

Immortal 1671

Chapter 1671: The One Who Was Investigating

Yan Xuehen's declaration left everyone present shocked.

As she looked at Yan Xuehen, Elder Peng's eyes widened. This stone cold woman really is my sworn enemy! I already changed my appearance like this, and yet she could still sense my aura?

Wang Wuxie asked Yan Xuehen, "Sect Master Yan, why do you think that?"

Zu An also looked at her. Unlike everyone else who was alarmed, he was instead pleasantly surprised. Big sis Yun also came?

Yan Xuehen and Zu An's gazes separated as soon as they met. She replied, "The Devil Sect's arranged day of competition with us is about to arrive. Normally, they should have come earlier to familiarize themselves with the situation, but they are nowhere in sight even after all this time. That means either they are overestimating themselves too much, or they are not using their real identities."

The daoist sects' leaders all frowned. Even though they didn't like that Devil Sect witch, they had to admit that she definitely wasn't just an egotistical fool. It was unlikely for her to overestimate herself that much.

"What Sect Master Yan says makes sense. Even though I already had our disciples strengthen patrols around Violet Mountain, they would not be able to stop someone like Yun Jianyue," Wang Wuxie said.

"I feel like that may not necessarily be true. Even though Yun Jianyue is formidable, we have so many people here. If she came here in an honorable way, we would be too ashamed to try to ambush her. But if she stirred up trouble first, we would have a reason to act as well. It would be her loss then," Wan Tongtian suggested.

"Heh, we can only say that Brother Wan doesn't understand that witch's nature enough. Yun Jianyue always does things that are completely outside everyone's expectations. Sometimes, it even comes off as deranged," Guan Chouhai said with a laugh.

Elder Peng narrowed her eyes slightly. I'll remember that.

She naturally wouldn't admit to such a reputation. She continued to argue noisily about how it was definitely someone here who had taken her disciple. In the end, the others could only agree to let her investigate all of their residences, but as expected, there were no discoveries. Wang Wuxie tried to appease her while expressing that he would definitely do his utmost to help her find her disciple.

Thus, the great competition could only temporarily come to a close. Those present all returned to their own residences.

Everyone present on Violet Mountain was anxious. After all, if even someone with Peng Wuyan's level of cultivation could be kidnapped without a sound, wouldn't it be even easier to kidnap everyone else?

The elders were also worried. They told their important disciples to not leave their line of sight to avoid repeating such a disaster.

It was to the extent that even Yan Xuehen returned to her courtyard and didn't come back out. She had some lingering fears. What if that mysterious person had taken Chuyan while she was away last night?

...

Zu An returned to his room. He also warned Xie Daoyun to not run around Violet Mountain for the time being, for her own safety. After all, that Peng Wuyan seemed even stronger than her. Of course, if it really was Yun Jianyue who had done this, he didn't have much reason for concern. But if it wasn't, that would make things much more worrisome.

Suddenly, he received news that Emptiness Isle's Elder Peng was looking for him. He felt his scalp turn numb. He had seen how much of a troublemaker she was. Even all of those sect masters were at their wits' end with her. Why is she looking for me? Don't tell me she thinks that I kidnapped Peng Wuyan?

Even though he wasn't all that willing, he was worried that she would do something irrational because of her disciple's disappearance. As such, he came out to greet her, asking, "Has Elder Peng found any new clues?"

Elder Peng didn't reply and just stared at him. Zu An was a bit stunned when he saw how she was looking at him. He could only continue, "Don't worry, Elder Peng. I've also given the order for my subordinates to search around Violet Mountain. I'll definitely contact you as soon as there's any sign of Miss Peng."

Elder Peng finally retracted her gaze. She gave Xie Daoyun, Zhang Zijiang, and the others a look and slowly said, "I have some things to discuss with Sir Zu alone."

Zu An was stunned. He couldn't figure out what she had to say to him. Could it be that she had evidence that Peng Wuyan really had been captured by a daoist sect elder? Was that why she had sought him out, so he could make things right?

Xie Daoyun and Zhang Zijiang were a bit worried. This Elder Peng's cultivation was really high. Being with her alone while she was enraged didn't seem safe at all.

However, Zu An wasn't scared and gave them a look that seemed to say 'don't worry'. He told them to wait outside. Then, he looked at the middle-aged woman across from him and asked, "Is there anything Elder Peng wishes to talk to me about?"

Elder Peng stared at him, then suddenly chuckled. She said, "Sir Zu loves to fondle the flowers and trample the grass as expected. You even have a great beauty cross-dressing as a man with you during this trip to Violet Mountain."

Zu An's eyes immediately widened. It wasn't because she had recognized Xie Daoyun's real identity, but because of her voice. Previously, her voice had clearly been that of an old-fashioned middle-aged woman. It had also carried a hint of aloofness that kept others from getting too close. However, her voice was now extremely charming and pleasant, and there was also a natural pride to it. It was as if she considered everyone else trash. There was only one person who could perfectly combine those two entirely different feelings.

Zu An looked at her in complete shock and exclaimed, "Big sis... big sis Yun?"

“Sir Zu has colluded with the Devil Sect Master after all.” Elder Peng said, returning to her previous voice. She sneered as she looked at him.

Zu An was startled. Had he been fooled? What the heck? I won’t be able to wash this off even if I jumped into the yellow springs of hell! Am I really going to take the blame for Peng Wuyan’s disappearance?

Wait...

He looked at the woman doubtfully. How could her voice possibly be that similar?

When she saw his conflicted and stunned expression, Elder Peng suddenly laughed. Then, she removed her face mask. Long hair scattered down, revealing her gorgeous features.

“Big sis Yun!” Zu An exclaimed, feeling happy and surprised. He couldn’t help but run over and give her a big hug.

“What are you doing?” Yun Jianyue asked. She hadn’t expected him to be so direct either. After pushing him away, she gave him an annoyed look.

“This kind of feeling is definitely big sis Yun,” Zu An said happily.

Yun Jianyue’s face heated up. This damn brat really was daring! He didn’t hold himself back at all.

Zu An suddenly voiced his surprise. “Was that Peng Wuyan really stolen by you? Just how did you make yourself look so much like Elder Peng? We couldn’t even tell today at all.”

Yun Jianyue harrumphed. “Your eyes were full of those other pretty sisters, so of course you couldn’t recognize me.”

When Zu An realized what she was implying, he exclaimed in surprise, “So Elder Peng was you the entire time?”

“Of course,” Yun Jianyue said proudly. “That Elder Peng was just an unknown elder from Emptiness Isle, and Emptiness Isle has always resided far away, in a place that isn’t all that close to the other eight sects. Wang Wuxie had never seen her, so I was able to bluff my way through just by changing my appearance a bit.”

“But Emptiness Isle’s disciple was really strong...” Zu An trailed off. His expression suddenly changed.

“She was Honglei?” No wonder he had always felt a sense of familiarity from her.

“You only realized now? I don’t even know whether to call you smart or stupid,” Yun Jianyue said with a sigh.

Zu An panicked, exclaiming, “But she went missing yesterday! We have to find her as soon as possible!”

Even though he had been worried about Peng Wuyan’s disappearance before, they didn’t have too much to do with each other. However, if it was Qiu Honglei, things were different.

“Don’t worry. That’s just something I said to fool them,” Yun Jianyue said. Her attitude was completely different from how furious she had sounded at Golden Peak before.

"But where is she then?" Zu An asked, still not fully convinced.

Yun Jianyue was a bit annoyed. She snapped, "What, you don't even believe my words? Are you scared that I'd sell your little lover away or something?"

Zu An said apologetically, "I'm just worried, okay? It's been so long since I saw her that I got a bit worked up."

"Why don't you say that again in front of that Chu girl? She just happens to be here too," Yun Jianyue said with a sneer.

Zu An had an awkward expression. It wasn't just Chu Chuyan; there was Yan Xuehen too! If she found out what was happening right now, wouldn't things immediately be blown out of proportion?

"Don't worry. I sent Honglei out on a mission," Yun Jianyue said.

Zu An was stunned. He said, "No wonder you put on that performance today. You wanted to delay the competition. But what kind of important thing is it that you guys can't even be bothered with such an important competition anymore?"

Yun Jianyue's expression suddenly became extremely conflicted. She looked at Zu An for a while before asking, "Can I trust you?"

Zu An was stunned. He reached out to hold her hand before saying, "We've already fought through life and death so many times. I thought that was something we didn't have to worry about anymore."

"Heh, didn't you and that stone cold woman also go through life and death together?" Yun Jianyue replied, clearly unsatisfied with his reply.

Zu An said in embarrassment, "It's different. We have the most intimate relationship."

Sigh, the mouths of men really are unreliable.

Yun Jianyue's face heated up. She muttered, "Hmph, why are you bringing that up..." She pushed him away before continuing, "That matter was only because it was an emergency. You were saved, and I was satisfied, so we're both even. Don't bring it up again. Also, you have to call me master in front of Honglei. In the future, we'll go back to how we were before."

Zu An was stunned. Perhaps it was because she came from the Devil Sect, but Yun Jianyue was clearly a bit more at ease about such a thing than Yan Xuehen. However, that kind of carefree attitude only made him feel that she was farther from him. In that instant, he didn't even know what to do anymore.

"Our relationship is special, so I'll count you as trustworthy. Even so, you can't tell anyone about what you're about to hear. Otherwise, I might be completely ruined forever," Yun Jianyue said, her expression grave.

Zu An shivered. He had never seen her act so serious before. He nodded and said, "I understand!"

When she sensed his sincerity, Yun Jianyue asked, "Did you go to arrest King Yan last night?"

"I didn't expect you to find out so quickly," Zu An said. Although he was a bit surprised, it wasn't too unexpected. Violet Mountain wasn't that close to Yi Commandery, but news of something that major

also traveled quickly. She was the Devil Sect Master, so it wasn't that shocking for her to know. That was before factoring in that she knew about his Golden Token Eleven identity.

"Why did you have to act against King Yan? Don't tell me it was really because he was going to rebel," Yun Jianyue said as she looked at him. "Judging from my understanding of you, you're not all that loyal to Zhao Han either."

Zu An explained, "The main reason was that I was investigating the murder of Golden Token Seven in Yi Commandery, and it ended up involving these things. Golden Token Seven and I weren't friends, but I didn't want him to pass away just like that either."

"He didn't kill Golden Token Seven," Yun Jianyue directly said.

"How do you know?" Zu An asked, a bit surprised at how certain she was.

"King Yan was also investigating Golden Token Seven's death," Yun Jianyue began, before pausing for a moment. "And the one he entrusted that task to just happened to be me."

Chapter 1672: Behind-the-Scenes Story

"What?" Zu An exclaimed, feeling truly shocked. He had never expected her to have connections with King Yan!

His shock wasn't completely unfounded. King Yan was famed for his contributions in fending off the Devil Sect and their rebel army, receiving countless awards for it. That was why they were known as sworn enemies, and no one would associate them together.

"Is it that surprising?" Yun Jianyue replied with a chuckle. "This is precisely the reason why I had to confirm whether you were worthy of my trust or not."

Zu An shook his head with a frown, saying, "If I remember correctly, Honglei was captured by King Yan Manor. I even had to figure out a way to save her. Just when did you two get in contact with each other?"

"Before then, there were some rumors and slander going around in the court, claiming that King Yan was suspected of having befriended some undesirable parties. That was why we worked together to put on that play. We just didn't expect the one who showed up to be you," Yun Jianyue said, sounding a bit apologetic.

Zu An immediately figured out many things. King Yan and the Devil Sect being in contact made perfect sense. King Yan was someone with such great ambitions, so of course he wouldn't be satisfied with just being the court's hired hand. He was already a king himself, so he couldn't even get promoted beyond that.

Even if he wiped out the Devil Sect, so what? Could it be that he would become a candidate for the throne? On the contrary, that would do nothing but make him lose his soldiers and generals. Furthermore, even though he was a part of the royal family, he wasn't from the same faction as Zhao Han. Their bloodlines were rather far apart from each other. As the sayings went, 'When the leader falls, everyone related suffers the same way, and when the birds have flown away, the bow is stored away.' He understood these principles well.

As such, although he looked like he was doing his best to subdue the Devil Sect on the surface, he was actually in close contact with them. That way, he could endlessly obtain the court's military supplies while gaining additional rewards and honors. With that, he had much more room for maneuvering. Thus, both the illegal smuggling and the nurturing of a private army went smoothly.

Meanwhile, the Devil Sect didn't want someone like King Yan to constantly bother them either, so they easily hit it off. Each year, the Devil Sect was in charge of offering some sacrifices so King Yan could obtain battle achievements, while they would borrow King Yan's protection to strengthen themselves.

It was no wonder Zu An's rescue of Qiu Honglei had been so strange back then. She had even said something strange along the lines of 'what if I did something to let you down'. So this was what she had been talking about at the time! At the time, Qiu Honglei hadn't been in danger at all. She had known the truth, but she couldn't explain herself. She could only hint at it ambiguously.

Meanwhile, Golden Token Seven's words from back then had become easier to understand as well. As a Golden Token Envoy assigned by the emperor to monitor the region, he had likely suspected King Yan and the Devil Sect's relationship for quite some time. After getting involved in the rescue of Qiu Honglei and finding out certain details, he had likely already confirmed that the two sides were working together. Afterward, he said some profound and regretful-sounding words to Zu An. It turned out to have been because he was worried that his life would be in danger if he continued to investigate King Yan.

Later, things had gone just as Golden Token Seven anticipated. He had died mysteriously not long after that.

Yun Jianyue's expression changed several times before she finally calmed down a bit. Then, she said, "I know you're smart. You've probably already thought through what happened."

Zu An nodded. In the end, he sighed and said, "You guys really fooled the entire world this time. If King Yan hadn't been captured, you would never have told me the truth, right?"

"It's as you say. If King Yan hadn't been captured, I wouldn't have told you about these things, but..." Yun Jianyue trailed off, looking at Zu An with dignified, yet charming eyes. She continued, "It's only because of our relationship that I told you the truth. Otherwise, I would have said something else."

Zu An hugged her with a smile, saying, "Looks like big sis Yun really does consider me as one of your own. Otherwise, you wouldn't have told me this secret that's so important to the Devil Sect."

"Stop acting so cheeky," Yun Jianyue said, moving to one side to avoid his touch. "I already told you to treat me like your master in the future. Otherwise, Honglei will find out that something is strange sooner or later."

Zu An had a strange expression. When he thought about how their bodies had pounded against each other, it really was hard for him to treat her as a senior.

"Ahem." He composed himself and continued, "But judging from what you're saying, King Yan is still the biggest suspect regarding Golden Token Seven's death."

Yun Jianyue shook her head and replied, "King Yan expressed that he wanted to kill Golden Token Seven several times, but he couldn't act because of Golden Token Seven's status. As such, he contacted our

Holy Sect several times. But because I knew that you were a Golden Token Envoy, I was worried that you could have some kind of relationship with Golden Token Seven, and thus didn't agree."

Zu An was moved. He looked at her with a grateful expression and said, "You were already worrying for my sake even though we didn't have the most intimate relationship yet! Big sis Yun, you care about me after all."

Yun Jianyue harrumphed. "Hmph, that was because I owed you the favor from the Imperial Palace. It's not what you're thinking."

Zu An didn't argue with her, and just continued to look at her with a big smile.

"What are you looking at? We have more important things to take care of," Yun Jianyue snapped with a hint of annoyance. She thought she had finally figured out how to deal with him, but she hadn't expected him to be so thick-skinned, leaving her puzzled at what to do.

Zu An put away his smile and asked, "Could it be that King Yan asked someone else to take care of it?"

Yun Jianyue shook her head. "That's not possible. Back then, after something happened to Golden Token Seven, he contacted the Holy Sect shortly after, requesting our help in finding out what happened in that situation. There was no reason for him to fool me."

Zu An nodded and acknowledged what she said. King Yan and Yun Jianyue were collaborators; there was no reason to lie to her about this.

It was no wonder that back in the prison, King Yan had said that he had someone look into it, but he wasn't willing to say who it was. He hadn't wanted his relationship with the Devil Sect to be exposed, as that would also completely destroy everything he had. He hadn't wanted to share something like that with Golden Token Eleven.

But he probably never expected the Devil Sect Master to actually be so close to me.

"Then did big sis Yun find out anything?" Zu An asked.

Yun Jianyue replied, "I thought that King Yan had some ability, and with my Holy Sect's competence, we would easily find out the truth. But even though we investigated and investigated, all the clues disappeared. We continued for a long time, but didn't manage to find any valuable information. I could sense that there was a powerful force backing this ordeal, one that wasn't weaker than King Yan at all, and is hiding in the shadows."

Zu An was stunned. He said, "All of Yi Commandery is King Yan's territory. With your Holy Sect's help, how could there be any powers that you don't know about?"

"That's what we couldn't figure out either," Yun Jianyue said with a frown. "But King Yan is quite the ambitious and ruthless individual. Since he couldn't find the mastermind, he decided to push things in the direction that would be most beneficial to him. You just happened to have arrived in Yi Commandery, so he bribed an Embroidered Envoy named Jiang Zhong to mislead you and make you investigate the Hub of Freedom instead."

Zu An suddenly understood what had happened. He asked, "Why did he want me to act against the Hub of Freedom?"

King Yan's Pegasus Merchant Group previously competed against the Zhenyuan Merchant Group. Could it be that the Hub of Freedom has something to do with the Zhenyuan Merchant Group?

Yun Jianyue's reply was quite surprising to him, however. "The Hub of Freedom and Yi Commandery's Governor Zhang have a good relationship. Furthermore, Zhang Jie has been at odds with King Yan over various matters over the years, but he couldn't do anything to retaliate because of Zhang Jie's status. He always viewed Governor Zhang as a thorn in his side, so he wanted you to investigate the Hub of Freedom, and then Zhang Jie, thus eliminating this opponent of his."

Zu An was alarmed. Zhang Jie? He seemed to have overlooked the governor's existence. Someone who could face King Yan in Yi Commandery for so long... Why would someone like that put on such an incompetent and powerless appearance?

"But even though you clearly fell into his trap, why didn't you investigate the Hub of Freedom, instead investigating King Yan?" Yun Jianyue asked, touching on the question that had left King Yan the most puzzled the entire time. King Yan had felt that his scheme was already quite brilliant, and yet it hadn't accomplished anything. Its failure truly kept him up at night.

There was no need for Zu An to hide such a thing from Yun Jianyue, so he replied, "I have a friend in the Hub of Freedom. We talked, and I believe they wouldn't deceive me."

"You left out their name on purpose, so it must be a woman, right? And definitely a ridiculously pretty woman," Yun Jianyue retorted with a sneer. "You're really something, you know? No matter where we go, regardless of whether it's great sects or hidden organizations, your lovers are everywhere."

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +200 +200 +200...

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment, replying, "What do you mean? It's just a friend, a friend."

"A friend, just like me?" Yun Jianyue blurted out, but she quickly regretted it. Hadn't she just ended up dragging herself into this mess now too?

"There's no way she and I are as close as me and big sis Yun," Zu An quickly said with an upright expression. It was the truth, so he had absolutely no guilt in saying it.

"Who's close to you?" Yun Jianyue retorted, starting to feel a bit uncomfortable. Her thoughts were unreadable as she said, "If King Yan found out that he was defeated because of your fickleness in love, he would likely just die from anger."

Zu An could only laugh in self-mockery. He was worried that Yun Jianyue would use this as a pretext to start a fuss and quickly asked, "I am actually really curious as to how King Yan bribed Jiang Zhong. After all, Embroidered Envoys are always strictly examined. All of them are individuals with clear backgrounds and firm wills. Jiang Zhong's rank wasn't low, so how did King Yan bribe him?"

It hadn't been that long since the Embroidered Envoy was set up, so it wasn't likely for there to be that much corruption yet.

Yun Jianyue said seriously, "King Yan didn't bribe him, but instead saved his life."

Zu An was stunned. So that was what happened!

Yun Jianyue didn't wait for him to ask further and continued, "Back then, Jiang Zhong was about to be silenced by a mysterious group of people, but King Yan just happened to save him. That was how he ended up working under King Yan."

"Silenced?" Zu An repeated in shock. Someone dared to kill an Embroidered Envoy to keep a secret? Who in this world dared to do such a thing? Could it be an internal conflict within the Embroidery House?

Yun Jianyue said, "This is also the only thing we gained from our investigation. The ones who tried to kill him were assassins from the Shadow Group."

"Shadow Group?" Zu An exclaimed in surprise, not expecting to hear the mysterious organization's name again. From Brightmoon City to the capital, and even until now, he had already interacted with them several times. The organization seemed even more mysterious than the Hub of Freedom. For better or for worse, he could find the Hub of Freedom's money-squandering establishment. But no one had ever seen what kind of place the Shadow Group was in.

"That Jiang Zhong seemed to have been roped in by the Shadow Group by some method. Unfortunately, he didn't know too much about the Shadow Group, and we weren't able to find any valuable intelligence either," Yun Jianyue said, sounding quite vexed.

"Why would he be silenced?" Zu An asked after a pause.

"That involves the disappearance of a batch of gunpowder," Yun Jianyue said. She paused for a moment before continuing, "The reason I came to Violet Mountain this time was partly to investigate that."

Chapter 1673: Unforeseen Event

Zu An was stunned. How had this situation ended up involving gunpowder?

Even though this was a world of cultivation, gunpowder existed. It just happened to be much weaker than in Zu An's previous world, so it couldn't compete against the methods of cultivators in this world. Still, it was good in terms of how cost-effective it was. It was easy to acquire, so it was usually used for mining or military purposes.

As if seeing through his confusion, Yun Jianyue explained, "Back then, the court was supposed to send a batch of gunpowder to Yi Commandery and it was to be received by King Yan, but it was plundered midway. The Embroidered Envoy in charge of that case was Jiang Zhong. Later, through his investigation, he discovered that it was stolen by the Devil Sect. The case was closed just like that."

Zu An sighed and said, "If it had been anywhere else, that conclusion would be fine, but he already knew that King Yan and the Devil Sect were secretly allies!"

Yun Jianyue gave him a look, clearly unhappy with him calling her sect the Devil Sect. She replied, "You're right. We knew that we hadn't done such a thing, and King Yan believed us. That meant there was something wrong with the one who came to the conclusion."

"King Yan went to investigate Jiang Zhong's background, but just happened to run into him while he was being tracked by a group of mysterious pursuers who were trying to silence him. King Yan's subordinates thus took the chance to rescue him."

"Where is Jiang Zhong right now?" Zu An asked. He had tried to find the man after realizing that there was something wrong with him, but hadn't been able to find Jiang Zhong at all.

"He was probably hidden or killed by King Yan," Yun Jianyue said, shaking her head. She clearly didn't care much about a nobody like that.

"Later, King Yan interrogated Jiang Zhong. Jiang Zhong was at the end of his rope and could only seek out King Yan," she continued, "It seems that Jiang Zhong went too far in gambling and lost his family fortune, accumulating a large amount of debt and causing his marriage to fail. He fell deeper and deeper into debt until Shadow Group found a chance to purchase him."

"Gambling is indeed a vicious poison," Zu An remarked. He thought to himself, There really is something wrong with Yi Commandery's Embroidered Envoy system. Its subordinates had already reached such a state, and yet they hadn't noticed anything ahead of time.

"But Jiang Zhong didn't know about the Shadow Group's details, so he only listened to orders. His line of contact with his superiors was already nowhere to be found," Yun Jianyue said. As the Devil Sect Master, she clearly held some reservations toward the mysterious Shadow Group.

"What about the batch of gunpowder that disappeared?" Zu An asked.

"Judging from my investigation since then, the trail ended at Violet Mountain. So, I suspect that the batch of gunpowder has already been delivered to Violet Mountain," Yun Jianyue answered.

"What?!" Zu An exclaimed in shock. This was gunpowder that was used by the court to supply the military! What was it going to be used for in a place like Violet Mountain?

When he then thought about how the emperor would hold the Fengshan Ceremony here, however, it wasn't hard for him to guess the objective.

"But I don't know where it's hidden. Furthermore, there's no way such a large amount of gunpowder was delivered here without causing any activity at all. That means there's only one possibility, which is that a certain important figure is covering it up," Yun Jianyue said.

"Are you suspecting Wang Wuxie?" Zu An asked in alarm. All of Violet Mountain was Wang Wuxie's territory. In such a situation, he was the most suspicious one.

"Wang Wuxie is indeed suspicious," Yun Jianyue said, shaking her head. "It isn't impossible for it to be the other daoist sects either. Many people came to Violet Mountain ahead of time for this great daoist competition. If they were here to serve as the receiving end, the Righteous Sun Sect couldn't really just examine their possessions either."

"So that's why you pretended to be Emptiness Isle's Elder Peng. You were investigating this matter," Zu An said, having thought through many things. No wonder he had always sensed such a familiar feeling from Peng Wuyan. He was glad that he hadn't gotten into any conflict with them so far, and had even helped them several times. Otherwise, he could have ended up being hated by them!

He asked, "Right, where are the real Elder Peng and Peng Wuyan then?"

"I killed them," Yun Jianyue said with a displeased expression. "I'm a demoness who kills without batting an eyelid, after all."

Zu An frowned. Even though he knew about her identity, based on their interactions, he hadn't really seen that vicious side of hers. He still felt a bit uncomfortable when he heard that.

"Look at how scared you got," Yun Jianyue said, rolling her eyes. "Don't worry. It's too much of a waste to kill someone just like that. I locked them up and plan to just release them after all this. Who knows, I might even be able to plant a seed in the daoist sects for the future."

Zu An sighed in relief. He quickly asked with a chuckle, "How has the investigation been going so far?"

"Honglei and I have been investigating this matter the entire time, but unfortunately, there haven't been any results," Yun Jianyue said. Her expression became a bit strange as she continued, "But sometimes, not being able to find out anything can tell us a lot of things."

Zu An was stunned. He asked, "What do you mean?"

"I was also suspicious of the daoist sects before, but they are still just guests. It would have been practically impossible for them to sneak in that batch of gunpowder without alerting me," Yun Jianyue said. She paused for a moment, then continued with a serious expression, "And the only one on all of Violet Mountain who could do such a thing may be Wang Wuxie."

"He seems quite refined and elegant, and he's even the State Teacher. It's not too likely for him to do such a thing, right?" Zu An wondered. He recalled his impression of Wang Wuxie and how he hadn't really noticed anything strange.

"Refined and elegant?" Yun Jianyue sneered. "That's only because you haven't seen how much of a fool he was when he pursued that stone cold woman in his youth."

Zu An was speechless. Yan Xuehen was indeed beautiful, so it wasn't that surprising for those from the previous generation to like her. On the contrary, it would be stranger if Wang Wuxie hadn't liked her.

Yun Jianyue continued with a serious expression "The reason I sought you out today is because I wanted to help speak up a bit for King Yan, and also because I wanted to remind you that King Yan has been scheming in Yi Commandery for so long. Do you really think you could deal with him that easily?"

Zu An was startled, saying, "Then what you're saying is..."

"King Yan has tens of thousands of elite troops. If someone were to instigate conflict, something major could easily happen," Yun Jianyue continued. "Furthermore, from what I know, you didn't catch King Yan's heir or Sun Xun, right?"

"Don't tell me they would really dare to start a rebellion?" Zu An exclaimed, his expression changing a bit. Zhao Han was still here, and the court was flourishing. Wouldn't starting a rebellion just result in all of them being wiped out?

"You can't assume that everyone would be that rational. When pushed to the limit, it isn't too surprising for people to start acting unreasonably," Yun Jianyue slowly said.

Zu An was about to speak up when he suddenly noticed something. He took out the Embroidered Envoy golden token. There was a piece of information on it: 'King Yan's army has completely surrounded Yi City, demanding the release of King Yan. Yi City is in danger of being broken through.'

Zu An's expression darkened. He knew that these people wouldn't be able to cause much trouble, and that they would definitely be subdued by Zhao Han and the court with terrifying efficiency. However, the lives of Yi City's common people, as well as Xiao Jianren, Zhang Zitong, and the others, weren't guaranteed. He got up and said, "I'm going to pay Yi City a visit!"

"I'll go with you. After all, without King Yan as a backer, our Holy Sect won't be having as easy a time anymore," Yun Jianyue said as she also got up. She put on Elder Peng's mask again.

...

Xie Daoyun paced back and forth uneasily. Zhang Zijiang said with a chuckle, "Don't be too worried, Lady Xie. Sir Zu's cultivation is unmatched, so he won't be in danger."

Xie Daoyun's face turned a bit red. She quietly said, "I'm not worried, but that Elder Peng is a senior of the daoist sects. If she was able to raise a disciple as formidable as Peng Wuyan, her cultivation must be deep and immeasurable. Big broth... Sir Zu is still young, after all."

Just then, the door opened with a groan. Zu An and Yun Jianyue walked out from inside. Xie Daoyun quickly rushed over to greet them. Zhang Zijiang no longer had a frivolous appearance and also looked at Zu An with a nervous expression.

"I'm fine, but I have to go out on a trip. You need to be careful," Zu An replied.

"What kind of pressing matter is it, Sir Zu?" Xie Daoyun asked worriedly.

"Don't worry. Something minor happened over at Yi City and I'm heading over to deal with it. It's nothing dangerous," Zu An said to comfort her, not wanting her to worry.

Xie Daoyun released a sigh of relief.

Zu An initially thought of asking Zhang Zijiang to look into the batch of gunpowder in Violet Mountain. But after thinking about it a bit, he thought, Wouldn't it be great if Zhao Han got blasted to pieces? Why am I worrying about that guy?

Afterward, he waved at the two of them and left.

...

When they left, Yun Jianyue suddenly laughed and said, "That Lady Xie seems to care quite a bit about you."

Zu An said with an embarrassed smile, "She's a friend, so it's just a friend's concern."

"It's another friend again. You have quite a few of these pretty female friends, don't you," Yun Jianyue retorted with a sneer.

Zu An gave her a look of surprise. There was a hint of amusement on his face as he asked, "Is big sis Yun jealous?"

Yun Jianyue's face heated up. She glared at him and said, "Get lost! I was just speaking up for our Honglei!"

“Why are you laughing? I’m going to rip your mouth off! What, you don’t believe me?”

“You’re still going to continue smiling?”

...

When the two of them got to the base of the mountain, Zu An took out the Wind Fire Wheels and invited Yun Jianyue to ride with him.

After some hesitation, however, she still shook her head and said, “I’ll just fly on my own.” She clearly wanted to keep some distance from him.

Zu An thought, As expected of Yan Xuehen’s nemesis. The two of them have the exact same way of thinking. Thus, he didn’t force the issue. After they flew into the air, he found something to talk about to dissolve the awkwardness, asking, “Right, was that turtle spirit at the bottom of Blackwater Pool also something you guys arranged?”

Back then, it was precisely because the turtle had mentioned that a woman had tossed Golden Token Seven into the pool that he had suspected the Hub of Freedom.

Yun Jianyue was stunned. She asked, “What turtle spirit? Back then, it was because King Yan knew that you had managed to narrow the trail to some woman that he had Jiang Zhong lead you to the Hub of Freedom.”

“You guys don’t know about that turtle spirit?” Zu An asked in surprise. He had always thought that the turtle spirit was something arranged by King Yan, and that it was his way of shifting blame onto Tang Tian’er. He had assumed that King Yan had only miscalculated due to not knowing about his relationship with her. But judging from what Yun Jianyue was saying, King Yan didn’t even know of the turtle spirit’s existence!

“I really didn’t. I was still curious as to how you found out Golden Token Seven’s death was related to a woman. So it was because of a turtle spirit in Blackwater Pool?” Yun Jianyue replied. She was the Devil Sect Master and was full of knowledge, so she naturally knew about some legends.

Zu An told her what had happened at Blackwater Pool. Yun Jianyue frowned, and after a pause, she suddenly asked, “Did you consider that perhaps that turtle spirit didn’t deceive you?”

Zu An was stunned. He replied, “Then why did it leave in such a guilty manner, even leaving behind that message?”

Yun Jianyue chuckled and replied, “Brat, you’re normally pretty sharp, but aren’t you a bit muddled right now? Think about it. If you were that turtle spirit and there was someone who could take your life at any time out there, would you still dare to continue staying there?”

“As for that incense burning or whatever, it’s nothing compared to its life. Only if it kept its life could it slowly gather all that again. There would be no need to take the risk of staying there at all.

“As for the message it left, its losses were way too great this time, so it’s normal for it to have been a bit bitter.”

Zu An was speechless. Suddenly, all kinds of thoughts filled his mind.

Chapter 1674: Banners Raised

When he first saw the words in Blackwater Pool, Zu An had been pretty upset due to the feeling of betrayal. Furthermore, when he later discovered that Jiang Zhong had been bribed by someone, he had instinctively associated these two things together and thought that the turtle spirit was in cahoots with King Yan.

However, now that Yun Jianyue had told him that King Yan wasn't Golden Token Seven's killer, the turtle spirit working with King Yan was a much more unlikely scenario. Zu An hadn't been particularly prepared the first time he found it. Furthermore, if not for his incredible perception, no one would even have noticed its existence at the bottom of the lake. That meant the chance of it being deliberately planted to mislead him was extremely low. As such, the answers it had given to keep its life before could be real. After all, there was no reason for it to hide any information.

In that case, then, a woman really had thrown Golden Token Seven's corpse into the pool, just as the turtle spirit said. However, why would that woman say something so strange? As she was discarding a corpse, why would she hope that someone would find it sooner? Also, just who was that woman?

Zu An suddenly thought of something. Could that woman really be Tang Tian'er?

However, he quickly became confused again. The turtle hadn't seen that woman's appearance. The reason he thought of Tang Tian'er was that, according to Jiang Zhong, Golden Token Seven met with her several times. Although Jiang Zhong had already been bought out by King Yan by then... Everything seemed to have circled back to the very start!

Zu An suddenly felt that he was on the edge of realizing something, but he couldn't really put his finger on it.

Yun Jianyue said, "Ah Zu, there has always been something that I've wanted to ask you about."

"What is it?" Zu An asked as he snapped out of his daze and looked at Yun Jianyue beside him.

Yun Jianyue hesitated for a bit, seemingly considering how to word what she was about to say. She then said, "Ever since I met you, you never seemed to be all that loyal to your ruler. I even feel as if you already treat Zhao Han as a potential enemy. In that case, why are you still helping Zhao Han? Whether it's our Holy Sect or King Yan, both of us want to bring down the emperor. The enemy of your enemy is your friend, so why did you make things hard for King Yan and lose those potential helpers?" She paused for a moment, her expression becoming a bit conflicted before she continued, "Also, you led these troops here to Violet Mountain to help Zhao Han get rid of hidden dangers. I feel that everything you're doing is completely meaningless."

Zu An said with a serious expression, "Big sis Yun, that's where you're wrong. Even though King Yan had thoughts of rebelling, he wouldn't dare to go against Zhao Han even if he had ten gallbladders. If I'm not mistaken, everything he's been doing has been in preparation for when Zhao Han dies, to go against the crown prince. So, there's no chance that he would work with me against Zhao Han. As such, he naturally can't become my comrade.

"But you, big sis Yun, are different. You're someone who really dares to go against Zhao Han publicly, and you even dared to invade the Imperial Palace. That's why I really admire you and our relationship is really good."

When she heard him mention the past, Yun Jianyue remembered the time she had spent hiding in the Imperial Palace. A hint of a warm smile appeared on her face.

"As for all of the things I'm doing right now, it's all just about accumulating opportunities," Zu An continued.

"Accumulating opportunities?" Yun Jianyue repeated, stunned. She was a bit confused. People usually looked for opportunities. What was 'accumulating opportunities'?

Zu An didn't explain the phrase, just changing the subject to ordinary matters. He said, "Right, big sis Yun, I heard that your competition with the White Jade Sect would be happening in a few days. Why haven't you made an appearance yet?"

Yun Jianyue had an ambiguous smile as she asked, "What, are you scouting for that little female friend of yours?"

Zu An's face heated up. He replied, "I'm just as worried for Honglei! Honestly, I don't even want either side to fight. It's going to suck no matter who loses. Both sides are equally important."

"Equally important?" Yun Jianyue repeated, laughing out of irritation. "You really are quite something! You actually managed to make something so shameless seem righteous!"

You have successfully trolled Yun Jianyue for +66 +66 +66...

Zu An complained, "Then what else am I supposed to do? Am I supposed to support one side in beating the other?"

"You're in front of me, and yet you're not saying anything biased in favor of Honglei? You're probably like this in front of that stone cold woman too, so I guess you have a bit of a conscience," Yun Jianyue said, her mood improving a bit. "But the time you spent with that stone cold woman's disciple and Jaded Palace's big-boobed woman really left Honglei feeling wronged."

It took some time for Zu An to realize that she was talking about Pei Mianman. This woman really loved her nicknames. He reacted quickly and said, "Come on, I didn't know your identity before! But I still felt a mysterious sense of familiarity, and didn't I help you guys out several times?"

"That's more like it. And I thought your tastes had changed," Yun Jianyue said with a smile, leaving Zu An speechless.

After messing with him for a while longer, Yun Jianyue said with a serious expression, "I have my own plans against the White Jade Sect. But since your relationship with the other side is really good, telling you will only put you in a difficult position. I planned to just come up with some excuse to trick you, but I don't want to do that anymore. I just won't tell you. I hope you can understand."

Zu An was stunned. Then, he looked at Yun Jianyue, a smile appearing on his lips.

"What are you looking at? Are you upset?" Yun Jianyue asked, surprised.

“Not at all. I just feel that you have a free and carefree kind of beauty,” Zu An said. He couldn't help but sigh in admiration. Those two really had entirely opposite personalities... No wonder they had become enemies.

“I don't want to hear that bootlicking. That stuff doesn't work on me,” Yun Jianyue replied. Despite that, the smile between her brows still sold out her true thoughts.

...

The two chatted for a while, and quickly arrived near Yi Commandery. Yun Jianyue couldn't show her real identity in public, so she descended first.

Zu An changed into his Embroidered Envoy clothes, then hurried to Yi City. He could see banners flying all over the place even from far away, with armies spreading across the field. It felt as if a black cloud had surrounded the city.

Meanwhile, Yi City's gates were tightly shut, with soldiers stationed on the walls. With Zhang Jie in the lead, Yi Commandery's officials all had nervous expressions. They knew that if they really fought, there was no way some city defense guards could win against the other side's seasoned field army.

King Yan Manor's strength in the city wasn't small either. If they coordinated between inside and outside, how could Yi City possibly be defended?

As such, Zhang Jie nervously called out for the other side to calm down, saying that there were a ton of misunderstandings.

Unfortunately, it wasn't of any use. In King Yan's army, King Yan's heir Zhao Huang rode atop a large and tall horse. Just then, he waved his hand, and war drums resounded among his troops. His army immediately surged with killing intent and began to march slowly toward Yi City. Their footsteps, for the people on the city walls, seemed to demand their very lives.

...

Xiao Jianren, Zhang Zitong, and the Embroidered Envoys also arrived at the city gate tower. Because of their status, they had a duty to defend the territory.

When they saw the enemy's black expanse of an army encroaching, their hearts beat nervously. Normally, they only had to face a small number of enemies; when had they ever seen a battlefield of this scale? In such a situation, individual strength was practically negligible. If they really fought, every breath could end up being their last. They also felt a bit of despair. Where is Sir Eleven? Why hasn't he appeared yet?

Still, they knew that Sir Eleven wouldn't be able to do much to change the situation even if he came.

Meanwhile, Zu An was observing King Yan's army. Even after being in this world for so long, this was the first time he had seen such a battlefield.

The Chu clan's private army in Brightmoon City and the Armed Escort Division that was accompanying him on the current mission technically hadn't fought on a real battlefield.

King Yan's army was one that had fought against the Fiend races and rebel armies for a long time. They all carried an almost-tangible killing intent that could make many cultivators shiver in fear, unable to bring out their true strength. Their strict formation, their superior armor... Those details showed that they were even higher in quality than the Chu clan's private army.

Zu An noticed many cannon-like objects in the army, engraved all over with runes. They were clearly a combination of cultivation techniques with gunpowder technology. Meanwhile, Yi City's walls flickered with blue light; they were clearly activating their defensive formations. However, it was hard to say how long its soldiers, who had low morale, could hold on for.

Zu An couldn't wait any longer. If they really started fighting, it would become too late to stop them. War was cruel. Regardless of how it ended, the ones who suffered would be the lowest-level soldiers and the common people.

"Halt!" he called out as he flew right over King Yan's army. With his cultivation, his shout was enough to reach every corner of the battlefield. King Yan's army quickly noticed him. A group of soldiers immediately pointed their arrows at him.

Zu An's eye twitched when he saw the black glint of the bows and the glimmering runes on the arrowheads. If he really ended up being targeted by a hail of arrows, he would have no choice but to avoid them even with his current ability.

Xiao Jianren and Zhang Zitong said excitedly, "It's Sir Eleven! Sir Eleven came!"

After going through all they had, they now had a mysterious sense of trust in Golden Token Eleven, as if they had found their pillar of confidence as soon as he appeared.

King Yan's heir Zhao Huang waved his hand, temporarily stopping his subordinates from firing. He clearly recognized who it was. He called out, "Sir Eleven, you actually dare to appear in front of me? This really is quite unexpected."

Many people next to him voiced their anger and shouted, "Young master, it was precisely this person who conspired against King Yan!"

Zu An remained calm as he replied, "Young master, Sir Sun, do you know what your actions today are called? Rebellion is punishable by nine generations of execution."

Zhang Jie and the others wiped away cold sweat when they heard that. This Golden Token Eleven really is fierce... He's actually provoking the other side even in such a critical moment?

Sure enough, Zhao Huang's face twitched. He said, "I don't know what kind of end we'll come to, but I know that none of you will come to a good end."

You have successfully trolled Zhao Huang for +444 +444 +444...

Sun Xun, who had remained silent the entire time, spoke up. "We are only doing this to bring justice for King Yan and save him. If Sir Eleven could convince Zhang Jie to release King Yan, that would be better for everyone."

These two were clearly playing the carrot and stick game.

Zu An shook his head and said, "If we agreed to your conditions just because you brought your troops, everyone else would follow your example. Wouldn't the entire world be in trouble then?"

Zhang Jie and the others' expressions changed. Even if what you're saying is true, is this the time for it? What face do they have left if you refuse them so ruthlessly?

Sure enough, Zhao Huang erupted into a rage. "Since you're the main culprit behind all this, I'll just have to take you down!"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Huang for +666 +666 +666...

With a wave of his hand, the countless arrows aimed at Zu An were released. They were full of blue light and covered every possible angle of escape.

Chapter 1675: Appeased

Zhang Jie, Xiao Jianren, and the others immediately cried out in alarm. Even though Sir Eleven's cultivation wasn't low, there was no way he could face an entire army's attacks alone!

That was common knowledge in this world of cultivation. Cultivators normally had shocking abilities, but unless they reached a certain point, they would have no choice but to run if they faced a proper army. After all, the army had all kinds of formations to defend against a cultivator's attacks, and they could also combine the strength of all the individual cultivators within them.

Furthermore, the army had many formations that made all sorts of heavy weaponry stronger. Armor Penetrating Arrows, City Defense Crossbows, Rune Cannons, and other weapons could even blast apart city walls with the help of formations, let alone human flesh. The army had no lack of cultivators either. When they attacked together, it usually wasn't something a single cultivator could defend against.

The storm of arrows that had been fired at Zu An just happened to be Armor Penetrating Arrows specialized in blasting through the ki barriers around cultivators. Such a concentrated attack was impossible to avoid. Additionally, all the soldiers on the city walls were too far away. They couldn't help out even if they wanted to.

Could it be that another Golden Token Envoy was about to fall here?

...

Zu An didn't try to dodge the incoming arrows at all. He still looked completely calm.

Just then, a terrifying aura descended from above. The clouds in the sky began to gather. The overbearing rain of arrows seemed almost to have been stopped in time, as they all froze in midair without moving at all.

When they saw that, all those present were immediately overwhelmed with shock. When they saw the roiling clouds above them, they seemed to remember something.

King Yan's forces were horrified, while Yi Commandery's officials were rapt with excitement. "It's his majesty! His majesty is here!"

Only then did they remember that Golden Token Envoys could summon the emperor's power! No wonder Sir Eleven had been completely calm from the start until now.

Clouds surged in the skies, gradually gathering into a giant head. It was none other than Zhao Han's appearance.

"Long live your majesty! Long, long live!" Zhang Jie cried out as he took the lead in kneeling down atop the city walls. He was incredibly moved because things were taking a completely new turn!

Zhao Huang's expression changed. He quickly kneeled down. With him in the lead, King Yan's entire army knelt down to exclaim 'long live your majesty'. The sound was extremely shocking.

...

On Violet Mountain, Wang Wuxie, who had been seated at Pure Yang Palace in meditation, suddenly opened his eyes. He took the surrounding violet ki into his body. His expression was grave as he muttered, "When will I be able to reach this level?"

Meanwhile, Tranquility Temple's Master Huang was teaching his naughty and mischievous disciple. Just then, he sensed something and looked in Yi Commandery's direction, muttering, "Hasn't the emperor made an appearance more often recently? This is an omen of the changing times..."

...

Above Yi City, Zhao Han shared similar thoughts. His giant head glared at Zu An furiously and snapped, "What is it now?"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +888 +888 +888...

His anger wasn't surprising at all. Other Embroidered Envoys were always fearful whenever they used his strength. They wouldn't necessarily summon him even once in their entire lives. And yet, this kid had summoned him three times in the span of just a few days! Was he being made a fool of?

The worst part was that his heaven and man deterioration was encroaching, so he had always remained in the Imperial Palace while trying to make it appear as if he wasn't sleeping. It would be stranger if he weren't irritated from being woken up like this all the time!

Zu An bowed respectfully. He pointed at King Yan's troops and said, "King Yan's heir has started a rebellion and Yi City is in imminent peril. This subordinate can no longer think of any solution, so I can only rely on your majesty's strength."

It wasn't that he didn't have the ability to deal with this situation with his own strength. However, with so many people on this battlefield, using his abilities would easily give away his real identity as Zu An. Besides, even if he went all out here, there wouldn't be any benefits to gain anyway.

In that case, why did he have to use up his own efforts for the sake of the public? Either way, Zhao Han was a destructive weapon that would be wasted if left unused.

Furthermore, he had summoned Zhao Han several times on purpose, to see if he could weaken the emperor's soul. At the same time, he wanted to see more of the emperor's strength in order to prepare more precautionary measures against his abilities. Even though he had faced off against Zhao Han in the

secret dungeon, that was just a soul fragment. Its abilities were very different from the main body's offensive skills. He gave the rain of arrows that were still suspended in the air a look, and his expression couldn't help but become a bit more grave.

When Zhao Han heard that, his gaze swept over those present. He quickly came to a decision regarding the situation and shouted, "Zhao Huang, how brazen of you!"

As soon as he spoke, although there was no sign of him doing anything, all of the arrows in the sky instantly crumbled into powder. Those present gasped in alarm.

Zhao Huang's entire body trembled as he kneeled down on the ground and said respectfully, "Your majesty is wise and enlightened. This humble servant was forced to act out of helplessness. I only did this out of concern for father king's safety. I know that he was framed by a crafty scoundrel, and did not want them to cause father king further harm."

Setting King Yan aside for the time being, Zhao Huang was the most powerful person in all of Yi Commandery. Almost everyone else usually looked up to him. However, in front of Zhao Han, even though they were still cousins in theory, he couldn't summon forth even the slightest bit of pride.

"Is this the reason why you moved your troops?" Zhao Han replied, looking at him coldly.

Zhao Huang's entire body was ice-cold. He was almost flat on the ground at this point. He couldn't muster a single word to say.

Next to him, Sun Xun said, "Reporting to your majesty. King Yan has always been loyal and devoted to your majesty over the years, and has suppressed the rebel armies in Yi Commandery for many years. He has received many awards from the court, and yet he was charged with a criminal accusation by some strange scheme. If news of this got out, it will easily make the hearts of the soldiers throughout all the different commanderies turn cold..."

Zhao Han frowned slightly. The world wasn't too peaceful right now. He had the Fiend races as a powerful enemy, and there was also the Devil Sect rebel army and other local tyrants. There were even some remnant evils from the previous dynasties. As such, he had assigned the imperial family's members to guard different places. That was how the Zhao clan had been able to keep everything under control. The death of King Yan wasn't a big issue in and of itself, but if it ended up shaking the confidence of the imperial clan, that would be much more troublesome.

Even though he had those thoughts, he remained unfazed on the surface. He said, "This emperor has already assigned someone to look into this case. The truth of whether or not King Yan was unjustly blamed will soon come to light."

After Sun Xun's reminder, Zhao Huang also gradually calmed down a bit. He clenched his teeth and said, "Pardon this subject for speaking forthrightly. Governor Zhang has always been at odds with father, and the proof of rebellion was brought forth by this Sir Eleven alone. If the case is assigned to them, even if father has done no wrong, he will end up becoming a criminal. This humble subject knows about their evil plans, and that once their plots are in place, father will undoubtedly die. It was out of a moment of desperation that I made this mistake. I hope for your majesty's forgiveness."

Zhao Han replied coldly, "Are you suggesting that this emperor is incompetent in his selection of appointments?"

"This humble subject doesn't dare!" Zhao Huang said as he immediately kowtowed in apology.

Zhao Han then said, "This emperor has my own thoughts regarding King Yan's case. Do you think that these random excuses about some conspiracy can fool this emperor?"

"Your majesty is wise and outstanding! Of course no one can deceive you," Zhao Huang said, sighing in relief. Judging from the emperor's tone, it seemed there was a chance of averting this disaster.

Just then, Zhao Han continued, "Out of consideration for your devotion to saving your father, I will show mercy in dealing with this case. However, an offense is an offense. Zhao Huang will forfeit his salary for three years and lose his military rank. All officers related will lose three grades in military rank."

Zhang Jie immediately revealed a look of disappointment. Even though this punishment wasn't light, in relation to the rebellion that had just happened, it was practically nothing. However, he didn't dare to speak up, because he could tell that his majesty wanted the matter to be dealt with quietly.

"Thank you, your majesty!"

Zhao Huang and the others all kowtowed to express their gratitude.

Zhao Han turned to Zu An and said, "You only have three days to investigate whether Golden Token Seven's case has anything to do with King Yan. Otherwise, be prepared to offer me your head!"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +444 +444 +444...

This damn rascal was sent to investigate Golden Token Seven's case and eliminate dangers from the Fengshan Ceremony, and yet instead of doing that, he almost forced a king into rebellion!

On the city walls, Zhang Jie's expression changed. As an old fox of the court, he naturally understood the emperor's intentions. What could they even find out within three days? This was clearly a sign to wrap up the case quickly and properly appease King Yan's side.

Zu An seemed to have anticipated that. He calmly replied, "Understood!"

Zhao Han could even tolerate something like rebellion? It seemed that something more important had his attention, giving him no choice but to set the issue aside.

Chapter 1676: Lucky Stroke

After giving the order, the floating head in the sky gradually dissipated. The officials both inside and outside the city bowed and said, "We respectfully bid your majesty farewell."

With Zhao Han's appearance, the potential for rebellion had all but completely dissolved. Zhao Huang and his troops left Yi City's surroundings, allowing all the officials on Yi City's walls to sigh in relief.

Zu An flew over to the city gates. Zhang Jie greeted him and said, "It is all thanks to Sir Eleven's prompt arrival today, or else the consequences would have been too horrible to imagine." When he saw that Zu An remained quiet, as if he had something on his mind, he continued, "Sir Eleven must feel a lot of

pressure from what his majesty said earlier. I have managed to collect quite a bit of evidence recently and will give all of it to sir.”

“Thank you, Sir Zhang.” Zu An sneered. This Zhang Jie really was crafty. On the surface, he seemed to be acting out of concern for Zu An, but in reality, he was pushing Zu An closer and closer to the pit of hell.

The emperor already expressed that he didn’t want to bring down King Yan, and yet this man is now handing me evidence of his crimes. Is he trying to start another rebellion?

After they exchanged some more words and ended the conversation, Xiao Jianren and Zhang Zitong both surrounded Zu An and asked, “Sir Eleven, is there anything you need our help with? We won’t hesitate to be of service!”

They were clearly worried that something could happen to Zu An because of the emperor’s three-day time limit.

Zu An nodded slightly and said, “It’s fine. You all should just continue the investigation as previously assigned. As for this case, I’ve already come up with a corresponding plan.” Afterward, he quickly disappeared.

His two subordinates sighed in admiration. They were still completely baffled, and yet Sir Eleven already had a way of dealing with the situation. He really was mysterious and unfathomable!

After Zu An left the city, Yun Jianyue quickly reappeared. She sighed as she looked at him, remarking, “You were really toying with the emperor like a monkey, but he didn’t treat you much better either. Should I be praising you or should I feel bad for you?”

“I’m already used to it,” Zu An said, his expression remaining calm. “He loves playing these sorts of power games and gets pleasure out of feeling as if he has the fate of others in his palm. If not for that, I might have actually followed him loyally.”

Yun Jianyue clicked her tongue and said, “You were never the sort of person to be content with following another. Sometimes, I even feel as if you aren’t from this world. The way you think is way too different from that of other people.”

Zu An laughed and replied, “There’s no harm in telling you this, then. I actually transmigrated from a different world.”

“Tsk, if you’re from a different world, I’m a goddess descended from the heavens,” Yun Jianyue retorted, snickering. She naturally treated what he said as a joke.

However, her smile quickly faded and she asked, “What are you planning to do now? You only have three days left.”

“I plan to visit the Hub of Freedom. There are many things I need to confirm,” Zu An replied. Many of the things that had happened recently appeared in his mind. He already had a rough idea as to what was happening.

“I’ll talk things over with King Yan’s side and tell them not to cause any more trouble. At the same time, I’ll see if I can improve the relationship between you two, so I won’t be keeping you company in the Hub

of Freedom,” Yun Jianyue said. She definitely didn’t want to have to deal with another one of his women.

Zu An nodded. Time was pressing, so they didn’t say much more and quickly parted ways.

...

Zu An went straight to the Hub of Freedom. Even though it was extremely hidden from other people, after several trips there, he was already completely familiar with the way. He had a special token, so the guards of the Hub of Freedom didn’t trouble him. Soon after, someone guided him to Tang Tian’er’s residence.

Tang Tian’er just happened to emerge from her room just then. Her characteristic sweet smile was on her face as always. Zu An had to admit that in a money-squandering establishment like the Hub of Freedom, both Tang Tian’er’s appearance and her attitude were perfect.

Tang Tian’er was surprised by his visit. She waved her hand to dismiss everyone else and invited him into her room. She poured some tea while saying with a smile, “I was just about to look for you, yet you came to me instead. Doesn’t this mean our two hearts are beating as one?”

Zu An said with a sigh, “Sometimes, I really can’t tell if that’s really what you think or if you’re just putting on an act.”

Tang Tian’er suddenly looked as if she were about to cry. She replied, “Your words are really hurtful, you know?”

Zu An ignored her and asked, “You were looking for me?”

“Of course! Something so major happened in Yi Commandery, and you were given a three-day restriction by the emperor. I was worried about your safety!” Tang Tian’er replied.

“Your sources of information are surprisingly sharp,” Zu An said with a hint of surprise. He had practically traveled directly from Yi City, and yet Tang Tian’er already knew what had happened.

“Don’t forget what our Hub of Freedom does for a living,” Tang Tian’er said with a smile. There was a bit of pride on her face.

“Then you should know why I came here to visit you today, right?” Zu An replied, staring straight into her eyes.

Tang Tian’er’s eyes remained clear. There wasn’t a hint of alarm in them as she replied, “You’re probably worried about how to deal with the emperor’s three-day time limit. But there’s no need for you to be too worried. If you really can’t solve the case in three days, our Hub of Freedom can guarantee your protection and safety.”

“The Hub of Freedom really is generous in your speech,” Zu An said with a harrumph. “You know I’m not here for that.”

“Then why are you here?” Tang Tian’er replied, giving him a look of confusion with an innocent and pure appearance.

“The case of Golden Token Seven’s death last time,” Zu An said bluntly. “The one who threw the corpse into Blackwater Pool was you, right?”

Tang Tian’er’s expression changed. She replied, “I don’t know what you’re talking about. Wasn’t all of that done by King Yan? According to what I know, there was a traitor among your Embroidered Envoy who was bought out by King Yan, who then deliberately tried to frame us.”

Zu An looked at her with a gaze full of disappointment. He didn’t say another word and got up to leave.

When she saw his expression, Tang Tian’er trembled inside and quickly got up, shouting, “Wait!”

Zu An stopped in front of the door, but he didn’t turn around.

Tang Tian’er gritted her teeth and asked, “Are you here as Golden Token Eleven or as Ah Zu right now?”

“Is there a difference?” Zu An asked calmly.

“If you came as a Golden Token Envoy, then what I just said is my reply,” Tang Tian’er said. She paused for a moment, then added, “If it’s as Ah Zu, then I have something else to say. Does he have any interest in hearing me out?”

Zu An turned around and looked at her in shock. To be honest, he hadn’t had much confidence in getting anything out of this exchange after having discovered that Tang Tian’er seemed to be deliberately lying to him.

When she saw him turn around, Tang Tian’er’s sweet smile returned. She ran over and grabbed his arm to bring him back to his seat. She said, “It’s been a long time since we friends have met, so why are you in such a rush to leave?”

“Do you really see me as a friend?” Zu An asked with a sigh.

Tang Tian’er felt wronged and replied, “If I really didn’t treat you as a friend, would I have given up so much?”

Zu An was alarmed. He remembered how she had helped him when he hid in her bathtub. He had to admit that if she really was trying to fool him, there would have been no need for her to go that far at all.

Tang Tian’er slowly said, “The one who brought Golden Token Seven to Blackwater Pool was indeed me.”

Zu An was alarmed. He asked, “Was Golden Token Seven killed by the Hub of Freedom?”

Tang Tian’er shook her head and replied, “Golden Token Seven was already dead. I only brought his corpse there to discard it.”

“Why did you have to do that?” Zu An asked in confusion.

“I knew about the turtle spirit under Blackwater Pool, so I wanted to use its eyes to provide the officials with some information, which was that Golden Token Seven was already dead when he was thrown into the water. Meanwhile, his cause of death was supposedly drowning, so they would definitely have

harbored suspicions,” Tang Tian’er explained. Her little mouth inadvertently turned downward in a pout as she continued, “But I never expected you to be the one who came to investigate this case.”

Zu An was surprised. He said, “So you wanted us to suspect that it was a spirit element expert who attacked him, and the most famous practitioner of those methods in all of Yi Commandery was none other than King Yan Manor’s Sir Huo.”

“Indeed. King Yan wanted to seize the Zhenyuan Merchant Group’s market share in Cloudcenter Commandery, and he has been aggressively attacking the Hub of Freedom over the past few years in Yi Commandery. I naturally wanted to get some revenge,” Tang Tian’er said confidently.

Zu An frowned slightly. To be honest, she had enough motive, but he still felt that she was just saying that as an excuse and was still hiding something. However, he didn’t keep pressuring her and instead asked, “According to what that turtle said, you seemed to be muttering to yourself that you hoped the corpse would be found earlier. Were you not worried that the turtle spirit would expose you?”

“I let it see me on purpose,” Tang Tian’er said with a mischievous smile. “According to the Hub of Freedom’s intelligence over the past few years, an important collaborator of King Yan was a mysterious woman, but we could never track down her identity. We wanted to use that turtle spirit to implicate that woman and King Yan Manor, then use the Embroidered Envoy to find out her identity. But who would have thought that you didn’t follow that trail and found us instead! That was what I couldn’t figure out.”

Zu An had a strange expression. The mysterious woman she was talking about was likely Yun Jianyue. King Yan and the Devil Sect working together was likely something not even most of King Yan Manor or the Devil Sect’s higher-ups knew. Only someone such as Golden Token Seven, with his abundant experience, had been able to detect something strange.

By an even bigger coincidence, King Yan had also wanted to redirect the disaster onto the Hub of Freedom, so he had described the woman’s appearance in a way that pointed to Tang Tian’er. The original framing attempt had ended up succeeding by a lucky stroke.

Still, the problem remained: Who was the true culprit behind Golden Token Seven’s death?

Chapter 1677: Exposed

Zu An didn’t hold back and directly asked that very question.

Tang Tian’er shook her head and said, “I know who Golden Token Seven’s killer is, but please forgive me for not being able to tell you. I can only say that it was definitely not our Hub of Freedom.”

Zu An fell silent for a moment. He synthesized all of the information he had collected in his mind and seemed to realize something.

When she saw that, Tang Tian’er couldn’t help but feel a bit worried. She asked, “Are you upset with me right now?”

Zu An shook his head and replied, “I’m already really grateful that you can tell me this much. Why would I be upset with you?”

“Really?” Tang Tian’er asked, feeling a bit suspicious. “You aren’t blaming me?”

“Of course. If it were someone else, they definitely wouldn’t have told me as much as you did. I don’t even have enough time to feel grateful, so why would I blame you?” Zu An replied with a smile. “You’re with the Hub of Freedom, so you definitely have your own misgivings. After you admitted those things frankly, if I still complained, I would just be ungrateful.”

“I’m happy that I was able to help you then,” Tang Tian’er said, the smile returning to face. “You finally came here for a visit, so why don’t you relax for a bit here? I’ll let you experience the true feeling of freedom!”

“I still have something to take care of, so I’ll have to take you up on that another day,” Zu An said, declining tactfully.

Tang Tian’er didn’t try to keep him and said, “I’ll definitely take good care of you once you finish dealing with this matter.”

Zu An nodded. After bidding her farewell, he returned to Yi City. He gathered Xiao Jianren, Zhang Zitong and the other Silver Token Envoys in the meeting room.

“Sir Eleven, did you find out any useful information?” Zhang Zitong asked out of concern. Her tall and slender figure really made her stand out among the other Silver Token Envoys. It made the normally stern and harsh meeting room seem a bit brighter.

“I did get some results,” Zu An replied.

Xiao Jianren had been admiring Zhang Zitong’s legs, but when he heard that, he exclaimed in surprise, “Please share it with us, Sir Eleven!” Even though Sir Eleven was the one who had been given the three-day deadline, as Sir Eleven’s direct subordinate, if something went wrong, he definitely wouldn’t get away.

The other Embroidered Envoys all looked at Zu An with wide eyes.

Zu An looked around him and slowly said, “We’ve been making a mistake this entire time. King Yan’s smuggling and formation of a private army are part of one case, while the murder of Golden Token Seven is another case entirely. We subconsciously mixed the cases together, and thus came to a misunderstanding.”

Zhang Zitong couldn’t help but voice her dissent. “Sir Eleven, Sir Seven was investigating King Yan’s rebellion for a long time, so King Yan hated him bitterly. Could it be that after Zhao Huang’s cries of grievance and the trouble today... You believe them?”

Xiao Jianren quickly said seriously, “Miss Zhang, I believe you’ve misspoken. Our Sir Eleven has never been the type to act timidly. He definitely has a reason for saying what he said.”

Zu An nodded inwardly. Looks like this guy hasn’t been completely blinded by infatuation.

Zhang Zitong, however, still seemed a bit unconvinced. She insisted, “Either way, King Yan has the strongest motive and the most ability. Furthermore, we even have a testimony and material evidence. I don’t believe that there was any mistake.”

“Let’s not talk about the material evidence for now. The human evidence should be Sir Huo, right? However, has Sir Huo ever admitted to killing Golden Token Seven this whole time?” Zu An asked.

"Of course he wouldn't admit to something like that. We often encounter those who clearly made mistakes, yet still feel as if they were wronged," Zhang Zitong said, still unconvinced.

"I've already sent for someone to bring him here. We can just ask him," Zu An said with a chuckle.

The Silver Token Envoys all had grave expressions. As individuals who had worked in this field for a long time, they could sense that something was off. However, they couldn't really pinpoint where the problem was exactly, either.

Suddenly, an Embroidered Envoy rushed over and reported in alarm, "Sir Eleven, Sir Huo is dead!"

"Dead?" The expressions of all the Silver Token Envoys changed.

"How did he die?" Zu An asked calmly, as if he had already anticipated the situation.

"He appears to have committed suicide," the Embroidered Envoy replied. After working in this field for so long, Embroidered Envoys usually had some coroner abilities, so they had already roughly guessed the cause of death.

Xiao Jianren couldn't help but say with a frown, "Something isn't right. That Sir Huo didn't seem to be someone that cowardly..."

"He was probably silenced," Zu An said slowly, leaving the others in shock.

"Silenced?" Zhang Zitong asked in confusion. "He was locked up in an Embroidered Envoy prison. Who would have the ability to silence someone like him?"

The other Silver Token Envoys also voiced their agreement. "Exactly! Could it be that since he knew he couldn't escape, he decided to just end it all?"

"We were a bit harsh on him in an attempt to obtain a confession. Spirit element cultivators like him have weak bodies, so it's expected for him to have been unable to hold on."

...

After listening to the others talk over one another, Zu An said calmly, "The premise for your assumptions is that he was indeed the killer of Golden Token Seven. But what if he wasn't? As someone who had cultivated to his level, who would be willing to just die like that?"

When they heard his response, the others' expressions changed. If Sir Huo really had been silenced, there could be something wrong with the Embroidered Envoy's internal system. They all looked at each other nervously.

Zu An said, "The reason why we believed so strongly that King Yan and Sir Huo were the killers of Golden Token Seven was because someone was secretly guiding us to those conclusions."

Xiao Jianren was stunned. He replied, "But that's not right. No one guided us to that conclusion. We investigated those things ourselves..."

However, midway through his sentence, he was suddenly stunned. Then, his expression changed several times, and he looked at Zhang Zitong.

The other Silver Token Envoys also looked at her. Anyone who could become a Silver Token Envoy was competent in dealing with situations; apart from cultivation, they weren't all that different from Golden Token Envoys. They were all intelligent. Thus, although they hadn't realized it before, Zu An's reminder made them quickly realize that the one who had first mentioned Sir Huo seemed to be Zhang Zitong.

Zhang Zitong had an expression of shock. She stared furiously at Zu An and exclaimed, "You're suspecting me?"

You have successfully trolled Zhang Zitong for +111 +111 +111...

Xiao Jianren couldn't help but ask, "Sir Eleven, is there some kind of misunderstanding? Sir Seven treated Miss Zhang with great importance. Why would she do something like that?"

The Silver Token Envoys nearby all nodded.

Zu An didn't explain and only looked straight at Zhang Zitong. He said, "At first, intentionally or otherwise, you mentioned King Yan Manor or Sir Huo as possibilities. Later, you deliberately rushed into King Yan Manor, forcing us to go against King Yan Manor.

"Afterward, whenever we hit a dead end or went somewhere else, you always redirected us back to King Yan."

The other Silver Token Envoys shivered. When they recalled everything that had happened, Zhang Zitong had indeed done such things. It was just that at the time, they had felt that she was enraged by Golden Token Seven's death and was in a rush to get revenge, so they hadn't suspected her.

Zhang Zitong took a deep breath before saying, "Sir Eleven, I actually felt respect for you before, but you've really disappointed me this time. We Embroidered Envoys need proof when we do things. Isn't this a bit too forced, to charge me with a crime with just this?"

"Of course there is proof," Zu An said with a sigh. "You've hid it quite well all this time, but unfortunately, you were in too much of a rush when you were trying to accuse King Yan. You actually knew King Yan Manor's secret study's details perfectly. You even knew the exact weight of that account book. In order to make it so that the replacement wouldn't trigger the alarm at all, you had to have held that account book before."

Zhang Zitong's expression changed. She said, "I already said that as long as people are involved, there will always be some clues. I merely looked into the artisan who participated in the creation of the secret room to find out that information."

"Ah, I also looked into that artisan you talked about. They worked on the construction of King Yan Manor, but they only worked on the outside of the study. They didn't know a thing about the interior. How could you have obtained this information from them then?" Zu An asked, looking at her coldly.

"I..." Zhang Zitong finally revealed a bit of alarm. "There are a few other craftsmen I didn't give the names of, to ensure their safety. This was something I promised them."

"Then you can tell us their information now. We'll look into it ourselves," Zu An said, pointing at the others. "Even the lowest among us are Silver Token Envoys. I believe none of us would leak this information."

"Right, Miss Zhang, hurry and tell us. We will definitely ensure their safety!" Xiao Jianren said as he looked at Zhang Zitong nervously. There was even a pleading look in his eyes.

"Sure. They're at..." Zhang Zitong said, gradually becoming quieter. Xiao Jianren couldn't help but move closer to her to listen.

Suddenly, Zhang Zitong twisted his arm, revealing a dagger from her sleeves and pressing it against his neck.

Xiao Jianren had constantly been trying to find ways to get closer to her, and yet she had always maintained some distance from him. He hadn't expected their first close interaction to be in this kind of situation! His face fell, turning ashen.

The other Silver Token Envoys' bodies went completely taut in preparation for a battle. With her reaction, how could they still not know what was happening?

Zu An looked at her calmly and asked, "Do you think you can still get away?"

Zhang Zitong's face paled. A hint of stubbornness and unwillingness appeared on her face. She asked, "When did you begin to suspect me?"

Chapter 1678: Revived from the Dead

"From the first time we met," Zu An slowly said.

Zhang Zitong couldn't understand. She asked, "Is it because that turtle spirit in Blackwater Pool said that it was a woman who threw Golden Token Seven's corpse into the lake? Do you think that was me?"

Zu An shook his head and said, "No. I just had a feeling that something was off with you from the moment we met."

"What kind of reason is that?!" Zhang Zitong exclaimed, feeling really wronged. After working in this field for a long time, she knew about the power of intuition too. Once one developed suspicions toward someone, even if all of the evidence suggested that they were innocent, one still wouldn't be able to get rid of those doubts. In the end, one would find proof that they were guilty. She had never expected to end up losing to that so-called intuition.

Zu An gave her a look, then looked at her long legs and said, "You are quite attractive, and your figure is tall and slender. That's completely different from the Embroidered Envoy's style. Look at these people around you; they're more like what you'd expect from an Embroidered Envoy."

Xiao Jianren and the others wanted to cry. Is Sir Eleven praising us or cursing us?

Zhang Zitong's face reddened. She had never expected to obtain such praise from him, but she couldn't bring herself to feel happy about it at all. She protested, "I was raised by Sir Seven ever since I was little. I already explained this to you before!"

"Any parents who could produce a daughter of your appearance and temperament couldn't possibly be ordinary people. Golden Token Seven might have not realized he had fallen into this trap, or perhaps he didn't want to think about it, but I'm different. I noticed that something was off immediately. You're too

outstanding and pretty," Zu An slowly said. He paused before continuing, "Which means you definitely shouldn't have been an Embroidered Envoy."

Zhang Zitong gave him a long look and said, "Even though I've never seen Sir Eleven's face, I can feel that you're a handsome and outstanding individual. Why is it that you can be a Golden Token Envoy, but I'm being suspected?"

Zu An smiled and replied, "Just a single person like me is enough. Others are unable to share such a good fate."

Zhang Zitong was speechless.

Even Xiao Jianren and the other Silver Token Envoys thought to themselves, Isn't this Sir Eleven a bit too shameless?

"Alright, you've already asked what you wanted. It's time for you to let him go, right?" Zu An continued as he walked toward Zhang Zitong.

"Don't move!" Zhang Zitong cried as she put more pressure on the dagger, the blade already digging into Xiao Jianren's skin. With just a bit more force, it would cut through his neck.

Zu An's brows furrowed. He said, "I believe you understand how Xiao Jianren has treated you all this time. Are you really going to threaten us with his life?"

When he heard that, Xiao Jianren felt ashamed. His actions as of late really were too humiliating.

Zhang Zitong's expression changed several times. In the end, she lowered the dagger in her hands and said apologetically to Xiao Jianren, "Sorry." Afterward, she gently pushed him forward, then brought the blade up to her own neck.

Even so, Zu An was already prepared. With a flick of his finger, the dagger was knocked flying. The other Silver Token Envoys seized the chance to rush forward and restrain her with Soul Reaping Chains. Surprisingly, however, Zhang Zitong didn't seem to have any intention of resisting.

Zhang Zitong looked up at Zu An. She said with a sad smile, "Sir Eleven, I know I'll undoubtedly die, but I still want to say this. Being able to work together with you made this was the happiest period of my entire life."

When Xiao Jianren and the others heard that, they weren't that surprised. Judging from their interactions, they more or less knew that compared to Sir Eleven, they were no competition whatsoever.

Zu An's expression changed. He walked up to Zhang Zitong and opened her mouth. He saw a strand of black blood. There was clearly poison hidden in her teeth. His finger quickly moved to seal her blood circulation and stop the poison from spreading.

Zhang Zitong smiled bleakly and said, "It's useless. The poison is meant to end my life, and it's extremely strong. There is no... antidote..." Her voice gradually became quieter and quieter. Her eyes also gradually lost color.

Xiao Jianren's expression grew dark, but he knew that this was the best end for her. Otherwise, only endless torture would await her in the Embroidered Envoy's prison. It would be better to just end her life here. Still, he thought, But why do I want to cry?

Zu An didn't hesitate and took Zhang Zitong into the inner room, saying, "Wait outside. You're not allowed in no matter what you hear." Then, he slammed the door shut.

Xiao Jianren and the other Silver Token Envoys looked at each other in dismay. What was the meaning of Sir Eleven's actions? Zhang Zitong had already activated the poison between her teeth. Did he really think he could still save her?

Zhang Zitong was also confused. Zu An had carried her into the room while she was on her deathbed, then placed her on the table. "What is he doing? Don't tell me..." she muttered in alarm. Even though she was about to die, she still felt that all of this was... ridiculous.

Zu An moved his finger closer, then gave her body a push.

"Ah~"

When they heard that sound, Xiao Jianren and the others looked at each other in dismay. What was Sir Eleven doing? Could it be that he wanted to interrogate her all the way to her last breath?

After some time, muffled groans emerged from the room every so often. They were clearly being suppressed on purpose. They seemed to carry a hint of pain, but also a hint of... pleasure?

Xiao Jianren and the others were completely stunned. What the heck were the two really doing inside? Zhang Zitong had already taken poison and was about to die. How did she still have the energy to make those sounds?

Eventually, Zhang Zitong's voice couldn't be suppressed anymore. Her screams filled the air unceasingly, sounding sweet and seductive. She couldn't hold them back at all.

The people outside were all experienced, so they immediately realized what kind of sound that was. Their expressions became incredibly strange as they thought, Sir Eleven really is someone who doesn't like to waste resources... She's already about to die...

Still, they felt that that kind of action was a bit... brutish. They patted Xiao Jianren's shoulder, their eyes full of sympathy.

Xiao Jianren immediately panicked and cried, "You guys are definitely misunderstanding! It's definitely not what you're thinking!"

"You can fool your brothers, but don't fool yourself. We know how you're feeling right now," the other Silver Token Envoys said, feeling even more sympathetic. Many of them even felt a bit sour inside, because who wouldn't like a pretty coworker like Zhang Zitong?

Xiao Jianren scowled and retorted, "You don't understand Sir Eleven. I believe that he's definitely not that kind of person! Even if he were, he's definitely saving Miss Zhang, or has some other intentions. It's definitely not because of lust."

The others chuckled and felt that arguing further was pointless. They didn't try to console him anymore.

A loud cry emerged from inside, and silence fell.

The Envoys outside felt their hearts beating quickly and their throats becoming dry. They also felt that staying there wasn't too good, so they all left to provide the two with some privacy.

After some hesitation, Xiao Jianren also left. However, he didn't go too far and stood guard outside the courtyard to prevent anyone else from getting closer.

Zhang Zitong's entire body dripped with sweat. Her hair stuck to her skin, and her face was completely red as she looked at the man at her side. Her expression was one of shock, but also full of embarrassment.

Zu An pulled back his finger and said, "Alright. Even though the poison hasn't been completely eliminated, there should be no danger to your life. Cultivate properly for a while and you should be able to recover."

"You... What kind of trick is this? Why are you even able to cure poison like this?" Zhang Zitong asked. More importantly, it just had to be through something so embarrassing...

Her voice was a bit hoarse, perhaps because of all of the noise she had made. As a woman, she had really shown this man an unbearably humiliating side of herself. If he had been her lover, that would be one thing, but strictly speaking, he was a stranger. She didn't even know what he looked like.

Zu An was a bit embarrassed. The Primordial Origin Sutra's third layer could help another eliminate poison to a certain degree, but the side effect was also clear. It easily made a woman's body become several times more sensitive, as if they were...

He coughed lightly and said, "That's not important. There's something I'm quite curious about, though. Back then, Golden Token Seven saved you and raised you himself. He was someone who showed you tremendous favor. You also said that you treated him like your adoptive father. Why, then, did you betray him?"

Chapter 1679: Assassin

When she heard what he said, Zhang Zitong's expression revealed a hint of pain. Perhaps because she had already shown her most embarrassing and private side to him, the way she looked at Zu An became gentler, and she didn't hold back from revealing some information that wasn't critical. She explained, "Sir Seven did treat me really well. If he hadn't been the one who forced my clan to complete ruin, I might really have treated him as my adoptive father."

Zu An repeated in surprise, "Forced your clan to ruin?"

"That's right," Zhang Zitong said, a hint of hatred flashing through her eyes. "I was still young back then. I remember that one day, Golden Token Seven appeared in my clan's home with some people. My father was really scared at the time, but still went out to greet him. Then, for some reason, both sides began to fight, and then my clan was wiped out.

"If not for the fact that my nanny risked her life to send me out, I might have also died in that disaster. But in order to save me, my nanny swapped the clothes of her own child with mine, to die in my place.

Furthermore, she eventually also died because of an arrow wound." As she spoke about the past, her eyes clearly became red, either out of grief or hatred.

Zu An frowned. He asked, "Your clan belonged to an official? When did this happen?"

A clan that required a Golden Token Envoy to personally deal with it definitely couldn't be an average one.

"My father's tabooed name was Zhiquan. In the past, he was an Imperial Censor, but this all happened thirteen years ago," Zhang Zitong said with a voice full of grief.

Thirteen years before the present, Zu An still hadn't transmigrated to this world yet. He naturally didn't know Imperial Censor Zhang. He said, "I'll help you look into this matter if I get a chance in the future, to find out what happened."

Sure enough, whether it was Zhang Zitong's appearance or aptitude, they were features that an ordinary pair of parents couldn't produce. Even though Zu An wasn't willing to admit it, this cultivation world was even more cruel in that respect than his previous world. The stronger the bloodline of the parents was, the more outstanding their posterity would often be. In contrast, it was difficult for ordinary people to produce even a single individual with cultivation aptitude.

Zhang Zitong had a distressed smile as she replied, "What would be the use even if you looked into it? Our Zhang clan has already been wiped out. The dead can't be revived. Furthermore, I've already gotten revenge for my clan, so I don't have any regrets left in this life."

"If some injustice really took place, there might still be a chance of righting that wrong. I believe you wouldn't want your Zhang clan to still carry a shameful name even after death, right?" Zu An asked, seeing the resolve to die in her eyes. He knew that after completing her revenge, she had lost all her will to live. That made things really troublesome, as it would be hard to get any more useful information from her. Thus, he had to give her some hope first.

Sure enough, Zhang Zitong's previously dull eyes revealed a sliver of emotion. Zu An used the opportunity to say, "From what I know, you were taken in by Golden Token Seven and raised by him at a young age. According to what you said earlier, you were the only one left of your clan. At that age, I don't believe that you could have already developed any thoughts of carrying out an infiltration and waiting for revenge."

After a moment of hesitation, Zhang Zitong still replied, "Someone appeared in front of me back then. He asked me if I wanted revenge, and as I was in the pits of despair, I agreed immediately.

"I trained with them for a year or so. Later, he told me that there was an opportunity for revenge, which was to join the Embroidered Envoy. So, I pretended to be an orphan on the streets. I pretended to have coincidentally bumped into Golden Token Seven, and sure enough, he ended up favoring me. However, he had no idea that it was all a plot."

In truth, if not for the embarrassment from the treatment that had mysteriously made her feel closer to Zu An, she wouldn't reveal such information. However, she didn't even feel as if telling him these things was that big of a deal anymore.

Zu An frowned slightly and said, "Normally, with Golden Token Seven's cautious nature, any traces of cultivation shouldn't have escaped his notice."

Zhang Zitong explained, "My benefactor didn't teach me any cultivation on purpose, only training my will and other aspects. Golden Token Seven thought that I was more mature than others because I had to wander the streets, so he didn't suspect anything."

Zu An nodded. He asked, "Who was the one who raised you?"

To place that chess piece more than ten years in the past, only to reap the benefits now... just how great of a scheme was that?

Zhang Zitong shook her head and said, "That person has shown me great favor. There's no way I could tell you that information."

Zu An scowled and said, "Since you were an Embroidered Envoy for so many years, you should understand their methods. There are ways of making you speak."

Zhang Zitong looked away. She bit her lip and asked, "In that case, why did you save me then?" She clearly knew about those methods too. Her voice now carried a hint of fear.

She took a deep breath to calm herself down and said, "I knew this day would come back then, so I already made my preparations. Even if all my acupoints are sealed, I still have ways of ending my own life. The only reason I haven't used them is because you went through so much to save me just now, so I didn't want to waste your goodwill."

Zu An was stunned. He didn't know if what she said was true or not, but there were many mysterious things in this world. Perhaps she really did have something like that. As such, he changed his approach and asked, "Have you thought about this before? What if that so-called great benefactor was actually the one who truly forced your clan into ruin? Otherwise, why would he have just happened to appear in front of you when you were at your lowest point? On top of that, everything just lined up afterward and you were planted into the ranks of a Golden Token Envoy, and as the right hand of Golden Token Seven, no less?"

Zhang Zitong was stunned. Her expression immediately changed, because she realized that there was truly such a possibility. But as someone who had worked as an Embroidered Envoy and spy for so many years, she was incredibly strong-willed. She quickly calmed down and said, "Please don't try to drive a wedge between us. I won't fall for it."

"You should get some rest. Don't think about suicide for now. I won't order anyone to punish you immediately either," Zu An said, then got up to leave.

Zhang Zitong was alarmed. She reflexively asked, "Where are you going?"

The Embroidered Envoy had been her home, but now, for her current self, it was no different from a devil's nest. The only thing that brought her a bit of warmth was this Sir Eleven. If he left, perhaps she would immediately be completely swallowed up in darkness.

"Since you aren't willing to talk, I can only look for others," Zu An said with a chuckle. He pushed open the door and walked out.

Xiao Jianren rushed over when he saw him leave. He asked without thinking, "Did you finish?" His face heated up afterward. He really wanted to fan himself.

Zu An was confused. What the heck are you asking? Still, he replied, "How can things be finished that easily? She's been saved for now. We'll keep her restrained here. Don't let anyone get closer to her."

"Understood!" Xiao Jianren replied with an eager smile. "Sir's way of saving someone is a bit unique... Judging from how sir is dripping with sweat, you must be exhausted."

Even though he liked Zhang Zitong, he had merely been infatuated by her beauty and long legs. That was just a man's instinctive reaction. If one were to ask if he loved her, things definitely hadn't gone that far. That wasn't even considering the fact that Zhang Zitong hadn't returned those feelings at all.

Now that this shocking disaster of a plot against Golden Token Seven's life had been revealed, he wouldn't dare to get involved any further. Even though he had felt terrible while waiting in the courtyard, after so much time, he had also thought things through. For Sir Eleven to take Zhang Zitong in was already quite a good conclusion.

After their two years of interactions, he had already been completely won over by Sir Eleven.

"I do feel a bit tired," Zu An said, not realizing the misunderstanding. After exchanging a few more words, he quickly left.

Xiao Jianren was a bit envious. He wanted to find a chance to properly consult Sir Eleven about just what kind of skill it was that could bring so much pleasure and cure poison.

When she heard what was being said outside the door, Zhang Zitong couldn't help but cover her burning cheeks.

Ah... So embarrassing...

But Sir Eleven really is a warm and gentle person. He still didn't pressure me in this kind of situation. Just how did someone like that survive in the Embroidered Envoy?

...

Meanwhile, after he left, Zu An went straight to the governor manor. Zhang Jie was a bit surprised by his quick return.

"We've hooked a big fish this time," Zu An said as he picked up a teacup and sipped it. Then, he gave Zhang Jie a rough summary of Zhang Zitong's identity as a spy.

Zhang Jie was surprised, asking, "Then what can we even get from an interrogation? A spy like her would definitely be extremely cautious. Be careful that she doesn't end up taking her own life!"

Zu An nodded and said, "She did try to take her own life, but was saved. She didn't reveal too much even after a day of interrogation. However, it's fine. I'm going on a trip to request a Truth Talisman from Master Yan's disciple Miss Xie. I should be able to get what I want from her then. I'll have to entrust her care to Sir Zhang. Help me ensure the safety of the Embroidered Envoy's surroundings."

Zhang Jie's expression became serious. He said, "Don't worry, Sir Eleven. These are special circumstances, so I'll definitely increase the number of personnel to ensure Zhang Zitong's safety."

Zu An nodded and said, "I'm pressed for time, so I must leave." Afterward, he quickly left.

Zhang Jie immediately summoned his subordinates and assigned them security tasks.

...

Late in the night, Zhang Zitong was curled up on her bed. She had her arms around her legs, a blank look on her face. However, when she heard a light noise outside, she was overjoyed. Had Sir Eleven hurried back?

Suddenly, a black-clad individual rushed in. A glistening blade slashed straight at her.

Chapter 1680: Revenge Plot

Zhang Zitong was stunned. She instinctively rolled to the side to avoid the lethal slash, but her body was restricted, so she couldn't use ki to counterattack. When she saw the blade slash at her again, she no longer had the strength to avoid it. She could only watch it descend in despair.

Suddenly, she felt a bit of relief. Either way, death was what she had been looking for. It didn't make that much of a difference whether she died to poison or to this blade.

However, after the blade struck her, she likely wouldn't look so pretty anymore, right? She really didn't want Sir Eleven to return and see such an ugly scene.

Suddenly, a fist smashed toward the blade, knocking it away. An imposing figure appeared in front of Zhang Zitong, making her heart skip a beat. It was Sir Eleven!

Zu An looked at the black-clad individual across from him. Their clothes were wrapped firmly around their body and he couldn't detect any special characteristics. The assassin had clearly come prepared.

The black-clad individual was also stunned when they saw Zu An and bolted for the exit without a moment's hesitation. Just then, however, several Soul Reaping Chains cut off their escape route, with Xiao Jianren and other Silver Token Envoys in the lead.

They were all Silver Token Envoys, and with their special coordinated skills and Soul Reaping Chains, even a powerful cultivator would give up after a short futile struggle. That wasn't even considering the fact that there was a Golden Token Envoy watching over the scene menacingly.

The black-clad individual suddenly turned to look at Zu An, their eyes seemingly filled with anger from being deceived.

You have successfully trolled Zhang Jie for +444 +444 +444...

When he saw the name, Zu An thought, As expected. He said, "Sir Zhang, I didn't expect you to come yourself."

The others present were all shocked to hear those words. They had only assumed this person was an assassin who had come to kill Zhang Zitong. How could they have anticipated that it would actually be such an important figure?

Apart from Zhang Jie, was there anyone else more important who could be called Sir Zhang?

The black-clad individual was shocked, but he still replied in a hoarse voice, "What are you saying? I don't understand." He was clearly carrying out his final struggle and didn't want to admit his identity.

Zu An didn't bother exposing him further and continued, "You actually had me fooled all this time. King Yan used Golden Token Seven's death to make me investigate the Hub of Freedom and discover your relationship with the Hub of Freedom. That way, you would fall from power.

"But there was another mysterious force that tried to lead me to investigate King Yan. At first, I did fall for it and thought that it was King Yan who had done the deed. After all, he had the motive and the ability.

"Along the way, though, there were so many aspects that I just couldn't understand or solve. Only after experiencing everything I've gone through over the past two days did things finally line up.

"The only thing left was to find out the identity of that mysterious force. Actually, many things might look complicated, but there is a simple principle one needs to follow to find the truth, which is to look at who has the most to gain from the situation. That party is the most suspicious.

"If King Yan really fell because of Golden Token Seven or a rebellion, who would be the biggest winner? Of course, that would be you, Yi Commandery's governor. You've fought so bitterly with King Yan over the years. Even though you purposely put on that rather mediocre appearance in front of me, how could anyone who could clash with King Yan for so many years be so incompetent?"

After listening to the explanation, the black-clad individual knew that arguing any further was meaningless. He removed his mask. As expected, it was Yi Commandery's Governor, Zhang Jie.

Xiao Jianren swallowed with difficulty. He felt as if everything he was seeing wasn't real.

When a case involved someone as important as King Yan, if not for his trust in Sir Eleven, he would even have wondered whether everyone involved would be silenced after the fact.

Zhang Zitong looked at Zhang Jie. Her expression changed several times.

"I should have known that this was a trap as soon as you mentioned Zhang Zitong's situation in front of me," Zhang Jie spat, overwhelmed with hate. He had still been careless in the end. Most importantly, this kid really had gone all out in setting the trap. Master Yan's reputation in the field of formations and talismans was too well-known, and he had heard of the Truth Talisman too. He had really been scared that Zhang Zitong would speak the truth.

"King Yan was just captured and King Yan's heir publicly started a rebellion. Even though his majesty reached a compromise and quelled the situation, he definitely wouldn't feel too happy about it inside. In the future, he'd deal with them sooner or later. This victory was far too thorough for you. Even the most cool-headed person would become muddled by victory," Zu An said, then paused for a moment. "But I didn't expect you to come personally."

"If I hadn't personally taken care of it and ended up like her, things would only have become even more annoying," Zhang Jie said as he glared at Zhang Zitong. If not for her, his plans would have been completely flawless.

Zhang Zitong lowered her head apologetically, However, when she thought about how he had been about to kill her, there was also a hint of unwillingness and despair in her expression.

"I have one question. Even though your official rank is high, strictly speaking, you're only an official appointed by the court. Would you really have the power to achieve all of this yourself?" Zu An wondered, feeling confused.

That was precisely why he hadn't suspected Zhang Jie at first. Put nicely, Zhang Jie was an important regional governor, but in more direct terms, he was just a pawn for someone else. He would still be a government employee anywhere else, and would have had no reason to go so far in trying to get rid of King Yan. If every single subordinate of Zhao Han were this capable, just the thought of that alone would be quite terrifying.

"Hmph, what do you understand? In the past, Zhang Zhiquan saved my life. How can I not play my part in his revenge?" Zhang Jie spat hatefully.

Zu An was surprised by the answer. He looked at Zhang Zitong and said, "You're both named Zhang. Are you actually relatives?"

Before Zhang Zitong could say anything, Zhang Jie quickly said, "The relationship couldn't be more distant. You probably couldn't even find any records of us having family history. Otherwise, after Zhang Zhiquan's criminal affair, I wouldn't have been able to sit in my current position."

"Then, what you said about Zhang Zhiquan saving your life, the court doesn't know about it either?" Zu An asked, finding it a bit strange. After all, upon reaching such a high position, a strict political background check should have been carried out.

"He saved me from a terrible situation when I was young. I was only able to walk the path of cultivation because of his assistance. Brother Zhiquan was a man of noble character and wouldn't boast about something like this. I didn't tell anyone else about it either and just stored it in my heart, so of course no one knew about it," Zhang Jie replied.

"I didn't expect you to be the emotionally righteous type," Zu An said with a chuckle. "And yet today, you were about to kill the sole remaining survivor of your benefactor's lineage. Isn't talking about these things quite laughable now?"

"All of this was merely for the sake of the ultimate revenge! I believe she's willing as well," Zhang Jie said with a sneer.

"That's right!" Zhang Zitong also said, but inwardly, she couldn't help but feel a ripple of doubt. She was willing to give up her life for this matter, and that was why she had firmly chosen to end her own life. Still, being killed by someone else suddenly felt really different from ending her own life.

"Just what did that Zhang Zhiquan do that resulted in his entire family being executed?" Zu An asked curiously. "And what is the ultimate revenge you're talking about?"

Zhang Jie sneered. "Even if I had the courage to tell you, you wouldn't necessarily have the guts to stomach it."

Zu An chuckled and said, "I might not have other skills, but I've always been quite brave. I'm all ears."

Zhang Jie gave Xiao Jianren and the others a look, saying, "If they hear about this, they won't be able to live after."

Xiao Jianren and the others' expressions changed. After being Embroidered Envoys for so long, they'd had their fair share of contact with darkness. They naturally knew that what he was saying might not have been spoken just to scare them. There was indeed a chance that hearing the truth would mean that they would undoubtedly die.

Zu An waved his hand and said, "All of you, wait outside for me. You're not allowed to get close to this place."

Xiao Jianren immediately panicked. "Sir Eleven, be careful not to be fooled! He might be using this as a chance to send us away!"

Zu An thought to himself, This guy at least has some loyalty. He definitely didn't want them to take the risk now. He replied, "Don't worry, I know what I'm doing."

Xiao Jianren and the others could only leave helplessly.

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Zhang Jie was a bit surprised when he saw them leave. He remarked, "You are quite bold, aren't you? Are you not scared of me attacking you now?" He was a master rank cultivator, after all, and Golden Token Envoys usually didn't reach that level.

Zu An remained quite calm as he said, "I've already cleared the room for you. You can say what you want to say."

Zhang Jie slowly said, "The case of the Zhang clan's eradication involves the previous dynasty's imperial descendant..."