

## Immortal 1551

### Chapter 1551: Heads Will Tumble

When he noticed the empress' irritation, Eunuch Lu quickly said in an obsequious tone, "Replying to your highness, this servant personally made a trip to the Imperial Palace and passed on the words to Sir Zu."

"Then did he agree?" Empress Liu Ning asked. She had waited expectantly for so long, and yet Zu An never appeared. Her neglected body was starting to burn with a hint of evil flame.

"I think he agreed," Eunuch Lu said, trying to recall what had happened.

The empress quickly sat up straight. Her voice became an octave higher as she snapped, "You think?!"

Eunuch Lu hurriedly explained, "Your highness is such an incredible beauty; which man in this world could refuse you? If your highness invited him, wouldn't he be eagerly rushing over?"

The empress harrumphed, replying, "Don't think everyone else is like you. He's different from normal men."

Eunuch Lu was so moved that he was about to cry. So her highness did know what I thought of her! Everything I've done over the years was worth it! He thought for a bit before replying, "I believe it's because Sir Zu has just returned to the capital and was held up by someone. He should be here a bit later."

"I hope it's as you say," the empress said as she gently brushed a finger across her body. This body is so beautiful; how can he be willing to give it up?

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However, she didn't know that Zu An had already completely forgotten about her, instead enjoying the Sang clan's warmth.

Sang Qien cuddled docilely in Zu An's embrace. She had been worried about hurting the baby in her belly, so she had her back to him on purpose. However... How could a distinguished daughter like her, who was as innocent as a white sheet of paper, possibly withstand the methods of a seasoned veteran like him? Furthermore, Zu An was the child's father, so she already considered him her man.

At first, she was still a bit embarrassed, but after some resistance, she eventually yielded. In the end, she even took the initiative to adjust her body so she could receive him better. Her entire body trembled. She could only tightly purse her lips so as to not wake Zheng Dan up.

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By the next morning, Zu An had already gone to the palace. Even though a morning court session wasn't held every day, whether due to his Eastern Palace position or Embroidered Envoy identity, he had to show himself; it was even more important right now when Sang Hong's situation hadn't been dealt with yet.

After Zu An left, Zheng Dan sat down on a grooming chair, applying her makeup while calling out to her sister-in-law, "Little Qien, come here. I'll help you with your grooming."

"I think it's better if I don't. I've heard that makeup isn't good for children," Sang Qien replied with a smile while fixing the bed. Compared to her usual pale appearance, she looked much more radiant today.

"Alright, fine. I'm no match for your pregnancy," Zheng Dan said with a pout, becoming a bit upset.

"Come on, that's not what I meant. Won't this child still call you 'mom' in the future?" Sang Qien quickly explained.

"I'm not really angry, you know?" Zheng Dan replied with a sigh. "But I should also pretend to be pregnant. That way, the outside world will eventually be able to accept the situation."

She knew about the Sang clan's plans. She was amazed that the Sang clan really had carried it out, but she was also a bit moved. That was because it meant the Sang clan tacitly approved of her relationship with Zu An. They wouldn't have to be all secretive anymore. When she found out that she would be the child's mother in name, the two women's relationship had also become much closer.

Unlike the other great clans where the women fought with each other, the two didn't feel the need to fight against each other at all. On the contrary, to a certain degree, their interests were aligned. Furthermore, they had been mutually dependent on each other for survival in the Sang clan for some time, so they were already like real sisters. As such, she had made that joke on purpose.

"Hmph, where would you find a pregnant woman as pretty as you?" Sang Qien replied, unable to help but sigh. After all, Zheng Dan was a widow now, but she was nothing like the other widows in the capital who always looked grim and miserable. She was probably the most gorgeous widow in the entire capital.

Even though she was Zheng Dan's sister-in-law, Sang Qien didn't feel angry at all. On the contrary, she felt a bit of sympathy, as they were both women. Zheng Dan had married her big brother because of the family, but her big brother had died before they could even get married properly. This woman would probably have to spend the rest of her life alone.

Thank goodness there was big brother Zu...

Sang Qien's face heated up when she thought of that man. Her sister-in-law had clearly already been close to him for some time. If something hadn't happened to her big brother, wouldn't he have died from anger?

Still, her big brother had already passed on. What mattered most was the Sang clan's future. This entire matter was quite unfair to Zheng Dan, but things would be much easier with her cooperation.

"Hmph, if it were anyone else saying something like that, I'd pull their tongue out," Zheng Dan harrumphed, recovering a hint of her domineering manner as the boss of Brightmoon City's gang. She suddenly asked, "Ah, Little Qien, why are you sorting out the covers? You can just have some servants take care of it!"

"There's no need. Our Sang clan is lacking personnel right now, so I should do what I can to keep my body in shape," Sang Qien said, blushing. She blocked Zheng Dan's view with her body and hastily rolled up the bedsheet.

Zheng Dan quickly walked up behind her. She craned her neck and asked, "Is there something making you feel guilty?"

Sang Qien jumped in fright. She couldn't help but give Zheng Dan a pinch. Her chest rose and fell as she exclaimed, "You scared me! Don't appear suddenly like that!"

"Those who don't do shameful things in the middle of the night won't be scared of ghosts knocking on their door," Zheng Dan said, giving her an ambiguous smile.

"What ghosts? You'll end up scaring and hurting your adopted son," Sang Qien said, rubbing her belly awkwardly. Was she hinting at something by mentioning the middle of the night?

"Once my adopted son grows a bit bigger, he might end up picking up a stick to bother his sleeping father all the time," Zheng Dan said with a pursed smile, rubbing Sang Qien's belly.

"Why is that?" Sang Qien asked, confused.

"Because his father keeps prodding him when he's asleep, of course," Zheng Dan said with a laugh, running away as if she were scared of being attacked.

Sang Qien's face instantly turned entirely red. She naturally knew that Zheng Dan had probably seen everything after waking up in the middle of the night! She was ashamed and distressed. She quickly ran after Zheng Dan to get her revenge. The two sisters-in-law began to play-fight for a while.

Zheng Dan pleaded for mercy, crying, "I was wrong, I was wrong! Don't let the baby get hurt!"

Inwardly, however, she was quite moved. You silly girl, if I hadn't created that opportunity for you on purpose, how could you two have become like a real couple so quickly?

Whether it was the Zheng clan's business or her past experience as a gang leader, both of them had given her considerable awareness of danger. Even though Zu An hadn't said anything, she more or less had a sense of just how formidable her rivals in love were. Even though she had been one of the best in Brightmoon City, she still seemed to pale a bit in comparison now.

Sang Qien's situation probably wasn't much better. Only if they banded together would there be a chance of facing the sharks raised by that playboy king of the sea.

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"Achoo!" Outside the Eastern Palace, Zu An rubbed his nose. Did I catch a cold last night?

"Sir Zu seems to be in quite high spirits. Did something good happen last night?" a guard asked, winking at him. He had dark circles around his eyes and looked somewhat lacking in nutrition. He was naturally Piao Duandiao, who loved frequenting brothels.

"Isn't that obvious? Sir Zu has established such a world-shocking achievement, and he was promoted to marquis yesterday. Is that not good enough for you?" Jiao Sigun replied, still just as stiff and righteous as before.

When he saw the two guards of the Eastern Palace, Zu An immediately felt a sense of familiarity. He interacted with them closely, just like before. He wrapped his arms around them naturally, laughing and chatting with them; he remarked, "It's been a while, but the two of you haven't changed all that much, I see."

When they saw that even though Zu An's status had risen so much, he still treated them as well as before, the two guards' smiles grew even bigger. They chatted happily for a while.

Soon, however, an attendant arrived with a report, saying, "Sir Zu, the Crown Prince has asked for an audience."

"Crown Prince?" Zu An asked in surprise. Still, he couldn't continue to chat leisurely with the guards anymore.

When Zu An and the attendant entered the main hall, they discovered that that fatty, the Crown Prince, seemed awfully happy as he played games with the eunuchs. Zu An bowed and asked, "What does the Crown Prince need me for?"

"I didn't need you for anything. It was Linglong who wanted to see you. Hurry up and go in already," the Crown Prince replied, waving his hand as if he were shooing away Zu An for disturbing his own fun.

Zu An suddenly realized what was happening. That's what I thought; why would this dumb prince look for me? He then walked inside.

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Not too far away, Eunuch Wen secretly watched their interactions. Then, he summoned a lesser eunuch and gave him instructions. Even after the other eunuch left, however, he still didn't feel at ease. He felt that he had to look around himself. If he really saw something happen between Zu An and the Crown Princess, countless heads would tumble as a result.

## **Chapter 1552: Warning**

Zu An didn't know what danger was approaching, but he still sensed a mysterious threat. Just as he entered the inner hall, he had been about to praise Bi Linglong inwardly for always being so beautiful and elegant when he suddenly received a string of Rage points.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +33 +33 +33...

Even though it wasn't a large amount, it never seemed to end.

Zu An really wanted to ask Bi Linglong why she was so angry, but there were still maids and servants present, so he couldn't really say anything. Instead, he said with a bow, "I greet the Crown Princess!"

"Sir Zu may be at ease," Bi Linglong said, waving her hand. Whether it was her expression or her body language, there was nothing different from the usual.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +33 +33 +33...

Except this!

Zu An even began to think, Could it be that she found out about what happened in the Sang manor last night?

Subsequently, the two interacted in a very formal manner. Bi Linglong praised Zu An for his contributions from Cloudcenter Commandery, while also expressing sympathy and concern for the trouble encountered by his fleet in Silkworm City. In return, Zu An expressed his gratitude. The entire process seemed to be orderly and routine. They both knew the conversation was pointless, but they had to do it in front of everyone else.

After some time, Bi Linglong asked Zu An about the Fiend races' situation. Zu An was just about to reply when she suddenly stopped and had her personal maid Rong Mo watch the surroundings.

Rong Mo pouted so deeply that one could hang a teapot from her mouth. She clearly knew that the Crown Princess had something secret to talk to Zu An about that others couldn't hear. However, while normal maids were one thing, why did she have to move out of the way too? She was the one the Crown Princess had trusted the most before Zu An arrived; practically nothing had been hidden from her. Now, Bi Linglong hid many things from her!

Is this Zu An guy just here to fight against me for her majesty's favor?

Even though she didn't feel particularly happy, she didn't dare to go against the Crown Princess' intentions. She took the maids outside and guarded the area from behind the curtain. The palace had its rules; she didn't dare let the Crown Princess interact with a man in a room alone.

However, that amount of distance was already enough for the two inside. Zu An kept his back toward the outside while asking Bi Linglong with a smile, "And what are you so upset about?"

"I'm not. Which eye of yours saw that I was upset?" Bi Linglong retorted coldly.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +51 +51 +51...

Zu An chuckled and said, "Every eye I have."

Bi Linglong's expression stiffened. After a while, she asked, "Why didn't you send me any letters at all while you were in the Imperial Envoy fleet?"

Zu An suddenly realized what was going on. So that was the reason! He replied, "You are the Crown Princess, after all. Wouldn't I have harmed you if I sent you letters?"

Bi Linglong frowned and said, "I didn't tell you to write me any private letters. Even if it was just an exchange of official business explaining a bit about what you saw and heard, I would have been able to sense your sincerity. But apart from the first one you sent in the beginning, you didn't send anything else to the Eastern Palace."

"That's because too many things happened along the way, so I didn't have the time to write anything..." Zu An replied with a grimace. To be honest, he really had forgotten about that.

"Oh? Then, Sir Zu, please tell me what kind of huge event you encountered along the way that you didn't write any letters after traveling for tens of thousands of miles," Bi Linglong said with a sneer.

"I don't know about tens of thousands of miles, but..." Zu An replied. He thought that Bi Linglong getting angry was quite adorable, so he didn't mind. He began to tell her about all the things that had happened along the way.

Even though Bi Linglong had already learned about most of the events from her intelligence sources and public documents, she still couldn't help but become drawn in when she heard him talk about many details she hadn't heard yet. Whenever Zu An explained the more dangerous situations, she nervously cried out in alarm too. How could she still be bothered to be upset?

"Right, I came here to bring you some souvenirs," Zu An said, taking out some small gifts from the Brilliant Glass Bead. They weren't all that precious, especially for a Crown Princess who had seen all kinds of expensive treasures. However, they were quite special and carried a hint of another world's style.

Sure enough, Bi Linglong's gloomy face lit up. She sifted through the small items, asking where they came from and what kinds of stories they had. Zu An replied to each question one by one. He was glad that he had already prepared himself beforehand, or else he might not have been able to pass this trial.

Eventually, Bi Linglong picked up a pretty decorated case and asked, "Hm? Is this makeup?"

"It is. This is a product from Cloudcenter Commandery's most famous makeup store, which is extremely popular. The style is a bit different from the capital's," Zu An replied. He had bought ten sets of them before, but he hadn't been able to give them out even after several tries. Currently, he had only been able to give out a single set to the Hub of Freedom's Tang Tian'er.

"Why would a man like you know so much about makeup? Did one of your girlfriends help you pick it out?" Bi Linglong asked, looking at him with suspicion.

Zu An thought, This Rouge Spice store really has something wrong with it. He was always in a tough spot whenever he tried to give their products out. However, he reacted quickly and said, "Of course I didn't know anything, so I just told the store owner to give me an entire set."

Bi Linglong felt more relieved then. She opened them up bottle by bottle and said, "It is indeed totally different from the capital's style. Every single kind carries the style of a different place. Unfortunately, I can't use them."

"Why is that?" Zu An asked, stunned. Should I just toss all of these out? Why can't I give any of them away?

"As the Crown Princess, everything I use has to undergo strict scrutiny in the palace. If I suddenly use a product I've never used before, it won't escape the notice of my servants. At that time, I can't just say you gave them to me from Cloudcenter Commandery, can I?" Bi Linglong replied with a sigh.

Zu An figured that made sense. It would be reasonable for her to be given some other kinds of gifts, but makeup was a bit too intimate.

"I didn't think it through carefully enough. I'll take these with me," Zu An said, thinking to himself that he would throw them away as soon as he left. These things were complete poison! He could never give any of them out.

However, Bi Linglong grabbed his hands and replied, "Who said I didn't want them? Even if I can't use them in public, I can still keep them as a memento, right?"

Zu An was quite surprised. Bi Linglong was scared that he would be disappointed and was actually so considerate!

"Right, what exactly happened in the Unknown Region?" Bi Linglong pretended to ask nonchalantly, but she was really nervous deep down. After all, the Unknown Regions were just too incredible. To a certain degree, they were top-secret information that only the emperor had the right to know about at present.

Zu An didn't hesitate and began to share what had happened with her. Of course, he took out the details about his female friends. Seeing as Zu An didn't disappoint her, a big smile quickly appeared on Bi Linglong's face.

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Two hours passed just like that. Even though Bi Linglong felt a bit reluctant, she could only let Zu An go. After all, there was always a limit to how much time she could spend with another man.

Soon after Zu An left the Eastern Palace, he suddenly stopped and called out, "What brings Concubine Bai here? Why are you hiding and not coming out to meet me?"

A delicate figure walked out from behind a rock in a garden. Her long and slender brows were elegant, and her nose was small and exquisite. Between that and her cherry lips, she looked like a small white flower amid cold winds. She gave off a lovable and dainty air.

"Just how did you know it was me?" Concubine Bai asked, her voice sounding incredibly delicate and her expression full of surprise. After all, she had a special concealment skill. Even though she hadn't been hiding deliberately, she still shouldn't have been immediately exposed.

Zu An said with a smile, "Your highness has a special, fairy-like fragrance of a hundred flowers around you. It would be quite difficult to ignore it even if I wanted to."

"Sir Zu really is brazen," Concubine Bai said, blushing slightly. Of course she didn't believe him when he said he had noticed her through her smell. He had only said that to tease her.

"I'm being wronged here! The spice bag that your highness gave me last time was really helpful. I was really moved, so how could I dare to treat you disrespectfully?" Zu An replied. Her spice bag was really useful for hiding one's cultivation realm and it had helped him a lot before. Of course, he didn't need it anymore, but he still had to show his gratitude. He even wondered whether to give her a set of Rouge Spice's makeup products.

Concubine Bai smiled, clearly already used to his way of speaking. She said, "Let's talk about other things later. I came today because of an important matter. Have you offended Eunuch Wen somehow?"

"Eunuch Wen?" Zu An asked, stunned. "I haven't. Why do you say that?"

"I inadvertently noticed that he seems to be investigating you. He was monitoring you from nearby not too long ago too. At that time, I deliberately sought him out to stall for time and don't know if that helped you at all," Concubine Bai said, looking at him with a pensive expression; she appeared worried, but also inexplicably amused.

Zu An shivered inwardly. Even though Concubine Bai sounded nonchalant, she was talking about tracking Eunuch Wen's movements! This woman didn't seem to be as weak and helpless as she looked on the outside. But more importantly, why was Eunuch Wen monitoring him?

He still wasn't all that familiar with the Imperial Palace and hadn't been able to memorize the appearances of some lesser eunuchs. Even if he noticed that they were nearby, he wouldn't think too much about it.

Meanwhile, however, Eunuch Wen was someone he frequently ran into. As such, even though he had sensed the eunuch nearby, Zu An hadn't thought there was anything strange about it. Only now that Concubine Bai reminded him did he realize that something was off.

### **Chapter 1553: Bitter Waiting**

Don't tell me even Eunuch Wen is interested in the Unknown Region and wants some information from me?

Or maybe he's actually one of King Qi's spies? What, is he trying to do something to help King Qi right now?

Zu An quickly dismissed those thoughts. Eunuch Wen was the emperor's most trusted subordinate. If even someone like that had been bought out by King Qi, Zhao Han would have already died several times over.

There's no way he's here to get between me and the Crown Princess, is he? Zu An thought in horror.

When she saw his expression, Concubine Bai knew her reminder had been useful. She didn't talk any more about that; instead, she said, "Sir Zu, I heard that you encountered people from the Devil Sect during this trip too. Were there any dangers back then?"

Zu An had already suspected Concubine Bai had a relationship with the Devil Sect for a long time. She was clearly asking because she was curious about the Devil Sect's affairs. As such, he returned the favor and said, "Thank you for your concern, Concubine Bai. It wasn't anything major. Although, I met the Devil Sect Master along the way."

"Ah! I heard that the Devil Sect's Master Yun Jianyue was a bloodthirsty murderer and a people-eating [\[1\]](#) demoness," Concubine Bai said in surprise.

Zu An couldn't detect anything unusual from her expression. He thought to himself, No wonder this woman was able to do so well in the Imperial Palace! He couldn't pick out any problems at all. He muttered, "That woman indeed eats people..."

The charming and gentle events between the two of them appeared in his mind. An appreciative smile unknowingly appeared on his face.



Concubine Bai was stunned. She had merely used that term as an expression; why did Zu An's reply make it seem as if Yun Jianyue really did eat people? How is that possible? Why would she do that?

Fortunately, Zu An snapped out of his daze and shared his experiences in that time with her. Of course, things related to the Unknown Region were too sensitive. He only picked some of his interactions with Yun Jianyue to share.

However, that was enough to make Concubine Bai listen with keen interest. She couldn't help but sigh, saying, "I'm so envious of all of the amazing experiences you've gone through in the vast world outside."

She suddenly felt rather alone and dejected. She was more like a canary bound to the world within the Imperial Palace. Most importantly, her status was quite awkward. She was the crown prince's concubine in name, but in reality...

When he saw the dejected look on her face, Zu An felt pity for her. He blurted out, "I'll take your highness out for a stroll if there's a chance in the future."

Concubine Bai was stunned at first, but then her small face flushed with color. She said, "I've stayed here for too long, so it'll be bad if other people see us. I'll be leaving for now." She didn't wait for Zu An's reply and left in a hurry.

When he saw her leave like a frightened rabbit, Zu An couldn't help but laugh. I wasn't trying to feed you a carrot or anything; what are you acting so scared for?

Still, he soon recalled Eunuch Wen. His mood quickly darkened. He couldn't just go over and ask the man why he was following him, right? He planned to discuss it with Bi Linglong when he went to the Eastern Palace the next day. As he already knew Eunuch Bai suspected the two of them, he had to avoid meeting with her even more.

In the past, he would have felt very nervous in such a situation. At the moment, though, the best strategy was to do nothing. Either way, there was no way Eunuch Wen would be able to get any proof.

When he left the Imperial Palace, Zu An first made a trip back to his residence to show his face. Otherwise, going straight to the Sang manor would easily draw unwanted attention.

Someone leaped out excitedly to greet him as soon as he arrived at his place, exclaiming, "Brother-in-law~"

Zu An was stunned. A young man with pretty features ran over and picked up his hands in excitement. It was none other than the cross-dressing Chu Youzhao.

Nearby, the tan-skinned Murong Qinghe blinked. She normally felt that her big brother Chu was quite mature and earnest, but why was it that he always acted like such a child whenever he met his brother-in-law? To a certain degree, he even looked a bit... feminine.

"Huh? Why are you here?" Zu An asked. He thought to himself that these two really were always around each other. He wondered how they were going to deal with the truth later.

Two beauties together... Just the thought alone is great.

"What, you didn't want to see me?" Chu Youzhao replied, looking crestfallen.

"No way!" Zu An exclaimed, taking out a small pile of gifts. "Your brother-in-law even brought you a bunch of local goodies."

He couldn't help but praise his own wit. Before leaving, he had sent some of his Fiend race subordinates to purchase gifts. Otherwise, he wouldn't have been able to deal with so many people once he came back.

"Brother-in-law is so great!" Chu Youzhao exclaimed. Her mood immediately became as bright as the sun in summer. Even though she came from a big clan, she had always been raised as a son and taught how to live properly. These kinds of things had all been forbidden. However, that had only increased her sense of longing.

Forget about her, even Murong Qinghe craned her neck over. After all, these were things that could only be obtained from the Fiend King Court, and were rarely seen on the human side. When Zu An saw that, he picked up another bag and gave it to her. Murong Qinghe was shocked and happy, exclaiming, "There's even some for me?"

"The Lesser Return Pill little sister Qinghe gave me last time was really helpful, so I'm just repaying the favor a bit. I'm actually the one who's embarrassed here," Zu An said sincerely. When he was injured by the Snow Lady in the Great Snowy Mountains, the Lesser Return Pill she gave him had helped him take on a good share of the injuries.

Murong Qinghe had a brilliant smile as she replied, "Big brother Zu speaks too politely! You are big brother Chu's brother-in-law, so you're naturally also... ahem. It wasn't much, so big brother Zu doesn't need to thank me like that."

If the situation didn't involve Chu Youzhao, she was always a formidable and valiant girl. But whenever it did involve Youzhao, she became a star-struck dummy.

They chatted for a while longer. Chu Youzhao asked curiously, "Right, why weren't you home last night?"

Zu An was alarmed. Wouldn't things be blown out of proportion if he told her he had stayed at the Sang manor? He replied, "I went out on a trip and came back really late. That's probably why we didn't run into each other."

He knew that Chu Youzhao's status was special and the clan had strict rules. She had to return to the Qin clan very early each day. The first reason was that they were worried that a girl like her would get in trouble, and the second was that her crossdressing could be exposed.

"Youzhao, he's lying to you," an aloof and ice-cold voice suddenly said.

Zu An's entire body froze. He looked toward the source of voice in disbelief.

A beautiful, watery-blue figure stood by the entrance. Her eyes were bright; her skin was fair like snow. Her facial features looked as if they had emerged from a drawing. However, there was a natural hint of icy coldness to her expression. A cold winter breeze blew past, sending her beautiful hair dancing and her dress fluttering. She looked like an ice queen. Fortunately, the fiery red silk band around her waist added a hint of liveliness and tender beauty to her appearance.

"Big sis!" Chu Youzhao exclaimed, happy and surprised. She jumped straight into the other woman's arms. Only when the woman hugged her little sister did a hint of gentleness appear in her ice-cold eyes.

Murong Qinghe's first reaction when she saw her sweetheart hug such a beautiful woman was disbelief. But when she heard the words 'big sis', she realized that this was Chu first miss!

When Chu Chuyan first arrived at the capital, it had caused a stir among the young nobles. She had been on par with Madam Yu back in the day. In the past, Murong Qinghe had had the chance to meet her; and yet, even as they met again, she was still shocked by Chu Chuyan's astonishing beauty.

More important was the distinct, otherworldly air Chuyan gave off. That aura, as if it came from a goddess above the clouds, made Murong Qinghe envious. Still, she didn't feel great. She just didn't want her big brother Chu to be so intimate with another woman, even if she was his big sister.

What is up with the Chu clan anyway? They have no boundaries at all between men and women! Also, does big brother Zu not have any objections to his wife and her little brother being together?

Zu An naturally had no objections. He actually felt very moved as he called out, "Chuyan~"

At the same time, he was curious. The item around her waist seemed to be the Primal Skysilk! Hadd Yan Xuehen given it to her?

Chu Chuyan's eyes resembled a snowy peak as she stared at Zu An calmly, saying, "You said that you came back really late to Youzhao, but I waited here all night yesterday and didn't see you."

Zu An began to sweat buckets.

#### **Chapter 1554: Wasted Effort**

"You came out of seclusion! Last time, I heard Yan... Ahem, I heard Sect Master Yan say that you were cultivating in seclusion, and that you were at an important breakthrough point in your cultivation, so I didn't even dare to disturb you out of fear of affecting your cultivation."

Zu An wasn't telling a lie. The two of them were newlyweds, and yet they had already been separated for so long.

When she felt the sincerity in his words, Chu Chuyan's expression finally became a bit less cold. She said, "I was going to spend some more time in seclusion, but master suddenly came back to tell me that rather than cultivating alone in seclusion, it could be better for me to cultivate in the secular world for a while. That, and she told me to go and have a contest with the Devil Sect's Saintess. That's why I came out."

Zu An was surprised and happy. He asked, "Yan... The sect master returned? Was she injured at all?"

He had suspected that she suddenly left without saying anything; even though he knew she was more than strong enough to protect herself, he had still been worried that something unexpected had happened to her. Now that he learned that Yan Xuehen had returned safely, he felt a huge burden disappear.

Chu Chuyan gave him a confused look, unsure as to why he was so concerned about her master. She replied, "Master's cultivation is so high; how could anything have happened to her?"

"That's good then, that's good," Zu An said, sighing in relief. Then, he realized that his question was a bit strange. He quickly added, "I fought alongside Sect Master Yan previously, so we can be considered friends now. She suddenly left the Fiend races' territory back then, so I was worried that something could have happened to her."

"Master mentioned that briefly to me before. But you say the two of you are friends?" Chu Chuyan asked with a strange expression. She understood her master's nature better than anyone. Yan Xuehen was more like a frozen mountain than any other being in the world! She already lived in her own world of indifference. Chu Chuyan really couldn't imagine her being friends with Zu An.

Furthermore, if they're friends, wouldn't Zu An become my senior?

Zu An's expression stiffened. He replied, "She didn't tell you anything?"

Looks like Yan Xuehen still can't face our relationship after all and is subconsciously running away.

Chu Chuyan shook her head and said, "She didn't mention that your relationship was that great, but seeing as you were able to entrust a gift to me through her, your relationship probably isn't bad."

"Gift?" Zu An asked, stunned. How could he have possibly had the nerve to ask Yan Xuehen to bring a gift for another woman? That would just be scattering salt on the wound!

Chu Chuyan looked down at the red silk band. A hint of redness appeared on her face as she said, "I really like this Primal Skysilk. Thank you."

Zu An finally realized what had happened. He chuckled and said, "It's good that you like it."

Inwardly, he sighed deeply. What is the meaning of this, Yan Xuehen? Are you trying to say goodbye forever?

"Right, there was something strange about master this time," Chu Chuyan suddenly said.

"What was strange?" Zu An asked, his heart skipping a beat.

"Sometimes, she just sat there by herself in a daze. A silly smile appeared on her face for a while, but it was replaced by anger the next moment. It made me worry that something was wrong with the Unshakable Daoist Manual's cultivation, but she said that she was fine whenever I asked," Chu Chuyan replied, furrowing her brows. Then, she looked at Zu An suspiciously and asked, "You've been with her for so long. Do you know the reason?"

Everyone had a bit of a gossipy side to them, and Chu Chuyan was no exception. She really wanted to know what her master had encountered, to the point that she wouldn't be told about it.

Zu An looked a bit embarrassed. He naturally knew the reason, but he couldn't say it... He could only say, "It might be because she saw some immortals in the Unknown Region. That might have left her quite shocked."

"Immortals?" Chu Youzhao asked, a curious look on her face as she hung from her big sister's elbow. She quickly grabbed Zu An's arm instead and cried, "My good brother-in-law, hurry and tell me about it!"

When she saw how Chu Youzhao was acting, Chu Chuyan frowned a bit. The Chu clan had needed to go through a huge ordeal to raise Chu Youzhao as a true heir. Why did she look like a little girl again?

Murong Qinghe's ears perked up too. Zu An couldn't help but laugh. Either way, these were all people he was close to. Considering Murong Qinghe and Youzhao's relationship, Qinghe was an insider too. As such, he gave them a rough summary of what had happened in the Unknown Region. Of course, he gave them a simplified version and didn't go into too much detail. He could tell Chu Chuyan about such things, but knowing too much would only be bad for the two girls.

Still, it was already enough to leave the two girls astonished. Even Chu Chuyan was a bit stirred. For some reason, she felt as if her master had become a different person or something. Yan Xuehen had also begun to act a bit unfamiliar around her, to the point that Chu Chuyan felt as if her master was scared of being seen or something.

In fact, her master had only given her a very simple account of her experience in the Unknown Region. Chu Chuyan didn't know that much. When she heard Zu An's version now, her pretty eyes sparkled with amazement. Still, with her keen perception, she noticed that he was withholding some details. However, she didn't suspect anything and just assumed it was because of the two girls off to the side. She could just ask him about those things in private later.

Suddenly, Zu An belatedly asked, "Right, you said that you were going to compete with the Devil Sect's Saintess?"

Chu Chuyan nodded slightly and replied, "Indeed. Previously, Master and the Devil Sect Master agreed that their disciples were to have several competitions. However, the first meeting was originally going to take place a few years from now, but for some reason, master suddenly changed her mind. I'm not sure if the Devil Sect's side will agree or not." Her brows furrowed slightly. She just felt as if she had been a bit rushed this time, as if her master were chasing her out.

Zu An gave her a careful look. He sensed her ki aura and exclaimed in surprise, "You've already reached the ninth rank?"

Chu Chuyan responded in the affirmative, adding, "Master used a lot of effort to help me, and the White Jade Sect has favored me as well, offering me all sorts of cultivation resources. That's why I was able to improve quickly. If I had emerged when we originally planned, there was a high chance I would have reached the master rank."

That was something she couldn't understand. At this rate, she should have been able to break through into the master rank before leaving seclusion. At that time, she would have had more confidence against the Devil Sect's Saintess.

Still, she had always admired and respected her master, knowing that she was experienced and knowledgeable. She believed the sect master definitely had something in mind, and she missed Zu An a lot. That was why she had agreed to leave the mountain.

"Big sis is so amazing!" Chu Youzhao exclaimed, her gaze full of adoration. She thought, As expected of my big sis, my idol!

Murong Qinghe was also shocked. Just how old was Chu Chuyan? Less than twenty, right? And yet she was already at the ninth rank! I am a genius too, but compared to Chu Chuyan, the difference is way too huge!

The Fiend races' younger generation had individuals at a higher rank than her, but on average, they were practically on par with middle-aged uncles on the human side. Furthermore, the Fiend races attached more importance to bloodline power.

Chu Chuyan's expression suddenly changed. She grabbed Zu An's hand and examined him, asking, "What happened to you? Why are you even weaker than when we first met? Don't tell me that your injuries ended up affecting your cultivation..."

This was a world that relied on cultivation. If Zu An had become an ordinary person, his days would be much more difficult. In that instant, she even thought she had to work harder to become stronger, because only then could she protect him.

"Don't worry. I'm fine. It's just that my cultivation method is a bit strange, so it's hard for others to detect my ki aura," Zu An said reassuringly. Then, with a light wave of his hand, he sliced a fluttering leaf nearby in half.

"That's a relief then," Chu Chuyan said, letting out the breath she had been holding. She suddenly thought of something and said with a strange expression, "I almost got distracted by you! Where did you spend the night yesterday?"

Zu An's fine hairs stood on end. Even though Chu Chuyan knew about his relationship with Zheng Dan, telling the truth would only get him into deep trouble. Fortunately, he had already thought of an excuse. He replied, "I was investigating the Sang clan's situation last night. Sang Hong went missing after an assassination attempt. I hold a share of the responsibility too..."

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe had both heard people from their clans mention the affair. They both spoke up to console him, saying it wasn't his fault.

A strange look flickered through Chu Chuyan's eyes. She replied, "Sang Hong? I know where he is."

### **Chapter 1555: Desperate Action**

"What?!" Zu An exclaimed, feeling both shocked and happy. He grabbed her arm and asked, "Where is Sang Hong?"

Everyone was looking for Sang Hong at the moment, and Sang Qien was really worried too. Zu An was a good friend of Sang Hong's now too, and had been worried that something really dangerous had happened to him. Now that he had received news, how could he not be happy?

Chu Chuyan had a strange expression. She looked into the room and replied, "He was inside your house. You never came back, so of course you didn't know."

Zu An was confused. His first reaction was that she was messing around. But when he saw that she wasn't kidding at all, he quickly reacted and ran inside.

Chu Chuyan followed him in and said, "When I left the White Jade Sect, I wanted to go to the Fiend races' territory to find you. But knowing your nature, I figured you probably wouldn't spend too long on

that side and would definitely come back. I was worried that I would miss you along the way and that we'd be far from each other again. That's why I came back to the capital to wait for you.

"When I passed by Silkworm City, I just happened to see Sang Hong being chased by a group of black-clad men, so I saved him in passing. Unfortunately, I arrived too late and couldn't save the others in the Imperial Envoy Fleet."

Zu An suddenly realized what had happened! No wonder the Embroidered Envoy's records had mentioned that it was especially cold around that area that night; so it was because Chuyan had used her Snowflake Sword! He should have realized that earlier.

Chu Chuyan brought Zu An to a secluded room; it was a place where all manner of junk was normally piled up, so few people in the manor ever went there. She said, "I hid him here. Because the Imperial Envoy Fleet affair was definitely related to many, many things, I was worried that news would get out and didn't even let those in your own manor know. I waited all this time for you to come back, but you never returned even in the evening!"

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle bitterly inside when he heard the hidden grudge she carried. She had probably only snuck in at night to preserve the secret, but he had already ran over to the Sang manor by then.

When the door opened, Zu An saw Sang Hong sleeping, hidden in the shadows. His condition wasn't that good; his entire body was wrapped in bandages. It was easy to imagine how many injuries he had received from the battle that night. His face was incredibly pale, clearly the result of excessive blood loss. Zu An quickly moved over to check his condition. Fortunately, Sang Hong had received prompt treatment; even though his injuries were severe, there was no danger to his life.

"Chuyan, I really am thankful for what you did. If not for you, he probably wouldn't have survived," Zu An said as he fed Sang Hong a pill he had obtained from the Fiend King Court, looking at Chu Chuyan gratefully.

"We're one family; what are you thanking me for?" Chu Chuyan replied. She couldn't help but grin. "If I remember right, we even used to be enemies with him in Brightmoon City, and yet we've gone to such lengths to save him. The events of the world truly are hard to predict."

"That's why the entire Brightmoon City affair, for me, was a thorough and crushing defeat. Only, meeting all of you was my greatest reward," Sang Hong said with a sigh. He had gradually woken up, and just happened to have heard their conversation.

"Respected uncle, you're awake?" Zu An replied as he supported Sang Hong.

Sang Hong smiled at him and said, "If not for the young miss, this old life of mine would have been done in at Silkworm City."

"Just what exactly happened in Silkworm City? People all said you had been colluding with the Fiend races," Chu Youzhao asked curiously. When she saw that everyone else was looking at her, she quickly added, "I don't believe that, of course."

Murong Qinghe's eyes widened. She was also curious about that. The case of the Imperial Envoy Fleet's destruction had been the focal point of discussion between the great clans recently.

Sang Hong gave the two a look. After being in the capital for so long, he recognized the girls as well. He thought for a bit, then said, "That night, I encountered Shadow Group's assassins..."

He had been roused awake by a great fire in the middle of the night. When he rushed out, he had been surrounded by an organized group of black-clad assassins. He had done his best to break out, but he had been seriously injured and couldn't shake them off. Just as he felt absolute despair, Chu Chuyan had saved him.

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe were both shocked when they heard the story. After all, they were from distinguished families. Even though they had some experience, when had they ever been through something so dangerous?

Even someone like Zu An, who had often wandered along the brink of life and death, was surprised. He thought to himself that the chances of survival in such a situation really were slim. He felt a bit conflicted inside, saying, "It's all my fault for not being with the Imperial Envoy Fleet that you almost died."

He had been sent to guard the fleet, and was supposed to manage the Armed Escort Division that followed it. However, he had headed into the Fiend races' territory due to his own selfish desires, causing Sang Hong's protection to become much weaker.

Sang Hong shook his head and said, "This matter has nothing to do with you. Seeing as they wanted to act against me, they would have already been plotting actively. If they could even bribe the local officials, you would have been factored in if you were there, and they would have sent even more people. You would have been in danger as well. With more enemies, I might not even have had the good fortune of being able to escape."

Even though he hadn't seen the Embroidered Envoy's reports, as an old fox of the political circles, he had immediately realized that there was something wrong with Silkworm City's local officials. Zu An just revealed a weak smile and didn't argue.

Just then, Chu Youzhao couldn't help but exclaim, "What kind of background does Shadow Group have? They even dare to try and assassinate the Imperial Envoy! Isn't that rebelling against the state?!"

Murong Qinghe added, "I heard a rumor that even the Embroidered Envoy couldn't identify the one behind Shadow Group, and only managed to track down some mid-rank leaders."

Zu An thought, That's not just a rumor; the Embroidery House really doesn't know who the boss of Shadow Group is. Of course, there was also the chance that only the emperor and Zhuxie Chixin knew who it was, and access to such information wasn't given to the Golden Token Envoys.

Sang Hong suddenly said, "Ah Zu, I want to meet with the emperor."

Zu An replied with a frown, "Your injuries are still so serious. Let's discuss things after your injuries improve a bit."

In Sang Hong's current condition, he couldn't move around as he pleased. Despite that, he insisted, "I can't wait any longer. The one behind the scenes knows I haven't died and won't leave the matter at that. I'm too scared to even return to the Sang manor for fear of bringing the girls harm. If I hadn't been unconscious when Chu First Miss brought me here, I wouldn't have agreed to come here either."



"Respected uncle, you're treating me like an outsider here. Why would I be worried about those things?" Zu An replied. He continued, "Right, who's the one behind all of this?"

Sang Hong looked around at the others. He didn't say anything.

Murong Qinghe realized something and said, "I'm going to withdraw for a bit."

However, Chu Youzhao quickly grabbed her and said, "Little sister Qinghe is one of us; you can trust her."

Murong Qinghe was really happy when she heard her big brother Chu say that.

"It's not that I don't trust you two, but rather that this matter is too important. Knowing will only bring you harm. I don't want to do that to the two of you," Sang Hong explained.

Zu An knew Sang Hong was right. Thus, he said, "Alright. I'll bring you to the palace immediately."

"It would be best if you change your outfit a bit to mislead others," Sang Hong reminded him, "I suspect that there are people watching your house. After all, our relationship is common knowledge."

"It's fine. We can just go straight there," Zu An calmly replied. There was a mysterious confidence in his voice.

Chu Chuyan was still worried, saying, "I'll escort you all."

Zu An didn't want to worry her. Furthermore, they had been separated for so long that he didn't want to be apart from her again, so he agreed.

Chu Youzhao made a fuss about going as well, but Chu Chuyan refused, saying, "You two should wait here for more information. That way, we'll have someone to provide support too."

When she heard her big sister's unquestionable tone, even though Chu Youzhao was unwilling, she could only agree.

Zu An quickly arranged a carriage to send Sang Hong out; he and Chu Chuyan sat by his side. The carriage moved straight toward the Imperial Palace. Zu An was now a count and a famous person from the Eastern Palace, so few people caused his carriage trouble. Along the way, he asked, "Respected uncle, is the one behind the scenes King Qi?"

"So you already knew after all," Sang Hong said, unsurprised. "Indeed, he likely didn't want Cloudcenter Commandery's events to return to the capital. I have proof of his misconduct. He probably wanted to wipe away all the evidence."

"It wasn't all that hard to predict," Zu An said. He remained silent for a moment before saying, "At the time, I obtained clues from the wooden sword, after which you investigated some more details. Those would definitely have a huge effect on King Qi. Still, I didn't expect him to be so bold and take such a risk out of desperation."

"King Qi has already suffered losses again and again. If I present the proof found in Cloudcenter Commandery to the entire court, his decades of hard work will only become more of a lost cause. He can't be blamed for taking desperate action," Sang Hong said before shooting a glance at Chu Chuyan.

“Chu First Miss is exceptionally sharp, actually arranging for your honorable brother to monitor Miss Murong to keep her from sending out any information.”

It was no secret that the Murong clan backed King Qi. Chu Chuyan nodded slightly in response.

Meanwhile, Zu An laughed and wrapped his arm around Chu Chuyan’s shoulder, saying, “Of course my wife is smart!” However, when he realized that Sang Hong was another father-in-law of his, he suddenly felt that such a public display of affection was a bit inappropriate.

Chu Chuyan blushed and secretly gave him a pinch. With her nature, she wasn’t used to being so intimate in front of other people. Zu An was about to say something when his expression changed.

Suddenly, the carriage walls ruptured. Several dozen military crossbows turned the carriage into a porcupine!

### **Chapter 1556: Death Courting Topic**

Chu Chuyan quickly made her move. A longsword appeared in her hand, and cold frost condensed all around her, blocking all the crossbow bolts. Her body trembled, ki and blood surging violently; after all, the shots came from military crossbows with extremely great power. She didn’t hesitate even for a moment, grabbing Zu An and Sang Hong before jumping out through the shattered carriage wall. They would just be sitting ducks if they stayed in place.

However, the enemy seemed to have anticipated that such a thing would happen. A large, thick crossbow bolt flew at her, shrouding the group in terrifying energy. This one was different from the hail of bolts, however; it came from a city defense crossbow!

Chu Chuyan’s expression changed completely. After all, the power of a city defense crossbow could even break through a city wall! Furthermore, they were often supported by all kinds of complex formations that allowed them to lock onto their enemies. There was no way to avoid the bolt; they could only face it head on. Even though she was already at the ninth rank, she wouldn’t necessarily be able to stop the bolt, let alone while protecting two other people.

She was very confused. Military crossbows were all heavily regulated, and city defense crossbows were even higher priority. Other cities could collude with outsiders to use them that way, but wasn’t using one in a place as important as the capital equivalent to open rebellion? With a grave expression, she raised her longsword, planning to use the Snowflake Sword to intercept the bolt.

Even though she thought about many things, it all happened in the time it takes for sparks to fly off flint. The city defense crossbow’s bolt was about to reach them. The terrifying power it carried was enough to blast the entire area to smithereens.

Unlike Chu Chuyan, Zu An was no stranger to such weapons. After all, he had been ambushed by one before and lost half his life as a result. If not for the fact that his body was incredibly tough, reforged by the Primordial Origin Sutra, he wouldn’t even have been able to hold onto the other half of his life.

However, things were different now. Zu An drew his sword, unleashing a sharp wave of sword ki. The giant bolt with its terrifying aura was cut in half down the middle like tofu. The sword ki continued forward, blasting straight through the city defense crossbow cart hidden in a nearby home, not giving it a second chance to attack again.

The entire street fell silent; all those present were stunned. A bolt that massive had actually been cut through so easily?

Sang Hong had been a bit worried at first, but now his eyes were filled with shock. This kid became even stronger than before in the few months we were apart! No wonder he had such confidence, saying he could protect me.

Chu Chuyan was also somewhat stunned, because her master hadn't really gone into detail about the trip. Thus, she hadn't known how strong Zu An really was. On the contrary, when they reunited, she had discovered that there wasn't any ki aura coming from Zu An's body, making her worry that he had lost his cultivation. She had intended to protect him properly before, but now, it was hard to say who was protecting whom anymore.

The assassins around them snapped out of their daze. They released all their bolts and rushed out from their hiding places. They weren't wearing black clothes and masks this time; instead, they were dressed in rough hemp clothes, just like the ordinary civilians living in the area. However, their expressions were nothing like those of ordinary civilians, the vicious looks in their eyes revealing that they weren't real peddlers or carriers.

Chu Chuyan's expression turned serious. In that instant, she had noticed that there were several eighth rank and ninth rank cultivators present. Such a force was already enough to make someone the boss of any given locality. She didn't understand why they would be willing to act as assassins.

Even though she didn't fear anyone in a one-on-one fight, the assassins seemed to excel in cooperation. They sealed off all paths of retreat, and the almost tangible killing intent coming from them made the air feel stiff.

Cooperative skills were often used by lower-level cultivators, especially in the army. Through teamwork, a group of lower-level cultivators could create a force capable of even taking on master rank experts. However, cooperative formations often required long years of training. Only then could the cultivators move and fight together seamlessly.

High-level cultivators all had their own pride, and they had their own methods to focus on. They usually didn't have much time to train together with others for a long time. And yet, eighth and ninth ranked experts were actually fighting in unified formations, and so proficiently at that! Just who had the skill to raise so many high-level deathsworn soldiers?

Even though Chu Chuyan was shocked, she didn't hesitate to move. She held her sword at the ready, her dress fluttering as her hair began to emanate an icy-blue radiance. She was about to use her most powerful skill to stake it all against her opponents. In such a situation, victory and defeat could be decided in an instant; holding back was meaningless.

Even though she saw that Zu An's sword was exceptional, they were clearly outnumbered. Furthermore, their opponent excelled at formations, while the two of them could only fight together back to back. However, they could at least hold on until the City Defense Guards arrived.

Suddenly, however, Zu An brandished his sword. Seeing as he couldn't avoid them, he didn't even bother trying. The swarming assassins felt as if they were going to go blind. Zu An's sword was as dazzling as a sun, powerful and direct. It left them with nowhere to run.

Afterward... There was no 'afterward'.

The assassins had been raised as deathsworn soldiers since they were young. They had received the best training and resources, as well as suitable cultivation methods. They had also worked incredibly hard, because in the cruel elimination system they had grown up under, they could only survive if they were stronger than their companions. The house never raised trash.

Of course, as their cultivation ranks rose, their minds had become more open too. After all, eighth and ninth rank cultivators were all powerful figures in the outside world. Who was willing to spend their lives as a deathsworn soldier forever?

However, they had received constant reminders of the ice-cold reality that awaited. Some of their companions had felt as if they could make it on their own and tried to escape, but they had been fed poison when they were young. When they betrayed the house and didn't receive the antidote, the suffering they went through had made them wish they were dead instead. Since that incident, the rest had never dared to have such thoughts again.

Of course, in order to appease them and avoid obstructing their cultivation and enthusiasm, the deathsworn had been promised that as long as they completed this mission, they would be sent to become local officials. They could also marry and have children then. The glory that awaited had filled them with motivation.

We just need to complete this mission...

Another brother from the house was supposed to have come along, but when he heard that promise, he had immediately chosen to take on another mission, claiming that such promises were very ominous. At the time, everyone else had laughed at him for being cowardly, but now, they knew that he was the one who was truly wise. Unfortunately, they didn't even have a chance to feel regret anymore.

When she saw the fallen corpses, Chu Chuyan was a bit stunned. There were so many horrifying assassins present, and yet they had been dealt with in an instant?

A middle-aged man, who had been hiding in the shadows with his sword drawn, widened his eyes. His jaw almost dropped to the ground. He swore, "F\*ck this! I thought my cultivation was already pretty fast, but how can it compare to this brat's? No way, no way, I won't go even if you pay more. I'm running away!" He quickly pulled his conical bamboo hat down over his face, then left through a secret path.

If Zu An had seen him, he would have recognized the assassin as 'Cash Warrior' Ding Run, whom he had met during the Brightmoon City escort mission. In the last few years, Ding Run had already earned quite a few resources and several opportunities, thus breaking through into the master rank. He had thought that this assignment would pay handsomely, and yet he had almost lost his life in the process.

Zu An patted the dazed Chu Chuyan and said, "Let's go." Then, he picked up Sang Hong and continued toward the Imperial Palace.

Along the way, Chu Chuyan secretly sized up Zu An several times. A blush appeared on her face from time to time. Back in Brightmoon City, she had always put on the appearance of a capable woman, but deep down, she was a young lady who liked to dream. At first, when she had been married to this 'trash'

husband, she had felt tremendous disdain. But now, when she looked at him, why did she feel that he was a bit like the sword immortal protagonist of 'Dominating Sword Immortal's Ninety-Nine Days of Searching For Love'?

No wonder master didn't tell me about what happened in the secret dungeon. She was scared that it would affect my dao heart and affect my conviction for cultivation!

Master really was worried about too many things. He's not some random person; he's my husband!

...

The group quickly arrived at the Imperial Palace. Chu Chuyan remained outside, while Zu An brought Sang Hong inside. He first arranged for a proper place for Sang Hong to stay, then headed straight to the Imperial Study.

Just then, he happened to run into Eunuch Wen, who was shocked to see him return. The eunuch said, "Sir Zu came at a good time. His majesty was about to send for someone to summon you to have an audience with him."

Zu An was stunned. The emperor already found out about what happened so quickly?

As expected of an earth immortal!

He sensed the fragrance of sandalwood wafting through the air when he entered the Imperial Study. The emperor's eyes were closed in meditation.

Zu An was about to mention Sang Hong when the emperor suddenly asked, "So... what do you think about the Crown Princess?"

## **Chapter 1557: Harsh Criticism**

Bi Linglong was both pretty and elegant, but Zu An couldn't just reply 'your daughter-in-law is so great', right? After thinking about it for a bit, he said, "The Crown Princess has always been someone who has cared for her subordinates. She has always handled matters with fairness and without bias... Everyone in the Eastern Palace has only ever spoken praises of her."

He didn't know why the emperor would ask him something like that, but he definitely couldn't include anything about her appearance or femininity in his reply.

The emperor remained expressionless as he suddenly replied, "Oh? You've spoken so many praises about her, but not a single one was about her treatment of the Crown Prince?"

Zu An was alarmed. This guy came prepared after all. No wonder Eunuch Wen was secretly following me. Thus, he said, "Everyone in the palace knows how well the Crown Princess treats the Crown Prince, so that's why I didn't bother to mention it."

"Did you not mention it, or did you subconsciously choose not to?" The emperor harrumphed.

Zu An's expression remained neutral as he replied, "I don't know what your majesty is trying to say."

The emperor frowned. Normally, whenever he became upset, all of his subjects shook in fear. In contrast, Zu An's completely calm demeanor left him feeling really unhappy. He could only continue, "I heard that you and the Crown Princess were in the same room for many hours; is that so?"

Zu An thought, As expected. He calmly replied, "That's correct. Today, the Crown Princess was curious about what happened in the Unknown Region, so she summoned me to ask me about it. We were worried that the information would be heard by people who shouldn't know it, which is why everyone else was sent away."

There were no flaws in his reply. Not only did he justify their reason for being alone, he also added that they weren't truly completely alone. The servants had still been able to see what the two of them were doing from behind the curtains.

The emperor stared at Zu An with sharp eyes. His expression eased a bit when he didn't notice anything off. However, he asked, "Seeing as you know it's a secret, why did you tell the Crown Princess?"

Zu An revealed a bit of surprise. He 'cautiously' replied, "The Crown Princess is the wife of the Crown Prince, and she's always received your majesty's favor. I thought that seeing as she wasn't an outsider..."

"Of course Linglong isn't an outsider," the emperor said with a cough. After a brief pause, he said, "She seems to especially appreciate you too."

Zu An replied, "Being able to receive the Crown Princess' appreciation is this subject's glory. I'll definitely strive to the utmost for her in the future. I won't hesitate to shed hot blood and sweat for her."

The emperor frowned. Why did those words sound a bit strange?

He recalled how the two of them had been involved in a scandal before; but then the libationer himself had stepped forward to clear their names, and thus he couldn't really believe that the two had anything going on. Still, he felt a bit irritated when he recalled that incident.

Unfortunately, there wasn't any proof. He couldn't pick out any problems from Zu An's responses either. As such, he decided to look around first, to let Eunuch Wen continue his investigation first. He changed the subject, saying, "Right, I heard that you wanted to meet with this emperor. What is it?"

Zu An said, "I've already found Sir Sang Hong." Sure enough, the emperor sat up a bit straighter in response. Zu An continued, "I brought him here to meet your majesty."

The emperor asked unhappily, "Why didn't you report something so important earlier?"

Zu An thought, You were so ready to criticize me earlier that I didn't have a chance to say anything. However, he could only say, "I was ambushed by mysterious assassins on the way to the Imperial Capital. The other party even used army crossbows and a city defense crossbow."

After killing the elite assassins in that battle, he had sensed his Keyboard System's experience bar advancing by a large margin. He was already close to reaching level 70. He looked at the emperor, really wanting to know what level Zhao Han was at according to the experience system.

"City defense crossbow?" the emperor repeated, his face twitching in anger when he heard what had happened. City defense crossbows had been used in the city again and again, proving that to a certain extent, the army was no longer under his control.

“So many people surrounded and attacked you, and yet you were still able to safely escort Sang Hong to the Imperial Palace?” the emperor asked, sizing up Zu An curiously. He could see through almost anyone in this world, but for the first time, he felt as if he couldn't see through this youngster.

“The reason why Sir Sang survived Silkworm City was that he just happened to meet my lady from the Chu clan. This time, we had her escorting us as well. That was why we were able to protect Sir Sang,” Zu An said. He didn't want Zhao Han to overestimate him and be on guard for no reason. It was still better to bow his head in this situation.

Sure enough, when he heard that Chu Chuyan was also there, the emperor felt relieved. He said, “I remember that Chu First Miss came to the capital once before. Her talent was indeed exceptional. Now, having saved an important minister of the court; she deserves to be rewarded.”

Zu An's achievements in the past two years had already made his position skyrocket. The emperor really didn't want to promote him any more than he had to, which was why he changed the one being rewarded to Chu Chuyan instead, even if the Chu clan had previously made him quite unhappy.

Zu An didn't notice those tactics, however. Instead, he felt rather proud that even the emperor had recognized Chu Chuyan's exceptional cultivation aptitude.

Just then, Sang Hong arrived at the Imperial Study, supported by eunuchs. The emperor gestured for Zu An to withdraw so he could talk to Sang Hong alone.

...

With the emperor there, Zu An didn't have to worry about Sang Hong's safety anymore. After he left the study, however, he still had to wait for Sang Hong and couldn't leave the palace. He reflexively wanted to seek out Bi Linglong to talk about what happened today, but he quickly realized that the emperor already suspected him, even sending Eunuch Wen to monitor him. Seeking her out would only be courting death.

Zu An wondered whether to visit Concubine Bai again and see if he could get any more intelligence out of her. However, not long after he left the palace, he was stopped by someone. He was stunned when he saw who it was, exclaiming, “So it was Eunuch Lu! What happened to your eyes?”

Eunuch Lu's eyes were black and blue, as if something had hit him in the head. He looked at Zu An with a strange expression, replying, “Sir Zu still has the nerve to ask that? This is all thanks to Sir Zu's actions.”

“What does it have to do with me?” Zu An asked in confusion.

Eunuch Lu's face turned even darker as he replied, “It seems Sir Zu really has forgotten what you promised her highness.”

Zu An was speechless. Only then did he remember that he had said he would visit the empress when he had some time. However, after enjoying some time in the comfort of the Sang manor the previous night, he had completely forgotten about that.

Furthermore, Chu Chuyan had returned today; where could he have found the time to visit the empress? As such, he said with an embarrassed smile, “There were too many unexpected things holding me up. I'll visit the empress another day to make up for it.”

"I was hoping that you would choose a different day, actually..." Eunuch Lu replied, giving him a look. "But there's no need for Sir Zu to feel so bothered. Her highness has already returned to the palace and has personally come to meet you. She's waiting right now. Or perhaps... Do you want her highness to come to find you?"

Zu An was speechless again. What kind of sick joke was this? Even though Liu Ning had kneeled and called him 'daddy' before, she was still the mother of the empire! Making her meet with a subject on her own... If another person saw that, there would be countless accusations of misconduct already!

However, he could only say, "I'll have to trouble Eunuch Lu to lead the way." Publicly offending the empress would really cause endless trouble. He had to deal with it somehow.

...

Zu An followed Eunuch Lu all the way to the empress' resting chambers. He noticed that there were clearly fewer eunuchs and maids around; they had most likely been sent away on purpose. He walked into the palace; there were even fewer servants inside.

A penetrating and relaxing fragrance wafted through the air. Zu An could only recognize the rose scent base, but it seemed to be mixed with many other elegant fragrances. The fragrance was strong and passionate, just like the empress herself.

Upon arriving just outside the pearl curtains, Eunuch Lu bowed and said, "Your highness, Sir Zu has arrived."

"I see. You can leave," the empress said lazily. Zu An saw that she was lying down. She wore a sparkling dress embedded with fine gemstones, making her look dazzling. However, compared to her perfect curves, the gems didn't seem all that amazing. That was especially true because the material seemed to be translucent, further accentuating her curvaceous body.

"Understood," Eunuch Lu said. He felt a bit depressed, but he didn't dare to express anything. He only gave Zu An a look of envy.

When the door closed, Zu An bowed and said, "I greet your highness."

"Oh my, I wouldn't dare to receive such respect from you. Does this empress even exist in your heart?" the empress sneered, clearly unhappy.

You have successfully trolled Liu Ning for +745 +745 +745...

Zu An jumped in fright. This woman was already so angry?! He didn't wait for her to act up and quickly said, "Your highness can't blame me for this! His majesty already suspects us, and he even sent Eunuch Wen to investigate me!"

"What?!" the empress exclaimed. She quickly sat up in fear, causing waves to ripple across her body.

## **Chapter 1558: Frank and Open**

"What? Zhao Han suspects us?" the empress asked, feeling a chill run down her neck. Her heart was beating so hard that she could almost hear it.



Zu An thought to himself, Why are you still bothering me if you're so scared, to the point that I can't even refuse you? However, on the surface, he said, "I don't know the exact details either. It's just that I received information telling me to be careful. Furthermore, I discovered that Eunuch Wen was secretly investigating me."

He spoke vaguely on purpose. Otherwise, if the empress found out that Eunuch Wen was actually tailing him to check on him and the Crown Princess, the empress would think that he was lying to her.

The empress' expression darkened. She called out, "Little Lu!"

"Yes!" Eunuch Lu replied, hurrying back like a gust of wind. There was a hint of excitement on his face. Could it be that her highness pitied my loyalty and is willing to let me watch from the side?! However, he was soon disappointed; when he entered, he saw that the two were still fully clothed.

The empress was too preoccupied to figure out what he was thinking; instead, she quickly told him what she had heard.

Eunuch Lu was shocked. If something like this were exposed, it would be hard to say what would happen to them, but for someone like him who was deeply involved, it would absolutely amount to nine generations of execution! Even though he was a eunuch, so he couldn't have any descendents, he still had an older brother. The Lu clan in the capital had become a large clan too.

"Go and look into this matter. Make sure not to alert anyone with your investigation," the empress warned him.

"This servant understands," Eunuch Lu said, feeling deeply worried as he left. This was related to the rest of his life! He had to make sure it wasn't ruined because of such a thing.

...

After Eunuch Lu left, the empress gradually calmed down.

Zu An said, "Don't worry. If the emperor had really noticed anything, there's no way we could even have a chat here." Inwardly, he thought, As expected of Zhao Han's woman. Such a level of bravery definitely wasn't something an ordinary woman could compare to.

"Little boy, you gave me quite the fright," the empress said, laughing and patting the seat next to her. "Come and have a seat over here; are you scared that I'll bite?"

Zu An's expression was strange as he thought, Isn't that exactly what I'm scared of? He replied, "Your highness, this situation hasn't calmed down yet. It would be better if we stay a bit more low-profile."

"What are you scared of? If he had some real proof, we wouldn't even be able to keep living. Seeing as we're still alive, that means he hasn't found anything. In that case, why don't we enjoy the present?" the empress replied charmingly as she moved closer.

Zu An had to admit that mature beauties were soft and supple. This woman really is dancing around the grave! She already knows the Emperor is investigating her, and yet she still isn't holding back at all?

Because the empress had moved closer, the strong fragrance she wore had begun surrounding Zu An. It made the dead of winter suddenly feel a bit hot.

Zu An felt his mouth become a bit dry. When he remembered Bi Linglong's concern, he sat upright and still, wanting to push her away. However, his hand seemed to have entered a large ball of cotton. He remarked awkwardly, "Would you believe me if I said this wasn't on purpose?"

The empress let out a lovely laugh, saying, "Of course I believe you. If you wanted to, you could just do what you wanted, and I'd be welcoming you. Why would you use such a clumsy method?"

Zu An coughed and said, "Your highness, I just came from the Imperial Study and don't know when his majesty will be looking for me. I have to head over first."

"Didn't you hate him quite a bit? Why does it now seem as if you're so scared of him?" the empress asked, gently stroking his chin. Her expression was hard to read.

Zu An was shocked. His attitude toward the emperor was the greatest of secrets. How did she know?

Seemingly seeing through his confusion, the empress gave him a flirtatious look. Then, she giggled and said, "You used so much force that night, almost as if you were taking it out on your enemy's wife. Did you think I wouldn't notice that?"

Zu An felt a flame ignite inside him when he heard this. However, his reason was still in control. He forcefully suppressed it and said, "Your highness must be joking. I really must go now."

The empress sighed deeply and said, "You call me 'Ning'er' when you feel good, but you call me 'your highness' when you don't. My heart is starting to grow cold."

Zu An was briefly speechless. This woman had suddenly played the 'deep feelings' card, so he didn't even know what to do anymore.

The empress put away her frivolous smile and asked, "Do you see me as an unfaithful wife, and thus look down on me?"

Zu An quickly said, "That's definitely not what I meant! It's just that the current situation is tense..."

Both he and the empress were mature adults. The first time had been quite stimulating, but the risk was just too great. Any rational person wouldn't take such a huge risk. After all, he still had too many people he cared about.

The empress' smooth hand pressed against Zu An's lips as she replied, "There's no need for you to make so many excuses. I already took the initiative to seek you out several times. You definitely look down on me. However, do you know why I keep impatiently seeking you out? Do you really think I've just felt neglected and can't hold it in anymore?"

Zu An didn't know what to say in response and could only remain silent.

The empress then said, "In my earlier years, my cultivation was quite high. Furthermore, my big sister was still in this world; her cultivation was also great. But perhaps it was precisely that which drew Zhao Han's suspicion. He silently allowed something to happen, which caused my big sister to die an untimely death, and I was left with dao injuries that couldn't be healed. My cultivation was thus lost, and I

became an ordinary person. How could I not feel hatred inside? That joyous night we spent together wasn't only to get revenge on that man, but also to borrow your help in restoring my cultivation."

"Restore your cultivation?" Zu An repeated, surprised by her frankness.

The empress gave him a look and said, "Judging from your expression, you already have some idea, right? After that night, I discovered that my dao injuries actually showed signs of healing. For the sake of recovery, I looked through every possible channel, and yet I was completely helpless. And yet, a single night with you was better than so many years of my efforts. That meant there could only be one possibility; that you have the legendary transcendent aptitude. Your blood essence is an unrivaled divine medicine in itself."

Zu An had a strange expression. He really had become Xuanzang<sup>[1]</sup> now... If news of this got out, wouldn't he be sucked dry by countless vixens along the way?

He also put away the feigned politeness he had shown in the beginning, almost returning to his previous identity as the Fiend races' Regent. He said, "Seeing as your highness has spoken so plainly, there's no harm in me being more direct as well. Our interaction is indeed beneficial for you, but there are only endless dangers for me. Why should I take such a huge risk?"

The empress laughed. The fact that Zu An had changed his tone meant that their relationship had now taken a step further. She replied, "Didn't you say that Zhao Han already suspected us? We're already grasshoppers on the same rope. If you help me recover quickly, I can help you keep Zhao Han in check. Furthermore, I am still the empress. I can provide you with even more benefits in the future."

Zu An frowned slightly and said, "Zhao Han is an earth immortal. Even if you recover, how much can your cultivation help?"

"That's hard to say," the empress said mysteriously before continuing, "However, there are still other benefits."

Zu An was stunned, asking, "What benefits? What are you doing? Ah..."

The empress moved her head slightly, brushing her messy hair behind her ears. A glossy luster flickered on her lips. She said with a proud smile, "You said you didn't want it, but your body is quite honest."

Zu An was speechless. The empress moved over to his ear and whispered, "With Zhao Han's nature, he won't tolerate your existence. You can vent all of the frustrations you have with him on his wife. Isn't that enough?"

Zu An thought, You always use this move. Do you think I'll fall for it?

Ah, Little An, how can you be such a disappointment?!

...

Meanwhile, in the Eastern Palace, Bi Linglong looked at her maid Rong Mo in pleasant surprise. She asked, "Really? Sir Zu entered the palace again?"

Didn't that mean they had another chance to meet again?

The emperor wasn't in seclusion, so the two of them couldn't meet as they wished, and the number of times Zu An could enter the palace was limited. The two were like separated lovers. Being able to meet again was always a good thing.

"It's a hundred percent true!" Rong Mo reported to Bi Linglong with a big smile. "But he seems to have been summoned by Eunuch Lu, the empress' subordinate, and didn't come to the Eastern Palace. Hmph, this Sir Zu really is something. He's already forgotten who he belongs to."

Bi Linglong glowered. Then, she got up and said, "Oh, now that you mention it, she's already returned to the palace, and yet I haven't paid her a visit yet."

### **Chapter 1559: Plots Revealed**

"Mother Empress?" Rong Mo asked, staring blankly for a moment. Only after a while had she realized that the crown princess was talking about the empress. As the crown princess' personal maid, she naturally knew that the crown princess and the empress' relationship wasn't good.

But after thinking about it, she thought it made sense to an extent. There weren't many mothers and daughters-in-law that got along. Furthermore, the empress wasn't even the crown prince's mother, and yet she acted like Bi Linglong's senior. Both of them were particularly stubborn in nature, so they naturally didn't like each other.

"Okay then!" Rong Mo said with a huge smile. She was looking forward to the moment when the crown princess saw that brat Zu An's double-crossing actions. She wanted to see what he would say to try and regain the crown princess' favor then.

...

Soon afterward, Bi Linglong brought a group of maids to the Empress Palace. They were quickly stopped by the maids and eunuchs outside, who said, "We greet the crown princess."

"I heard that Mother Empress has returned. As a junior, I should pay her a visit," Bi Linglong said in a neutral tone.

"Understood. We will bring her the report now," the empress' servants replied, looking at each other in dismay. After all, the relationship between the empress and the crown prince could only be considered ordinary at best. Each time, the crown prince's side only paid a visit to go through the motions. They never came here at all otherwise. Had the sun risen in the west today?

Bi Linglong frowned and asked, "Why are you all out here?"

The maid replied, "Her highness is a bit tired and needs to rest, so she had us stand guard outside."

Bi Linglong gave the palace a look, saying, "You don't need to go through all that trouble. I'll just follow you into the palace." Then, she walked straight in.

The maids didn't dare to stop her. They could only run a bit faster to notify the empress beforehand. However, as the crown princess, Bi Linglong had her status to worry about and couldn't run in with them. She could only walk a bit faster.

When they arrived at the Empress Palace, a faint voice called out from inside, "So it was Linglong. This empress was sleeping just now, so please wait for a moment."

Bi Linglong was a bit confused. Why did the empress' voice sound so charming right now? Her voice even seemed to be trembling a bit. Still, it could indeed be because the empress had been sleeping, so she didn't read too much into it as she said, "I've disturbed Mother Empress' rest."

Meanwhile, her eyes darted around, but she didn't see Zu An. She couldn't help but laugh when she thought of that. Why would the empress ever allow Zu An into her own resting chambers? Her previously irritable mood calmed down a bit when she thought of that. She couldn't help but shoot Rong Mo an annoyed look. It was all this girl's fault for gossiping all the time. She had almost blamed a good person.

Rong Mo felt really wronged too. Just now, she really had seen Zu An being called away by Eunuch Lu!

The empress quickly got dressed and came out. But for some reason, Bi Linglong felt that even though the empress wasn't as lavishly dressed as usual, she looked much prettier than usual. She practically seemed to be glowing. Her fair skin was covered with a faint blush, just like a young lady. Even Bi Linglong had no choice but to admit that this was the mother of a country, a beauty among beauties.

"Why did Linglong come today?" the empress asked, greeting her with a smile. But underneath her clothes, her body couldn't help but tremble slightly. She thought about what had just happened, complaining inwardly about Bi Linglong's sudden arrival. Of course, she didn't show anything on the surface.

"I heard that Mother Empress returned to the palace, so of course I had to come and pay a visit. I recently obtained some precious medicines, and since I'm here, I'll share some with your respected self," Bi Linglong said, gesturing toward the maid at her side. Not a single flaw could be picked out from her words and actions.

"Linglong really is considerate..." the empress replied.

The two continued to go back and forth like that. After exchanging a bunch of courtesies, Bi Linglong still couldn't help but ask, "Hm? Why don't I see Sir Zu here?"

The empress' heart was beating crazily, but she didn't reveal anything on the surface. She replied, "I did call over Sir Zu to ask him a few questions, but he already left not too long ago. I believe he should now be back by the Imperial Study, waiting."

She didn't deny that Zu An had visited. As Bi Linglong had asked such a thing, it was clear that she knew Zu An had visited. If the empress denied that, she would only appear more suspicious.

"So that's what happened," Bi Linglong said, finally calming down. After chatting a bit more, she found a pretext to leave.

The empress made a perfunctory attempt to keep her, but then both sides separated.

...

As the empress watched Bi Linglong leave, she put away her smile. She hadn't expected Zu An's arrival to be discovered.

Looks like I have to be more careful; otherwise, it would be really annoying if Zhao Han found out.

Wait, hold on. Why does she care that much about the behavior of a subject?

Don't tell me... Is she using this to try and attack me?

She did have some awareness of what their relationship was really like, at least. The more she thought about the situation, the more she thought that was possible. Bi Linglong could even have received some rumors from Zhao Han, thus trying to bring her down this way.

She shivered when she realized that. Normally, in such a situation, it would be best not to have any more interactions with Zu An, but she also couldn't give up on her own recovery. She really was conflicted.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An had already returned to the Imperial Study's vicinity. He secretly wiped the cold sweat on his forehead as he thought, I'm really putting my heart to work these days... I almost got caught in the act by Bi Linglong!

The empress really did have a special kind of charm to her, but it was just too dangerous to stay around her.

Suddenly, a lesser eunuch emerged. He was surprised when he saw Zu An, saying, "Sir Zu, what a coincidence! His majesty is looking for you."

Zu An had a strange expression. Don't tell me the emperor noticed I was messing around with his wife?

Still, the way things were, he could only brace himself and go for it. He was secretly glad that he had used the water element to wash away his body's smell. Otherwise, if the emperor detected the empress' scent all over him, he would be dead for sure.

He was stunned when he came in. He discovered that not only was Sang Hong there, but other important court members were also present, such as Central Secretariat Supervisor Meng Yi, Imperial Secretariat's Right Confidential Assistant Bi Qi, War Chariot General Liu Guang, Rear General King Liang Zhaoyi... All of them were the emperor's most trusted ministers.

When he saw Zu An arrive, the emperor said, "Bring Sir Sang back to get some good rest. Furthermore, I will assign twenty Armed Escort Guards to serve as his personal bodyguards."

"Thank you, your majesty!" Sang Hong exclaimed. Even though he was injured, he still bowed to show his gratitude.

After all, the Armed Escort Division was the private army of the Imperial Palace. They usually only ensured the safety of the Imperial Palace. From time to time, some of them were dispatched to be used by Imperial Envoys, but they were rarely assigned to protect a single person. Twenty Armed Escort Guards didn't sound like a large number, but what they represented was the emperor's attitude. That way, no one would dare to brazenly mess with him anymore.

Zu An also felt happy for Sang Hong. That meant his survival was guaranteed. There was no way Zu An could constantly protect Sang Hong, but now that the emperor had made his stance clear, there was no chance of King Qi's people trying anything else.

...

When the two left, the emperor frowned. He reflexively looked up above him. There was nothing on his head, but why did Zu An keep glancing at that area? Furthermore, there was a hint of a pitying expression in Zu An's eyes. Such a feeling really wasn't good.

Suddenly, King Liang interrupted his train of thought by saying, "Your majesty, King Qi actually publicly used assassins in the Imperial City. This crime cannot be pardoned. Please punish him!"

Liu Yao also got up and said, "King Qi has the ambition of a wild wolf. His crime is far more severe than this. Previously, he set up arrangements in Cloudcenter Commandery to plot a rebellion. After he was defeated, he surrounded the Imperial Envoy fleet to wipe out the evidence. Adding up all the things that have happened over the years, he ought to be executed for his crimes!"

The others all got up to denounce King Qi, advising the emperor to set his hand against King Qi. Their side already had the advantage, so it was the best time to act against King Qi.

However, Zhao Han didn't reveal anything. Instead, he looked at Bi Qi and Meng Yi, asking, "What do the two of you think?"

Bi Qi and Meng Yi exchanged a look. In the end, Bi Qi said, "This subject thinks..."

...

When they were some distance away from the Imperial Study, Sang Hong said quietly to Zu An, "King Qi is finished."

Zu An was surprised, asking, "Is the emperor going to make his move?"

"That might not necessarily be the case," Sang Hong said, shaking his head. "Even though King Qi's forces have suffered considerably recently, he still has a lot of power and resources at his disposal. If he's pressured too far, he might be driven to desperate action. His majesty probably won't adopt such extreme measures, but King Qi no longer has any place left for him in the capital."

Unlike ordinary kings, King Qi intended to fight over the imperial throne. If he left the capital, the political center of the empire, he would completely give up his struggle for the throne. The forces that supported him would gradually crumble.

...

Meanwhile, in a secret room within King Qi Manor, there was also a gathering. The one in the lead was none other than King Qi.

"My king, with how things are, should we make our move?" one of the members asked.

Half of King Qi's face was hidden in the shadows. After remaining silent for a bit, he suddenly said, "Fine!"

## Chapter 1560: The Terror of Linked Sword Heart

As Zu An brought Sang Hong out of the palace, they discovered that many of the guards were pointing and gesturing into the distance. The guards were all discussing something excitedly, as if they had seen a big celebrity. When he looked up, Zu An couldn't help but smile.

It turned out Chu Chuyan was waiting outside the entrance. She stood there in the cold wind, her long hair and dress dancing through the air. With her stunning beauty, she looked like a beautiful being completely separate from the mortal world.

It wasn't just the palace guards; even the commoners passing by in the distance couldn't help but give her a few glances. Some people even wanted to try and strike up a conversation, but as soon as they took a few steps, Chu Chuyan's ice-cold aura scared them off. They didn't dare to offend her further.

Even Sang Hong said with a sigh, "Chu First Miss is like a goddess after all. This level of beauty is something only Madam Yu could compare to back in the day." When he recalled those past events, he suddenly felt as if he had become a few years younger.

Initially, he had planned to make use of the Chu clan cutting off their relationship with Zu An in order to find some way to make his own daughter into Zu An's main wife. However, Chu Chuyan was so strong of a competitor that in that instant, he suddenly lost his confidence in that plan.

"Ah Zu!" Chu Chuyan exclaimed. When she saw Zu An arrive, a smile appeared on her cold face, as if it were the first thawing of spring. Then, she nodded slightly toward Sang Hong.

"Let's go. We'll send Sir Sang back to his manor first," Zu An said. He couldn't help but take Chu Chuyan's hand. It would be such a waste if he didn't show off such a beautiful wife.

Sure enough, when the onlookers saw that Chu Chuyan not only didn't resist, but even leaned against him naturally, their expressions were filled with jealousy.

You have successfully trolled the onlookers for +110 +110 +110...

Zu An couldn't help but laugh when he saw the Rage points. He suddenly remembered how he had taken Chu Chuyan with him into a casino in order to earn more Rage points.

Perhaps because she also remembered the past, a blush appeared on Chu Chuyan's ice-cold face. She asked via ki transmission, "Ah Zu, did you do something to let me down?"

Zu An was alarmed, replying, "Why would you ask that?"

"I just feel inexplicably as if you did something you felt apologetic for, making you treat me so attentively," Chu Chuyan said, shooting him a suspicious look.

"I'm hurt that you would wrongfully accuse me like that!" Zu An exclaimed, although he thought to himself that a woman's sixth sense really was terrifying. Could it be that this was White Jade Sect's Linked Sword Heart, which Yan Xuehen had mentioned before, and that Chu Chuyan was one of the few geniuses who had reached that level?

Fortunately, an Armed Escort Guard suddenly arrived with a new carriage, cutting the conversation short. Zu An quickly brought the two toward Sang Manor.



Along the way, Sang Hong shared everything that happened at the palace. He then said, "Even though we know that the one behind the Silkworm City attack is King Qi, there is no proof. Afterward, he was driven into desperation and tried to assassinate me in the capital, but failed. The capital is different from Silkworm City. No matter how powerful he is, there is no way he can completely hide all traces. As long as his majesty sends people to investigate this issue, he will find the truth.

"Furthermore, his crimes in Cloudcenter Commandery are already known. That is already enough to convict King Qi. On top of that, the Qin clan's great generals are on the front lines and cannot return immediately. As a result, King Qi's military forces are at less than half strength."

Chu Chuyan's expression changed slightly. The Qin clan was her mother's family, after all.

"But respected uncle said his majesty won't do anything to King Qi, right?" Zu An asked curiously.

"You are still young. You underestimate King Qi's ability too much," Sang Hong explained. "If I can speak in a rather disgraceful manner, King Qi is the heir of this dynasty's great ancestor. That is why he has inherited the great ancestor's core forces. Between that and his efforts over the years, in certain ways, his power has even exceeded his majesty's. There are also rumors that his personal strength is on par with his majesty's own."

Zu An was shocked when he heard that, exclaiming, "He's also an earth immortal?"

"Even though there is no conclusive proof, I suspect the truth is not too far off. That is why he was able to gather such prestige over all these years," Sang Hong said. "Of course, I believe that he is still inferior to his majesty, or else he would not have been content to remain a subject for so long."

Zu An nodded. With this information, many things began to make sense.

King Qi was weaker than the emperor, but the difference likely wasn't that great. The emperor would have to pay a huge price to deal with King Qi. At present, the emperor's lifespan was nearing its limit, so he was definitely unwilling to squander any at all. That was also why he hadn't made his move against King Qi yet. However, if his life was really nearing its limit, he would definitely fight against King Qi. Otherwise, his silly son would definitely have no chance of defeating King Qi, who was in his prime.

King Qi wasn't stupid; he knew that day would eventually come. As such, even though time was clearly in his favor, he still took risks, rebelling in some ways such as enacting his plans in Cloudcenter Commandery.

"But this time, King Qi has given up information that can be used against him. His majesty would never give up such a good opportunity. If things do not completely fall apart, it will definitely result in King Qi leaving the capital and returning to his fiefdom," Sang Hong continued seriously. "All people move toward benefits and avoid harm. If King Qi leaves the capital and shows that he no longer has the ability to seize the throne, many members of his faction will start to leave him. Even the clans that are part of his core forces will start to consider that possibility. All sorts of doubts will begin brewing. Then, King Qi's strength will gradually weaken, ultimately ending up being completely cut off. There will be far fewer consequences if his majesty acts against him then."

Zu An was in complete awe as he listened. Even though Sang Hong's cultivation wasn't too outstanding in the capital, his keen perception of the political landscape was top rate. His deductions from just a bit of information he had received after what happened were all reasonable and fair.

Chu Chuyan couldn't help but ask, "What will happen to the Qin clan in the future?"

Sang Hong replied, "With the Qin clan's prestige in the military, as long as they do not rebel along King Qi in the end, nothing too major should happen to them. Of course, the Qin clan will never again have as much authority as they have right now."

Chu Chuyan nodded. She didn't care too much about authority. As long as nothing too serious that would make her mother sad happened, that would be enough.

...

Time passed quickly as they talked, and they arrived at the Sang manor before they realized it. Sang Qien and Zheng Dan had already received news ahead of time and were waiting by the entrance.

"Dad!" Sang Qien exclaimed. She was much more excited than Zheng Dan. She had already lost her big brother, and thought her father had died too. How could she not be happy to see him return safely?

"Sang Qien!" Sang Hong exclaimed, tears flowing profusely from his eyes.

"Big brother Zu, thank you..." Sang Qien said, looking gratefully at Zu An. Suddenly, she froze as she saw Chu Chuyan next to Zu An. Her expression stiffened as she said, "Chu... Chu First Miss."

Sang Hong's face heated up. He naturally knew that his daughter was still too immature, so he spoke up to ease the awkwardness, saying, "Little Qien, it was thanks to Chu First Miss saving me that I was able to keep this old life of mine."

Sang Qien was stunned. How could she still be bothered to focus on her love rivalry? She quickly expressed her gratitude.

"Lady Sang is too courteous," Chu Chuyan replied politely.

...

The group headed inside. Sang Qien naturally talked to her father about their long time apart from each other. Meanwhile Zu An helped them explain the situation.

Zheng Dan pulled Chu Chuyan aside for some chit-chat, as they were from the same hometown. She said, "Big sister seems to have become even more beautiful and elegant than before."

Chu Chuyan was cold in nature and wasn't too used to such enthusiasm. However, she was too embarrassed to push Zheng Dan away. She replied, "Miss Zheng, long time no see."

She naturally knew about Zheng Dan's relationship with Zu An, so she wasn't too happy deep down. But when she thought about how Zheng Dan had remained at Zu An's side when he was in trouble, and how they had all fought together, she couldn't bring herself to act up either. She sighed inwardly. As the other party already called her big sister, she couldn't just protest now, right?

Thus, she quickly sorted out her thoughts and chatted with Zheng Dan. Seeing that Chu Chuyan was playing along, Zheng Dan felt as if a weight had lifted from her chest. To a certain extent, that meant Chu Chuyan had already accepted her.

As they chatted, the two girls became much closer. Zheng Dan keenly sensed Chu Chuyan glancing toward Zu An several times. She couldn't help but ask with a smile, "Why does big sister seem so reluctant to be apart from Ah Zu?"

Chu Chuyan blushed and replied, "I wasn't looking at him at all..." However, after some hesitation, she quietly asked, "Does Lady Sang also... like Ah Zu?"

"Pfft!"

Zheng Dan had felt her throat was a bit dry from all the talking, and had begun sipping on some tea. When she heard that, she immediately spat it out.