman. She sat leisurely in her seat, her beautiful profile drawing furtive glances from the men around her. However, she paid no heed to it. Her peach blossom eyes curled into a smile as she murmured, "A man whom I can't kill; how could it be hard for him to defeat Yuan Wendong?"

Back to the judges, Sang Hong internally cursed Xie Yi for being as slippery as an eel while silently listening to the discussions occurring around him. In truth, he was also having difficulties understanding why Yuan Wendong would suddenly get distracted at that critical moment. He must be too young, that's why he's unable to focus properly.

So, he turned to Jiang Luofu and asked, "Principal Jiang, what are your thoughts?"

The victory of the Chu clan in the tournament would indubitably affect his future plans, which put him in a bad mood. Even Jiang Luofu's beautiful thighs couldn't stir him anymore.

Jiang Luofu calmly responded, "It was indeed Yuan Wendong who tried to cripple Zu An at the start, only to be counterattacked by Zu An. It was a critical moment, so neither side could afford to hold back against one another. Regardless of the outcome, neither side can be blamed for their decision back there. Since the victor has already been decided, I don't think that there's anything much we should be discussing here."

Sang Hong was surprised to hear how supportive Jiang Luofu was of Zu An. However, she didn't intervene the previous few times he tried to undermine the Chu clan, so it didn't seem like she was sided toward them. More likely, she was just playing the neutral role, as per normal for the academy.

In any case, it didn't seem possible to reverse the situation anymore, especially not with what Jiang Luofu had just said. So, Sang Hong declared, "Since the victor has been decided, I hereby declare that the Chu clan has won the Clans Tournament!"

Even though Sang Hong was sent here to deal with the Chu clan, he still had to uphold the dignity of the royal court. He couldn't act too explicitly against the Chu clan, or else it would create openings for his enemies to dig at. With things already settled in stone, he could only go along with the flow and revise his future plans.

Those from the Chu clan immediately cheered happily. There were many incidents throughout the course of the day, and they thought that they would really suffer a loss in the hands of the Wu clan and Yuan clan this time around. Who could have thought that there would be such a last-minute reversal?

On the other hand, those from the Wu clan and Yuan clan looked absolutely livid. After all of the preparations they had made, they would have never dreamed that things would end up like this. They were so close to victory there, only for it to slip past the cracks of their fingers. No one could possibly take it well.

"Governor Sang!" Wu Wei looked at Sang Hong with an awful look on his face. Clearly, he was displeased with Sang Hong's verdict.

Sang Hong turned to look at Wu Wei calmly and said, "Yes, I do understand that the Chu clan has to take responsibility for young master Yuan's injuries too. Brightmoon Duke, I'll hold you responsible for young master Yuan's treatment fee. Do you have any objections?"

"Of course not!" replied Chu Zhongtian heartily. He was quite angry when the Yuan clan mockingly offered to pay for the Chu clan's medical fee, but it seemed like karma was real.

"There's no need for that. We can at least pay for our own family member's medical fee!" Yuan Zhengchu spat coldly. He knew that this was a sign from Sang Hong that he had already given up on them.

So, he indicated for their clan members to stand up and return back to the Yuan Estate.

It was then that Zu An suddenly spoke up, "Wait a moment. Are you leaving just like that?"

Yuan Zhengchu turned around and glared at Zu An with fury burning in his eyes. "Zu An, what else do you want?"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +783 Rage!

Putting them aside, even those from the Chu clan had no idea what Zu An was up to in attempting to stop the Yuan clan's departure.

"Nothing much. I know that you all hate me so much that you would love nothing more than to tear me apart. Since that's the case, I'll give you a chance to exact vengeance then." Zu An pointed his sword toward Yuan Wenji. "I'll challenge him to a fight. Let's settle the conflict right here right now."

Many of the spectators were also just about to leave when they heard those words and rushed back to their seats with excited looks on their faces. Yippie, another drama.

Yuan Zhengchu was stunned for a moment before realization struck him. "You want to exact vengeance for Chu Second Miss?"

Zu An nodded. "That's my intention in mind, but it's also an opportunity for your Yuan clan too. From this day onward, I'll be protected by the guards of the Chu clan. This is the only shot you got, and you won't get another chance if you pass this opportunity by. I advise you to carefully think it through."

On the stretcher, Chu Huanzhao was deeply excited. "Brother-in-law is the best to me!"

Qin Wanru, on the other hand, frowned. "This is utter nonsense. He only happened to defeat Yuan Wendong by coincidence, and all of a sudden, he thinks that he's invincible in the world? While Yuan Wenji is much weaker than Yuan Wendong, he's still beyond what someone of Zu An's caliber can deal with. Besides, the Yuan clan has already suffered a loss to him, so they won't fall for the same tricks again. Isn't Zu An just forcing himself into the corner?"

It was then that Yuan Zhengchu received a message from Shi Kun. "Accept his offer. Make use of this opportunity to cripple Zu An. Our Shi clan will reward you handsomely."

Yuan Zhengchu had the same intention in mind, and the Shi clan's promise was an additional incentive on top of that. Delighted, he turned to Zu An and sneered coldly, "Very well. I hope that you won't regret your decision!"

Zu An shrugged in response. "Everyone present, please be my witness. This duel is fair and square. Regardless of who wins, no one is to exact vengeance on the other side after this!"

Sang Hong's eyes lit up. He immediately agreed to it, "Very well, I'll be the witness of the battle for these two young men then."

He didn't want to get involved in this matter either, but just earlier on, his son had informed him of Zu An's bet with a tearful look on his face. Upon hearing that they had just lost a million silver taels, he was utterly horrified. A million silver taels might be nothing much for established clans, but for the Sang clan which had just risen through the ranks in recent years, it was definitely not a small sum of money.

He was infuriated by his son's folly, but the deed was already done. He could only find a way to resolve this somehow. It just happened that the two of them were making a bet at a time like this. If something really happened to Zu An, they might just be able to shrug off the debt and treat it as if it never existed. So, he immediately agreed to it.

His declaration was so fast that even Chu Zhongtian couldn't even stop him in time.

Chapter 122: Revelation

Jiang Luofu shot a surprised glance at Sang Hong, thinking that the latter was acting much more recklessly than usual. However, she thought nothing of it and rested back onto her seat. She leisurely crossed her legs and she prepared herself to watch the show. She was also curious to see if Zu An still had any surprises in store for her.

With Sang Hong and Jiang Luofu setting the example, the other powerhouses also quickly returned to their seats to spectate this additional match.

Qin Wanru tugged her husband's sleeves and asked, "Does Zu An stand a good chance against Yuan Wenji?"

"I'm not sure." Chu Zhongtian shook his head. "Based on what he had shown earlier, he seems to be slightly weaker than Yuan Wenji. To be honest, I'm still not very sure what happened to Yuan Wendong earlier to actually lose the battle."

Hong Xingying heaved a sigh of relief hearing those words. If that fellow had really returned victoriously to the Chu clan after triumphing over a fifth rank cultivator, I really wouldn't know what to do with him. However, since his greediness got the better of him, it looks like he'll be done in here.

If Zu An lost this match, whatever prestige he built up would vanish in an instant. If so, I wouldn't need to worry about anything anymore. Heh, in the end he's still nothing more than a hoodlum who managed to climb up through luck. I don't know how he managed to build up his cultivation, but he immediately forgot his palace right away. People like him will just die without even knowing how in the future.

Meanwhile, Chu Huanzhao was panicking. "Isn't my brother-in-law in danger then?"

Chu Zhongtian consoled her, saying, "Rest assured, I'll step in and save him if it comes down to it."

“Tsk. Throughout this entire Clans Tournament, have you managed to save anyone at all?” remarked Chu Huanzhao with a click of her tongue.

This darned child!

Chu Zhongtian nearly choked on her words. He was unable to find any words to refute what his second daughter just said. It took a long while before he managed to squeeze out, “I’ll move together with your mother and older sister if anything happens later on. That should be fine, right?”

Only then did Chu Huanzhao finally nodded in approval. “That’s more like it.”

Chu Zhongtian’s face turned dark. What’s the use of having daughters? She’s already siding with others despite her young age. She’s really going to be the death of me at this rate!

On the other hand, the others from the Yuan clan were currently surrounding Yuan Wenji, giving him a pep talk. “Wenji, there’s no need to get scared. His real cultivation is only at early third rank. He isn’t a match for you in a proper battle.”

“Wendong only got careless earlier while fighting him. Put on these ear muffs later on before the fight. Don’t let the nonsensical chatter of that man distract you. Just focus your attention on hacking him down once you step onto the dueling ring. At the very least, try to get at least a hand and a leg from him!”

“You also don’t have to get too worried about his movement skill either. We’ve examined it closely earlier, but it’s not a threat at all. You just have to do this...”

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On the dueling ring, Zu An yawned in boredom. “Are you done discussing yet? Is this battle on or not?”

But halfway through his words, he suddenly froze up.

This sounds oddly familiar. Isn’t this what Yuan Wendong did earlier on before I got onto the dueling ring. Oh shit, am I going to walk in his footsteps too?

Pui pui pui! How can I be compared to him? That man doesn’t even have a hundredth of my suaveness! Even the Goddess of Luck will specially look after me after seeing my handsome face!

“Since you’re in such a hurry to court death, I’ll fulfill your wish!” Yuan Wenji leaped onto the dueling ring with a darkened look on his face.

“Don’t be like your cousin, who keeps prattling off but ends up disappointing everyone,” replied Zu An calmly.

“You resorted to despicable means to assault Brother Wendong earlier on! I’ll make you pay for what you did to him!” Yuan Wenji drew his sword and pointed the tip at Zu An.

It was then that Yuan Zhengchu berated loudly, “What did I tell you earlier? Don’t even talk to him! Put on your earmuffs!”

Yuan Wenji’s face reddened. He quickly put on the earmuffs that were given to him.

Somehow, this guy's words seem to carry some sort of sorcery. I just can't help but want to refute whatever he's saying.

On the other hand, Zu An was a little disappointed to see the earmuffs. The 'Whatcha Staring At' skill was unexpectedly useful in the earlier battle. While it only caused Yuan Wendong to be distracted for a split second, the opening it created was more than enough to make a difference in the midst of a heated battle.

But if all of my opponents were to cover their ears when going against me in the future, wouldn't that skill be practically useless from now on?

However, Zu An soon consoled himself that there was no way everyone would be constantly wearing earmuffs. The reason why Yuan Wenji was wearing it was not because he knew about the effects of 'Whatcha Staring At' but that he was afraid of getting distracted by his words and following in the footsteps of Yuan Wendong.

"Die!" Yuan Wenji sneered coldly as he drove his sword forward. His proficiency in swordsmanship was beneath that of Yuan Wendong, but he had at least managed to grasp the basics, allowing him to exert formidable prowess.

Zu An crossed several blows with him, and soon, he noticed that something was amiss. He realized that his movements were being predicted!

"Hahaha, that lousy movement skill of yours might look scary at first sight, but it only has that few maneuvers." Having guessed Zu An's thoughts, Yuan Wenji burst into heart laughter. His words didn't hinder his movements though as he continued to dish out ferocious slashes toward Zu An.

On the other hand, Zu An berated Old Mi in his head for imparting to him a flawed movement skill. What's the use of it if it can be deciphered that easily?!

To be fair, Zu An was using the revised Sunflower Phantasm that Old Mi changed in a fluster out of fear that someone would see through the real one. He didn't have time to properly think through the revised version through, resulting in it being riddled with openings. With several experts analyzing it simultaneously throughout the course of the earlier battle, it was inevitable that they would soon find a way to curb it.

If Old Mi had been given more time to work on it, even the weaker, revised version would be strong enough that those present wouldn't be able to easily see through its openings.

While Zu An was distracted, Yuan Wenji made use of the opportunity to push his attack on. A gleeful smile crept onto his lips as he slashed his sword with a force so great that it could hack his leg into two.

My luck isn't bad today. With the crippling of Yuan Wendong, no one in the younger generation of the Yuan clan will be able to compete with me anymore. On top of that, I'd even be able to exact vengeance for Yuan Wendong, making a huge contribution to the Yuan clan. With this, I should be next in line as the successor of the Yuan clan!

Thinking back, I really need to thank Chu Second Miss for this. Even though you bullied me ever since I was still young, at least you made up for it by sending such a huge gift my way.

Hahaha, just wait till I become the successor of the Yuan clan. I might just be able to have the Chu clan betroth you to me so that I can bully you everyday. Just thinking about it makes me excited!

Just as Yuan Wenji was about to slash through Zu An's legs, he astonishingly found that there was no resistance against his blade. What he had slashed through was just a mere afterimage—the real Zu An was already nowhere to be seen.

From his peripheral vision, he saw a glint of light coming from the side. His heart jerked in fright as he hurriedly tried to sidestep away. Unfortunately, it was already too late.

A cry of misery echoed on the dueling ring as an arm flew through the sky in an arc. It was still clutching onto a sword tightly, all five fingers twitching nonstop. It was a hair-raising sight.

Then, Zu An smashed his feet into Yuan Wenji's abdomen, crushing him heavily onto the ground with a cry of misery. Yuan Wenji tried to rise back up, but his injuries were too severe for him to move. In the end, he stared at Zu An with quivering eyes as he cried out, "Y... You're vicious!"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Wenji for +1024 Rage!

Losing his arm was one thing, but the earlier kick had smashed his ki core, crippling his cultivation for good. It was just a moment ago that he was dreaming about rising to greater heights, but in the next, he had fallen back into the dust. The nosedive drop in his emotions left him on the verge of a mental breakdown.

Zu An walked over and gazed down on him from above. "I'm not a big-hearted person. If someone treats me well, I might still irk him with my words. However, if someone treats me badly, I'll return it to him tenfold. I was planning to just fracture your arm and injure your abdomen to exact vengeance from Huanzhao, but since you tried to sever my legs, you shouldn't blame me for returning the favor."

From the sidelines, Hong Xingying gulped in fear. He felt a shudder run down his spine. He's too vicious!

At this moment, those from the Yuan clan flew into a state of rage, "Zu An, you're courting death!"

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +1024 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Yuan XXX for +444 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Yuan YYY for +444 Rage!

...

How could Yuan Zhengchu remain calm after seeing two of his clan members being crippled? He led the experts of his clan onto the dueling ring, intent to get back at Zu An.

However, Chu Zhongtian was already well-prepared. He led the Chu clan up onto the dueling ring as well to stop those from the Yuan clan. "Yuan Zhengchu, have you no sense of shame? After all your preaching earlier on, you're trying to interfere in a duel between the juniors now?"

Yuan Zhengchu knew that he was no match for Chu Zhongtian, so he turned to Sang Hong and cried. "Governor Sang, this man is too cruel! Please redress the grievances of our Yuan clan!"

Standing amidst the members of the Chu clan, Zu An felt more confident than ever. So, he spoke out loud, "Uncle Yuan, I don't understand what you're saying here. We agreed beforehand to fight it out to settle our grudges, but you're whining right after the duel is over. Isn't this the attitude of a sore loser?"

Yuan Zhengchu choked upon hearing those words. Who is your uncle? If I had a nephew like you, I would have drowned you in the lavatory by now!

You have successfully trolled Yuan Zhengchu for +999 Rage!

Sang Hong also felt incredibly frustrated too. The Yuan clan is more useless than I have expected. They keep slipping up time and time again, expecting me to clean up their mess.

Instead of expressing his stance, he turned to Jiang Luofu and said, "Principal Jiang, I didn't expect the Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay to harness such great prowess. I must say that I'm impressed."

Zu An's earlier strike was obviously one of the forms of the Elementary Swordplay, but for some reason, Yuan Wenji, despite his higher cultivation, was unable to avoid the attack.

Jiang Luofu thought back about the earlier duel, and to be frank, she couldn't understand how Zu An was able to bring forth such prowess with a relatively straightforward move. It felt like there were some bits of his swordplay that was different from the Elementary Swordplay, but she couldn't put her finger on just what it was.

"The Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay is the crystallization of centuries of wisdom of our academy, so it does have its strengths. It's just a pity that our lack of talent prevents us from comprehending the deeper intricacies lying within," replied Jiang Luofu.

Xie Yi also spoke up at this moment, "Governor Sang, no matter how we look at it, Zu An's earlier strike was indubitably the most normal Elementary Swordplay of the academy. If Yuan Wenji isn't even able to dodge such a strike, it'd be hard to pin the blame on Zu An for not holding back."

Sang Hong nodded in agreement. Given the circumstances, it would be hard for him to side with the Yuan clan. "Patriarch Yuan, we've agreed not to pursue the results of the duel no matter who wins or loses. You're putting me in a spot here."

His words swiftly brought about nods of agreement from the crowd.

"Indeed! We heard it too!"

"The Yuan clan are sore losers!"

"Just how lousy must he be to be unable to even deal with the Elementary Swordplay?"

...

Zu An heaved a sigh of relief. He had executed the Sunflower Phantasm for an instant there, and fortunately, no one had seen through it. All they saw was just the ordinary Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay from the academy, oblivious to the fact that it had been augmented by the Sunflower Phantasm to become the legendary 'Bixie Swordplay'. This sword art was bizarre in the sense how only those facing it would be able to feel its prowess. Onlookers would only be baffled by how the enemy inexplicably fell for his attack so easily.

However, what Zu An didn't know was that there was someone in the crowd staring at him intently. "That sword art he executed earlier, why does it resemble that man's so much? No, this won't do. I need to report it upward!"

Chapter 123: Even Dogshit Has Its Uses

The crowd was getting riled up, and Yuan Wenji's loss was indeed embarrassing too. Seeing that the tides weren't on his side, he could only retreat with the Yuan clan with a livid look on his face.

Wu Wei knew that there was no way to salvage the situation anymore, so he swiftly left the scene too. He was frustrated by how Sang Hong refused to help them that he didn't even bother bidding his farewell.

Wu Qing, before leaving with her father, shot Zu An a sharp glare. This fellow foiled our Wu clan's plans. Hmph! I'll get Pan Long and Fu Feng to think up something so as to vent this grudge!

Jiang Luofu also stood up as well. She was planning to pose some questions to Zu An, but recalling the crowd they were standing before, it didn't seem like a good idea. So, she decided to pose her doubts once they were back at the academy instead.

Watching as Jiang Luofu stood up, Ji Dengtu hurriedly lowered his head guiltily before walking out of the area. At the same time, he thought about how that lad from the Yuan clan had broken his ki meridian and would surely require treatment. Another sum of money coming into my pocket then. Heh, little Zu An, I'm liking you more and more!

After Jiang Luofu left, most of the men who had been ogling at her at this time suddenly felt that there wasn't much point to this Clans Tournament anyway, so they scattered too.

Xie Yi clasped his fist toward Sang Hong, bidding his farewell before returning back to the City Lord Estate. Along the way, he asked Xie Xiu, "I heard that you're on good terms with him?"

Xie Xiu nodded. "We had some pleasant encounters with one another."

"Try to get close to him in the academy. There's more to this child than what we see. Even if you aren't able to befriend him, you must make sure not to make an enemy out of him. Perhaps, it might fall on him to bring the Chu clan over to our side."

Xie Xiu was put in a spot. "Father, it's not like you don't know how I am like. I can win over women with ease, but if you want me to get close to a man... That's really out of my field of specialty."

Xie Yi's eyes immediately widened angrily. "You still dare to say it aloud! You squander your time on women and cause a huge load of trouble everywhere. Just a few days ago, Lord Zhang came over to complain on the behalf of his daughter. Do you know how embarrassed I was?"

Xie Xiu responded with a sheepish smile. I mean, if we aren't meant to be, what's the point of holding on? Why do those women always act as if it's the end of the world whenever we break up?

At the same time, Xie Daoyun shot a glare at her younger brother before speaking gently, "Father, please leave Zu An's matter to me. It just so happens that I'm curious about him too."

Xie Xiu was nearly shocked out of his wits. "Big sis, that fellow is a renowned moocher! You mustn't get fooled by him!"

Xie Daoyun grabbed her younger brother's ears and twisted it angrily. "Do you think that everyone in the world is like you? Besides, I'm just going to consult him on music-related matters. Why would anything happen out of that?"

"I guess so," replied Xie Xiu in agreement.

My big sister has high standards. She once said that her husband must be wise enough to govern a city and strong enough to bring stability to the country. A hoodlum like Zu An doesn't fit the criteria at all. It looks like I was just worrying in vain.

After those from the City Lord Estate departed, Sang Qian rushed to his father's side and exclaimed anxiously. "Father, how can you declare it as Zu An's victory? What about..."

Before he could finish his words, Sang Hong had already interjected snappishly, "What else do you expect me to do then? The Yuan clan is useless! With so many eyes on me, do you think that it's possible for me to rule it as Zu An's loss? You should know that while the man above me wishes to deal with the Chu clan, he values the reputation and image of the royal court even more!

"Besides, I haven't settled the score with you for getting involved with the creation of a casino on your own accord. You better clean it up well!"

After berating his son, Sang Hong departed together with his subordinates with a livid face. Naturally, he wasn't pleased by the results of today's tournament.

Sang Qian's face darkened too.

Even though my father is a formidable figure in the royal court, he doesn't seem to care much about our clan. If he just earns off the stipends of the royal court without looking for additional income out there, what'll happen to the rest of us?

Besides, isn't this the usual practice of most officials? They all have their own business out there. My father is simply too old-fashioned and inflexible!

It was then that a gentle voice sounded in his ears. "Is Governor Sang unwilling to help?"

The light fragrance drifting across the air was more than enough to make Zheng Dan's beautiful visage surface in his head. His irritation soothed a little just by her presence. "Yeah, you know what my father is like too. He isn't willing to get involved in such matters."

Zheng Dan frowned. "What do we do then? Are we really going to pay the 1,000,000 silver taels?"

While the Sang clan was involved in the casino as well, most of the money was still forked out from the Zheng clan's side. If they suffered a loss, the one who would be done in more badly was still the Zheng clan.

"Of course not!" exclaimed Sang Qian!

He was still waiting to earn money off the casino, but who could have thought that a debt of 1,000,000 silver taels would come in first? There was no way he could swallow that down!

He turned his gaze toward the Chu clan, and a thought suddenly surfaced in his mind. "Say, since Zu An had to step onto the dueling ring today, don't you think that he'll entrust the bet paper to his study companion in case it gets torn?"

"You're saying that we can make use of this opportunity right now to snatch the bet paper over?" Zheng Dan's eyes lit up.

"Indeed. We need to do it fast too, otherwise we'll have no chance to do so once they realize it," said Sang Qian.

"Alright!" Zheng Dan immediately wrote down another bet paper before the two of them began making their way toward the Chu clan.

Not too far away, Shi Kun noticed their irregular movements and frowned. "What are those two up to?" Snow shook her head, not knowing what was happening either.

Shi Kun harrumphed coldly. "Now that I think of it, they were the ones who provided us with inaccurate intelligence yesterday. They can't be colluding with the Chu clan in secret, are they?"

The old man behind Shi Kun, Shi Lezhi, said, "I don't think so. It's more likely that they have been duped. That brat is extremely cunning."

"What should we do from now on then?" remarked Shi Kun with an awful look on his face.

Now that Zu An had made such a huge contribution to the Chu clan and reversed his 'good-for-nothing' image, the Chu clan would surely view him in a different light. Perhaps, Chu Chuyan might even fall for him!

Just thinking of Zu An becoming the Chu clan's real son-in-law and holding his beloved woman in embrace was enough to fill his mind with envy.

To make things worse, the previous few assassination attempts had been foiled, which meant that the Chu clan was already on their guard. It wouldn't be easy to kill him at all.

"Young master, it's because your mind is in a fluster that you keep thinking of killing him directly. You've neglected the fact that we have an advantage over him," said Shi Lezhi with a smile.

"Hm?" Shi Kun hurriedly turned his gaze over.

Shi Lezhi carried on, "Right now, we wield great power in terms of politics and authority. We can simply use our strength there to get rid of him. Regardless of how powerful the Chu clan might be, they don't have the strength to openly oppose the royal court. We can simply do this..."

Upon hearing the plan, Shi Kun's face swiftly cleared up in delight. "Hahaha! It looks like wisdom does come with age! It's no wonder why my father appointed you by my side."

Snow was also amazed by what she had heard. It's no wonder why the number of unaffiliated cultivators is on the decline. Those in power sure know how to play their cards well. Those who offend them would eventually be cornered by their ploys before being plucked off.

...

Meanwhile, Pei Mianman walked toward Zu An with a smile and said, "Congratula..."

Before she could finish his words, Zu An suddenly rushed off while saying, "Give me a moment."

Pei Mianman's smile immediately froze in place. One must know that most men would get excited just to be able to say a single word to her. Even though she had mercilessly rejected the men who tried to approach her earlier, there were still many who couldn't resist giving it a try anyway. Right now, she was taking the initiative to approach Zu An, but the latter was actually ignoring her!

Is it because I'm not charming enough, or that there's someone more attractive than me here?

The only reason she could think of was that Zu An had gone to look for Chu Chuyan. Since the latter was his wife, she could still somewhat accept it. However, to her surprise, Zu An actually walked over to his study companion and wrapped his arm around the latter before heading to the corner to whisper with one another.

"???" Pei Mianman.

Wait a moment, could it be he doesn't like women?

Meanwhile, Zu An was asking anxiously, "I was too busy during this period of time that I didn't have any time to ask about it. Which casino did you bet at this time around? That's 1,000,000 silver taels we're talking about here! I'm going to strike it rich!"

Unexpectedly, Cheng Shouping looked at him with a tearful face as he spoke, "Young master, I have to tell you something. Please don't get angry."

Zu An waved his hands and laughed heartily. "Don't worry, I'm in a good mood today! I won't get angry."

Cheng Shouping immediately broke out into a smile as he took out the bet paper. "I was worried that you would lose in the Clans Tournament, so I thought that it would be good if I could earn some money to console your broken soul if that happened. Thus, I secretly betted on your loss instead. I mean, now that we won the Clans Tournament, what does this bit of loss count as, right? Aren't I sharp-witted? Ah? Young master, why are you picking up your sword?"

"I'll bloody hack you to death!" Zu An felt that if the keyboard could gather his Rage points, it would surely be beyond 9000. How in the world did someone like Cheng Shouping manage to live to this day?

It was also during then that Sang Qian and Zheng Dan rushed over and heard those words. They immediately froze on the spot.

In the end, it turned out that it's this idiot of a study companion who changed Zu An's bet on his own accord, but the two of them foolishly changed it back for him?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +1024 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Zheng Dan for +1024 Rage!

Zu An was in the midst of chasing Cheng Shouping when he noticed the inflow of Rage points in his system. Why are those two getting so angry for, especially Zheng Dan? Isn't she still heads over heels for me just a moment ago?

It was then that Cheng Shouping's delighted exclamation sounded in the air. "Eh? Why did the bet suddenly change? Did I remember wrongly? Hahaha! Young master, quick, take a look! It turns out that I betted on your victory instead!"

Cheng Shouping passed the bet paper to Zu An excitedly.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +1024 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Zheng Dan for +1024 Rage!

Zu An looked at the two of them before taking the bet paper from Cheng Shouping's hand. The bet was indeed on his victory, and the ratio was 1:100. Seeing this, he heaved a sigh of relief.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +66 +66 +66...

You have successfully trolled Zheng Dan for +66 +66 +66...

Looking at the Rage points flowing in and thinking about what Cheng Shouping said earlier, a thought arose in Zu An's mind, and he hurriedly asked, "You said you betted on my loss yesterday?"

"I didn't." Cheng Shouping tried to laugh it off. "Needless to say, I believed that you would win right from the start. Why would I bet on your loss?"

Like hell you believed in me!

Zu An instinctively reversed the words of the Cheng Shouping, and it came to him what had happened. So, he turned around to look at Sang Qian and Zheng Dan with a smile and said, "It looks like I have to thank the two of you then. If not for you changing the results of my bet back, I would have really been done in by this idiot of a study companion I have here!"

Having watched so many drama serials in his previous, he was aware of those little tricks involving special ink and the sort.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +1024 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Zheng Dan for +1024 Rage!

However, the two of them maintained smiles on their faces as they said, "Young master Zu, I'm afraid that I don't really get what you're saying. We're just here to congratulate you on your victory."

It was only a guess from Zu An's part, but the inflow of Rage points affirmed his guess. He shot a sharp glare at Cheng Shouping, who was looking back at him with a fawning smile.

This fellow is really untrustworthy, but his dumbness is compensated by his good luck. It would be good if I try to take advantage of that. He would be like a wild card I could use to throw my opponents off guard, similar to what happened this time around.

After all, even a sheet of toilet paper or a pile of dogshit has its own use in this world.

Chapter 124: Interrogation

“Thank you, thank you.” Zu An had just earned a huge sum of money while learning of a new way to exploit Cheng Shouping’s unreliable nature, so his mood was pretty good.

Sang Qian and Zheng Dan quickly chatted with him for a moment before leaving. As soon as they were out of his line of sight, Sang Qian’s face immediately turned incredibly ugly. “Damn it! Why did I foolishly help him change the bet back then?”

Zheng Dan also had a bitter smile on her lips. “Who could have thought that a study companion would be so audacious as to defy his own master’s orders?”

Sang Qian agreed with those words. A thought suddenly arose in his mind, and he asked, “This is indeed illogical. Do you think that it’s possible that Zu An predicted that we would change his bet paper, so he intentionally betted on his loss so as to deliver the wrong message to the Yuan clan?”

“He would be a truly terrifying person if he’s able to think that far ahead.” Zheng Dan shook his head with a frown. “I don’t think that he’s able to predict our actions to that extent. I reckon that he likely intended to spend the 10,000 silver taels to mislead the Yuan clan, only for us to mistakenly change it back.”

“Damn it!” Sang Qian felt that his luck was really horrible recently. Things simply wouldn’t go his way.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +999 Rage!

“Our initial plan to swap the bet paper failed. What should we do next?” Zheng Dan took out the new bet paper she had prepared just earlier on and ripped it apart.

“It looks like I can only count on you for this,” Sang Qian looked at Zheng Dan as he spoke.

Zheng Dan’s face immediately turned cold. “You want me to lay a honey trap again?”

Sang Qian smiled sheepishly as he replied, “You’re going to have to find the 7,500,000 silver taels debt note anyway. It’s just looking for another bet paper here...”

Zheng Dan interjected sharply with a wintry look. “Sang Qian, why do you keep pushing your fiancée into the arms of another man? Do you have some sort of feish regarding that?”

Sang Qian immediately lost his temper. “I’m not asking you to really succumb to him. Didn’t you say that he didn’t take advantage of you? Why are you saying as if I’m asking you to sell your body to him?”

Zheng Dan’s eyes reddened tearfully. “Those who walk along the river will eventually get their feet wet. Zu An isn’t as weak as the rumors put him out to be. If he really tries to take advantage of me, I’ll never be able to face anyone in the future!”

In truth, she wasn't really opposed to getting close with Zu An. However, she couldn't afford to appear too willing here. She had to make Sang Qian feel guilty and aware that she was forced into this, and only then would he cherish her more and not pursue this matter after their marriage.

Looking at the pitiful look on Zheng Dan's face, Sang Qian felt his heart shattering into pieces. He quickly consoled her, saying, "I know that I'm putting you in a spot here. Don't worry, I'll protect you well. If Zu An dares to bully you, you can be certain that I'll take his life!"

"Really?" Zheng Dan looked at Sang Qian with large, watery eyes.

"Of course!" Sang Qian's heart softened at the sight of his beautiful fiancée. "Forget it, let's just give up on the 7,500,000 silver taels debt note. We shouldn't risk it."

However, Zheng Dan shook her head in resignation and said, "That wouldn't work either. The 7,500,000 silver taels debt note is important to your plans. On top of that, there's also our 1,000,000 silver taels bet paper too. For our future, I have no choice but to sacrifice myself."

"I'll make it up to you." Looking at the beautiful, gentle woman before him, Sang Qian felt that he was blessed to find such a virtuous fiancée.

However, Zheng Dan's mind had already moved on to ponder upon how she should best approach Zu An.

...

Zu An had a grand sneeze. He rubbed his nose as he murmured, "Which beautiful lady is thinking of me now?"

Beside him, Cheng Shouping quickly nodded fawningly.

Earlier today, the young master showed his true worth and defeated a fifth rank cultivator. More importantly, he helped the Chu clan win the Clans Tournament. Without a doubt, his standing will rise greatly from this day onward, and the same goes for me too!

At a moment like this, I must make sure to get into the young master's good books!

"Aren't you afraid of your own wife hearing those words?"

A teasing voice suddenly sounded at this moment, and Pei Mianman walked over with an air of fragrance around her.

Zu An laughed softly and said, "My wife has already said that she doesn't mind me looking for other women."

Pei Mianman was taken aback, not expecting Zu An to respond in such a manner. "Chu Chuyan said those words?"

"Why don't you ask her then?" Zu An pointed to Chu Chuyan as he said. "How is it? Are you interested in becoming my woman? Chu Chuyan is your good friend anyway, so I bet the two of you will get along with one another."

Cheng Shouping was stunned to hear those words, thinking that the young master was brave. It looks like I've really underestimated him in the past. To think that he would try to seduce his wife's best friend right in front of her! T-this... When will the young master offer me some pointers to the secrets of his success?

"You want to be my man?" Pei Mianman chuckled softly, not getting angry at all. "It isn't impossible, but your current strength is still far lacking."

Cheng Shouping's eyes immediately reddened, and he hurriedly lowered his head. His heart was thumping fast just by looking at Pei Mianman. She really is a temptress. Even her peach blossom eyes are more than enough to draw in the souls of others. The young master is truly amazing for being able to chat with her calmly.

"How high does my cultivation have to be in order to be considered strong enough?" asked Zu An with a smile.

"You'll know it by then." Noticing that Chu Chuyan was making her way over, Pei Mianman stopped teasing Zu An. "Alright, I'll be leaving now. Don't forget our promise."

She left the area after saying her piece, leaving behind a trail of fragrance behind her.

"What did you two agree on?" Chu Chuyan looked at Zu An doubtfully.

"We agreed for her to become my little wife in the future," replied Zu An.

Cheng Shouping was utterly impressed by those words. The young master is a true warrior!

Chu Chuyan, on the other hand, was rendered speechless. Clearly, she didn't take Zu An's words seriously. "You should come with me. Everyone has many things to say to you."

As soon as Zu An walked over to where the other members of the Chu clan was, he found himself swarmed with a huge crowd.

"Young master, we didn't expect you to be this formidable! This is a recovery medicine special concocted by the Red Cloak Army..."

"Our young master defeated his enemy so easily that he didn't sustain any injuries at all. Why would he need your medicine?"

"Our medicine isn't just for healing injuries. It can hasten the recovery of one's ki too. Given the two battles the young master has fought earlier, he must have depleted his ki greatly."

...

"A bunch of bootlickers!" spat Hong Xingying coldly. He couldn't stand how the others were rushing to fawn on Zu An.

Quite a few of them were still showing concern for him earlier on, only to rush to Zu An's side right now. With Zu An's accomplishment today, his rise in the Chu clan was already inevitable. Seeing this, Hong Xingying's face turned livid.

Tsk, the world sure is a mercenary place! What should I do from now on...

It was then that the vision before him darkened. He raised his gaze, only to see two servants of the Chu clan had moved a table over and were looking at him intently. He immediately asked impatiently, "What are you doing?"

It looks like a fallen tiger would even get bullied by mere dogs. Even these weaklings dare to provoke me now, huh?

"I wonder who mentioned earlier that he would eat a table up if my brother-in-law wins!" a teasing voice sounded.

Chu Huanzhao was still lying on the stretcher in a tragic state, but judging from how she was shaking her fair legs leisurely in the air, it would seem that she was in a good mood.

Had it been any other occasion, Hong Xingying would find his heartstrings being pulled along by the movements of her long, slender legs, but the words she had spoken earlier had riled him up.

Chu Huanzhao patted on the table and said, "Look, I've kindly prepared a superior redwood table just for you. It might be made of good material, but it's much softer than most other tables out there, so don't say that I'm taking advantage of you. Oh right, I've prepared a pot of water for you to aid in your digestion too. If it isn't enough, feel free to tell me. I can get the other servants to bring more over."

"I..." Hong Xingying's mouth opened and closed, but he couldn't find any words to say at all. He was starting to regret not feigning unconscious earlier on, leading to him being placed in such an awkward situation.

It's all that Zu An's fault!

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for +999 Rage!

Zu An was still happily accepting the crowd's gifts when he noticed this inflow in Rage points. He turned to look over in Hong Xingying's direction, only to see Chu Huanzhao ordering the servants to place a massive table right before him.

Oh? It looks like my sister-in-law is helping me get even with him, huh?

It was around then that Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru noticed the awkward position Hong Xingying was in. Chu Zhongtian glared at his younger daughter and bellowed, "Ridiculous! What are you doing?"

Chu Huanzhao pouted unhappily as she replied, "He was the one who said earlier that if my brother-in-law can win the duel, he would gobble down a table right on the spot. You should have heard him loud and clear. It's not as if I'm forcing him into anything!"

"Enough! How can you take such jokes seriously?" Qin Wanru shot a glance at the servants, and they immediately carried the table away anxiously. "We're all one family here. It's also out of concern that Xingying said those words earlier. You should stop causing trouble here."

Be it out of consideration of Butler Hong or Hong Xingying's contribution toward the Chu clan over the last few years, Qin Wanru was obliged to stand up for him. Nevertheless, she couldn't help but think that Hong Xingying wasn't as trustworthy as a person she thought he was.

Chu Huanzhao still wanted to argue about the matter, but her older sister tugged her arm to stop her. So, she could only turn her head away unhappily and sulk.

“Thank you, Master and Madam.” Hong Xingying quickly bowed down to thank Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru. However, he was feeling incredibly bitter inside. He could feel the piercing stares coming from the others.

It’s all Zu An’s fault!

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for +999 Rage!

Zu An was utterly flabbergasted. What the hell? You’re blaming me for that too?

It was obvious that there was no room for reconciliation between the two of them anyway, so Zu An decided to make use of this opportunity to squeeze out as many Rage points as he could. “Actually, it’s not that hard to eat a table. You can soak it in water for a few days to soften it before munching down on it. Otherwise, you can also have it grounded and mixed in water before drinking it. If you find it flavorless, you can even coat it in flour before deep-frying it. Perhaps, you might just get addicted to the taste!”

“...” Hong Xingying.

“...” Chu Zhongtian.

“...” Qin Wanru.

What in the world did I just hear? Who in the right mind would analyze the way to eat a table?!

Qin Wanru harrumphed coldly and said, “Men, bring the casualties back to the Chu Estate first!”

She was worried that a conflict might break out if the two of them were to remain in each other’s presence, so she quickly separated them.

Zu An looked at the massive inflow of Rage points coming in and smiled in delight. Oh well, I guess I should give it a rest for now. I have to think in the long-term. If I break Hong Xingying down right now, it’ll be hard to earn anything from him in the future.

After Hong Xingying was escorted off as a ‘casualty’, the remaining members of the Chu clan also swiftly packed up and returned to the Chu Estate too.

Once they were back at the estate, Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru instructed the others to wait outside and called Zu An alone into the study room.

Everyone thought that Zu An was going to rise through the ranks after this incident, and they started thinking about how they should get close to him. Those who had offended him in the past also felt deeply regretful as they racked their brains for ways how they could salvage their relationship with him.

Over in the study room, as soon as the doors were closed, Zu An laughed heartily and said, “Actually, you need not be too thankful to me. Chuyan is my wife, after all. It’s only right for me to do my part for the Chu clan. Of course, if you wish to reward me with 100,000 silver taels or something, I’ll humbly accept your goodwill. Otherwise, I’ll be fine with having a few beautiful maids to wait on me too.”

“...” Chu Zhongtian.

“...” Qin Wanru.

“...” Chu Chuyan.

“Dream on!” Unable to take it anymore, Qin Wanru slammed her palm on the table and questioned, “Speak! Who sent you here?”

Chapter 125: Hand My Prize Over

Zu An’s words left Chu Zhongtian stumped too.

Just how brazen must you be to dare ask for beautiful maids in the presence of your parents-in-law and your wife? Do you think we would send you those to compete with our daughter? There’s no such parents in the world who would do that!

Back then, I wanted a few beautiful maids too, but in the end, aren’t I still single here?

Chu Zhongtian couldn’t help but direct a grudging look toward his wife.

Zu An was shocked by those words too. A furrow gradually formed on his forehead as he asked, “You can’t be so stingy as to shirk compensation after the huge contribution I’ve made for the Chu clan, right?”

“...” Qin Wanru.

Chu Chuyan finally spoke up at this moment, “Do you still not understand the situation yet? We want to know who’s behind you! What’s your purpose of going this far to infiltrate our Chu clan—cough cough!”

Halfway through her words, she suddenly began coughing violently. Chu Zhongtian quickly asked out of concern, “Your injuries seem to be worse than I expected.”

“It isn’t an issue. It won’t get in my way.” Chu Chuyan shook her head before turning her gaze back to Zu An.

“I infiltrated the Chu clan?” replied Zu An subconsciously. “Weren’t you the one who chose me as your drafted son-in-law and brought me in?”

A tinge of redness formed on Chu Chuyan’s face as she explained, “I was just thinking of... choosing an ordinary, unambitious man. I thought that you would fit the criteria. While the world says that you’re inept... I don’t care about all those. But now, I realized that you’ve been keeping me in the dark all along.”

Qin Wanru followed up as well, “Indeed! You went through so much effort to hide your true strength so as to appear harmless before us. Without a doubt, you must be planning something great. On top of that, you were even able to circumvent the background check we conducted. This means that there has to be a greater power assisting you. Speak! Were you sent by the empress’ faction or King Qi’s faction?”

Zu An finally understood why they were so angry at him, and he answered, "Mother-in-law, who do you think I was sent by then?"

"Shut your mouth! Don't call me mother-in-law!" bellowed Qin Wanru furiously. "It goes without saying that you're..."

But halfway through her words, she suddenly froze up. She realized that Zu An's actions didn't benefit any of the factions she had just listed.

"If I really bear malicious intentions in mind, why would I risk exposing myself in order to help the Chu clan win the Clans Tournament? You should also be aware of the implications behind this tournament too," added Zu An.

"Hmph! It might be because you weren't valued by the Chu clan thus far, so you wanted to make a name for yourself to win our favor. At the same time, you would also be able to get together with Chuyan... Cough cough."

There was no way that she wouldn't have noticed that her daughter and son-in-law hadn't been sleeping in the same room.

"Fine, allow me to put it in another way then. If I was from the empress' faction, why would I get into a conflict with Shi clan, and why would Snow, whom they had slotted by Chuyan's side, be out for my life then?" said Zu An. "And if I'm from King Qi's faction... Oh? It does seem like there's a chance here."

Qin Wanru sneered coldly, "Nothing more to say, huh?"

However, how could Zu An possibly lose in an argument? He swiftly recovered and thought of an idea, "There's actually an easy way to prove that I'm not related to King Qi."

"How do you intend to prove it?" asked Chu Chuyan.

Subconsciously, she hoped that Zu An had nothing to do with all of these powers. She didn't think that she was really fond of Zu An, just that she had already gotten used to being with him. While he was different from how she thought him out to be, it wouldn't be easy for her to find someone else at this point.

Zu An pointed to heaven and swore, "How about this? King Qi's sons will have no buttocks and all of his daughters will become my concubine. Now, you can't possibly still think that I'm from King Qi's faction, right?"

Qin Wanru's body recoiled in horror whereas Chu Chuyan hurriedly averted her embarrassed gaze/

Chu Zhongtian burst out angrily, "How can you say such words out loud! If King Qi hears of that, he'll have you executed right away!"

Zu An chuckled cheekily in response, "Well, doesn't that prove that I have no relations with King Qi? You should trust me now, right?"

"Even if you aren't related to King Qi, there's no saying that you might still be from the empress' faction," said Qin Wanru. "Who knows? You might just be putting on a skit with Shi Kun and the others so as to win our trust."

“Isn’t that simple to disprove too?” Zu An put his hands up and began swearing once more. “From now on, the empress shall...”

Chu Zhongtian hurriedly reached out to cover Zu An’s mouth. “Enough, enough! You shouldn’t talk about the empress in such a manner even if she can’t hear you. At this rate, it’s only a matter of time that your rotten mouth lands you into deep trouble!”

Zu An scoffed a little upon hearing those words. Sorry to let you down, but I’m counting on this rotten mouth of mine to rise through the ranks.

“Then how do you possess your current level of cultivation?” Chu Chuyan stared at Zu An intently. “Based on what I saw on the dueling ring, you should be at the third rank at the very minimum.”

“Are you surprised to see that your husband isn’t a good-for-nothing contrary to what others say?” Zu An leaned toward Chu Chuyan as he asked with a smile.

Chu Chuyan subconsciously took a step back to widen the distance between them before saying, “I’m more shocked than surprised. You haven’t answered my question yet.”

“Oh.” Zu An pondered for a moment before replying, “Actually, I’ve been talented ever since a young age. It’s just that I don’t like bragging so I’ve been keeping a low profile all this while. That’s why the world misunderstands me... Ah! The common populace simply doesn’t understand prodigies and discriminate against them!”

“Do you take us as fools?” Qin Wanru couldn’t take it anymore. “We did a thorough check on you before accepting you in as our drafted son-in-law. In the past decade, you’re a good-for-nothing from head to toe. Your deceased uncle doesn’t know any cultivation either, so there’s no one around you who you could have possibly learned how to cultivate from.”

“Well, it’s like this. Many years ago, I met an old beggar who was on the verge of starving to death. Out of pity, I gave him a bun, and that made him extremely thankful to me. So, he imparted to me a cultivation technique. I’ve been practicing it diligently since then, and before I knew it, I’ve already reached my current level.” Zu An laughed heartily.

He had seen plenty of martial arts movies in his previous life to know about the plot devices that give rise to the protagonist’s power skips.

“Hah! A cultivator would actually be starving to the point where he needs you to save him?” Qin Wanru totally didn’t believe the story at all. “Are you taking me for a fool?!”

“I mean, cultivators can get into bad positions at times too! God knows what he has been through!” Zu An swiftly supplemented his story.

Qin Wanru and Chu Zhongtian shot a glance at one another before nodding inconspicuously. If Zu An had tried to explain all of the details, they might have doubted him even more. However, Zu An’s vehement and forceful attitude in insisting on his imperfect story somehow made him look much more credible.

"Very well, we'll believe you for the time being. However..." Qin Wanru's tone suddenly turned sharp. "... if we were to ever find out that you have been deceiving us, you shouldn't blame us for getting nasty on you!"

"But what if Chuyan and I already bear grandchildren for you by then? Won't you be a bit nicer on me on the account of your grandchildren?"

"..." Chu Zhongtian.

"..." Qin Wanru.

Chu Chuyan was both embarrassed yet enraged. "Shut up! Who's going to bear children with you?!"

Zu An shrugged calmly. "Aren't we a couple? It's perfectly normal for us to have children."

"Pui!" No matter how cold-natured Chu Chuyan was, she was still a young maiden. Zu An's teasing left her turning her head away in a huff.

This fellow really is too much! Despite being... he still wants to make fun of me!

Chu Zhongtian coughed lightly to alleviate the awkwardness in the room. "So, Zu An..."

But before he could finish his words, Zu An had already interrupted, "Father-in-law, please don't call me Zu An anymore. Please call me Ah Zu instead."

"Ah Zu?" Chu Zhongtian was perplexed. "That's quite a weird nickname you want me to call you by."

Zu An explained with a smile, "Back at my hometown, Ah Zu is a term used to refer to handsome guys." [1]

Chu Zhongtian couldn't help but roll his eyes upon hearing those words. However, knowing that Zu An had a screw loose, he decided against arguing with him. "Ah Zu, you've crippled two of the most outstanding juniors in the Yuan clan today. You must make sure to be careful from now on. I'll also dispatch more experts to protect you as well."

Qin Wanru added on, "Also, you shouldn't get too complacent just because you've managed to win on the dueling ring earlier today by luck. Your true cultivation is still only at the third rank. If not for Yuan Wendong losing his focus at a crucial moment, the one to be crippled would have been you instead. You should try to keep a lower profile from now on."

Zu An shrugged helplessly. "There's nothing I can do about that. Someone as outstanding as me is bound to be in the limelight no matter where I go. Even if I want to keep a low profile, the world doesn't allow me to do so!"

Unable to stand all the bragging coming from Zu An anymore, Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru decisively kicked Zu An out of the room.

Once Zu An left the area, Chu Zhongtian turned to his daughter and asked, "Chuyan, what's your take on this matter?"

Chu Chuyan pondered with a frown before replying, "I don't think that he's a spy sent by the other clans. No one would send someone of his character over to spy on us."

Thinking about Zu An's unruly personality, Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru agreed deeply with her words.

"No matter what, he's only a third rank cultivator at the moment. Even if there's something amiss with him, we still have the means to deal with him," said Qin Wanru.

Chu Chuyan nodded in agreement too. "I'll pay closer heed to him in the future."

...

Meanwhile, as soon as Zu An left the room, Chu Huanzhao quickly walked up to him together with a group of people. "Brother-in-law, brother-in-law! How is it? Did my parents reward you for your effort or something?"

The others in the crowd also looked at Zu An with heated looks in their eyes. No matter how low Zu An's position was in the Chu clan previously, he was still its son-in-law. With the merits he had accrued through the tournament today, there was no doubt that he would become deeply favored by the Chu clan from now on.

It was also only then that a severe problem had dawned on Zu An. Wait a moment... Yeah, where is my reward?

He got too caught up in Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru's tempo that he actually forgot about this matter!

"You didn't receive any rewards?" Noticing how Zu An had gone silent, she immediately felt indignant on his behalf. "How can my parents act like that? My big sister should have spoken up for you!"

"Who says that there's no reward?" A smile curled on Zu An's lips. "They have rewarded you to me."

"Ah?" Chu Huanzhao was stunned for a moment before she finally understood what those words meant. Her face immediately reddened. "Did they really..."

It was then that she noticed the teasing look in Zu An's eyes and realized that he was making fun of her. She immediately lifted the crutches supporting her body and smacked it down on him. "Stinky brother-in-law, you lied to me! I'll beat you to death!"

"I'm just joking! Ey, aren't you injured? How in the world are you able to run that quickly?" Zu An quickly scooted off, and Chu Huanzhao chased him desperately.

The crowd was left staring at one another in bewilderment. The second branch's Chu Hongcai heaved a deep sigh of relief and said, "That scared me! I thought that uncle really betrothed Huanzhao to him!"

The plump Chu Yucheng's eyes curled into crescents as he said, "That's not entirely impossible."

Chu Hongcai scoffed in response, "What nonsense are you spouting? Just think about what kind of people Chuyan and Huanzhao are? How could the two sisters possibly wait upon the same man, not to mention, Zu An is just a drafted son-in-law!"

Chu Yucheng didn't bother arguing his point. Instead, he gazed at the two people running around the Chu clan's courtyard contemplatively. He could tell from Huanzhao's coy response earlier that she

wasn't averse to the idea at all. On top of that, instead of taking out her Wailing Whip to strike him, she instinctively used her crutches instead.

It looks like our drafted son-in-law is quite an interesting man.

...

In the midst of fooling around with Chu Huanzhao, he unknowingly returned back to his own residence. As soon as he opened the door, however, he found Old Mi standing right before him, leaving him jolting backward.

For some reason, he simply felt uncomfortable in the old man's presence.

Chu Huanzhao also noticed that there was a stranger present, and it belatedly dawned on her that it was inappropriate that the second miss of the Chu Estate was actually prancing around with her brother-in-law like that. Her face reddened as she harrumphed. "Hmph! I'll settle the score with you next time!"

Then, she quickly left the area.

After Chu Huanzhao left, Old Mi turned to look at Zu An and asked coldly, "How did you manage to raise your cultivation that quickly?"

Chapter 126: The Ways of a Vixen

Zu An's heart skipped a beat. He knew that he couldn't possibly fool Old Mi with the same excuse he used for Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru. Of everyone in the Chu Estate, the one person who knew Zu An's circumstances the best was no other than Old Mi. The latter knew that he was just an ordinary human a month ago, only embarking on the journey of a cultivator through the cultivation technique the latter imparted to him.

"How did you raise your cultivation that quickly?" Seeing how Zu An wasn't answering, Old Mi repeated his question once more, but his tone was much more impatient this time around.

"I think it's because I'm still young, that's why I'm cultivating a bit faster?" It took Zu An some effort to squeeze out an excuse.

However, Old Mi simply glared at him coldly, not bothering to respond at all.

Zu An's face heated up. This excuse sounded ridiculous even to him. So, he pondered once again before replying, "I entered the academy. The academy distributes ki stones to each of us to use in our cultivation. On top of that, the ki in the academy is much richer, so..."

Before he could finish his words, Old Mi had already interjected once more, "Even with ki stones, there's no way you could have progressed that quickly. Besides, the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra relies mainly on getting beaten up to raise your cultivation. Ki stones have limited effectiveness for you."

Zu An was surprised to hear those words. Old Mi mentioned that ki stones had limited effectiveness, not that it was completely useless. Yet, why did it not work for him?

He thought about how the system had turned the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra into a series of formations within his body. Could it be that the way he was practicing the cultivation technique was different from how it was supposed to be, resulting in some divergence? As a result of that, he could only raise his cultivation through getting beaten up or consuming Ki Fruits.

Thinking deeper into it, he felt that it wasn't too bad since Ki Fruits were much easier to obtain than ki stones.

While Zu An was distracted, Old Mi had finally lost his patience. He reached out to grab Zu An's hand to check on his condition personally.

Zu An was still feeling gleeful at having defeated two experts on the dueling ring, but to his astonishment, he couldn't even dodge a casual grab from Old Mi. He tried to pull his arm out, but Old Mi's hand was like a metal claw firmly latched on.

"The hell! Just how powerful is this old man?" Zu An was alarmed.

"Hm?" exclaimed Old Mi in surprise. He flicked his long fingernail on Zu An's fingertip and created a small incision. Then, he squeezed out a small droplet of blood.

He brought the droplet of blood up to his nose to have a whiff of it, and his body immediately jolted in shock. He looked at Zu An with eyes filled with disbelief as he asked, "Transcendent class aptitude?"

Zu An's heart skipped a beat. He remembered the warning Jiang Luofu had given him regarding how he shouldn't reveal his aptitude level to others. So, he feigned ignorance and said, "What transcendent class aptitude?"

However, Old Mi disregarded his words and reached out to grab his collars. He looked at Zu An with heated eyes as he asked anxiously, "What happened to you during this period of time? How did your aptitude suddenly rise by so much?"

He was certain that Zu An's aptitude was only at lower Ding a month ago, yet it suddenly rose to the legendary transcendent class aptitude. How could he possibly not be surprised?

Zu An knew that it was impossible for him to hide it anymore, so he quickly cooked up an excuse and said, "I'm not too sure either. I think it might be related to that wild fruit I ate the last time I was at the city suburbs."

"What wild fruit?" Old Mi asked on. "How does it look like? Describe it to me."

"Errr..." Zu An hesitated for a moment before continuing on. "It's oval in shape, and its exterior is red in color. The fruit is covered with scalelike protrusions with sharp tips. The fruit has a thick skin that feels a bit wax, and its flesh is red in color. There are lots of black bits embedded in its flesh..."

Picturing the fruit based on Zu An's description, Old Mi began murmuring under his breath. Could it be the legendary Dhara Scales? No, that isn't right. The color of the flesh is a little different. Could it be the Redcloud Divine Fruit then? The exterior looks different though. What could it possibly be..."

Zu An almost burst into laughter there and then. You'd be a god if you could guess it. That's a dragonfruit from my previous life! I don't think I've heard of it anywhere ever since arriving in this world.

"It looks like you've stumbled upon a fortuitous encounter, obtaining a fruit that could alter your aptitude. However, it's hard for me to imagine why a treasure of such a tier would actually be in the Hidden Dragon Mountain," said Old Mi.

Zu An chuckled in response, "I guess dumb people are compensated by their luck."

A frightening smile surfaced on Old Mi's aged face. He patted Zu An's shoulder and said, "Wonderful. The higher your aptitude, the more heartened I am."

"Thank you for your concern, elder," replied Zu An. He looked at this still bleeding fingertip as he reassessed his evaluation of Old Mi. All along, he thought of Old Mi as a 'grandfather gift pack' accorded to newbie transmigrators so as to kick them off on their journey. However, it looked like he was sorely mistaken here. There was no one who would selflessly impart their teachings to a stranger for no good reason...

"You didn't use the Sunflower Phantasm in the tournament today, right?" asked Old Mi.

"I didn't. I used the modified version you imparted to me, and it looks like it was more than enough." Had it been before, Zu An might have just confessed that he had used a move from the Sunflower Phantasm at the very last instant in order to deal with Yuan Wenji, but he felt that he couldn't trust Old Mi anymore.

"That's good," replied Old Mi with a nod. He also thought that his movement skill would be more than enough to deal with most low-level cultivators, so he didn't harbor any doubts toward Zu An's words. "Alright, you should rest for now."

After saying those words, he began staggering his way out. Despite his seemingly slow movements, it took only a few moments for his silhouette to completely vanish from view.

Zu An finally heaved a long sigh of relief. Somehow, being in Old Mi's presence made him feel incredibly pressured.

It looks like I need to prepare a countermeasure against Old Mi...

There was a problem here though. The pressure that Old Mi exerted on him earlier was even greater than what he had felt from Yuan Zhengchu and the others when they charged at him earlier today. This proved that Old Mi was indubitably an incredibly powerful cultivator, and this only left Zu An's heart feeling even heavier.

Heaving a deep sigh, he closed his door.

As per usual, he started off with washing his hands and face. Now that he was a bit more well-to-do, he even bought from fragrance and joss sticks in order to upgrade his ritual. As they say, the Goddess of Luck shines on those who are prepared.

Once all preparatory work was completed, Zu An dived into his lottery. He had accumulated a total of 58,835 Rage points thus far. Most of it had come from the splash damage he had dealt upon the spectators. Indeed, a good performance needed to be enjoyed by a huge audience!

Should I try to hug Jiang Luofu's leg in public next time?

Zu An quickly dispelled that thought from his mind. While he would surely make a killing out of his Rage points, he might just end up dead from that.

He drew the lottery as per usual, but he didn't obtain anything special. His total loot was only 59 Ki Fruits, which was pretty disappointing though it was within expectations. He swallowed the Ki Fruits and filled the fourth formation by roughly a third.

Seeing this, he couldn't help but sigh deeply. He was only at the fourth step of the third rank, but the amount of Rage points he needed to make a breakthrough was already an astronomical sum. He couldn't imagine how he could possibly rake up enough Rage points for subsequent breakthroughs.

All of a sudden, someone knocked on his door, and Cheng Shouping's fawning voice sounded, "Young master, let's go redeem the bet paper. It's 1,000,000 silver taels!"

Zu An's eyes immediately lit up as his low spirits cleared up in an instant. There had been too many things going on that he nearly forgot about this.

"Let's go!"

Zu An charged out of the door, only to quickly return back in. "No, this won't do. I need to find someone to accompany me."

While his winnings this time around wasn't as exaggerated as what he had earned from the Silverhook Casino the last time around, it was still no small sum. Just the few guards from the Chu clan might not be sufficient to get the matter done. He needed to find a reliable backing here.

In the end, he felt that his wife was still the most reliable one of all. After the previous incident, she had experience handling things relating to the casino now.

...

Meanwhile, Chu Chuyan was in the midst of circulating her ki through her body to recuperate from her injuries. All of a sudden, an unnatural tinge of redness filled her face, and she abruptly lurched forward and sprouted a mouthful of blood. Shockingly, there were a few small shards of ice in her blood.

Confusion flickered across her face as she murmured in disbelief, "How could this be..."

"Honey, honey~" It was then that a familiar, light-hearted voice sounded from the outside.

She quickly waved her sleeves, and the puddle of blood vanished without a trace. Following that, Zu An barged right in. "Hm? Honey, what are you doing lying on the bed in the middle of the day? Are you trying to invite me to join you?"

Chu Chuyan nearly choked. It's like this fellow is incapable of spouting anything good. "What are you doing here?"

Zu An said with a sheepish smile, "I want to invite you out for a walk."

Chu Chuyan closed her eyes once more as she replied placidly, "I'll pass."

She still remembered how she was duped by Zu An the last time around and ended up becoming a spectacle on the street. She reckoned that he was doing the same this time around to satisfy his vanity.

“Err... Alright, I’ll be honest with you. I’m heading down to a casino to collect a payment, but I’m afraid that they might attempt to pull something. I’ll feel more assured with you by my side,” said Zu An with a smile. “I’ll split a portion of it with you!”

“You went to gamble again?” Chu Chuyan opened her eyes right away and stared at Zu An in displeasure.

“It’s not a gamble; I’m just collecting school fees. You see, they actually dared to put a ridiculous 1:100 payout on me! As an arithmetic teacher, I feel obliged to teach them basic math so that they’ll understand the importance of risk control in the case of freak accidents. It’s not like I’m taking a lot from them anyway,” answered Zu An vehemently.

“You can phrase it however you want to, but it doesn’t change the fact that you’re gambling,” Chu Chuyan harrumphed. “The Chu clan has strict rules against gambling. I already made an exception by following you to the Silverhook Casino the last time around; there’s no way I’ll do it again.”

“At least do it on the account that I’ve made such a huge contribution to the Chu clan. I mean, instead of rewarding my merits, you all ended up interrogating me instead. Now, you wouldn’t even accompany me out for a walk. Hmph, it looks like there’s no point staying at the Chu clan anymore!” Zu An harrumphed lividly before stomping his way out.

“Where are you going?” Taken aback by Zu An’s sudden tantrum, Chu Chuyan asked in bewilderment.

“I’m going to announce to the world that we’re divorcing one another!” Zu An waved his hand as he continued heading out without the slightest hesitation.

“Come back here!” Chu Chuyan cried out in alarm.

It wasn’t easy for her to find a fitting husband to shield her from the other pursuers aiming for the Chu clan. If Zu An were to leave, how in the world was she going to find another one?

Besides, even if she could find someone who fit the criteria, surely she, as the proud first miss of the Chu clan, couldn’t possibly marry twice, right? That would be a huge embarrassment, as well as a scandal.

However, Zu An paid her no heed at all. He continued heading out as if he couldn’t hear her. So, Chu Chuyan bit her lips and dashed right in front to stop him. “Fine fine, I’ll accompany you, alright?”

“Really?” It was hard for Zu An to stop his lips from curling up. He never thought that the usual tricks used by vixens in soap operas would be effective even for men. If he refuses, cry. If crying doesn’t work, throw a tantrum. If even throwing a tantrum doesn’t work, threaten him with your life!

“Of course!” replied Chu Chuyan. “Only this time!”

Zu An contemplated for a moment longer before adding, “I also want to sleep with you later tonight. Otherwise, I’ll announce to the world that we’re divorcing one another!”

“Go ahead then!” Chu Chuyan eyed Zu An coldly.

Zu An nearly choked. Hey, you are supposed to follow the script here. “We don’t need to share a bed. Even just being in the same room is fine with me.”

Chu Chuyan turned around and walked off, saying, "If you don't catch up, I won't even bother going to the casino with you."

"Wait a moment, does that mean that you're agreeing to my request?"

"Shut up!"

...

Having learned from her previous lesson, Chu Chuyan insisted on taking the carriage this time around. It didn't take them long to arrive at the entrance of the Four Seas Casino. This was where Cheng Shouping made his bet the last time around.

"Go and redeem the prize," Zu An passed the bet paper to Cheng Shouping and instructed.

"Alright!" Cheng Shouping's eyes immediately lit up. He was more than willing to do fun tasks like this. He puffed up his chest and walked up to the counter, smacking the bet paper down loudly. With a voice loud enough for everyone in the casino to hear, he shouted, "Manager, I've struck the lottery. Pay up my 1,000,000 silver taels!"

As one could expect, it immediately caught the attention of everyone in the casino.

The manager's face immediately darkened. He shot a look at the person behind him before gritting his teeth. He took the bet paper and tore it into shreds, saying, "Where did this swindler come from? How dare you take a fake bet paper to fool us? Men, chase him out!"

Chapter 127: You're In Trouble

Cheng Shouping was bewildered. He had marched off to the counter gleefully to collect his money, thinking that the young master would reward him handsomely for his efforts. Yet, he actually messed everything up.

It was a million silver taels they were talking about here!

Cheng Shouping's eyes immediately reddened in agitation. With a cry of despair, he charged forward to brawl with the manager, only to be swiftly dragged out by the guards of the Four Seas Casino.

"Where did this lunatic come from? Beat him up real good so that even his mother wouldn't recognize him!" The manager covered his swollen eyes as he pointed his finger at Cheng Shouping angrily.

"Oh? Is this how the Four Seas Casino treats its customers? Not only are you all shrinking payment, you even try to turn things around your customers to frame them, even attempting to beat them to death?" a sharp voice sounded as Zu An strutted into the casino imposingly.

Beside him, Chu Chuyan also saw the pitiful plight Cheng Shouping was in, and her gaze turned cold. Even though she wasn't too fond of Cheng Shouping, he was still a member of the Chu clan. She wouldn't allow outsiders to just trample all over him.

Receiving Chu Chuyan's subtle gesture, the Chu clan's guards immediately rushed forward to beat down the guards of the Four Seas Casino, saving Cheng Shouping from their clutches.

“Waaa, this woman is really pretty!”

“Are you blind? Don’t you recognize the first miss of the Chu clan?”

“As expected of Brightmoon City’s number one beauty!”

“But what are they doing here? Doesn’t the Chu clan have strict rules against gambling?”

...

The others in the casino, as well as passers-by, immediately rushed over to watch the commotion.

Cheng Shouping staggered over to Zu An’s side with a swollen face. He hugged the latter’s thigh as he cried out indignantly, “Young master, that bastard over there has torn up the bet paper!”

Zu An’s eyelids twitched. “Stop using my clothes as a tissue paper to wipe off your snot.”

Seeing that Chu Chuyan was here too, the manager from the Four Seas Casino dared not to put on airs. He quickly stepped forward to welcome her with a smile, but his bruised eye made his appearance rather comedic. “Young miss Chu, what brings you here today? I’m the manager of this casino, Ol’ Third Du. Pardon me my lack of an appropriate welcome.”

Chu Chuyan harrumphed coldly and said, “If I hadn’t come here, I wouldn’t have known how little you thought of the people from our Chu clan.”

“I dare not to!” Ol’ Third Du hurriedly replied with a nervous smile. “I didn’t know he had come under your orders, so please forgive me for my earlier act of disrespect.”

Zu An waved his hand impatiently. “Enough. Don’t waste our time with such pleasantries. Hurry up and pay the million silver taels you owe us.”

Ol’ Third Du put on a surprised look as he asked, “Young master Zu, I’m afraid that I don’t quite understand what you’re saying. The bet paper your servant brought to us is fake, so I’m unable to cash it out for you.”

“Whether the bet paper is real or not, you should have had everyone to testify for it. Don’t you think that it was highly inappropriate for you to tear it up just like that? That’s an act of a guilty conscience,” said Zu An coldly.

Those words were met with the fervent agreement of the crowd. The action of Ol’ Third Du was suspicious in their eyes too.

However, Ol’ Third Du had already prepared an answer to that. “I thought that this servant was falsifying the bet paper behind your back. It was out of consideration of the reputation of the Chu clan that I tore the bet paper on the spot. Otherwise, it might lead to unnecessary gossip. I didn’t know that he was doing it under your orders.”

Since the bet paper had been destroyed, there was no way for Zu An to disprove his words anymore. Not to mention, his words made perfect sense too.

As expected, those in the crowd immediately turned doubtful eyes toward Zu An.

“Oh? You’re even trying to turn the tables on me, huh?” Zu An burst into laughter. “It’s fortunate that I made preparations in advance. I knew that you would try to pull something like that, so I kept the real bet paper with me.”

Zu An took out the real bet paper from his robe and displayed it before everyone else. “What a pity that your guilty conscience prevented you from even taking a close look at the bet paper, resulting in such an elementary mistake.”

“...” Ol’ Third Du.

You have successfully trolled Ol’ Third Du for +666 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Zheng Dan for +666 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for +666 Rage!

Zu An subconsciously glanced at the tightly shut doors behind the counter.

Zheng Dan and Sang Qian are indeed hiding inside. It looks like this is one of the Zheng clan’s businesses. It was wondering why Zheng Dan kept trying to get close to me previously, but it turns out that she does have ulterior motives in mind. Most likely, she was aiming for the 7,500,000 silver taels debt note I have on the Silverhook Casino, hoping to use it to devour the Plum Blossom Sect’s businesses.

Still, I must say that Sang Qian really went all out this time around. He even had his fiancée lay a honey trap for me, casually hugging and touching me.

Ey, that fellow can’t have some sort of weird cuckold fantasies, does he? Oh my! If that’s the case, I really should... make a friend out of him!

In any case, it means that they are unaware that the 7,500,000 silver taels is no longer on me anymore. I should tell Jiang Luofu to keep this matter hidden for the moment. It’ll be interesting to see the two of them desperately struggling, only to realize that it was all in vain.

It was also then that Chu Chuyan spoke up, “It’s very easy to discern the authenticity of a bet paper. Casinos would pay careful heed to the material of the paper, the quality of the ink, and the handwriting on it so as to prevent forgery, and a record of it will be kept in the magistrate’s office so as to avoid contention. On top of that, every casino would keep a spare copy of the bet paper for documentation purposes. I shall invite the vice magistrate over to look through your accounting book and judge this matter fairly.”

As one of the decision-makers in the Chu clan, she had to be well-versed with how businesses operated and the laws of the country.

“Young miss Chu, please wait a moment!” It was then that someone suddenly ran out. “I am the owner of the Four Seas Casino, Zheng Guanxi. It’s an honor to have Chu First Miss and young master Zu visiting our premises.”

There was no way the Zheng clan would allow them to go to the vice magistrate for this. They were clearly at fault here, and things would be made clear with just a bit of investigation. On top of that, if the vice magistrate really ran through their accounting books, they could stand to lose far more than just a million silver taels.

"You're the owner of the Four Seas Casino?" Zu An shot a glance at the inner rooms of the casino as he spoke.

It looks like Zheng Dan and Sang Qian aren't intending to come out. But again, given their lofty standing, they can't possibly openly intervene in the matters relating to the casino or else it could lower their standing. It was only normal for them to find someone else to take care of matters.

"Yes, I am!" replied Zheng Guanxi with an amicable smile.

"Zheng? Are you from the Zheng clan?" asked Zu An.

"No no no, of course not. I have nothing to do with the Zheng clan at all. How could someone as humble as me possibly be related to the great Zheng clan?" Zheng Guanxi denied it right away.

Should I have used another name instead? Otherwise, it's very easy for others to see through my background. But again, it's much easier for me to settle problems when I bring the Zheng clan into the picture to pressure others. Ah, this is really a dilemma.

"I don't care which clan you're from. Just tell me, how are you intending to resolve this matter?" asked Zu An.

"Yes, of course." Zheng Guanxi took out a handkerchief and dabbed away the small beads of sweat forming on his forehead. "It was all Ol' Third Du acting on his own accord earlier. Our casino is unaware of the matter. I reckon that he's coveting this huge wealth."

"???" Ol' Third Du.

Zheng Guanxi wasn't about to give Ol' Third Du a chance to explain at all. "Men, drag him down and bring him to the vice magistrate!"

Ol' Third Du immediately panicked. "You can't do this to me! I'm just following the young miss'..."

Kacha!

However, the guards were already prepared for this. With a single punch, they dislocated Ol' Third Du's lower jaw, causing his words to immediately turn into mumble jumble. There was no way to hear him clearly anymore.

"There's no need for you to put up a pretense before me. Give me a straight answer, are you planning to pay up or not?" Zu An harrumphed.

"It goes without saying that we'll pay you whatever you have earned!" There was still a smile on Zheng Guanxi's face, but his hands were trembling. This was a million silver taels they were talking about here! The Four Seas Casino hadn't even earned that much money ever since its establishment. "It's just that the sum is too big for us to raise right away. Could we write down a debt note for you first?"

"Sure, but I'll be expecting an annual interest rate of 40%," replied Zu An with a nod.

Zheng Guanxi was shocked. "But you only demanded 10% from the Silverhook Casino back then!"

"That's a different story. They owe me 7,500,000 silver taels and are unable to raise the money within a short period of time. However, the sum you owe me is much lower. Are you trying to tell me that your casino doesn't have that much money despite having accepted my bet?" Zu An harrumphed.

It was fortunate that he had only betted 10,000 silver taels back then. Otherwise, he might not be able to get his money back.

"That's right! Why the heck are you operating a casino when you can't even pay your own customers?"

"I think that Ol' Third Du's action was simply a sign of the Four Seas Casino shirking payment!"

"Wow, it looks like the drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan is the nemesis of all casinos."

"We should follow his lead next time around. He's our lighthouse toward prosperity!"

...

The crowd pointed their fingers at Zheng Guanxi and criticized him, leaving him feeling incredibly flustered. All of a sudden, his body jerked a little, as if someone had suddenly whispered in his ears. Then, he turned to Zu An and said, "How about this? We'll first pay you half of your winnings first, and as for the rest, we'll write it down as a debt at a 20% interest rate. How does that sound?"

Zu An finally nodded in satisfaction. "You should have done that right from the start! Bring the money out!"

He hadn't expected to be able to collect the full sum of money right away, so receiving 500,000 silver taels on the sum was already pretty good for him. One must know that he had only managed to squeeze 150,000 silver taels out of the Silverhook Casino the previous time.

In the casino's secret room, Sang Qian gritted his teeth as he muttered furiously, "I really want to smash my fist into that man's face."

Zheng Dan shook her head helplessly and said, "He has Chu First Miss by his side. You won't be able to touch him."

Sang Qian eyed Zheng Dan suspiciously as he asked, "Why don't you seem angry at all?"

"What's there to get angry about? Our plan is to get close to him to steal the debt note anyway," replied Zheng Dan as she looked at Zu An intently through the cracks of the door. "We're just tucking our money with him for the time being. It won't be long before we reclaim what we have lost and even more."

Sang Qian nodded in agreement, "We're counting on you then. You must make sure to protect yourself well. Remember, you mustn't allow him to take advantage of you."

"I know," replied Zheng Dan.

"Also, we should make some adjustments to the rules of the casino. We shouldn't offer such a high payout rate, and we should also put a cap on high payout bets. Otherwise, we might just be bankrupted by such freak accidents," said Sang Qian.

He couldn't let his wife clean up after him every single time. In the last few days, for some reason, he had been feeling jittery inside, as if he was going to get cuckolded.

...

After collecting their money and debt note, Zu An and the others prepared to return back to the estate. Zu An casually entrusted his banknotes over to Cheng Shouping, and it made the latter so excited that his hands wouldn't stop trembling.

Zu An distributed some of the notes over to the guards too. The guards were hesitant to accept it at first, but seeing that Chu Chuyan wasn't saying anything, they finally accepted it joyously. All of them had families to raise too, so additional money was naturally welcomed.

"Young master Zu, you look dashing today!"

"For some reason, he's looking more and more compatible with our first miss."

"In consideration of this banknote, I'll reluctantly agree with that statement just this once."

...

Zu An stuffed a stack of banknotes into Chu Chuyan's hands too. "Here, your share."

However, Chu Chuyan didn't accept it. "I don't need it."

"What are you getting so courteous for? You played a huge part in collecting the debt too." Zu An laughed heartily. "Now that I'm rich, it's my turn to provide for you!"

"..." Chu Chuyan.

If he continues acting so haughtily, I think I really might give this fellow a good beating.

Even after returning back to the Chu Estate, Zu An remained so overjoyed that he didn't sleep for the entire night. When he woke up the following day, he felt completely refreshed. The blue sky filled with white clouds looked more beautiful than ever, and even the air felt more refreshing than usual.

He was just about to set off to the academy to embark on another fruitful day when a bunch of constables suddenly charged into his residence and bellowed, "Zu An! You're to follow us back to the yamen to be trialed for your crimes!" [1]

Chapter 128: Dying Message

Zu An was stunned. He never thought that a day would come where a law-abiding citizen like him would be arrested by the police.

Trialed for my crimes? What crimes?

While he was still overwhelmed by the situation, the constables had already fastened his hands behind his back with a pair of metal shackles. It was fortunate that he was protected by the guards of the Chu clan, who wouldn't allow him to be taken away so easily by the constables, especially after accepting his money the previous day.

“Zu An, are you trying to resist arrest here?” asked the head constable coldly.

Zu An finally snapped out of his daze.

Having been in this world for some time, he knew just how powerful the royal court was. He couldn't allow things to proceed down this direction. So, he stepped forward and stopped the Chu clan's guards first before asking, “You should give me a reason at the very least. I can't possibly allow myself to be taken away without any justifications, right?”

“You shouldn't have done it in the first place if you don't want others to know of it.” The head constable pointed to the side. “You can't hear it?”

Zu An turned his head sideward, only to be shocked by what he saw. A huge crowd was rushing in his direction with indignant looks on their faces, roaring furiously.

“Murderers have to pay for their crimes!”

“The Chu clan oppresses the people and condones the vile deeds of their son-in-law!”

...

Looking at those banners that wrote stuff like ‘Bring justice back to the Great Zhou Dynasty’ and ‘Commoners’ lives matter’, Zu An couldn't help but frown. He felt like he had been mired into a huge scheme.

It was then that Chu Zhongtian, Qin Wanru, Chu Chuyan, and the others rushed out. Chu Huanzhao was still in the estate because she was still recuperating from her injuries, but Chu Zhongtian stopped her from coming out.

“What happened?” Chu Zhongtian ordered his men to stop the rioting crowd before turning to the head constable with a cold look in his eyes.

The attitude of the head constable immediately became much more amicable. “Brightmoon Duke, Zu An is under suspicion for murdering Official Yang Wei and Commoners Plum Blossom Twelve and Plum Blossom Thirteen. The city lord has ordered us to arrest him to be trialed.”

Everyone in the Chu clan was shocked to hear those words. It was one thing for Plum Blossom Twelve and Plum Blossom Thirteen to be killed, but Yang Wei's death was quite a huge issue. He might be a low-ranking official, but he was still a subordinate of the royal court.

Zu An's mind was quickly whirled into action. All three people had previous conflicts with him, so their deaths hinted strongly at a ploy directed toward him.

“Nonsense! Ah Zu has been in our Chu Estate all this while, so how could he possibly kill anyone?” Chu Zhongtian could also tell that it was an attempt to frame Zu An.

“We're just acting according to the city lord's orders. Brightmoon Duke, I'll have to humbly ask you not to make things difficult for us.”

However, the crowd only grew more inflamed after seeing how the constables were bowing down to the Chu clan.

“Is the Chu clan trying to cover for a murderer?”

“Does the laws not apply to the Chu clan?”

“Where has the justice of our Great Zhou Dynasty gone to?”

...

It was always easy to rile up the populace, especially when it came to acts of injustice from the rich and the powerful. Everyone was always quick to hop onto the bandwagon, speaking up indignantly as if they had suffered grievances themselves. This was simply how humans were.

Chu Zhongtian realized that this matter would be hard to deal with. It would be a huge matter if the people were to turn against the Chu clan against him over this. “Very well, I’ll follow you all back to the yamen. I would like to see how you intend to judge this case!”

He patted Zu An’s shoulder and said, “Ah Zu, don’t worry. As long as I’m here, I won’t let you suffer any grievances!”

He was a duke of the country after all. With him keeping an eye on the proceedings, the others wouldn’t dare to carelessly make a ruling on the case.

Zu An felt a surge of warmth into his heart. My father-in-law is truly a decent person.

Chu Zhongtian told Qin Wanru to hold the fort in the Chu Estate and be prepared to send reinforcements whenever required before leading a group of guards over to the yamen.

Chu Chuyan was intending to follow as well, only to be stopped by Zu An. “I need you to find a person for me. Relay these words to her...”

Chu Chuyan was taken aback by the abrupt request, but she nodded in response before swiftly disappearing amidst the crowd.

Cheng Shouping also quickly rushed up to Zu An’s side fawningly, asked, “Young master, young master! Is there anything I can help you with? I’ll be willing to brave through a sea of flame for you as long as you give the word!”

“Yes, I do have something I need you to do,” replied Zu An.

Cheng Shouping’s eyes lit up right away. “What is it?”

“Zip up your mouth.”

“... Orh.”

Unless Zu An was tired of living, there was no way he would entrust anything important to the troublemaking Cheng Shouping anymore. He needed Chu Chuyan to deal with it personally in order to give him peace of mind. As for Cheng Shouping... all he needed to do was to disgust his opponents when the time came.

As Chu Zhongtian was tagging along too, the guards didn’t insist on shackling Zu An up. Just like that, they swiftly made their way toward the yamen.

City Lord Xie Yi and Vice Magistrate Pang Chun personally stepped forward to welcome them, saying, "What brings Brightmoon Duke here today?"

"You've already sent your men to arrest my son-in-law, so how can I not come by personally?" Chu Zhongtian harrumphed.

Xie Yi shook his head bitterly and said, "Someone knocked on the drums of the yamen, crying out his grievances. On top of that, an official is even implicated in the matter. Given the circumstances, I have no other choice than to hold a trial." [1]

"Who's the one who knocked on the drums?" asked Chu Zhongtian.

He had to at least figure out who his enemy was here first.

As they headed into the yamen, Xie Yi replied with a lowered voice, "It's Yang Wei's widow and the relatives of Plum Blossom Twelve and Plum Blossom Thirteen. Mei Chaofeng is here too."

Chu Zhongtian's eyes narrowed. "It looks like the Plum Blossom Sect is determined to turn against our Chu clan. I sure do wonder where their courage is coming from."

"Don't get careless. They seem to be confident this time around," reminded Xie Yi.

Once they entered the court, solemnity swiftly returned to Xie Yi's face as he stopped talking altogether.

Zu An scanned the surroundings, only to see two long horizontal banners that wrote 'Laws made of our virtues, enforced through discipline'. It gave an air of severity to the court.

Xie Yi and Pang Chun headed toward the front of the court, where their seats were located. Similar to how it was depicted in historical dramas, there were two rows of guards standing by the sides of the court, standing on attention with long metal poles in their hands.

There were several people kneeling before the court. One of them was a middle-aged woman, who appeared to be Yang Wei's wife from her fairly well-to-do attire. The others appeared to be farmers, which likely made them family members of Plum Blossom Twelve and Plum Blossom Thirteen.

Mei Chaofeng was standing at one side, looking at Zu An with utterly cold eyes.

Seeing this set-up, Zu An smiled quietly in anticipation. Very well, show me what you've got then.

"Since the plaintiffs and the defendant are already present, I hereby declare the commencement..." Xie Yi was just about to declare the commencement of the trials when a commotion sounded outside.

"Governor Sang has arrived!"

Astonished, Xie Yi quickly got up with Pang Chun and the other subordinate officials to greet Sang Hong. Casual laughter could be heard from the entrance as Sang Hong's voice sounded, "Lord Xie, there's no need for you to rise. You're the one in charge of the court proceedings. I'm here just to spectate."

Chu Zhongtian, on the other hand, was much less polite. "Lord Sang, I really see you everywhere I go."

It was just a day ago when Sang Hong openly sided with the Yuan clan, and now, he was here to deal with his son-in-law. Even the most patient man in the world would lose his temper after being picked on time and time again.

Toward that, Sang Hong calmly replied, "I should have returned to my office, but I heard that something major has happened in the city. After quickly looking into it, I realized that it involves the Chu clan. Out of concern, I came here to take a look lest the civilians claim that the law of our Great Zhou Dynasty sides with those in power. Brightmoon Duke, surely you wouldn't mind, right?"

Seeing that Sang Hong was pressuring him with the law, Chu Zhongtian replied calmly, "No one is blind here. I won't stand idly if someone tries to distort the facts."

Sang Hong laughed at those words. "Of course, of course. Everything will be dealt with according to the law. I believe that Lord Xie will handle the case promptly."

That wily old fox!, Xie Yi cursed under his breath. This put him in a quandary. That being said, as long as he judged the matter fairly, neither sides would be able to fault him.

It was then that Zu An spoke up, "I understand that Governor Sang is here to ensure the fairness of the procedure, but may I know in what capacity is young master Shi here to spectate the proceedings? Is he an official?"

He had sharply noticed that Shi Kun had come together with Sang Hong.

"My father is the Minister of War..." replied Shi Kun calmly.

But before he could finish his words, Zu An had already interjected sharply, "I'm asking you if you're an official. Why are you mentioning your father instead? Do you have nothing else to speak of other than your father?"

"You!!" Shi Kun's face immediately reddened in anger. With his background and his reputation, he was treated like a VIP no matter where he went. No one had ever tried to put him down in public in such a manner before.

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +500 Rage!

"What do you mean by 'you'? You should watch the way you address your teacher. Is that how you were brought up in the Shi clan?" Zu An's mouth was like a relentless machine gun, shooting out bullets endlessly.

Shi Kun felt a little light-headed. Why am I being interrogated here instead?

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +653 Rage!

"Scoundrel, how dare a mere child like you dare to sully the name of the Shi clan!" Shi Lezhi stood forth from Shi Kun's side to bellow at Zu An. He released his powerful aura to intimidate the latter.

However, Chu Zhongtian immediately waved his hand to dispel Shi Lezhi's aura, saying, "You should think twice before attempting to strongarm others in the court. Besides, Ah Zu isn't wrong either. He's a teacher at the academy. It's only right for young master Shi to pay respects to him as a student."

Shi Kun's face turned completely red. He felt incredibly stifled. There was no way he could bring himself to bow down politely to Zu An in the capacity of a student before so many people. That would be a stain on his reputation!

Snow felt an urge to step forward to speak on her young master's behalf, but somehow, she felt guilt-ridden facing her old masters once more, leaving her at a loss.

Fortunately for Shi Kun, Sang Hong stepped in at this moment, "Zu An is in the position of a plaintiff now. Until he's finally cleared of his charges, it'd be inappropriate to view him as a teacher of the academy. I believe that we should skip the formality for now. As for young master Shi, it's indeed inappropriate for him to view the proceedings without an official position. He shall stand by the doorway for now."

Sang Hong had taken on an impartial position, putting down both sides together. So, no one could raise any doubts against him.

It was just that Shi Kun had expected to be able to comfortably rest on a seat while watching the drama in the front rows, only to be shoved in together with the rest of the populace. It made him feel both humiliated and indignant.

To be fair, Shi Lezhi had secretly released his aura to prevent anyone from coming close to Shi Kun, giving him some privacy. But even so, Shi Kun's face remained incredibly livid.

Zu An!!! Celebrate your little victory while you can. I'll make sure that you'll cry your eyes out later on!

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +444 Rage!

"Silence!" Seeing that Chu Zhongtian and Sang Hong had settled down in their positions, Xie Yi started off by silencing the crowd before slamming a wooden brick onto the table, saying, "Zu An, do you plead guilty?" [2]

Zu An shrugged leisurely as he replied, "What am I guilty of?"

An opulently-dressed middle-aged woman pointed her finger at Zu An and bellowed, "Zu An, how vicious you are! Despite having defeated my husband in a competition in the academy, you still weren't satisfied and viciously assassinated him! Milords, you have to redress my grievances!"

The middle-aged woman proceeded on to bawl pitifully, but her reactions did nothing to faze Zu An. Instead, he asked calmly, "What does Yang Wei's death have to do with me?"

Xie Yi coughed softly and said, "Lord Yang left a dying message that points you out as the murderer."

Chapter 129: Blessed By the Wisdom of Brilliant Detectives

"Dying message?" Zu An frowned.

Vice Magistrate Pang Chun elaborated more on the matter, "The deceased, Yang Wei, wrote down a 'Zu' word before he passed away. In view of the conflict you had with him two days ago in the academy, as

well as the fact that there's no one else who goes by the surname 'Zu' in the entire Brightmoon City, we're left with no choice but to deduce that the person he's referring to in his dying message is you."

Even Chu Zhongtian found himself unable to remain calm upon hearing about the dying message, but Zu An forced himself to remain composed. He knew that it was exactly at times like this that he shouldn't panic. He had seen far too many dramas where the plaintiff just kept crying 'I'm being framed' and 'I'm innocent' to know that it was futile to do so.

He took some time to ponder over the matter before saying, "There should be a motive behind murder. I have no reason to kill Yang Wei."

"No reason? You had a conflict with Yang Wei in the academy, and there are several hundred people who can bear testimony to that! You harbored hatred in your heart, so you assassinated my husband for that. You're a vile man through and through!" Yang Wei's wife roared at Zu An with a face warped with anger.

"Indeed, I did have a conflict with Yang Wei, but it was just a squabble regarding arithmetic, not to mention, I won the bet. Principal Jiang even appointed me as the stand-in arithmetic teacher, replacing him. On the other hand, Yang Wei was thoroughly disgraced in public and fired from the academy. In other words, it was a complete victory for me. Is there a reason for me to make a move on an utter loser? It's far more likely for Yang Wei to make an attempt on my life than the converse," replied Zu An.

Xie Yi and Pang Chun looked at one another and nodded in agreement. Indeed, the killing motive made no sense here.

Chu Zhongtian also turned to look at Zu An in astonishment.

All along, he thought of his son-in-law as someone with a reckless personality who spouted anything that came to his mind. To be honest, his impression of Zu An didn't change by too much despite the latter's outstanding performance on the dueling ring. After all, the latter was only at the third rank in terms of cultivation, which the Chu clan had no lack of.

However, Zu An's ability to analyze the root of the problem here truly impressed him. He realized that he and his wife might have had a wrong impression of Zu An all this while.

It was at this moment that Mei Chaofeng, who was still watching the show quietly a moment ago, stepped forward and said, "That's hard to say. We have seen how vindictive Zu An is yesterday on the dueling ring. Yuan Wenji had only offended him, but he sliced away the other party's arm and crippled his ki core. It was in line with Zu An's character to thoroughly exact vengeance on Lord Yang after the conflict they had with one another."

Since it wasn't convenient for Shi Kun to participate in the trial, Mei Chaofeng had no choice but to intervene.

Upon hearing his words, Yang Wei's wife seemed to have found a pillar of support and immediately hopped on it, "Right, right! That must be the case! Milords, please redress my grievances! My husband died a tragic death."

The complicated situation left Xie Yi and Pang Chun frowning, not knowing how they should handle it.

Sang Hong also joined in as well, "Zu An, how do you explain the dying message Lord Yang left behind then?"

"Then how can you be certain that it's Lord Yang who left that word behind? Just think about it. If I'm the murderer, do you think that I'd allow my victim to write my name out?" replied Zu An.

Sang Hong simply kept quiet with a smile. It was beneath him to join the debate directly. He was just pointing the crux of the matter out for Xie Yi and Pang Chun to handle the case on his behalf.

As expected, Pang Chun immediately spoke up, "Lord Yang's hands were hiding the word when we found him. It's only normal for the murderer to have not noticed it."

Zu An burst into laughter. "If I may ask, which murderer would be so careless? It's one thing for him to leave his victim with a dying breath, but he actually didn't notice his victim attempting to leave a dying message too? Does that even make sense to you?"

The spectating crowd began discussing the case through whispers too. The arguments from both sides made sense to them.

"Silence!" Xie Yi smacked the wooden brick on the table. "Zu An, what you said made sense, but all of the evidence is pointing to you at the moment. Without a doubt, you're the prime suspect. If we're unable to find any other evidence, I'm afraid that it would be hard to vindicate you."

"If I may ask, when did Lord Yang die?" asked Chu Zhongtian.

"Brightmoon Duke, based on the autopsy record, he should have died yesterday night, around the zi hour to the chou hour."

(11PM to 3AM)

"Then there's no way it could be Ah Zu. He was resting in his estate yesterday night. Also, due to several incidents in the past, I have allocated several guards to protect him around the clock, so there's no way he could slip past my notice."

"I see." Xie Yi heaved a sigh of relief. If Zu An had an alibi, it would make things far more straightforward. However, just as Xie Yi was about to make his judgment, a voice suddenly sounded in the court.

"If I recall correctly, the testimony provided by kin of the plaintiff can only be used as reference and not absolute evidence, right?" said Shi Kun.

Naturally, they had considered this too while they were concocting this scheme.

Those words left Xie Yi frowning. There was indeed such a rule as there was a good chance that family members would try to cover for one another.

Chu Zhongtian turned to Shi Kun and uttered coldly, "Are you claiming that I'm spouting falsehoods here?"

"Brightmoon Duke, please pardon me. I'm not doubting your character here, but given how many people there are in the Chu Estate, there's no way you could keep track of everyone's whereabouts.

Furthermore, Zu An has displayed a formidable movement skill that could overwhelm even a fifth rank cultivator on the dueling ring yesterday. Given so, it shouldn't be too difficult for him to circumvent the guards in the estate if he truly intended to sneak out."

"..." Chu Zhongtian.

Shi Kun's arguments were perfectly logical, leaving Chu Zhongtian with no room for argument. The crowd also immediately eyed Zu An in suspicion as well.

Zu An turned around to look at Shi Kun and said, "Young master Shi, you're well-prepared. It almost looks like you were the one who prepared this scheme to frame me."

"I am just a concerned civilian. I don't think that there's anything wrong with me stating my opinion, right?" replied Shi Kun with a smile.

Vice Magistrate Pang Chun finally spoke up, "Zu An, what else do you have to say for yourself?"

Zu An pondered for a moment before speaking up, "I'd like to visit the murder scene."

May all of the great detectives of the world bless me here. Please don't let those detective dramas I've watched in my previous life, be it Justice Bao, Di Renjie, Sherlock Holmes, or Detective Conan, be in vain. Otherwise, I might really get done in here.

"There's no need for you to head over to the scene personally," replied Xie Yi.

He gestured to his subordinate, and soon, someone brought an artifact that resembled a mirror over. Xie Yi infused his ki into it, and an image appeared on the surface of the mirror.

It was the scene of Yang Wei's dead body!

Zu An was quite amazed by the technologies this world had to offer. They actually created the equivalent of a camera in their own way, allowing them to store and display images. It would appear that the runemasters in this world were far more formidable than he had thought.

Zu An carefully examined the murder scene, and soon, a smile surfaced on his lips. "Well, well! It looks like justice does exist in this world after all!"

"What do you mean?" asked Xie Yi in confusion.

The others on the court were equally bewildered as well. Even Shi Kun began frowning, wondering if they had accidentally messed up here.

Zu An pointed to the blood words in the image and explained, "The dying message left behind by Yang Wei was written with his right hand, but Lord Yang is left-handed. The true murderer seems to be unaware of that, resulting in this careless mistake."

"Left-handed?" Pang Chun was taken aback. "I've known Lord Yang for many years, but I've never known him to be left-handed."

"Previously, when I was attending Yang Wei's arithmetic class, he started out writing with his right hand. However, when the two of us started competing with one another, he subconsciously switched to his left hand in a moment of nervousness. From this, it should be clear that his master hand is his left hand.

However, I reckon that most people are oblivious to that, which is also why the true murderer erred here.

“When a man tries to leave behind an important message in his dying breath, there was no way he would deliberately go through the trouble of using his non-master hand. Yet, Yang Wei’s dying message was written with his right hand instead. This should prove that the dying message is fabricated by the true murderer.”

Xie Yi frowned at those words. He turned to Yang Wei’s wife and asked, “Is Lord Yang left-handed?”

The middle-aged woman was bemuddled by the current turn of events, but she still nodded anyway. “My husband is indeed left-handed. It’s out of fear that he would be mocked that he tries to use his right hand in public, but from time to time, he would still subconsciously resort to his left hand.”

A huge ruckus broke out as soon as those words were spoken. Even Shi Kun was shaken too. How could he have known that they would have made such a mistake?

Realizing that things were turning awry, Mei Chaofeng’s face warped in shock, and he hurriedly chirped in, “Zu An might be using this fact to take us for a ride! He intentionally faked the dying message in such a way so that he could absolve himself of blame!”

Faced with those words, Zu An shook his head and looked at Mei Chaofeng in ridicule, “You must have not brought your brain out with you today. Do I look like I’m mentally ill as to leave my name on the crime scene and turn myself into the prime suspect?”

Xie Yi nodded in agreement. “What Zu An says makes sense. With the doubts surrounding the dying message, there isn’t any concrete evidence to prove that he’s the murderer anymore. Lord Pang, I’ll be counting on you to reinvestigate this matter and root out the murderer.”

Pang Chun bowed slightly and said, “Yes, I’ll do my best to get to the bottom of this case.”

With the case regarding Yang Wei’s death coming to a standstill, the guards escorted Yang Wei’s family members out of the court. Zu An turned around to look at Shi Kun and said, “There were quite a few people in the academy who witnessed my competition with Yang Wei, so most of them should be aware of the fact that he’s left-handed. It’s unlikely that they would make such a careless mistake. If I remember correctly, young master Shi has only joined our academy a day after the duel, right? Ah, that would explain why the true murderer is unaware of the fact that Lord Yang is left-handed!”

Shi Kun refuted those words right away in agitation, “Zu An, don’t you dare slander me! How could I possibly be the culprit behind Lord Yang’s death?!”

Zu An burst out laughing, “Oh? But I didn’t say that you were the murderer. Why are you getting so agitated?”

“...” Shi Kun.

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +523 Rage!

That bastard! I nearly fell into his trap in a moment of carelessness!

Zu An's words might be unfounded, but it did make sense as well. The crowd began pointing fingers at Shi Kun as they speculated about the truth surrounding the case with their vivid imagination.

Seeing this, Mei Chaofeng valiantly stepped forth to alleviate the social pressure heaped on his master, saying, "Even if you aren't the culprit behind Lord Yang's death, there's no way you are unrelated with Plum Blossom Twelve and Thirteen's deaths!"

Zu An shrugged calmly. "Why don't you bring out some concrete evidence instead of running your mouth?"

Mei Chaofeng first bowed to Xie Yi and the others before starting on his testimony, "A month ago, someone witnessed you leaving the city together with Plum Blossom Twelve. However, you were the only one who returned to Brightmoon City at the end of the day. Based on the results of our investigation, Plum Blossom Twelve died in the Wolf Valley, and there are eyewitnesses who have seen you handing over ten goubaos to Divine Physician Ji on the very same day. From this, we can deduce that Plum Blossom Twelve has fought hard against the Assrip Wolves to gather a bunch of goubaos, only for you to assault him and steal his loot!"

Zu An rolled his eyes in disdain. "You've already said it with your own mouth that it's a deduction. Evidence! Where's the evidence!"

"The goubaos are the evidence! Furthermore, there are testimonies from eyewitnesses too. This is the most logical explanation regarding this matter!" said Mei Chaofeng vehemently.

"With the strength I've shown on the dueling ring yesterday, I could have just hunted the Assrip Wolves and gathered the goubaos on my own. Why would I need to kill Plum Blossom Twelve for that? Besides, I also have an eyewitness on my side too. Back then, the daughter of Divine Physician Ji, Ji Xiaoxi, was with me. She can testify that I've collected all of the goubaos by myself."

"Then how can you explain the fact that the two of you left the city together, but you were the only one who returned alone?"

Mei Chaofeng was feeling utterly exasperated at the moment. The other murder cases were all forged by them, and they made sure to plant ample evidence beforehand in order to incriminate Zu An. This was the only murder case that they were certain that the murderer was Zu An, so they thought that it would work out easily. Yet, who could have thought that no one would trust him even though he was speaking the truth here?

What's with this injustice in the world?!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for +497 Rage!

"He met someone named Tan Wei along the way and rushed off to chase that man, so we ended up parting ways. Is there anything wrong with that?" replied Zu An with an innocent look on his face.

"Based on what I know, Tan Wei is a traitor of the Plum Blossom Sect. It does make sense for Plum Blossom Thirteen to split up with Ah Zu to chase Tan Wei." Chu Zhongtian added credibility to Zu An's words.

Pang Chun also directed a nod toward Xie Yi as well, indicating that he was aware of this matter too. So, Xie Yi slammed the wooden brick on the table and declared, "Alright! There's insufficient evidence here to prove that Zu An is the murderer here. Next!"

Mei Chaofeng glared at Zu An with gritted teeth. "You might have been able to get by thus far with your glib tongue, but there's no way you can argue your way out of Plum Blossom Thirteen's death!"

Chapter 130: Feelings Speak Louder Than Words

"I'm amazed, Mei Chaofeng. In order to frame me, you even went to the extent of killing your closest aide, Plum Blossom Thirteen. Aren't you afraid that your deeds would chill the hearts of your subordinates?" asked Zu An.

"How dare you slander me when you're the one who murdered Plum Blossom Thirteen?!" Mei Chaofeng raged. "It's a known fact in Brightmoon City that you had Plum Blossom Thirteen's limbs broken back then when he offended you!"

To be exact, Plum Blossom Thirteen's limbs were broken by Discipline Master Lu De and Chu Chuyan, but these two people had extraordinary backgrounds, so Mei Chaofeng was reluctant to drag them into this matter. Thus, he neglected to elaborate on the exact details, choosing to focus on the fact that the incident happened under Zu An's order.

Zu An could see through Mei Chaofeng's intention, but it just so happened that he didn't want to drag his wife into this matter, so he didn't expose it. "Like you've said, I was the one who had Plum Blossom Thirteen's limbs crippled back then. I've already exacted vengeance on him, so why would I bother killing him afterward?"

"That's because Plum Blossom Thirteen is my strongest aide. You were afraid that you wouldn't be a match for him once he recovers, so you decided to make a move in advance and eliminate him while he's still incapacitated!" said Mei Chaofeng.

As those words were spoken, the friends and family of Plum Blossom Thirteen wailed indignantly as they charged toward Zu An, though the guards standing by the side of the court quickly stepped in to stop them,

"Silence!" Xie Yi smacked the wooden brick on the table once more to bring order back to the court.

"You must be kidding me. I'm able to defeat even a fifth rank cultivator, but you're telling me that I'm afraid of a mere third rank cultivator?" replied Zu An.

"You only lucked out yesterday, that's why you were able to defeat Yuan Wendong. Everyone knows that. Besides, there's concrete evidence to prove that you were the one who killed Plum Blossom Thirteen, so there's no way you can talk your way out of this!" Mei Chaofeng harrumphed.

"Oh? What evidence do you have?" asked Zu An curiously.

Mei Chaofeng first bowed to Xie Yi and the others before carrying on with his testimony, "Based on the autopsy, Plum Blossom Thirteen died under the academy's Elementary Swordplay. I believe that City Lord Xie has already verified this matter personally."

“You can say that every student in Brightmoon Academy knows the Elementary Swordplay. On what grounds are you insisting that Ah Zu is the murderer here?” questioned Chu Zhongtian.

Mei Chaofeng waved his hand, and his subordinate immediately brought a sword over. “The murderer was found by one of our patrolling disciples while he was assassinating Plum Blossom Thirteen, and he was almost surrounded. He fled in a hurry under the encirclement of my disciples and ended up leaving this sword behind.”

Chu Zhongtian’s eyes narrowed upon taking a closer examination of the sword. There was no way he wouldn’t recognize it to be the weapon Zu An used on the dueling ring yesterday.

Zu An shrugged calmly. “After the tournament yesterday, I casually tossed the sword over to a servant in the Chu clan and thought nothing of it afterward. It looks like you have managed to obtain it through bribing one of our servants.”

Chu Zhongtian’s face darkened. This, once again, affirmed the fact that there was a spy in their Chu clan. There wasn’t enough time for him and his wife to root out the spy yesterday, and their failure ended up creating an opening for their enemies to exploit.

Mei Chaofeng paid no heed to Zu An and carried on, “There were over a dozen people who witnessed your murder yesterday night. No matter how glib your tongue is, there’s no way you’re talking your way out of this!”

A group of people immediately rushed in and recounted what they saw yesterday night.

Unable to stand it anymore, Chu Zhongtian slammed the table and said, “Preposterous! It was just a moment ago we established that the testimony of kin cannot be used as evidence, but are we going to listen to their testimonies now? They’re all from the Plum Blossom Sect! There was no way they would dare to defy Mei Chaofeng openly in public!”

Mei Chaofeng smiled calmly and replied, “But we have concrete evidence aside from eyewitnesses. Zu An has a motive behind the murder too. Are you going to claim that all of this is a coincidence? Brightmoon Duke, you can’t be thinking of condoning a criminal just because he’s your son-in-law?”

Chu Zhongtian flew into a state of rage and roared at Mei Chaofeng, “Who do you think you are? How dare you speak to me in such a manner!”

He was usually a mild-tempered man, but the events over the last two days had really been challenging the limits of his patience. On top of that, he had never liked the Plum Blossom Sect due to their deeds in the city, so he finally lashed out at Mei Chaofeng’s gleeful attitude.

Mei Chaofeng immediately felt a tremendous force sweeping toward him, and he faltered fearfully. Even with his fifth rank cultivation, he found that he was on the verge of collapsing to the ground out of fright.

It was then that Sang Hong stood up and consoled Chu Zhongtian, “Brightmoon Duke, calm down! It’s beneath your standing to lash out at a civilian like this!”

Even though it looked like Sang Hong was advising Chu Zhongtian out of goodwill, in truth, he was warning the latter not to mess around here. On top of that, he also deflected the tremendous aura directed toward Mei Chaofeng too.

Xie Yi also stood up to mediate in the situation then, leaving Chu Zhongtian with no choice but to take a step back from the time being.

Even so, Mei Chaofeng's face still remained pale. It wasn't that easy to recover from the intimidating hostility coming from an eighth rank cultivator, such that Mei Chaofeng found himself unable to speak in a moment's time.

Zu An took this time to think the matter through before remarking, "How intriguing. Based on what you've mentioned, I paid a visit to Yang Wei's house to assassinate him before sneaking into the Plum Blossom Sect to kill Plum Blossom Thirteen. Wow, I never knew that I was such a busy man."

"There's nothing a vile man like you is incapable of!" Mei Chaofeng finally managed to calm his nerves to rebut Zu An. "Besides, haven't you been cleansed of the suspicion of killing Lord Yang earlier on? That gives you more than enough time to pull off a kill on Plum Blossom Thirteen!"

"I see. So you're acknowledging that I'm not the culprit behind Yang Wei's death too. Got it. As for your argument that I have more than enough time, I'm afraid that you're sorely mistaken." Zu An's tone suddenly changed at this point. "I was clearly working hard with my wife to bear offspring for the Chu clan last night. How could I have time to kill Plum Blossom Thirteen?"

"Don't you know how tough it is for me to marry such a beautiful wife? Every day, I wake up praying that the sun would set earlier so that my wife and I could get some private time together. What kind of a man would I be if I leave behind my beloved wife at home to handle other matters?"

"???" Chu Zhongtian.

He was utterly dumbfounded. Of course, he knew that Zu An was talking rubbish since he was aware that his daughter and son-in-law were still sleeping in separate rooms at the moment. However, how could he say it aloud at this point? Wouldn't that be placing Zu An in danger?

But at the same time, those words had practically tarnished his daughter's reputation...

Oh wait, they're a married couple. It doesn't look like a big deal for them to be sleeping together, right...?

Even so, it was incredibly weird for Chu Zhongtian to listen to his son-in-law talking about his lovey-dovey affairs with his daughter, especially in public...

A huge commotion immediately broke out amongst the crowd. Zu An might not have gone into detail, but a human's vivid imagination was a powerful weapon that could easily fill in any gaps in information. The thought of the beautiful Chu Chuyan being ruined in the hands of a swine named Zu An made all of them turn green in envy.

You have successfully trolled Yang Shanwei for +233 Rage!

You have successfully trolled Xiao Qun for +233 Rage!

...

“Rubbish!” an infuriated howl sounded from the crowd.

Everyone turned their eyes over, only to see Shi Kun glaring at Zu An with reddened eyes.

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +999 Rage!

Even though Shi Kun knew that Zu An was lying, he still couldn’t restrain the anger bubbling within him. The problem here wasn’t whether he knew Zu An was lying or not; it was whether the crowd knew it or not! At this rate, by the time he finally married Chu Chuyan in the future, everyone would think that he was just picking up a second-handed good from Zu An!

There was no way he could accept something like that!

“You have never consummated your marriage with Chu First Miss, so what are you bragging over there for?” roared Shi Kun.

Zu An shot a glance at Shi Kun before remarking leisurely, “What are you getting so agitated for? You can’t be coveting my wife here, are you? Tsk tsk tsk, is this how the Shi clan raises its offspring? Haaa~”

Shi Kun’s rage-o-meter immediately struck the limit. Bring me my fucking sword!

You have successfully trolled Shi Kun for +468 Rage!

Behind him, Snow quietly tugged his sleeves and reminded softly, “Young master, you need to hold it in, or else our plans will be compromised.”

Shi Kun took in a deep breath before slowly calming down. That’s right, Zu An is already done for over here. I should wait for the verdict to be passed before slowly settling the scores with him.

Zu An looked at Snow in surprise. Oh? It looks like she didn’t reveal my secret, or else Shi Kun wouldn’t have been so angry. Why is she concealing it for me?

Ah. Did she fall for me unknowingly?

Noticing Zu An’s stare, Snow returned a sharp glare back. It’s no wonder why the young master is so infuriated. Even I can’t help but want to pummel him every time I see his face!

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for +520 Rage!

Zu An was amused by the number. Oh hoh! Despite her refusal, it looks like her feelings are much more honest! [1]

Seeing that Shi Kun was getting riled up, Mei Chaofeng quickly leaped in and said, “The testimony of kin cannot be taken as evidence. Besides, Zu An’s words carry falsehoods. Just ask anyone in the Chu clan; all of them know that he has been sleeping in separate rooms with Chu First Miss, so how could the latter testify for him? Look! Despite the important occasion, Chu First Miss is nowhere to be seen at all. This should be more than enough to prove how their relationship as a couple is like!”

“Who says that I’m not here?” a crisp and euphonious voice suddenly sounded from behind the crowd.

The crowd quickly turned around, only to see a beautiful woman dressed in blue slowly walking over like a fairy from heaven.

“So this is Chu First Miss~”

“She’s as ravishing as the rumors put her out to be!”

“If I had a wife like her, I would never get up from my bed anymore!”

“Yeah! Who would waste a precious night with such a beauty on killing a person instead? Only a fool would do that!”

...

The remarks coming from the crowd amazed Zu An. Despite all of the arguments he had made, it turned out that nothing was more convincing than Chu Chuyan’s appearance.

Chu Chuyan walked into the court and said, “There’s no need to investigate it anymore. He was sleeping with me last night.”

Those words stirred huge waves right away. Chu Zhongtian widened his eyes. Sang Hong choked on the cup of tea he was sipping on. Even Xie Yi was too shocked to slam the wooden brick to demand order in the court.

“What?!” Shi Kun turned to Snow with a face distorted in rage. “Didn’t you tell me that there’s no way they will get together with one another?”

Snow was equally confused too. Could there be a huge advancement in the relationship between Chu Chuyan and Zu An in the last few days? But that was impossible!

Even Zu An was in no mood to stare at the massive influx of Rage points falling into his piggy bank. He, too, was staring at Chu Chuyan with his mouth agape. He didn’t expect her to stand up for him in this manner before such a huge crowd.

One must know that even though the two of them were married, there were rumors abound that they were sleeping in separate rooms. Due to that, she still remained as the lofty, pure fairy in everyone’s eyes.

However, her admittance to having slept with Zu An would break even the persistence of the most tenacious of fanboys in deluding themselves that she was still chaste.

She was actually willing to sacrifice her own reputation for me.

Zu An was moved by this gesture. It turned out that Chu Chuyan had a warm heart under her cold exterior.

Yup, I should do my best in the future to help her warm up her body too.

“Cough cough!” Xie Yi finally snapped out of his shock. He slammed the wooden brick on the table and demanded order. “Chu First Miss, the court is not a place for lies. Are you certain about what you have just said?”

“Naturally.” Chu Chuyan stood calmly at the center of the room as a light breeze tugged on her dress gently. The crowd found themselves falling intoxicated under her ethereal beauty. “Also, I’ve brought in a new eyewitness.”

“A new eyewitness?”

Putting aside Chu Zhongtian, even Shi Kun and the others were confused. They couldn’t imagine they could turn the tables with the evidence they had thoroughly prepared to incriminate Zu An.

“Bring in the eyewitness!” ordered Xie Yi.

Chu Chuyan nodded in response, and the guards of the Chu clan quickly escorted a person in. Mei Chaofeng was still standing confidently a moment ago, but when he saw the eyewitness Chu Chuyan had brought over, his composure shattered right away.