

Immortal 1601

Chapter 1601 – Wordless Edict

Chu Chuyan showed Zu An a smile as she explained, “The Great Sects Competition is a convention that was created over a thousand years ago. Many years ago, the daoists divided themselves into the nine sects. Every single one believed that their theories and cultivation methods were correct. They were all very proud people too, so fights easily broke out whenever there were disagreements. That caused all nine sects to suffer severe casualties.

“Later, the sages from the nine sects realized that things couldn't continue that way, as it would not only cause their geniuses to perish, but also easily form grudges that couldn't be dissolved. However, there was already a grudge between the nine sects, so there was no way for the fighting to completely end. As such, someone proposed the idea to hold a great competition within the nine sects. This way, the disciples could fight on a stage, and with the elders watching, it was easier for them to keep it under control.

“The great sect leaders at the time felt that method would not only eliminate conflict, but also motivate their disciples to cultivate earnestly. Thus, the tradition continued. Out of consideration for the clans' cultivation resources, they chose to hold it once every ten years. Now, it's been just about ten years since the last competition.”

“This kind of competition should have some benefits, right? Otherwise, it would just be known as some kind of chicken-ribs competition,” Zu An remarked. He thought about how in his previous world, just glory alone wasn't enough for the athletes in basketball and soccer competitions to do their best.

“Of course there are,” Chu Chuyan said with a smile. The eyes of Heavenly Sorrow's disciples widened. When had they ever seen her smile so brilliantly? Meanwhile, Chu Chuyan continued, “The winning sect can obtain the daoist treasure ‘Wordless Edict’ for ten years. That text will remain in that sect for them to consult.”

Zu An was stunned, asking, “Wordless Edict?”

Now, even King Yan's people were interested. They looked as if they were still chatting with their friends, but their ears perked up in Chu Chuyan's direction.

“The Wordless Edict is a text rumored to have been passed down by a daoist ancestor. It's claimed that the daoists' ultimate secrets are recorded in it. However, even after all of these years, not even the most stunning talents have been able to comprehend its mysteries,” Chu Chuyan said, a hint of longing in her expression.

“Does the Wordless Edict really not have any words?” Zu An asked.

“I've never seen it before, but it's rumored that it is indeed the case,” Chu Chuyan said with a nod. “Still, the book is truly profound. Even though there are no words, the contents seem to carry the great dao of the universe. Even though the sects haven't been able to comprehend its ultimate secrets, they've still gained a lot of enlightenment from its contents. It's to the extent that just staying closer to the Wordless Edict can improve one's cultivation speed.”

"It's that amazing?" Zu An asked, inwardly thinking to himself that he had to get his hands on the book one day. Naturally, he wouldn't say that in front of the two sects.

Chu Chuyan continued, "Apart from the Wordless Edict, the top ten disciples of the competition can participate in the Daoist Secret Dungeon that opens once a year. That's a tremendous opportunity for the younger generation, and the reason why the disciples sent to participate in the competition always try their hardest."

Zu An nodded. The different powers all had their corresponding dungeons; for example, even Brightmoon City's Academy had its own. If this was a dungeon that the nine daoist sects shared, it was definitely a place full of treasures and cultivation secrets. Such a thing was obviously extremely alluring for younger cultivators.

Suddenly, he thought of something and asked out of concern, "Aren't you going to compete against the Devil Sect's Saintess? Doesn't that mean joining the competition will become really dangerous?"

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If Chu Chuyan joined this Great Sects Competition first, wouldn't that mean she had to face Qiu Honglei while she wasn't at her strongest? The Devil Sect had always antagonized the daoist sects. She could be injured in the battle. Meanwhile, if she fought against Qiu Honglei first before joining the competition, that would also be dangerous. Even though the daoist sects claimed to be unified and hold the same beliefs, they actually viewed the other sects as competitors. Furthermore, with the allure of a prize, there was no way they would hold back. Whichever situation it was, it was going to be really dangerous for her.

Chu Chuyan felt warm inside when she sensed Zu An's concern. She replied, "Don't worry. I don't need to join the Great Sects Competition. The White Jade Sect's candidate spot will be taken by one of my senior brothers. The great sects have given me a special condition. As long as I can win against the Devil Sect's Saintess, I can obtain a spot for entering the secret dungeon."

Zu An sighed in relief when he heard that. Still, he felt even more worried afterward. After all, Chu Chuyan had to win in order to further her prospects. However, if she won, that meant Qiu Honglei had to lose. The Devil Sect was no doubt using similar strategies to encourage Qiu Honglei, but there could be punishment waiting if she lost.

Zu An really was torn, as he didn't want to see either one of them lose. In that instant, he felt the helplessness of fate. There were some things one really couldn't get the best of both worlds for.

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While the two of them were chatting, the Heavenly Sorrow disciples' mouths hung wide open. Zhi Yin in particular felt his head ringing.

He still remembered the first time he had met Chu Chuyan. Back then, she had apparently come to the Heavenly Sorrow Sect to deliver a letter. He had thought that she was a goddess the moment he saw her, instantly falling for her. He had even thought of what to name their kids. The son would be Zhi Chu, the daughter would be Zhi Yan... No, how can we only have two children if we get married? That would be such a waste of a beauty! We need at least ten!

In that time, he had immediately ended his relationships with other female disciples and wholeheartedly pursued her. Unfortunately, Chu Chuyan was way too cold and rarely said anything. When he thought about it, he didn't even remember her saying too much to him. The words that had left him with the greatest impression were 'oh', 'ah', 'alright', 'I see', and so on. The longest sentence he had ever heard from her was 'thank you, senior brother'!

The good thing was that her voice was so pleasant to listen to that even a single word had made him feel incredible. Furthermore, he had felt a sense of superiority because she had spoken even less to other disciples than she did to him. Afterward, when he tallied everything up, he found that she had said a whopping 78 words to him!

Unfortunately, that sense of superiority was completely shattered in this instant. Never could he have expected that the usually silent and ice-cold beauty would be so enthusiastic in conversation with another man. The most important part was her warm smile! There wasn't even any trace of coldness left!

What right does he have to deserve this?!

Zhi Yin felt anger bubbling within him. He almost vomited blood on the spot.

You have successfully trolled Zhi Yin for +888 +888 +888...

When he saw the surge of Rage points, Zu An gave Zhi Yin a strange look. Why is this little pretty boy throwing a fuss now?

However, he lost interest after a single glance. He continued to chat with Chu Chuyan, but worrying that he was leaving Xie Daoyun alone for too long, he even introduced them to each other. They had been acquaintances back in Brightmoon City, so they weren't all that unfamiliar.

Secretly, however, the two women had some other thoughts going on behind the scenes. Chu Chuyan tried to guess the nature of Xie Daoyun and Zu An's relationship, and Xie Daoyun felt that Chu Chuyan and Zu An weren't like a divorced couple at all.

Meanwhile, Yan Xuehen watched everything unfold indifferently. She thought to herself, This kid really is energetic in his skirt-chasing. He really deserves a proper beating.

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Meanwhile, Zhi Yin's entire body trembled with rage. His fists were tightly clenched under his sleeves, his nails digging into his hands.

Next to him, Zhao Xiaodie eventually noticed something. She muttered, "That Chu girl looks all cold on the surface. I didn't expect her to be such a kissass! She's so enthusiastic just because she's talking to an important official."

Zhi Yin suddenly turned around and snapped, "Shut up! You're not allowed to speak ill of her!"

His sudden outburst drew people's attention. The other guests looked at the two of them with surprise, wondering just what had happened.

Chapter 1602: Remarry

Zhao Xiaodie was shocked and angry, not having expected her good intentions to be rewarded with an angry reprimand from Zhi Yin instead.

Zhi Yin was handsome, and he was also Heavenly Sorrow Sect's most talented disciple. He was quite popular among the sect's women. Furthermore, he had taken care of Zhao Xiaodie when she was new to the sect, which was why she had a good impression of him. Even though it wasn't to the point of feeling love, she still attached more importance to him than other men.

She saw that Zhi Yin felt anger and great pain. When she thought about how, back when she had arrived at the Heavenly Sorrow Sect, Zhi Yin had been at Chu Chuyan's beck and call but received only cold treatment in return, she hadn't been able to hold herself back from speaking up against the injustice.

"Are you yelling at me right now?" Zhao Xiaodie replied with a scowl. After all, she was the daughter of King Qi, someone of noble status. When had she ever experienced such treatment before?

After Zhi Yin shouted at her, he saw several other people looking at him and was inwardly shocked. Only then did he snap out of his daze and quickly apologize. "Sorry, junior sister. I didn't do that on purpose. That wasn't what I meant; I must have just become a bit absent-minded..."

After Zhi Yin's panicked explanation, Zhao Xiaodie's expression finally eased a bit.

Meanwhile, Guan Chouhai took in the sight. He couldn't help but sigh. It seems this disciple of mine is following the same disastrous path as his master.

In this world, what is love...

He couldn't help but give Yan Xuehen a look. Her skin was fine like jade, and her beauty was simply outstanding. Furthermore, she seemed to look even more mature and stunning than ever. That sensation seemed to exist in harmony with her aloof and untainted beauty. How could there be a woman so perfect?

When she sensed Guan Chouhai's scorching gaze, Yan Xuehen was unhappy. As such, she asked King Yan for permission to excuse herself. Due to her nature, she had never liked such gatherings to begin with. If Zu An hadn't arrived, she would have long since left.

King Yan naturally tried to stop her, but when he saw that she remained unmoved, he could only say with a sigh, "In that case, this king will see off Goddess Yan."

Xie Daoyun couldn't help but move closer to Zu An. She quietly asked, "Sect Master Yan really is an outstanding individual among those of the previous generation. My dad was apparently infatuated with her at one point in time too. My mom was pretty jealous over it for a while."

Zu An was a bit surprised, replying, "Huh? If I'm not mistaken, didn't City Lord Xie used to like Yu Yanluo?"

In truth, there weren't many men from that generation who hadn't liked Yu Yanluo.

"Aren't men all like that? If they see a pretty woman, they fall in love with them," Xie Daoyun said, and then her face reddened. She said in embarrassment, "Big brother Zu, I'm not criticizing you here. I know you're not like that."

Zu An was speechless, thinking, Yan Xuehen and Yu Yanluo are both women whom men from the previous generation dreamed about. If they found out what kind of relationship I have with the two of them, I'd probably be hunted down by all of the big shots of the world, right?

Yan Xuehen refused King Yan's urging for her to stay and left. Chu Chuyan was a bit reluctant, but she didn't dare to go against her master's words. She could only give Zu An an apologetic look.

Zu An wasn't in that much of a rush. Being able to meet them here was already an unexpected joy. Either way, as long as they were in Yi Commandery, there would be more than enough opportunities for them to meet.

Guan Chouhai also got up to leave when he saw Yan Xuehen leave. Additionally, when they saw Chu Chuyan leave, Zhi Yin and the others immediately felt as if the evening banquet had become dull and senseless. They naturally followed their sect master out.

Zu An also took the chance to leave. If Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan both left, staying behind with these old foxes would only leave him tired. After all, he and King Yan found each other irritating.

Even though King Yan acted as if he wanted Zu An to stay on the surface, those with discerning eyes could tell that there was much less sincerity than when he had tried to keep Yan Xuehen.

After leaving King Yan Manor, Zu An initially planned to look for the two girls, but Zhang Jie and the other Yi Commandery officials sought him out, trying to get closer to him. They had felt a bit of disappointment when they saw that he didn't retaliate at all against Sun Xun's mockery. However, after seeing how tough he had been in the king manor, they immediately changed their attitudes.

Local officials represented the interests of the court, and were used by the emperor to keep the local kings or other nobles in check. As such, they didn't get along with King Yan. It would be one thing to go against weaker kings or nobles, but against the powerful ones such as King Yan, their work as local officials became very difficult. As they had finally met the kind of court representative they longed for, they naturally had to use him to change the situation.

Zu An felt quite helpless. He had no way to chase these people away and could only respond to them. By the time he was done, Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan had long since left.

Along the way, Zhang Jie invited them to stay in his side courtyard. The conditions there were much better than they would be at a relay station.

Naturally, Zu An tactfully declined. The first reason was that he couldn't really tell what this man's motives were, and didn't want to rashly make a decision that would leave him bound up in the same camp. The second was that he had many secrets too. If he lived in Zhang Jie's courtyard, the maids and servants would all be keeping an eye on him.

Zhang Jie didn't force the issue, and personally accompanied Zu An to Yi Commandery's relay station and arranged the best room for him.

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When Zu An finally managed to see off all the officials, he sat down on a chair and released a long sigh.

"It must have been tiring to greet and see off all those officials," Xie Daoyun said with a smile. She took a porcelain bottle from her waist and poured out a small blue pill, dissolving it into a cup of water. "This is Sobering Relief Tea. Please give it a try, big brother Zu."

"I really do feel even more tired than after a great battle," Zu An said, taking the teacup. When he smelled its refreshing fragrance, he felt his spirits immediately being roused. He remarked, "Little sister Ling'er really is ingenious, making this Sobering Relief Tea into a pill that can be carried with you."

"That can't really be helped," Xie Daoyun said as she sat down next to him. Her waist and back were perfectly straight, truly giving off the air of a distinguished daughter from a refined family. "My father often needs to deal with social niceties and comes back drunk as mud. That little brother of mine always causes trouble, often coming back dead drunk from brothels. A long illness makes a patient into a good doctor, in the end. That was how I created this Sobering Relief Pill. Actually, I'm quite grateful to little sister Xiaoxi. If not for her help, I wouldn't have had the skill to create it at all."

"Ji Xiaoxi?" Zu An asked, stunned. That young and tender girl appeared in his mind. He couldn't help but feel warm inside.

"Yup. Her father is a divine physician, after all, even though his temperament is a bit strange. Fortunately, Xiaoxi isn't like her father and has a kind nature. She went out of her way to help me make this," Xie Daoyun. When she thought of that girl, who was like a cute little sister, a smile spread across her face.

Zu An thought about the time when he encountered a huge disaster and was arrested by the Embroidered Envoy. Ji Xiaoxi had given him some medicine, pretending to kiss him to do so... He wondered whether she was doing well. There was also the adorable Huanzhao; was she still fretting over cultivation every day in the academy?

Sigh, it's a pity that I've never had a chance to return to Brightmoon City!

"Big brother Zu? Big brother Zu?" Xie Daoyun suddenly called out to him several times in confusion.

"What were you asking about?" Zu An asked, sounding apologetic. She seemed to have been saying something, but his mind had been elsewhere.

Xie Daoyun blushed. After some hesitation, she still said, "You met Miss Chu again today. Your relationship seems to be really good. Why don't you two... remarry?"

Chapter 1603: New Clues

"Remarry?" Zu An repeated in surprise. Soon after, he said with a sigh, "That might not be a good choice in the short term."

After all, Chu Chuyan was cultivating that shoddy Unshakeable Daoist Manual, and even talking with her would affect her mental state and cultivation. If they got married again and constantly messed with each other, how was she supposed to cultivate?

Furthermore, if they decided to talk about remarriage, all sorts of older generation individuals would get involved.

I don't really mind on my end, but Chu Chuyan is in the White Jade Sect, and Yan Xuehen would definitely get involved. Just the thought of having to ask her for Chu Chuyan's hand in marriage...

That was a possibility he simply didn't dare to think about.

Furthermore, he still had other close female friends to think about, such as Big Manman, Qiu Honglei, Yu Yanluo... It was one thing for him to have gotten married before knowing them. But now that they had all shared 'that' kind of relationship, getting married to another woman would definitely make them feel hurt.

Sigh, the life of a playboy isn't so easily enjoyed...

Xie Daoyun didn't know what Zu An was thinking. When she saw his surprised expression, she didn't know why, but she suddenly felt a bit happy. She said, "Big brother Zu, don't let that bother you too much. When the time is right, the heavens will decide who to bring together."

Zu An chuckled and replied, "Thank you for consoling me, little sister Ling'er."

Xie Daoyun actually felt a bit guilty. Her thought process made her feel like a bad woman. She felt so uneasy that she was too embarrassed to remain. After chatting a bit more, she got up to leave.

After Zu An saw her back to the room, he secretly changed into his Golden Token Eleven outfit. He rushed toward the Embroidered Envoy's secret meeting spot in the darkness.

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As soon as Zu An entered, he smelled a strong medicinal fragrance, and saw the normally calm Xiao Jianren running around in circles. Xiao Jianren glanced toward the inner room from time to time, seemingly wanting to say something, but stopping several times.

Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth were much bolder as they spoke up.

"Miss Zhang, do you really not need us to help you apply the medicine?"

"Miss Zhang, I have experience! In the past, I was always the one who patched up the old female boars who fought at the village entrance. All those who were treated all said that I did a good job!"

"There is no need to trouble this big brother!" Zhang Zitong snapped, clearly holding back anger.

"Oh," the two said, taking several steps back. Their Mediterranean Sea and M-shaped bald patterns made a comical sight together.

Chen Eighth was still unresigned. He wanted to say something else, but Xiao Jianren stopped him, saying, "Let's not anger Lady Zhang anymore."

Dai Eighth said with a snicker, "This is where you're lacking in knowledge. A woman might not remember someone who make her laugh, but she'll probably like a man who makes her cry..."

Xiao Jianren smacked his head before he even finished. "Look at all that cliched garbage you're spewing. Are you about to take a civil service exam or something?"

The door suddenly opened, and the tall and slender Zhang Zitong charged at him. She was just about to lash out when she suddenly saw Zu An in the corner. She quickly bowed and said, "I greet Sir Eleven!"

Xiao Jianren and the others jumped in fright. They only noticed Zu An's presence when they turned around. They quickly followed suit in greeting him and exchanged looks with bowed heads.

"Sir Eleven really is mysterious. None of us noticed anything even when you were already so close to us. If you were a thief, we would already be dead."

"Ah!! I'm screwed! Do you think Sir Eleven heard the things we were saying? Do you think his impression of us would be lowered?"

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Zu An ignored the guilty men and looked at the bandages around Zhang Zitong's leg. He asked, "Was that inflicted by a guard from King Yan Manor?"

Zhang Zitong was shocked. No wonder Xiao Jianren always said their Sir Eleven was profound and unfathomable. He clearly seemed to have disappeared for several days, and yet he actually knew she had just escaped from King Yan Manor.

Xiao Jianren and the others looked at her long legs with worry. They all wondered whether it would leave a scar. If a scar were really left behind on such beautiful legs, that really would be a loss for all men.

"Yes. A few days ago, we were looking into Sir Huo's information, but because he rarely made an appearance, it was hard to gather anything useful. For the sake of my duty to investigate the truth for Sir Eleven, I decided to personally look around the king manor..." Zhang Zitong explained, feeling guiltier and guiltier as she spoke.

"You've just been causing trouble!" Zu An berated them. "Who do you think you are? King Yan Manor is a place full of powerful cultivators, and King Yan is a grandmaster himself. You're just a trifling Silver Token Envoy, and yet you dare to trespass into King Yan Manor?"

"I didn't rush in blindly, though... I learned that he was inviting some esteemed guests and that he'd probably be too busy, which was why I used that opening to investigate..." Zhang Zitong trailed off; she didn't have much confidence, as she really had acted a bit impulsively.

If she hadn't been saved by that person, she might just have been finished in King Yan Manor. Because she had gone using her own personal identity, the Embroidered Envoy wouldn't even have been able to defend her. Golden Token Seven had already passed away, leaving her branch leaderless; furthermore, Embroidered Envoys had to obey the court's laws. As she had barged straight into a king's manor, it would have been perfectly reasonable and fair even if they decided to kill her.

"Then should I be thanking you for being so resourceful?" Zu An retorted with a sneer.

"This subordinate knows that she has made a mistake!" Zhang Zitong replied, realizing that she had acted a bit too impulsively this time. However, she was still a bit unsatisfied. How gentle and handsome had that young master's smile been when he saved her in the king manor? It really was like the difference between heaven and earth compared to Sir Eleven.

Xiao Jianren and the others quickly came forward to smooth things over, saying, “Sir Eleven, Miss Zhang did manage to successfully escape from King Yan Manor in the end, and didn’t leave behind anything else to worry about. That should be a sign of her competence in itself.”

Zu An sneered and replied, “Do you think she escaped through her own abilities? Wasn’t it because someone saved her?”

Zhang Zitong was shocked, thinking, How does he know? However, she quickly remembered that Golden Token Envoys were at the peak of prowess. It was normal for them to have their own intelligence networks.

“That’s right, I met a young master in the manor...” Zhang Zitong recounted what had happened. Her cheeks unknowingly heated up a bit.

“There were quite a few guests who attended the banquet today, but the only one who matches your description is Sir Zu from the Eastern Palace,” Xiao Jianren deduced.

Zhang Zitong’s face turned red. I didn’t say he was young and handsome, right? Did I really make it that obvious?

“Sir Zu? Why would he save me?” she wondered. As a Silver Token Envoy, she naturally knew that the one accompanying the Armed Escort Division on a mission from the emperor was Zu An. However, she had never seen him before, so she didn’t recognize him.

“Maybe it was out of respect for our...” Xiao Jianren began, sticking his chest out proudly, but he noticed that Sir Eleven was still there and quickly changed his tone. “It was probably out of favor for Sir Eleven. In the past, we went to Cloudcenter Commandery and worked together. He must have done it out of consideration for our shared past.”

“So that was it,” Zhang Zitong said. She was still a bit confused, though. She hadn’t even been in her uniform, so how had Sir Zu known that she was part of the Embroidered Envoy? Still, that doubt was quickly replaced by joy. After all, she finally knew who her benefactor was.

“Then, what did you find out from this trip?” Zu An asked.

“That Sir Huo is indeed good at mental attacks. The patterns on his forehead form something that resembles a vertical eye. It’s normally closed, but when it opens, it unleashes tremendous power. Anyone who looks directly at it is caught in a hypnotized state they can’t escape from. I suspect that Sir Seven fell unconscious and drowned precisely because of that skill,” Zhang Zitong said seriously.

Zu An frowned. After thinking for a while, he shook his head and said, “If even you could escape from him, I don’t believe that Golden Token Seven could have fallen victim to his skill.”

Zhang Zitong’s cultivation wasn’t weak; otherwise, there was no way she could have become a Silver Token Envoy at such a young age. But even so, she was still just a Silver Token Envoy. There was still quite a difference between her and Golden Token Seven.

Zhang Zitong quickly explained, “I naturally wouldn’t have succeeded by relying on my own strength alone. Before the investigation, I already made preparations. I applied for a magic treasure that has strong defensive properties against spiritual attacks. Furthermore, I encountered a similar treasure

through a chance encounter in my earlier years, which was why I recovered at a crucial moment and managed to escape.

“Even so, the Embroidery House’s magic treasure instantly shattered under his attack. That protective treasure I carry with me has cracks in it as well. I don’t think I would be able to escape if I had to go through that again.”

“Oh?” Zu An asked. “Then what level do you think his cultivation has reached?” He had met Sir Huo before, but the other party hadn’t used all his strength then, so it was hard to say how strong he was.

“It should at least be at the master rank,” Zhang Zitong said decisively. She still felt lingering fears when she recalled the power she had encountered.

Zu An nodded. The Embroidered Envoys didn’t always need to have powerful cultivation, but their judgment needed to be sharp.

Then, the group discussed the intelligence they had on Sir Huo for a while longer. They now had a much better picture of him than before. Still, they didn’t have any real details.

Seeing their troubled expressions, Zu An said, “You don’t have to worry about Sir Huo anymore. Leave it to me to investigate.” He was worried about the possibility of them continuing to act rashly. Next time, he wouldn’t necessarily just happen to be there to save them.

The three subordinates sighed in relief. After all, a master rank shaman was just too powerful; they just couldn’t deal with that at all.

Xiao Jianren suddenly smacked his head and exclaimed, “Right, boss! We have clues for the investigation into the woman Sir Seven came into contact with while he was still alive!”

Chapter 1604 – Repay

“Oh?” Zu An asked. He hadn’t expected much from this side of the investigation. After all, Golden Token Envoys were always secretive when carrying out their missions, let alone when it came to their interactions with women. It was completely expected for Xiao Jianren to not find anything, and the fact that he had found something was actually strange.

Xiao Jianren stuck out his chest proudly, saying, “Recently, I’ve been skipping sleep and meals to look through the different files, and I even asked Sir Seven’s colleagues. Finally, I found some clues. At some point in the past, Sir Seven seemed to be especially attentive regarding information surrounding the Hub of Freedom.”

“Hub of Freedom?” Zu An repeated in surprise. That name was familiar to him. In the past, he had visited the place while passing through Yi Commandery. It was a mysterious money-squandering establishment, so it made sense for Golden Token Seven to have been investigating the place.

Xiao Jianren continued, “On a certain day before the incident, a colleague bumped into Sir Seven while he was talking to a woman about something. That woman was extremely beautiful, but what left the deepest impression was her smile. That colleague had never seen a sweeter smile. Just a single look at her smile made that colleague feel as if he had just eaten honey.”

He was a bit troubled as he continued, "It's just a pity that was all we managed to find. We don't know that woman's identity at all. We wanted to get a portrait of that woman done, but that guy actually couldn't recall her appearance at all. He only remembered that her smile was really, really sweet."

The Embroidered Envoy, as a specialized intelligence organization, frequently captured suspicious people; thus, they had artists who specialized in drawing portraits of criminals. As long as there was a witness, they could draw a portrait with a seventy to eighty percent similarity to the person's real appearance. However, that colleague had only remembered the sweet smile and no other traits. Even the most brilliant artist would be helpless in such a situation.

"I have an idea of who it is," Zu An said. If they were talking about the Hub of Freedom, and a woman with a sweet smile... A familiar name appeared in his mind.

"Your respected self even knows about this?" Xiao Jianren replied in shock. Even Zhang Zitong looked at him with wide eyes. It was precisely because the trail seemed to have ended there that she had felt pressured to investigate the King Manor.

Zu An nodded and said, "I have something I need to take care of, and will take my leave now. Please don't act on your own again in the meantime." Afterward, he disappeared into the night sky.

Xiao Jianren couldn't help but sigh in admiration as he looked at Zu An, remarking, "Sir Eleven really is mysterious and profound, someone to admire and look up to..."

In the past, Zhang Zitong would have just cursed him for being a bootlicker. But now, she actually felt similar.

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Meanwhile, after Zu An left the meeting point, he went to the city outskirts. He still remembered where to go in order to visit the Hub of Freedom. Of course, along the way, he changed out of his Golden Token Envoy uniform. After all, the Hub of Freedom wasn't some honorable place. If he went in his official uniform, people would just run away from him.

When he arrived at the meeting place, the person waiting was about to ask him for a secret code, but Zu An didn't want to go through all that trouble and took out his jade badge. The other person initially looked prideful, but when he saw the number 333 on the jade tile, his expression quickly changed. He didn't ask anything else and called someone over with an exquisite carriage, then invited Zu An to enter.

Zu An knew about the process already, so he entered. The carriage quickly began to move. He stroked the jade token in his hands. The Hub of Freedom had given him the token previously; it was roughly equivalent to the highest-rank VIP card. For the sake of safety, the transportation process was extremely complicated. Fortunately, he had the token to save him a lot of time.

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After Zu An rested for a while in the carriage, it eventually came to a halt and the driver called out, "Esteemed guest, we've arrived."

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Zu An got off the carriage. He was surprised to discover that it had stopped at a paved pathway; nearby was the sparkling and luxurious Hub of Freedom. Normal guests had to have their heads covered, and were taken through a long, hidden path before entering. He hadn't expected the jade badge to bring him directly to the entrance.

Soon afterward, a beautiful servant came to welcome him, saying, "Esteemed guest, this way please~" After guiding him to a luxurious room and closing the door, the servant asked with a smile, "There is an auction with many precious items today. Does the esteemed guest want to have some fun?"

"I don't have any interest in that. I'm looking for someone," Zu An said, shaking his head. He had joined the auction last time, but that had only led to a heap of trouble.

The maid had an understanding expression as she asked, "Does our respected guest have any girls you are familiar with?"

If this guest hadn't come to join the auction, and judging from his temperament, he didn't seem like the type to gamble either... That meant there was only one possibility. She was even a bit eager to give it a try herself. If this person didn't have anyone he preferred, she could just recommend herself. This person was a respected jade token guest, and he was handsome too. He wasn't like the other jade token guests, who were old and ugly. If she could get on his good side, it would be worth it if he took her in as his concubine...

"I'm looking for a lady named Tang Tian'er," Zu An said directly. At the same time, he was a bit worried. Tang Tian'er was apparently the first miss of the Zhenhai Merchant Group. She had only come here out of personal interest, so he wouldn't necessarily be able to find her.

When she heard that, the maid was clearly a bit disappointed. She replied, "Tang Tian'er? There doesn't seem to be someone with that name here."

Zu An frowned. He thought that maybe she hadn't used her real name, so he described Tang Tian'er's characteristics to the maid.

The maid suddenly realized who he was talking about and said, "So our guest was talking about big sis Tang. But I fear that our guest will be disappointed. Big sis Tang has to preside over the auction and won't be able to come. Additionally, she usually doesn't receive customers..."

Zu An gave her a silver ingot and said with a smile, "You just need to tell her my jade token number. She'll come here."

The maid was a bit surprised, but when she sensed that his temperament seemed to be unusual, she didn't dare to say anything else and replied, "Okay~"

Even though she hadn't volunteered herself successfully, she was still happy about getting a silver ingot. But unfortunately, he'll definitely be disappointed. Big sis Tang has never received guests. In the past, there were jade token guests who favored her, but it never worked out for them.

Zu An sat down and closed his eyes to get some rest. A while later, he opened his eyes upon hearing a flurry of hurried footsteps, followed by the door opening. A woman with a big smile appeared in his room. Even though this wasn't the first time, he was still a bit taken aback by her sweet smile. That

alone really was enough to improve one's mood. No wonder the Embroidered Envoy had only remembered her smile.

"One of the girls told me, but I didn't believe it at first. It really was you!" Tang Tian'er exclaimed happily.

Zu An replied with a smile, "Miss Tang, it's been a while, but you're still so pretty."

Tang Tian'er harrumphed. "You really have no conscience. You've already seen everything I have, and yet you still call me 'Miss Tang' in such an unfamiliar way. Do you know that I gave up on presiding over the auction because of you? Who knows how much trouble that will cause?"

Zu An felt a bit embarrassed. Previously, when he was on the run in Cloudcenter Commandery, he had entered her room and used her bathtub to cover himself.

"Forget it. Out of consideration for the fact that you mailed me a set of Rouge Spice products and still have a bit of a conscience, this girl can barely forgive you," Tang Tian'er said as she sat down right next to Zu An. She rested her chin on her hand and looked at him with her bright and sparkly eyes. It was as if she were looking at a cherished toy.

Zu An was so moved he almost shed tears. He had bought ten sets of Rouge Spice makeup, but trying to give them away had always gotten him in all sorts of trouble. Now, there was finally someone who recognized their value.

"Right!" Tang Tian'er suddenly smacked herself, seemingly having remembered something. She reached into her waist bag and groped around, then took out an air-dried flower before saying, "Those Blue Earthflowers you mentioned before? I was able to finally get some from the Fiend races' Fox Merchant Group with extraordinary difficulty! I heard from the Fox Merchant Group that a group of thieves almost took it, so your luck is pretty good..."

Zu An had a strange expression as he heard her chatter away. The Fox Merchant Group? Previously, he had gone to the Fox Merchant Group in Bluefield Country to buy the flowers, but he was told that the last batch had been purchased by an esteemed guest. He hadn't expected it to have been bought for him by Tang Tian'er... He felt warm inside and said, "Thank you, little sister Tian'er."

Tang Tian'er's pretty nose wrinkled. She replied, "Is a 'thank you' all I'm going to get? Why don't I feel any sincerity?"

"Then what does little sister Tian'er want from me in return?" Zu An asked, smiling bitterly.

Tang Tian'er moved closer. The dimples around her smile were especially enchanting as she replied, "How about you devote your whole body to me?"

Chapter 1605: Cheated

Zu An stared blankly for a moment, then said, "Sure. Should we start now?" He began to remove his clothes as he spoke.

Sure enough, Tang Tian'er couldn't take it. She harrumphed and jumped aside, staying away from him as she remarked, "Hmph, what a scoundrel..." Zu An laughed at the sight. Tang Tian'er couldn't help but pout playfully with her red lips, saying, "Why are you so shameless~"

"I wasn't expecting little sister Tian'er to just be joking around," Zu An said. Of course, he hadn't really intended to take off all of his clothes. It was just to test her. They were both old foxes, so what was the point of playing these kinds of games?

Tang Tian'er harrumphed and changed the topic. "Right, it's been a long time since we've met. I heard that you went to the Fiend races' territory?"

"Little sister Tian'er really is in the know," Zu An said in surprise.

"But of course. Don't you see what kind of field I work in?" Tang Tian'er remarked proudly. Then, she asked him several things about the Fiend races' territory.

Zu An shared what he had seen and experienced on that side. Even though he hid the more sensitive details, it was enough to shock Tang Tian'er.

"Sigh, I really want to go with big brother Zu and tour the Fiend races' territory! I've always been interested in that side, but I would never dare to go by myself. I've heard that the Fiend races really will eat people..." Tang Tian'er said, looking like a weak little white rabbit.

Zu An completely ignored her act, retorting, "You frequently do business with the Fox Merchant Group, and yet you've never been to the Fiend side? Who are you trying to fool?"

"Ah, big brother Zu caught me," Tang Tian'er said, although she didn't seem embarrassed at all. Zu An knew that this was just her nature, and it was also the nature of her occupation, so he didn't take it to heart.

The two chatted for a while longer. However, Zu An hadn't forgotten the purpose of his visit. He said with feigned nonchalance, "You're always at the Hub of Freedom. Do you know a Golden Token Seven from Yi Commandery?"

A look of surprise flickered through Tang Tian'er's eyes. Then, she said with a smile, "How heartbreaking! I thought you came here to spend some time with me, but it was actually because you wanted to get some information."

Zu An had a wronged expression as he said, "If you don't believe me, you can go and look around. I just arrived in Yi Commandery today, and yet I came straight here to talk to you. Otherwise, would I have been in such a rush to see you? That young lady from your Hub of Freedom was trying to flirt with me, but I didn't even pay her any attention. Isn't that proof that I just wanted to see you?"

"Looks like you still have a bit of a conscience," Tang Tian'er said. She asked, "Why do you have a relationship with Golden Token Seven?"

Zu An replied, "We're both officials from the court, so we have some connection that way."

Tang Tian'er then said, "I do know Golden Token Seven. The Hub of Freedom operates in a legal gray area, and Golden Token Seven is the leader of Yi Commandery's intelligence, so we naturally had some dealings with each other. Of course, a social butterfly like me was sent over to persuade him. However, Golden Token Seven was always immovable. He's never had a lustful side, and he doesn't care about riches either. He really was quite the headache to deal with."

"Lustful?" Zu An repeated with a frown. He couldn't help but give Tang Tian'er another look. He had to admit that her appearance was exceptional, and she was exceptionally sweet. It made others unable to help but want to get closer to her.

"Ah, are you getting jealous right now?" Tang Tian'er replied as she moved closer. "Don't worry. Haven't you seen what I'm capable of? I have a kind of drug that can confuse others. Who can really take advantage of this girl?"

Zu An still couldn't help but remind her, "It's impossible to keep your feet dry if you keep walking by the riverbank. Things won't end well if you run into someone truly strong."

"After all these years, you're the only one I've lost to." Tang Tian'er harrumphed. "I've already learned from that experience and changed the drug's formulation. Next time, even a great dragon will still be done in."

Zu An was speechless. This woman really was quite good at creating such drugs.

"But I'm still really happy that you care so much about me," Tang Tian'er added, smiling brilliantly.

Zu An became a bit absent-minded when he saw her sweet smile, which carried more sincerity than her usual courteous demeanor. However, this woman was really good at acting, and what she said was usually half truth and half lie. It was quite hard to tell whether anything she said was real or fake.

"Did you meet with Golden Token Seven around the sixth of last month?" Zu An took the chance to ask.

"Can you not ask about another man when we're together? The mood is all spoiled now..." Tang Tian'er grumbled, but she still replied, "I did meet with him that day. It was the day the Hub of Freedom offered a monetary token of appreciation to him. He could choose not to take it, but we had to offer it." Afterward, she looked at him nervously and said, "You are a court official too. You're not here to arrest me because of our bribes, right?"

Zu An was speechless. He replied, "Look at how your legs are still dangling back and forth. I don't even see a trace of nervousness."

"Ah, you've seen through me. It seems my acting skills have worsened recently," Tang Tian'er said, sounding a bit distressed.

Zu An continued, "Did you visit Blackwater Pool after?"

"Blackwater Pool?" Tang Tian'er replied, stunned. "That place is haunted; why would I go there?"

"You didn't go there?" Zu An asked in surprise. What was going on then?

"I'm just too busy everyday; where would I have the time to go to such desolate outskirts?" Tang Tian'er asked, looking at him in confusion. "I'm confused as to why you asked me about that."

Zu An stared straight into her eyes, but he couldn't tell whether she was telling the truth or not. After some time, he said, "I heard someone say that the day Golden Token Seven died, you appeared at Blackwater Pool, and that it was you who threw his corpse into the water."

Tang Tian'er's expression changed. She replied, "You suspect me?"

Zu An didn't say anything. He quickly thought about many things. Just what was going on? The turtle spirit had said that a woman tossed the corpse into the water, and then said 'The earlier you're found, the better'. Later, Xiao Jianren's investigation found Tang Tian'er to be the last woman Golden Token Seven had met before he passed away. However, why was she saying she had never been to Blackwater Pool? Was she saying so just to get away with a crime?

Seeing that Zu An had fallen silent, Tang Tian'er put away her smile. Her expression also became ice-cold as she said, "If you believe that I was the one who harmed Golden Token Seven, you can just arrest me and bring me to justice."

Zu An shook his head and said, "I believe you, of course. Forget about the fact that I don't think you're the killer, even if you were, with our level of friendship, there's no way I would arrest you."

He wasn't like Detective Conan, who was hell-bent on punishing injustice, or anything. No matter how helpless the killer was, and even if they had no choice, that guy would still punish them according to the law.

Tang Tian'er's expression turned from grief to happiness as she said, "Big brother Zu is the best. I didn't misjudge you after all."

Zu An got up and said, "I need to go and confirm some things, so I'll have to excuse myself first."

"You're leaving so soon?" Tang Tian'er asked, sounding reluctant.

"Are you going to be in Yi Commandery this whole time?" Zu An asked.

"Not for certain. Sometimes, I visit the Hub of Freedom; other times, I return to deal with some affairs of the Zhenyuan Merchant Group," Tang Tian'er said. She then changed the topic, adding, "But big brother Zu, seeing as you're in Yi Commandery, I won't return to Cloudcenter Commandery for a while. You can come and see me whenever you want. I'll always keep my door open for you."

Zu An ignored her last sentence. She wasn't even that old, and yet she acted as if she had a lot of experience. No wonder she was the most famous social butterfly in a chaotic place such as the Hub of Freedom.

After she saw him leave, Tang Tian'er's smile gradually disappeared. As the candle's flame flickered, her body was eventually completely shrouded in darkness.

...

When Zu An left the Hub of Freedom, he rushed toward Blackwater Pool in the city outskirts. At night, its water was like ink, looking sinister and eerie.

Zu An called out with a cold snort, "Come out!" However, even after he shouted a few times, there wasn't any activity.

Zu An's expression changed. He jumped into the pool, but as he went deeper, he discovered that the cave at the bottom of the pool was already completely deserted. There wasn't any trace of the turtle monster left! He searched all around the cave, but he couldn't find any clues.

Eventually, however, he found a row of crooked words carved on a stone: ‘Bastard Sun, this turtle will leave then!’

Zu An’s expression immediately changed drastically. Previously, the turtle monster had spoken with a deadly earnest expression, saying that it had taken hundreds of years to gradually gather some faith offerings, and that it wouldn’t easily abandon all of its work. That was why he had trusted it. He hadn’t expected to have really been fooled by the monster!

Suddenly, he realized something. When he was investigating Blackwater Pool, the greenish-gray arms that had reached toward him hadn’t carried a trace of divinity, and had the aura of malicious spirits with endless resentment. The turtle was so good with words that he had actually been fooled!

Chapter 1606: Do You Want to Live

Zu An’s expression darkened. He changed clothes and returned to the Embroidered Envoy’s meeting point, gathering all the related personnel.

“Did Sir Eleven’s investigation bring about any results?” Xiao Jianren asked sleepily. He felt guilty and quite apologetic because his leader had been working hard outside, but he had been sound asleep.

Zhang Zitong noticed that there was still some dew on Zu An’s clothes, indicating that he had clearly been running around all night. She felt a bit of admiration for him.

Zu An asked, “Who was it that told you Sir Seven was with a sweet smiling woman?”

“It was a colleague from Yi Commandery,” Xiao Jianren said, giving Zhang Zitong a look.

Zhang Zitong explained, “It was a Bronze Token Envoy from here. His name is Jiang Zhong. Did something happen?”

“Bring me to see him,” Zu An said sternly. All this was just too much of a coincidence. The turtle monster had said that a woman threw Golden Token Seven into the water, while that Envoy had described the woman’s appearance. It was evident that they had been trying to draw attention to the Hub of Freedom. If not for the fact that he just happened to know Tang Tian’er, perhaps he really would have continued to investigate in the Hub of Freedom’s direction.

Zhang Zitong and the others exchanged a look, sensing that something wasn’t right. At the moment, however, they didn’t dare to ask more and said, “Sir Eleven, Jiang Zhong just happens to be on vacation today. His home is to the west of the city. Should we send someone to bring him here?”

“Lead the way. We’ll go straight there,” Zu An ordered.

All his subordinates shivered, because that meant there was definitely something wrong with Jiang Zhong. Zhang Zitong didn’t dare to treat the matter carelessly and led the group toward the west of the city.

...

All of them were silent along the way. They quickly arrived at a tattered residence. Zu An didn’t say anything as he kicked the door open and went in.

However, he quickly became dejected, because the courtyard was too quiet. If Jiang Zhong were present, he would have rushed out to see what was going on. There was no way there wouldn't be any reaction at all.

Soon afterward, Xiao Jianren came out to report the result of his investigation, saying, "Jiang Zhong isn't at home!"

Zhang Zitong's expression changed. It was already the dead of night, and yet an Embroidered Envoy wasn't resting at home? Where else would they go? After all, the Embroidered Envoys all had their own special rules. Even when they had the day off, they had to always be on call. There could always be some mission they would have to tend to.

"Ask around with the neighbors," Zu An ordered.

Xiao Jianren nodded, then led his subordinates to search the surroundings. Meanwhile, Zu An took the chance to ask Zhang Zitong, "What is this Jiang Zhong normally like?"

"His behavior was always a bit slick, but you won't last long in our line of trade if you can't adapt to circumstances," Zhang Zitong replied. "There wasn't much else. Anyone who could work as one of us has definitely had their background thoroughly investigated."

Zu An sneered. "Is that so? I don't think you're even the slightest bit slick."

Zhang Zitong was a bit hard-pressed as she replied, "With my personality, it is indeed easy for me to offend people. It's all thanks to Sir Seven's care. I already viewed him like my adoptive father, which is why I really want to find out his killer as soon as possible. Is there really something wrong with this Jiang Zhong?"

"He's already missing, and yet you still think there's no problem?" Zu An replied expressionlessly.

Xiao Jianren ran back while gasping for breath, saying, "Boss, the neighbors said that they saw him in the evening, and they even saw his house light on, so they assumed that he was sleeping inside."

Zu An frowned. He went inside the room and looked around. When he saw the messy bedding, he checked the temperature inside and said, "It seems he left not too long ago."

Xiao Jianren's expression changed. He asked, "We've just begun to investigate him, and yet he's already fled?"

The surrounding Embroidered Envoys' expressions quickly became unnatural. They were all professionals, so they realized that there was only one possibility: there was a mole among them.

When their gazes landed on her, Zhang Zitong asked with a scowl, "Do you suspect me of leaking information?"

Xiao Jianren chuckled in embarrassment, replying, "That's not my intention..." He naturally didn't want to suspect her, but Jiang Zhong was her subordinate. Furthermore, she had indeed been following Golden Token Seven's case.

Zu An said, "It has nothing to do with her. I was paying attention to her the whole time and she didn't leak out any information."

It wasn't just her. There had been no suspicious activity among any of the people who traveled with them. With such a huge difference in cultivation, not a single movement from these people could escape his notice.

Zhang Zitong quickly sighed in relief. Her impression of him improved a bit further. However, she soon realized that Golden Token Eleven had never completely dropped his suspicion of her, and that he had still been secretly watching her.

Zu An commanded, "Order the arrest of Jiang Zhong. Find him as soon as possible."

Someone accepted the order and passed it down. Zhang Zitong finally couldn't take it anymore and asked, "Just what is going on? Why did Jiang Zhong suddenly run? What's happening with him?"

Zu An replied, "Someone deliberately led us to investigate the Hub of Freedom..." He gave them a rough summary of what had happened.

"Who is the mastermind behind all of this? These schemes really run deep..." Xiao Jianren cried out in alarm.

Zhang Zitong said with a frown, "What I'm more curious about is how Jiang Zhong just happened to obtain information at such a crucial time."

That was also what Zu An couldn't figure out. They spoke for a while longer, but couldn't figure anything out either, so he had them continue to investigate Jiang Zhong's trail. He himself returned to the relay station.

...

The next day, Zu An wanted to find Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan, but when he arrived at their residence, he discovered that the beauties were already long gone. Zu An gritted his teeth. Yan Xuehen really was quite the vicious individual. Not only had she refused to meet him, she hadn't let Chuyan meet him either.

Sigh, but the relationship between us three really is annoying. I really have no idea how to deal with this in the future...

Zu An walked into an alley with a heavy mood. Suddenly, a small butterfly fluttered in front of him, leaving him surprised. There are actually butterflies in the middle of winter? This world really is completely different.

A few more butterflies flew over to him, then swirled around him like leaves. They added something of a warm feeling to the cold winter day.

Zu An reached out his hand. The butterfly in front of him fluttered its wings and stopped on his finger. It treated his finger as a flower petal, then lowered its head to bite him.

A smile appeared on Zu An's face. He was about to stroke the butterfly when he suddenly felt a stinging pain. His expression changed. He quickly flung the butterfly away and looked at his hand. There was a bit of blood on the tip of his finger. Furthermore, the blood was turning a bluish color; the butterfly was clearly poisonous.

Suddenly, a laugh that sounded like silver bells rang out. A pretty young lady sat on a tree nearby. Her colorful clothes made her look like a brilliant butterfly as they fluttered in the wind. Meanwhile, the little butterflies just happened to stop on her finger, looking lovable and cute.

"It was you?" Zu An exclaimed, glowering. This young lady was naturally the Princess Butterfly he had met yesterday, Zhao Xiaodie.

"I advise you not to rashly use your ki. After being afflicted by my poison, the more of your skills you use, the faster you'll die," Zhao Xiaodie said. Then, she suddenly changed her tone and continued, "No, actually, you won't die that quickly. The poison will first flow through your meridians and turn your entire body numb, then invade your internal organs. Then, your innards will start to gradually melt, ultimately turning into a puddle of viscous goop. Most importantly, your consciousness will be intact the entire time. You'll experience the fear of your entire body melting. Hehe, just the thought of it alone is really interesting."

Zu An said gravely, "I am an Imperial Envoy bearing his majesty's mission, and yet you've used such vicious assassination methods on me. Not even your father King Qi will be able to deal with the consequences."

"Tsk, you want to use the emperor to scare me?" Zhao Xiaodie replied with a disdainful smirk. "You're right. If this matter is exposed, it will become really tricky. But you'll be nothing more than a puddle of blood, so who would know that I did it? This alley is so secluded that no one will come here. Won't it be fine if I just toss your brain into some random ditch, thus erasing all evidence? Right, I still haven't told you that even though your entire body will melt, your brain won't, have I?"

She had deliberately described the illness in great detail, intending to see Zu An collapse in fear. However, Zu An's apathetic mood really dampened her spirits a bit. She thought, Is this just the despair of inevitable death? Then I should try and give him a bit of hope.

"Of course, this princess isn't completely insensitive to people's feelings. If you beg me, I'll consider giving you the antidote," Zhao Xiaodie said, looking down on him from above. She sounded amused as she asked, "Do you want to live?"

Chapter 1607: Fortunes Rise and Fall

Zu An sighed and remarked, "Women need to pay more attention when they wear dresses, especially when they're high up. You're letting others see everything."

Zhao Xiaodie was briefly distracted and instinctively pressed down on her dress. Then, she floated down like a butterfly and spat, "Bastard, you're courting death!"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Xiaodie for +452 +452 +452...

"What are you trying to accomplish here?" Zu An asked with a frown.

"Kneel and kowtow to this princess a hundred times. If my mood improves, who knows, I might just give you some antidote to alleviate your suffering," Zhao Xiaodie said, a cruel smile appearing on her face.

She didn't want to kill him that quickly, but if this guy wanted to get the antidote with just a hundred kowtows, that would be nothing short of delusion. First, she would use this method to destroy his self-

respect. Once he began to kowtow, everything after would become much easier. She could just turn him into one of her dogs in that case.

Zu An said calmly, "If I recall correctly, yesterday should have been the first time we met. Why do you carry so much hostility against me?"

Zhao Xiaodie said with a sneer, "Only the weak would care about something like that, as if one needed a reason to act against them. But this princess' mood today is quite good, so there's no harm in telling you. You plotted against my big brother, and even wantonly destroyed my father emperor's plans. Those things are already more than enough to offend me, and yet you still have the nerve to ask me why? I really never expected you to be so naive."

"Plotted?" Zu An repeated, looking at her with a strange expression. Did this woman spend so much time in the mountains that her brain had turned to mush from cultivation?

Zhao Xiaodie got the impression that Zu An was looking down on her strength, making her unhappy. She said, "I understand my big brother's aptitude best. Even though he wasted a lot of his energy on women and secular affairs, his cultivation definitely wasn't something you could deal with. I really don't know what kind of shameful and despicable methods you used to plot against him."

As she continued to speak, she couldn't help but frown, asking, "Why aren't you defending yourself?"

Zu An's reaction was quite strange. Normally, he should have been rolling on the ground in pain after being affected by her poison. His composure left her with an uneasy feeling.

"Why do I have to defend myself?" Zu An replied nonchalantly. "I'm just calmly watching your strange performance."

His calm demeanor made Zhao Xiaodie feel as if she were a clown. She erupted into a rage.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Xiaodie for +499 +499 +499...

However, Zhao Xiaodie wasn't stupid. She didn't lose her head from anger. She calmly stared at Zu An, asking, "You weren't poisoned? How is that possible?"

Even a master rank cultivator would be half-dead after being affected by her poison! Of course, a master rank wouldn't let themselves be poisoned so easily.

Zu An looked at his finger. The wound on his fingertip had already healed. His Primordial Origin Sutra not only granted his body incredible regeneration prowess, but also had detoxification effects. At the very least, no poisons thus far had been able to do much to him.

When she saw him stand in place without moving, Zhao Xiaodie just assumed Zu An was pretending to be calm, but was actually secretly dealing with the poison. As such, she didn't give him the chance to recover and rushed at him. If he started to fight and used his ki, it would become impossible to suppress the poison anymore.

What surprised her, however, was that he didn't seem alarmed at all! Still, she wasn't worried. She had always been a Heavenly Sorrow disciple with outstanding talent to begin with, second only to senior brother Zhi Yin. Wasn't someone like this, without any ki fluctuations, extremely easy to deal with?

She raised her hand. Her red fingernails were even sharper than a blade. The red color came from a nail polish she had made by combining all sorts of poisonous flowers; it was both beautiful and deadly. Just like that, she brought her fingernail straight up to Zu An's neck. She controlled her power perfectly; her strike was powerful enough to seriously injure him, while also preventing him from dying immediately.

When she saw Zu An raise his hand, she sneered. Is he only realizing that he needs to put up a defense now? It's already too late! Such reaction speed was even lower than the ordinary disciples of her sect. She really didn't know how that trash big brother of hers had lost to this guy.

After a moment, however, she was stunned. He had clearly just been in front of her, but she quickly lost track of him. In an instant, Zu An's hand arrived first, despite only moving after hers. He grabbed her wrist, using her own momentum and twisting. A tremendous force overwhelmed Zhao Xiaodie, and she could no longer move her hand. Her body spun in a circle, and the sharp, bright fingernails she had aimed at Zu An now rushed toward her own neck.

Zhao Xiaodie's pupils narrowed. Even she wouldn't be able to deal with her own poison!

Pu!

Zu An felt his hand become empty. Zhao Xiaodie had disappeared, replaced with countless fluttering little butterflies. Soon afterward, the butterflies gathered again several zhang away, reforming into Zhao Xiaodie.

"Hm? How interesting!" Zu An remarked, feeling a bit of admiration toward the skill. Turning into butterflies to avoid an attack seemed pretty awesome.

Meanwhile, Zhao Xiaodie looked at him with extreme horror. She could no longer act complacent like a cat toying with a mouse. She exclaimed, "Just what is your cultivation realm?"

"I don't know either," Zu An replied in annoyance. Ever since the Rune Weapon Chart and the Heaven Devouring Sutra's effects had merged, his cultivation system had become completely different from the norm. His current level of 70 didn't tell him anything.

Zhao Xiaodie just assumed he was hiding the truth from her. She said with a sneer, "I admit that I did look down on you earlier. But I'm going to get serious now."

She could sense a bit even from her powerful sect master. This Zu An probably cultivated some special method that hid his aura. There was no way he could be stronger than the sect master, right?

As soon as she spoke, her clothes rippled and she fluttered around Zu An like a butterfly. She remained on guard against his previous skill, not daring to rashly close the distance again. Instead, she planned to confuse him with a misleading movement skill and find an opportunity to take advantage of him. Her Rainbow Butterfly Steps skill was one that even her master praised. Naturally, it would be more than enough against this bastard.

"Hm? Why are there openings everywhere?" Zhao Xiaodie muttered in confusion. No matter how she looked at it, he seemed just like an ordinary person. So what had happened earlier?

After some hesitation, she clenched her teeth and attacked Zu An from behind. Either way, she could just transform into butterflies and escape, so she was in an invincible position.

Just then, Zu An's hand moved again. Zhao Xiaodie jumped in fright. When she recalled what had just happened, she immediately turned into butterflies to protect herself and escape.

Suddenly, she saw a strange, large bird, and an invisible sound wave rippled outward. Her mind went blank. The butterflies looked as if they had been battered by a snowstorm and fell from the sky, scattering all over the ground. In the end, they combined back into her body.

When Zhao Xiaodie snapped out of her daze, she discovered that Zu An's hand was already pressed against her shoulder's major acupoint. She couldn't muster the slightest bit of ki anymore.

"Do you want to live?" Zu An asked next to her ear, sounding amused. Zhao Xiaodie was filled with grief and indignation. She hadn't expected her own words to be returned to her so quickly!

Chapter 1608: I Have Never Heard Such a Weird Request

Zhao Xiaodie gradually calmed down from her initial alarm. Her previous arrogant expression returned as she retorted, "What, do you really dare to kill me? I'm the daughter of King Qi, someone with a title conferred by the court, Princess Butterfly! If you really do anything to me, that will be a crime punishable by nine generations of executions!"

Zu An nodded and said, "If the court finds out, it will indeed be a bit tricky."

"You're still not letting me go after realizing that?" Zhao Xiaodie replied, feeling a hint of pride when she heard Zu An's tone softening. She instinctively wanted to shake off his hand, but unfortunately, Zu An already restricted her in a way that meant she couldn't muster the slightest bit of strength. She couldn't move at all.

Zu An smiled. He moved Zhao Xiaodie's hand, bringing her glistening red nails up to her neck. He said, "This poison of yours is pretty formidable, but I don't believe that you have immunity against your own poison. Still, you'll be nothing more than a puddle of blood, so who would know that I did it? This alley is so secluded that no one will come here. Won't it be fine if I just toss your brain into some random ditch, thus erasing all evidence? Oh, right. You said that even though your entire body will melt, your brain won't, right?"

When she heard those familiar words, Zhao Xiaodie was nearly brought to tears. She really hadn't expected retribution to arrive so quickly. With her status and her high cultivation, when had she ever been so close to another man? She could even feel the heat coming from his palm.

In the past, she had dreamed about being held that closely by her lover, but she could never have expected her first intimate experience to be in this kind of situation. However, she didn't feel any infatuation, nor did she feel any anger. All that remained was horror.

She understood the terror of her own poison better than anyone. The process of melting in which her mind remained clear as her body gradually dissolved really would make her wish she were dead. She had an antidote, but her acupoint was sealed and she couldn't bring it out. There was no way he would feed it to her, either.

"Nooo!" Zhao Xiaodie cried out in alarm. She knew she had lost as soon as she said that, but she didn't dare to take any risks. After all, this was someone who dared to smash her big brother's knees to bits. Who knew what else he was willing to do? Her life was just coming into bloom; how could she die here?

"Oh?" Zu An replied, sounding amused. "Then how about you kneel down and kowtow three hundred times to me? My mood may improve and I may spare your life."

"I clearly only asked for a hundred!" Zhao Xiaodie cried in a panic.

Zu An retorted with a scowl, "What, can't I make you do three hundred?"

Zhao Xiaodie bit her lip and looked away silently. In response, Zu An brought her hand toward her neck again and continued, "What, you don't want to? Then you can't blame me for being merciless."

Zhao Xiaodie took a deep breath, but her chest still rose and fell rapidly. It was clear that she was completely terrified, but she feigned calm as she exclaimed, "If you're going to kill me, then kill me! As a member of the royal family, if I have to be humiliated so badly in order to live, I might as well just die! But there's no way others won't find out. If you really kill me, there will always be clues. If that happens, whether it's my father, the emperor, the court, or the Heavenly Sorrow Sect, they won't let you go!"

"Are you threatening me?" Zu An replied with a cold expression. Then, he took her fingernail and drew it across her neck.

When she felt the stinging pain and smelled a trace of blood, Zhao Xiaodie cried out in a panic, "Nooo! The antidote! Quick, give me the antidote!"

"Are you going to kowtow?" Zu An asked coldly.

"I'll do it!" Zhao Xiaodie wailed tearfully. This guy really was a devil!

"Why didn't you do it earlier? You just had to be disciplined first," Zu An said coldly. "Where is the antidote?"

"It's in my inner pocket, in the green porcelain bottle!" Zhao Xiaodie said quickly. She could feel the poison spreading through her wounds. If not for the fact that she had a strong resistance to poison from being around poisons all the time, nearly half of her body would already have rotted.

Zu An didn't need to worry about her playing tricks. He reached out and searched the area near her chest. When he found the antidote, he fed it to her.

"Cough cough~" Zhao Xiaodie coughed fiercely. When she felt Zu An let her go, she quickly took the antidote and smeared it over the wound across her neck. This guy really was a devil! He actually dared to try to kill her so brazenly!

Zu An calmly watched her go through the process before asking, "Are you going to kowtow now?"

Zhao Xiaodie clenched her teeth. She raised her head proudly and said, "I was in the wrong before. I apologize for my actions."

Zu An sneered and replied, "If an apology meant anything, why would this world need laws?"

"You're acting out of self-interest right now, aren't you? If you have the skill, why don't you bring me to court?" Zhao Xiaodie muttered.

Zu An laughed in annoyance, replying, "You wish." How many officials would really dare to trouble King Qi's daughter?

Zhao Xiaodie took a deep breath. She looked at him with a conflicted expression, saying, "I already apologized to you. What else do you want?"

"I want you to kowtow," Zu An replied bluntly.

Zhao Xiaodie said through gritted teeth, "I am still a princess. I have my pride, you know?"

Zu An continued to stare at her coldly without any intention of changing his mind. Zhao Xiaodie braced herself and said, "You know, I've actually already seen through your plans. You wouldn't actually dare to kill me. In that case, let's both take a step back. I'll apologize to you, and I'll offer you a generous gift. You can choose from all kinds of treasures and divine weapons."

"Oh? Anything I want? Do you have 'One Drop of Heaven's Essence or some Agate of Enlightenment?" Zu An asked. If he really could get the materials he needed to recreate big sis empress' body, not only would he let Zhao Xiaodie go, he would even consider treating her well.

"What are those?" Zhao Xiaodie asked, dumbfounded. She came from the royal family and had even studied at a top-tier sect, the Heavenly Sorrow Sect, so her knowledge was quite impressive. And yet, those were things she had never even heard the names of.

Zu An asked with a scowl, "Then how about you get me a deity-grade weapon?"

Zhao Xiaodie cried out in a panic, "There are only so many deity-grade weapons in the world! If they aren't in the hands of the Fiend Emperor, they're in the human emperor's. Where would I find such a thing for you?"

Zu An sneered and said, "You keep saying no to this and that, even after saying you'd let me choose what I want? Forget it, just kowtow."

"You're clearly just making things hard for me!" Zhao Xiaodie cried, feeling as if she were losing her mind. "Then why don't I find a way to get you an immortal-grade weapon? I'll also find some top-tier medicines. This is already an extremely generous reward! Don't go too far, because you wouldn't actually dare to kill me either way!"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Xiaodie for +555 +555 +555...

Even though immortal-grade weapons were rare, with her father King Qi's prestige, she still had a chance of getting one.

But father will definitely ask me why. If I tell him about what happened, won't he skin this guy alive?

Hmph, look at how smart I am! I'll definitely make this bastard kneel and beg for forgiveness later.

"I wouldn't dare to kill you?" Zu An repeated, the air turning as cold as his expression.

Zhao Xiaodie felt all of her fine hairs stand up. Even though Zu An hadn't done anything yet, she felt an aura of death manifest. She hadn't expected that this seemingly harmless person would be able to give off such a terrifying pressure.

How could she know that after Zu An killed the Fiend Emperor in the secret dungeon and executed the grandmasters at the Fiend King Court, he had developed the most powerful presence imaginable? How could she possibly go against that?

"I was wrong..." Zhao Xiaodie sobbed, bursting into tears. "But I really can't kowtow! Why don't you just whip me with three hundred strikes..."

"Whip you?" Zu An replied with a strange expression. "Keep dreaming!"

Zhao Xiaodie was confused, saying, "What I'm saying is that you should beat me up to vent your anger."

Zu An's face heated up. He coughed a few times to hide his embarrassment, replying, "I don't hit women!"

"Just hit me! Just count it as me begging you! As long as you can vent out your anger, that should be fine!" Zhao Xiaodie pleaded with tears in her eyes. Kowtowing would really be too humiliating! But if she were beaten up, that would be different. That would only be because she was weaker than him, so it wouldn't bring her dignity any damage.

Zu An said with a strange expression, "In all the years I've been alive, I've never heard such a weird request."

Chapter 1609: Imposter

Seemingly worried that Zu An would continue to make her kowtow, Zhao Xiaodie took out a whip and put it into his hands, saying, "Just use this to hit me! As long as you can vent out your anger, that should be fine."

Zu An looked at the small whip in his hands, then glanced at her strangely, remarking, "Could it be that you have some weird fetish?"

"Huh?" Zhao Xiaodie exclaimed in bewilderment, clearly not understanding what he meant.

"Just hit me already!" she continued, her alarm nearly bringing her to tears again. She was scared that he would refuse and bring up kowtowing again, so she began to encourage him. "Could it be that you wouldn't dare to hit me?"

"I wouldn't dare?" Zu An repeated. He knew that she was provoking him, but when he saw her provocative expression, he found it a bit hard to resist. He brought the whip down straight across her bottom.

"Ah!" Zhao Xiaodie screamed in pain. Zu An was a bit hesitant, but Zhao Xiaodie said, "Keep going, I can take it."

Zu An was speechless. He brought the whip down again. He could visibly see Zhao Xiaodie's bottom tremble. However, her robes really were high-quality, not showing any sign of damage after two strikes. Zhao Xiaodie groaned and bit her red lip tightly, tears filling her eyes.

Zu An thought to himself, Should I just let it go? This is just bullying a little girl a bit too much. However, when he remembered her bossy and aggressive appearance, and thought about how

terrible a state he would have been left in if he were weaker, he still hardened his heart and brought the whip down again.

Zhao Xiaodie suddenly groaned. Her cry of pain seemed to carry a hint of some unknown feeling, too. However, Zu An didn't think too much about it and assumed her voice was distorted from pain. He planned to just whip her a couple dozen or so more times and then be done with it. Either way, cultivators' bodies were pretty tough, and wouldn't be broken from just a few dozen lashes. Martial artists liked to show off other kinds of weapons, but wasn't the whip pretty interesting too?

However, as Zu An brought the whip down, Zhao Xiaodie's cries became stranger and stranger, sounding more like moans than screams. Additionally, her whole body trembled slightly, as if she were holding back something.

"If you can't take it anymore, you can choose to beg. If my mood is good, I might just forgive you," Zu An said. Inwardly, he thought, I'm really not suited to being a villain. Am I really about to give up that quickly?

Zhao Xiaodie shook her head, still maintaining a proud expression. Zu An recalled how arrogant and despotic she was; if he couldn't teach her a good lesson today, she would just hurt even more people in the future. As such, he brought the whip down again.

Zhao Xiaodie finally couldn't take it anymore, letting out a sweet and intimate cry. Then, she fell to the ground, unable to even stand up again. Her entire body shook intensely. Her eyes were watery as she looked at Zu An, no longer carrying any hints of crafty and unruly pride. Instead, her face was completely red and her gaze was filled with several different emotions.

Zu An was stunned. As an experienced person, how could he not tell what was going on with her? He had never expected to run into an M! No wonder she hadn't given him any Rage points the entire time he was hitting her. How could he possibly continue? He threw the whip away and leaped back, exclaiming, "What the hell?!"

Only after a long time had passed did Zhao Xiaodie crawl to her feet. Her chest rose and fell intensely; she clearly hadn't recovered from the wonderful sensation. She rubbed her heated cheeks, and there was a flustered expression in her eyes as she muttered, "What is going on with me?"

Only after a moment did she realize what had happened. She had actually shown such an embarrassing side in front of him?

Ahhh! I should've just kowtowed! All of this is his fault! I'm going to make him pay for this one day!

But that kind of feeling just now seemed quite... incredible?

...

Zu An didn't know that he had just unlocked a whole new world for her. He was a bit speechless even when he returned to the relay station. He really was unlucky today! Not only had he not met Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan, he had even encountered a crazy woman.

Not long after he returned, Wang Bolin sought him out and said, "Sir Zu, we need to hurry to Violet Mountain to finish the task his majesty entrusted to us."

Zu An thought, This guy really is honest. He had wanted to stay a few more days in Yi Commandery to spend time with Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan, but now that they had already left, it was meaningless for him to stay any longer. Instead, he would be caught up in the battle between the local officials and King Yan. As such, he nodded and said, "Alright, pass down the order to prepare for departure!"

"Understood!" Wang Bolin replied, feeling overjoyed. It looks like Sir Zu is a serious and earnest person, not one of those slick bastards who love to smooth-talk their way into their positions. Hmph, no matter how good at bootlicking that Zhang Zijiang is, won't he be no match for me when dealing with a practical leader like this?

...

Then, Zu An went over to inform Xie Daoyun. He saw that she was sitting in front of a desk, drawing something. He couldn't help but remark with a smile, "Little sister Ling'er really is hardworking. You're always working hard at drawing talismans even during your spare time."

"Ah?" Xie Daoyun jumped in fright. She quickly hid the talisman in front of her under the table and cried out in alarm, "Big brother Zu, why don't your feet make any noise when you walk?"

Zu An had vaguely noticed a person's outline on the paper. His expression grew strange. Why did it seem as if Xie Daoyun had been caught reading a banned book by a teacher?

She's not drawing dirty things, is she? Zu An thought, but he immediately rejected the suspicion. How could a wise and virtuous lady like her do such a thing?

However, he suddenly remembered Zhao Xiaodie. She normally had a proud and crafty appearance, and yet she was actually an M deep down! Sometimes, one's preferences really can be unpredictable...

In order to help alleviate Xie Daoyun's awkwardness, Zu An said considerately, "I was out for a bit and just came back."

"Were you looking for Miss Chu?" Xie Daoyun asked. She had looked for Zu An as soon as she woke up, but he hadn't been there. She was very intelligent and had guessed where he went.

Zu An nodded and said, "Unfortunately, they already left. I don't know where they went either."

Xie Daoyun tried to console him and said, "Big brother Zu shouldn't feel too discouraged. Those who are destined to meet again will meet again. You'll see them again soon."

She suddenly remembered how even though she left the capital on her own, she had ended up being reunited with him when she was in a moment of crisis. Wasn't that even more of a once-in-a-millennium fated encounter?

"Little sister Ling'er's words are always so pleasant," Zu An said, his mood improving quite a bit. He then told her the reason for his trip.

Xie Daoyun replied, "I also just happen to need to go to Violet Mountain to complete my mission." She paused for a moment, then suddenly asked, "Big brother Zu, can you find a set of clothes for me? I want to dress up as one of your personal soldiers."

Zu An asked in confusion, "Why?"

Xie Daoyun said, sounding embarrassed, "My mission this time is to see if there are any dangerous formations set up on Violet Mountain. If I did that openly, it would imply that I don't trust the State Teacher, which would be quite disrespectful to him and attract the gossip of others. It would be really bad if that ended up causing conflict between the academy and the State Teacher."

Zu An figured that made sense. If there really was something wrong with the State Teacher, then her investigation could prove dangerous. It was safer for her to follow by his side. As such, he took out a set of clothes from his Brilliant Glass Bead and said, "I don't have any new ones, but this is a set I've worn before. Should I ask the others?" He was always changing identities, so he had naturally prepared spare uniforms.

Xie Daoyun took the outfit and said, "There's no need for that. This set is good enough." If another man had worn those clothes before, she would never wear them, but her big brother Zu was different from other people.

Zu An sighed in relief before saying, "Little sister Ling'er should change into them quickly. We're going to leave soon." He thought to himself, After I leave Yi City, investigating Golden Token Seven's case might become difficult. I'm going to have to run around back and forth all night again.

Xie Daoyun's face turned a bit red as she asked, "Can big brother Zu go outside first? I'm going to change." Even though she had a really favorable impression of him, how could she do such a thing right in front of him?

Zu An was a bit embarrassed. He quickly left and helped her close the door, saying, "Sorry, I was a bit absent-minded just now."

...

Meanwhile, the usually quiet and secluded area around Violet Mountain was full of people. As it turned out, the nine daoist sects had all gathered to hold their great competition at Violet Mountain. Their disciples were busy registering themselves by the mountain gate.

Just then, two leaders from a group in the distance spoke to each other through ki.

"Master, do you think they'll be able to recognize us as fakes?"

"Don't worry. The daoist sects don't actually interact with each other that often. The ones we're impersonating are just some fairly unimportant elders. It would be strange if they could recognize us."

The two had ordinary appearances, but their voices were very pleasant to the ear.

Chapter 1610 – Infatuation

One of the two, a young lady, muttered quietly, "The powerful cultivators of the nine daoist sects are all here. The two of us are from the Devil Sect, so I can't help but feel as if we're walking straight into a tiger's den."

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The older one scolded her. "It's the Holy Sect! What Devil Sect?"

The young lady couldn't help but grumble, "That's what everyone calls it though, and I think it sounds pretty good."

"Other people call us the Devil Sect to slander us. Why are you also saying it? Did your brain rot or something?" the older one replied in annoyance.

"But doesn't even master call us the Devil Sect sometimes?" the young lady retorted, sticking out her tongue. She hugged the older one while acting like a spoiled child.

The other disciples all glanced at them. They thought to themselves, That woman is so ugly, and yet is still trying to act cute; how disgusting. But that little tongue of hers is still pretty cute...

The young lady shot all of them a look and said, "If not for the fact that we can't let our identities be exposed today, I would already have dug out their eyes."

The older woman said with a slight smile, "That's more like our Devil... Ahem, Holy Sect's style. Focus. We're almost at the mountain gate. They seem to be checking something there."

...

The two of them quickly arrived at the mountain gate. There was a group of Righteous Sun Sect disciples standing there, all standing with upright postures. Their ki surged powerfully around them, showing that they had excellent cultivations.

The older lady sighed, saying, "Just a single Righteous Sun Sect already has so many talented people; even the disciples watching the gate are so strong. Things are going to become more and more difficult for our Holy Sect in the future."

The young lady tried to make her feel better by saying, "Master, don't think too much of it. These were clearly carefully selected talents, put here to serve as a shop front. It's definitely not representative of their disciples' average level. Those daoist hypocrites love doing that kind of thing."

The older woman nodded in agreement, saying, "You're right. That stone cold woman's sect in particular loves doing these things. Your master was too worried for nothing."

Naturally, these two were the Devil Sect's Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei. They had both changed their appearance. Even someone such as Zu An, who was very familiar with them, would find it difficult to recognize them.

"Guests, please wait for a moment," a Righteous Sun Sect disciple called out when they arrived in front of the mountain, approaching them and adding in a refined and courteous manner, "Do these guests here have an invitation letter?" Afterward, seemingly concerned that the guests would be unhappy, he quickly added, "Each year, many people come to admire Violet Mountain. There are many people joining the Nine Sects Competition this time and it is impossible to recognize everyone. In order to prevent our competition from being disturbed by bystanders, we have decided to go through this process. I hope that seniors can forgive us for this."

Yun Jianyue nodded slightly. Qiu Honglei then handed over a jade tile with a big smile. The Righteous Sun Sect disciple sighed in relief when he saw the jade tile. It was a specially made invitation tile made by the Righteous Sun Sect. It wasn't something outsiders could imitate.

But which sect is this junior sister from? Her mental cultivation really is powerful. She clearly looks so... and yet she can still be so optimistic. She really is a model for us to learn from.

When he saw the information on the jade tile, he couldn't help but exclaim in astonishment, "So it was Emptiness Isle's Elder Peng; it's an honor! Please follow this path up the mountain; that is where the golden peak is located. There will be a disciple there to arrange your check-in..." As he spoke, he called over a junior brother to guide them.

Yun Jianyue nodded and walked in that direction. Qiu Honglei quickly followed along, thinking that her master was really composed. I'm about to die from nervousness at the thought of being exposed.

...

When they left, some of the Righteous Sun Sect disciples secretly conversed through ki.

"I heard that the nine sects have had different levels of development for some time. Many of the sects have already fallen. But I thought that no matter how bad it was, it couldn't be to that extent, right? But today, I've realized the truth. This is all the people who came from Emptiness Isle? And it's only an elder leading the way. The disciple's cultivation doesn't seem to be all that impressive either."

"What's going on with that Elder Peng in front? I've never heard of this person before, and yet she put on such arrogant airs, not even willing to speak much with us. She clearly looks down on us."

"I've actually heard of a strange-tempered woman from Emptiness Isle surnamed Peng. But she usually remains in seclusion and rarely comes out. Between that and her irascible temper, no one likes her. That's why it's best not to provoke her. She is still an elder, after all."

"We're not that dumb, okay?"

"Also, their looks are quite... unique. They don't look anything like our majestic sect."

Their leader scolded them just then. "One's appearance is dictated by nature. All of you, watch your mouths!"

"Yes, senior brother!" the others replied, shivering. They didn't dare to keep joking around in private anymore.

...

Because Violet Mountain was located in Yi Commandery, there had long been many myths and legends surrounding it since ancient times. In the past, because the Righteous Sect's Sect Master at the time, Wang Wuxie, had supported the founding emperor, he was given Purple Mountain as his own dao rite for his contributions. Furthermore, he had been given the title of State Teacher.

Even though Violet Mountain was only a few hundred li from Yi City, its status in Yi Commandery was extraordinary. They were outside the jurisdiction of the local government or King Yan Manor.

The vast Violet Mountain Range extended for thousands of li. However, everyone often calls Violet Mountain the territory of the Righteous Sun Sect. Apart from the main peak Crouching Cloud Crown, there is also Heavenly Lake Peak, White Dragon Peak, Heavenly Bamboo Peak, Watchful Heart Peak,

Restful Heart Peak, Immortal Rock Cliff, Thunder Peak, and other smaller peaks. Even smaller peaks than these were too many to count.

Those peaks were often occupied by the sect's elders and other individuals with extraordinary status. They cultivated on those peaks with their disciples.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An's group proceeded toward Violet Mountain. A journey of several hundred li would take at least a few days for an army from the ancient world, but this was a world of cultivation. The Armed Escort Division was a carefully selected army consisting solely of cultivators. Their mounts were of excellent breeds, so they arrived at the foot of Violet Mountain in just half a day.

When he heard Xie Daoyun's description, Zu An couldn't help but sigh in amazement at the Righteous Sun Sect's history. No wonder they had come to lead the nine daoist sects.

"The violet ki that rises each day in Violet Mountain is of great benefit to cultivation, and it can promote the growth of all kinds of spiritual medicines and mineral resources. That's why the Righteous Sun Sect has only grown stronger and stronger over the years," Xie Daoyun explained as she followed behind him in a normal soldier outfit. She really was pretty and especially endearing.

Zu An asked Xie Daoyun curiously, "Just what kind of background does this violet ki have? Has no one been able to figure it out in the past thousand years?"

"Many learned people have entered the mountains to investigate before, but they all returned without any new information," Xie Daoyun said, shaking her head. "In the last hundred years, Violet Mountain became the dao rite of the Righteous Sun Sect. After that, no one was allowed to enter the mountains to investigate."

Zu An chuckled and remarked, "If it were me, I wouldn't want my territory's secrets to be known by the entire world either."

Nearby, Zhang Zijiang and Wang Bolin speculated as they watched the two chat happily. If they had such a pretty personal attendant, how great would that be? Every night back at their tents would simply be wonderful. The two reflexively looked at the boorish men around them. They immediately felt their stomachs churn.

Zu An then asked more about the State Teacher, Wang Wuxie. Xie Daoyun replied, "The State Teacher is an exceedingly talented individual. In the past, the Righteous Sun Sect was actually one of the lower mid-ranked sects. It was through his own strength alone that the sect reached its current heights.

"He rose above all of his peers in the Righteous Sun Sect at a young age, then seized the victory in the Nine Sects Competition, establishing the record of being the youngest one to win in history. His appearance was also handsome and refined, capturing the hearts of countless female cultivators back then. Unfortunately, even until now, he has never gotten married."

Zu An was stunned, saying, "He's the State Teacher and even part of the daoist sects. He can still take on a wife and have children?"

“Of course. Among the nine sects, apart from the White Jade Sect and a few other daoist sects that don’t practice marriage, the other sects have no such restrictions. Of course, as cultivators, they don’t really encourage it either.”

Zu An thought, What kind of stupid rules are these? It’s really harming my relationship with Yan Xuehen and Chu Chuyan.

“You made him sound so amazing, and yet he never got married his whole life. Does he not like women?” Zu An asked curiously.

Xie Daoyun replied with a blush, “What are you thinking? The reason why he’s never gotten married is because of one woman.”

Zu An was stunned, asking, “Just which woman has such charm, to leave such an outstanding man in that state?”

“You’ve met that woman before,” Xie Daoyun said with a smile.

Zu An was stunned. Suddenly, his expression changed and he asked, “It’s not the White Jade Sect’s Sect Master Yan again, is it?”

“Who else could it be?” Xie Daoyun replied with an expression that seemed to be saying ‘of course’.

Zu An was speechless.