

Immortal 1681

Chapter 1681: Truth of the Throne

Zu An shivered. He hadn't expected this to actually be connected to the previous dynasty.

Zhang Zitong's eyes widened. She hadn't actually known the real reason behind her parents' deaths and the eradication of the clan. This was the first time she was hearing about it.

"Since you're a Golden Token Envoy, you should have heard of Chief Attendant Dongfang Bai, right?" Zhang Jie asked.

Zu An nodded. There were four Chief Attendants in the current dynasty, and Dongfang Bai was their leader. His son Dongfang Han was the Yellow Gate Attendant Minister, someone he had met previously.

However, because Dongfang Bai didn't leave much of an impression, the more famous Chief Attendant Waterfront Duke Pei Zheng, Big Manman's grandfather, actually had more practical authority. However, Big Manman wasn't the daughter of his first wife, and her father was only Pei Zheng's fifth son, which was why her status in the clan wasn't that high.

Zhang Jie seemed to have seen through his thoughts. He continued, "You're wondering why despite being the leader of the four Chief Attendants, Dongfang Bai, doesn't seem to have much of a presence, right?"

"Why is that?" Zu An asked. He hadn't been too interested in that before, since they hadn't had many dealings with each other, but now that it was related to the death of Zhang Zitong's parents and even the previous dynasty, he couldn't help but become interested.

"Dongfang Bai's wife is the princess of the previous dynasty's Qi State. The Qi State Princess is the daughter of the previous dynasty's Emperor Zhao," Zhang Jie explained.

Zu An knew Meng Emperor Zhao, who had been the last emperor in the Meng Dynasty with practical authority. The young emperors who succeeded him had all given up their authority to important ministers. In the end, the Meng Dynasty had been replaced by the Zhou Dynasty.

"But, Dongfang Bai wasn't the Qi State princess' first husband," Zhang Jie said, his expression seeming to carry a hint of sympathy as he spoke.

"Oh, who was her first husband?" Zu An asked. He didn't really know that much about the matter of the previous dynasty, but he wasn't too surprised to hear of her remarriage. After all, she was a princess, someone of imperial kinsmen and peerless beauty. She couldn't just remain a widow forever, right?

"The son of the Meng Dynasty's former Secretariat Director Qian Xuan. Back then, Qian Xuan opposed the grand director of this dynasty, colluding with the dynasty's enemies in an uprising. That secret was leaked, and he was executed, while the Qian clan also had three generations punished. Of course, the Qi State's princess had a special identity and wasn't included in the punishment. Later, she entered an arranged marriage with Dongfang Bai," Zhang Jie said, full of sighs as he talked about past events.

Zu An knew that the grand director Zhang Jie spoke of had been the Meng Dynasty's most important minister at the time. In reality, whether he was a grand director or a great ancestor, he had been the one with the greatest authority. And yet, in the end, the one who had formally established the Zhou

Dynasty was still Zhao Han. These titles of grand director and great ancestor were all titles that Zhao Han had assigned afterward.

“So was it just because he took the previous dynasty’s Qi State princess as his wife that Dongfang Bai was no longer viewed with importance in the court?” Zu An asked, sounding surprised. He didn’t really understand why Zhang Jie was saying these things now.

“Of course it wasn’t only because of that. Do you know about the current dynasty’s Imperial Director Zhen Xueyi?” Zhang Jie asked.

Zu An nodded. The Imperial Director was in charge of supervising the various affairs of the imperial clan. He had even personally interacted with the man before, due to the rumors surrounding him and the crown princess. In order to prove his innocence, the Imperial Director, libationer, and others had come to interrogate him. However, he didn’t have too deep of an impression of Zhen Xueyi. He only remembered the other man as an old fox who was really good at shifting blame.

“His surname isn’t actually Zhen; rather, he’s a clan member of Meng Emperor Zhao’s wife, Empress Huang. Because the Zhen clan lacked male offspring, he was adopted into the Zhen clan. However, his bloodline as part of the Huang clan still remains. His connection to the previous dynasty isn’t as estranged as that of Dongfang Bai, but he occupies an important position. Why do you think that is?” Zhang Jie continued, looking at Zu An with a sneer.

Zu An shook his head. A lot of information regarding the past dynasty had been cut off. He couldn’t investigate anything even if he wanted to. Fortunately, there were still some elders still alive from the previous dynasty whom he could ask directly.

Zhang Jie didn’t provide the answer and instead threw out another question. “Why do you think the Meng Dynasty, with its powerful foundation, ended up being replaced by the current dynasty’s Zhao clan?”

Zu An thought for a bit, then replied, “I reckon that it’s because the Meng Dynasty’s emperors didn’t live that long. Between that the struggle over the throne, the Meng Dynasty was able to greatly suppress the authority of the imperial clan. That was why this dynasty’s great ancestor and grand director had an opportunity to exploit.”

Zhang Jie was a bit surprised when he heard Zu An’s reply. He said, “You actually put it this bluntly... You’re not like the other Embroidered Envoys who will defend this dynasty no matter what. I wonder just how you passed the political background check.”

Zu An was stunned. As a transmigrator, he naturally viewed things from a different perspective. He hadn’t expected it to end up sounding so weird in the eyes of others.

“Very good, very good! Kid, with this level of backbone, it sounds like it wasn’t a waste for me to tell you about these things,” Zhang Jie suddenly said happily.

Zu An frowned and said, “You kept rambling about this and that, but you didn’t give me the most valuable piece of information yet. Are you stalling for time? My patience is limited.”

Zhang Jie laughed heartily and said, “Please don’t be so impatient. The reasons you spoke of were indeed very important, but you’re missing an even more crucial piece of information. Meng Emperor

Zhao's sons all died prematurely, to the point where there weren't even any mature sons who could succeed in the world. That was why he had no choice but to select some of the imperial clan's children to succeed the empire."

"Princes dying young isn't too rare, let alone the fact that even Meng Emperor Zhao himself didn't live for that long. That means there was something wrong with his genes," Zu An replied.

"Genes?" Zhang Jie repeated, stunned. He clearly hadn't heard of the word before. "It indeed isn't that rare, but what if it wasn't an accident, but rather brought about artificially?"

"Artificially?" Zu An repeated in shock. "Who would dare to do something like that?"

"According to what you said just now, the one who has the greatest to gain is the most suspicious," Zhang Jie said with a sneer.

"You're saying that it was the current dynasty's great ancestor, the founding emperor?" Zhang Zitong suddenly said, unable to hold back anymore after listening to the whole conversation from one side. After all, this was related to the case of the Zhang clan's eradication.

"Correct," Zhang Jie said bluntly. "Only the grand director had that kind of ability at the time."

"But something isn't right here. Even though information on this topic was quite limited, Meng Emperor Zhao had a good reputation and was known as a wise ruler. Why would the grand director dare to do something like that?" Zu An asked in confusion. Based on the available resources, the grand director had still been a loyal minister under Meng Emperor Zhao. Only later, when the younger emperors ascended to the throne, had imperial authority begun to slip.

"It naturally wouldn't have been possible if it were just the great ancestor alone. But what if he had the help of Emperor Zhao's wife, Empress Huang?" Zhang Jie replied with a sneer.

"Empress Huang?" Zu An repeated, stunned. She was already an empress, so why would she collude with a minister to go against her own husband? However, when he remembered the relationship between himself and the current Empress, his expression suddenly grew strange.

"Empress Huang didn't have any children herself, and she was the type who was prone to jealousy. She couldn't bear to see the other concubines continue to bear children. Her relationship with the great ancestor was quite good, so the two hit it off," Zhang Jie slowly said. "In the span of a few years, Emperor Zhao's princes all died young. He thought that he was just lacking in fortune and didn't suspect anything.

"But when dealing with the fourth prince, the doctors and eunuchs involved were worried that things could fall through and that they could be exposed. Because they couldn't bear the guilty conscience anymore, they secretly sent the fourth prince out of the palace. They declared to the public that the prince had died. One of the doctors contacted a friend of his outside the palace, which was Zitong's father, Zhang Zhiquan. He had always been someone of upright and honorable character, and chose to help. He helped bring the fourth prince out of the palace. From then on, though the fourth prince was forced to wander the world destitute, for better or for worse, he was able to survive.

"At the time, those involved thought that one day, the truth would come to light and they could bring the fourth prince back to become the emperor. Then, not only would they not be punished for their

mistake, they would even have established great contributions. However, over time, the grand director became too strong, successfully seizing the Meng Dynasty. This matter thus naturally fizzled out.

"Meanwhile, that fourth prince ended up dying an untimely death for reasons unknown as well. Still, he did leave behind a bloodline among the people, which led to the imperial descendant I mentioned just now."

Zhang Jie's voice was full of emotion as he spoke about the past. "But as time went on, the truth couldn't be concealed forever. In the end, the Zhao clan still found out about this. Because of the importance of this matter, they couldn't carry out a public hearing, which was why Golden Token Seven led his men to eradicate the clan. At the same time, his job was to ask about that imperial grandson's whereabouts."

Zhang Zitong sobbed tearfully. She had finally learned the truth of her parents' passing after so many years.

Zu An sighed. He had previously thought that there was no reason for a Golden Token Envoy to deal with an Imperial Censor that way, but if it involved the imperial throne, it all made sense. After thinking to himself for a while, he asked, "Then where is that imperial descendant now?"

Chapter 1682: Curse Arts

"Some say that he died, while others say that he was captured and locked up in secret... Who can say for certain?" Zhang Jie said, laughing in self-mockery. "Furthermore, even if the imperial descendant is still in this world, so what? What could he even accomplish?"

Zu An actually agreed with that analysis. The Zhou Dynasty already had a firm control over the world. Between that and the presence of an unstoppable being like Zhao Han, who would throw away their lives for an imperial descendant of the previous dynasty?

However, he suddenly noticed that something was strange. He asked, "Aren't you a surviving member of the 'evil' foreign regime then?"

"Surviving evil?" Zhang Jie sneered. "Who would want to have anything to do with those crazy bastards?"

"Then why did you talk for such a long time about that previous dynasty's imperial descendant? And what's the purpose of taking such a huge risk?" Zu An asked. Even though his tone was a bit harsh, many things he had been confused about were finally cleared up. Previously, he'd had no way of understanding the previous dynasty's secrets.

"I already told you. It's to get revenge for brother Zhang, of course," Zhang Jie said calmly.

"No, that doesn't make sense," Zu An said with a sneer. "You were able to become such an important official in this kind of frontier region, so you must have already reached the peak of your career. There's no way you would take such a risk to deal with a single king."

Even though King Yan was part of the imperial clan, he wasn't from the same branch as Zhao Han's direct line, but rather his uncle. Even if Zhang Jie wanted to get revenge, there was no reason to target him.

Zu An paused for a moment before continuing, "Besides, you wanted to end her life too. You can't justify that as showing her father favor, right?"

When she heard that, Zhang Zitong looked at Zhang Jie with a hint of fear. She hadn't thought too much about that under the pretext everything was for the sake of revenge, or perhaps she hadn't been willing to think more about it. Now that the main act of revenge had concluded and she was reminded of it once more, she realized that something was strange.

Zhang Jie laughed and said, "You are quite sharp, perhaps the smartest among all the Embroidered Envoys I know. But since you're that smart, have you considered why I told you all of these things?"

"Stalling for time..." Zu An said. He naturally knew Zhang Jie's goals, but he had confidence in his own strength and had wanted to get more information. That was why he had played along with the game.

His expression suddenly changed midway through his sentence, because Zhang Jie's temperament gradually became strange. All of the candles in the room flickered. They were clearly still lit, but the entire room suddenly became dark. It was as if all of the light were being sucked away by something. The shadows in the room seemed to leap at Zhang Jie together, as if they were living beings.

Zu An suddenly realized something and exclaimed, "You were that shaman who killed Golden Token Seven!"

He had examined Golden Token Seven's corpse. Golden Token Seven's cultivation wasn't low, and together with the support of assorted Embroidered Envoy equipment, he would normally have had a fighting chance even against a master rank cultivator. However, there had been no signs of resistance at all, as if he had died in his sleep.

At first, Zu An had thought that the killer was Sir Huo from King Yan Manor. However, even though Sir Huo's cultivation wasn't bad, Golden Token Seven had been investigating King Yan Manor for some time, so there was no way he wouldn't have been on guard against that famous follower at all. Sir Huo's cultivation wasn't high enough that he could ignore such vigilance. As such, Zu An had always been curious as to who that mysterious shaman was. Now, he had finally obtained his answer.

However, he was still a bit confused. He asked, "If you're a shaman, how did you escape the court's background check?"

An important official such as Zhang Jie would definitely have been investigated heavily. There was no way the court wouldn't have known if he were a shaman...

Zhang Jie chuckled and said, "I'm not a shaman, but I just happen to have cultivated a secret technique that invites a shaman to possess me, granting me the abilities of a shaman. The only issue is that the process takes quite a bit of time."

The reason why he hadn't used the shaman's power to silence Zhang Zitong was because he had been worried that the Embroidered Envoy would find out that the true culprit of the case was still at large, but he didn't need to have such misgivings anymore.

His eyes turned completely ink-black as he said, "Seeing as I could kill Golden Token Seven, then I naturally don't mind killing another Golden Token Envoy."

Zu An wondered what kind of freakish thing this shaman possession was. Why were there so many strange and inexplicable skills in this world? However, he didn't hesitate anymore, because he could already sense that Zhang Jie had a skill that could threaten him. He didn't appear to move at all, but Soul Reaping Chains instantly appeared in his hands and shot toward Zhang Jie.

The Soul Reaping Chains were the Embroidered Envoy's standard-issue weapon. They were extremely effective in restricting all kinds of abilities. Zu An didn't want to expose his other identity, so he didn't use a sword.

Zhang Jie clearly had some reservations toward the Golden Token Envoy's Soul Reaping Chains. He tried to move out of the way while aiming his pitch-black gaze directly at Zu An.

Zu An felt as if the air around him had become extremely viscous, and his eyelids became very heavy. A strong sense of drowsiness came over him. For some reason, the Soul Reaping Chains that had been rushing fiercely toward Zhang Jie's weak point also weakened.

With a thud, Zhang Zitong also collapsed on her bed. Zhang Jie's attack hadn't been aimed at her, but the side effects alone were already too much for her to handle.

Drawing on his previous experience with Sir Huo, Zu An quickly closed his eyes and summoned Hundredwarble at the same time. The most effective retaliation against a spirit element attack was often a spirit element counterattack.

Sure enough, Zhang Jie had a pained expression, and his hypnosis skill also weakened.

However, Zu An didn't have it easy either. This sleep-inducing skill was just way too powerful! It still affected him even though his eyes were closed. Fortunately, with his experience against Sir Huo, as well as Hundredwarble's retaliation, it wasn't enough to make him fall asleep.

The previous time, against Sir Huo, he had been able to break through the illusion and wake up. However, he didn't dare to take such a risk against the much more powerful Zhang Jie. He wouldn't necessarily be able to wake up, and it would be very bad if Zhang Jie decided to deliver a lethal blow while he couldn't move.

The door slammed open with a loud bang. Xiao Jianren and the other Silver Token Envoys rushed in. When they heard sounds of fighting and realized that something had happened, they hurried over to help.

However, when Zhang Jie's pitch-black gaze met his, Xiao Jianren groaned and fell straight to the ground. He didn't excel in combat prowess. Furthermore, because of Zhang Zitong, his emotions had been thrown into turmoil, so his mental strength was at its weakest. That was why he was the first to fall.

The other Silver Token Envoys only endured for a second longer before collapsing. Only two Silver Token Envoys managed to stay awake despite feeling extremely drowsy. They still gritted their teeth and tossed their Soul Reaping Chains around Zhang Jie's body.

Most of Zhang Jie's attention was on Zu An, and he had only used a bit of strength to deal with the others. These two individuals were Silver Token Envoys who had extremely steady wills, which was why they were able to hold on.

Zhang Jie released a cold snort, and two copper coins flew toward the two.

Zu An noticed that the natural laws surrounding those two copper coins were extremely strange and cried out, "Be careful!"

However, he was still too late. The two Silver Token Envoys had already brandished their Soul Reaping Chains and struck the copper coins.

How could a copper coin endure the power of a Silver Token Envoy's full-powered attack? The two copper coins immediately exploded into pieces. However, at the same time, those two Silver Token Envoys' bodies suffered the very same fate.

Curse Arts!

The strange skills of shamans could often link one's life with an object. If the object survived, so did the person. If the object was destroyed, so was the person.

Zu An's eyes turned red from that sight. He hadn't expected this to end up involving two Silver Token Envoys! In reality, because he had been so busy as of late, and because these were Golden Token Seven's Silver Token Envoys, he hadn't even taken special note of their names. He only remembered that one was surnamed Yan while the other was Tao. They were a bit lazy normally, but they had actually been so fearless and valiant in front of a great enemy, ultimately dying to the unknown danger.

While Zhang Jie was distracted, the viscous aura of drowsiness finally weakened. Zu An made his move. Resplendent sword radiance erupted, dispelling all of the darkness in the room.

At that moment, a hint of fear flashed through Zhang Jie's eyes. He began to run, but he noticed that something was strange about his body. He was shocked to discover that his entire right arm was missing! It had been sliced up by the sword ki.

Zu An frowned. Zhang Jie shouldn't have been able to avoid that sword, so why had he only lost an arm?

Zhang Jie's face was filled with alarm and horror. He could no longer remain calm, because he knew that he had brushed past the gates of hell just then.

The substitute puppet he carried had already turned to powder. Normally, the existence of that puppet should have been equivalent to him having an extra life. Thus, he had assumed he was absolutely safe. And yet, he hadn't expected this sword to be so formidable! Not only had it destroyed his puppet, it had even carried enough power to get rid of his arm!

He didn't dare to show any hint of negligence. He used his left hand to fish out a small straw doll shaped like a human as he spat, "Blood for blood! I'll let you have a taste of the pain of losing an arm too!"

Suddenly, he twisted the doll's right arm, ripping it right off.

At the same time, Zu An's right arm suddenly began to burst with blood. His whole arm was being torn apart!

Chapter 1683: Doubt

In the past, Zu An had obtained 'The Book' from Lu Sheng in a secret dungeon, which allowed him to have a kind of natural premonition against danger. In that instant, a few scenes had appeared in his mind. He quickly dodged to the side, then frantically used the Primordial Origin Sutra to protect his entire body.

Still, his opponent's Curse Arts were too treacherous. It wasn't something he could avoid on a physical level.

As the straw doll's right arm was torn off, Zu An felt a mysterious power envelop his shoulder. Then, a tearing pain came from his arm. His flesh was lacerated and blood poured out. Fortunately, after several instances of the Primordial Origin Sutra's refinement, his body had become incredibly tough. As such, his arm wasn't immediately removed by the Curse Arts.

He quickly used the Primordial Origin Sutra to treat that arm. The wounds healed at a visible rate. However, that mysterious power didn't disappear. It still continued to tear at his flesh.

The endless cycle of tearing, regenerating, and tearing again could leave even someone with Zu An's willpower shocked. The pain wasn't the main thing; the most important part was that the mysterious power hadn't disappeared. His body would eventually break down.

However, he suddenly thought of something and began to use the Heaven Devouring Sutra. A black hole appeared over his shoulder, gradually sucking in the mysterious power. His shoulder's rate of collapse slowed, and his flesh healed once again.

Meanwhile, Zhang Jie was completely stupefied. The sight before him completely toppled anything he knew. How could there be someone who could emerge unscathed against his Curse Arts? He suddenly felt a sense of fear. He was no longer as calm as before and didn't dare to toy with his prey like before. He twisted the straw doll's neck to immediately take his opponent's life.

Zu An felt some pain around his neck, but he had already figured out his enemy's patterns. He used the Heaven Devouring Sutra at full power to absorb all of the mysterious power.

"How?!" Zhang Jie exclaimed, almost breaking down when he saw that Zu An was still fine. He bit his tongue, causing blood to spray everywhere. Then, he muttered a strange incantation. All sorts of black patterns began to appear on his face.

The atmosphere of the room quickly became extremely strange, as if something was about to be summoned.

Zu An didn't dare to take any more risks. This guy's Curse Arts were way too strange; who knew what would happen if he let Zhang Jie continue? As such, he quickly shouted, "What you lookin' at?"

Zhang Jie was stunned. He instinctively replied, "I'm staring at you, shithead!"

His summoning ceremony was briefly interrupted, and what he was met with instead was a dazzling blade of light.

Ah, I have so many regrets! Really! Why the hell did I have to pay attention to him? I didn't even use my strongest move yet! Nooooo!

Those were Zhang Jie's last thoughts before passing on. His regrets were so strong that even after he took his last breath, his eyes remained open. When he died, the strange atmosphere also gradually disappeared. Even that terrifying and powerful aura vanished without a trace.

Zu An wiped away some cold sweat as he thought, These shamans' skills really are hard to defend against. I was almost done in just now... He then woke up all of the unconscious people in the room.

When Xiao Jianren and the others learned that Zhang Jie was the main culprit, they all sighed in relief. However, when they learned of the deaths of their colleagues, their moods sank again. Those in their trade all knew that such a day would come sooner or later. They wondered when the same fate would befall them too.

Zu An said, "Give the two of them a proper burial and generously support their families. Furthermore, I'll do my best to give them spots in the Hall of Honor."

"Sir is noble and righteous!" Xiao Jianren and the others replied, feeling greatly shaken.

The Hall of Honor was the highest honor for Embroidered Envoys after they passed on. There were many Embroidered Envoys who died each year, but those who could make it into the Hall of Honor were pitifully few in number. Not only was it a recognition of their achievements, it would also ensure three generations of their families' riches and honor.

Zu An gave Zhang Zitong a look and continued, "It was thanks to Zhang Zitong's report that exposed Zhang Jie in this case. She cooperated with us in trapping him, which was why we were able to take down the main culprit."

Zhang Zitong was shocked. She looked at him with a conflicted expression.

Xiao Jianren and the others were stunned, but all those who had reached their current positions were intelligent. They realized that Sir Eleven wanted to protect her, so they naturally didn't voice any objections.

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The room was just too bloody. With Xiao Jianren and the others dealing with the aftermath, Zu An took Zhang Zitong to another room.

"Don't think I'll be grateful to you. All you've done was just to prevent me from returning to my previous faction, as well as to draw out the ones behind me," Zhang Zitong said after remaining silent for a long time.

She and Zhang Jie didn't share much of a friendship, and this was the first time she had heard of his relationship with her father. Furthermore, he had even tried to kill her, so if he died, then so be it. However, she really couldn't understand why Sir Eleven would release her. In the end, that was the only reason she could think of.

Zu An replied calmly, "If not, what other use would you have for me?"

Zhang Zitong's face turned pale. Right, what am I getting so worked up for?

Zu An said, "Seeing as you've already died once, take good care of this life and start anew. After all, your parents' grudge hasn't been cleansed away yet. Furthermore, Tao Qing and Yan Ke were your colleagues. If you try to kill yourself, will you be able to face them for their sacrifice?"

Zhang Zitong's expression changed several times. After some time, she nodded and said, "Alright."

Zu An sighed in relief inwardly. Apart from those reasons, the other reason he had kept her alive was because she was related to the previous dynasty's imperial descendant, which could be useful in the future. After all, they were Zhao Han's enemies, so they could be helpful.

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After taking care of the situation, Zu An went straight to the Yi City Lord Manor. He found City Lord Liao Ling and gave him a summary of the events that had transpired.

There weren't many officials he trusted in this place, but Liao Ling was an exception. The fact that he had been able to cultivate such a pure and proud sword ki meant that his moral conduct was also reliable.

Liao Ling was shocked to hear the truth behind Zhang Jie. He reflexively doubted the conclusion, but when Zu An gave him all of the evidence, he couldn't help but waver.

Then, Zu An told him to properly manage Yi Commandery; otherwise, Zhang Jie's trusted aides could start a rebellion out of desperation. As for why he couldn't just let King Yan's people take care of the situation, he was concerned that they would take the chance to carry out a complete purge. If that happened, the balance of power in Yi Commandery would fall out of equilibrium.

Liao Ling understood that principle well. Even though he was still a bit skeptical about the circumstances surrounding Zhang Jie, he agreed to keep the situation under control.

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After making those arrangements, Zu An found some free time to summon the emperor. However, even after he tried many times, the emperor still didn't respond. Even so, Zu An didn't give up and just continued to call out.

A while later, an impatient voice resounded from the golden token. "If you don't have a proper reason this time, this emperor will make sure you pay for it!"

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +233 +233 +233...

He was clearly annoyed about being summoned like a monkey again and again. This time, he didn't send over his divine sense and only sent his voice. He thought that he definitely had to properly display his authority in front of Zu An the next time he saw him.

Zu An gave him a rough summary of what had just happened.

"Zhang Jie, a shaman?" Zhao Han exclaimed in shock, clearly realizing that this was no small matter. He forgot all about the annoyance of being summoned. After some time, he asked in a serious tone "The motive?"

He clearly couldn't trust Zu An that easily, but he was still curious as to why such an important official as Zhang Jie would take such a huge risk.

"I don't know the exact details, but there is definitely a mysterious force behind him," Zu An said, although he didn't report the information about the previous dynasty's imperial descendant.

Zhang Jie had told Zu An all of that information firstly because he had needed to buy time to gain the shaman powers, and secondly to plant a vicious scheme. He knew that once Zu An found out about the imperial clan's secrets, the emperor definitely wouldn't tolerate his existence any longer, and that he would settle things sooner or later.

As such, Zu An wouldn't be so stupid as to reveal everything now.

"Mysterious force..." Zhao Han muttered. He fell silent for a while, seemingly thinking about something. The silence went on for so long that Zu An even thought he had already left.

Suddenly, Zhao Han said in a suspicious tone, "Zhang Jie is a master rank cultivator. If he had that shaman ability, how did you end up killing him instead?"

Chapter 1684: Did I Come at a Bad Time?

Zu An had already anticipated that he would be asked that question. He replied calmly, "It was thanks to the other Silver Token Envoys' help that we were barely able to take him down. We lost Tao Qing and Yan Ke, two Silver Token Envoys, in the process. Forgive my boldness for asking this, but I hope your majesty will permit them to join the Hall of Honor and generously console their families."

Zhao Han remained silent for a long time. He then said, "I will permit it!"

That was tantamount to accepting the explanation. After all, whether it was Zhang Jie or Zu An, they could be considered important in the eyes of ordinary people, but they were both just ants to Zhao Han. He didn't really care about a battle between ants.

"Thank you, your majesty!" Zu An replied. It was the first time he had thanked the emperor sincerely.

"How is the investigation in Violet Mountain going?" Zhao Han asked.

"I've assigned the Armed Escort Division to renovate the mountain while secretly examining potential points of danger. For now, though, everything looks ordinary. The Great Daoist Sects Competition is also nearing its end..." Zu An gave a rough account of what had happened.

"Hmph. Emptiness Isle and Supreme Mystery Cave? Those declining sects were actually still able to produce disciples this excellent? It seems the court has indulged them too much these past few years," Zhao Han muttered to himself.

Zu An observed a moment of silence for Emptiness Isle and Supreme Mystery Cave, especially Emptiness Isle. It really was a sudden and unexpected disaster! They clearly weren't that powerful, and yet they had been screwed over by Yun Jianyue.

"What happened with the disappearance of Emptiness Isle's disciple?" Zhao Han suddenly asked.

“We still don’t know right now. The daoists are currently investigating the situation,” Zu An said. There was naturally no way he would tell the truth.

“You do not have to worry about these things; just remember your mission. As for getting involved randomly in needless things and almost forcing King Yan Manor to rebel, this emperor still has yet to settle that debt with you.”

Zu An cursed inwardly. I was clearly investigating what happened to Golden Token Seven, so what do you mean ‘getting involved randomly’?

“This emperor is already en route to Violet Mountain. Your only job is to keep an eye on Violet Mountain. Don’t create any more side issues,” Zhao Han said coldly.

Even though he could have arrived from the capital to Violet Mountain in an instant using his earth immortal rank strength, this time, he was coming for the Fengshan Ceremony. He had to keep the proper etiquette that was required, so he had to bring most of the procession from the capital with him to Violet Mountain. Along the way, he also had to summon officials from the local regions, and from time to time, he even showed himself to the commoners.

“Understood!” Zu An replied, thinking to himself that he had to let big sis Yun know ahead of time. Otherwise, they would be in danger once Zhao Han came to Violet Mountain.

Before leaving, Zhao Han warned him, “Unless you notice some ridiculous, world-changing conspiracy, do not randomly summon me again! Otherwise, you will have to pay the price with your life!”

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +400 +400 +400...

It was obvious that after being summoned again and again by Zu An, he was furious.

Zu An wanted to see what Zhao Han looked like when he was this angry. He was sure that it was the same as those old freaks from the Fiend races without much of their lifespan left. They had to spend most of their time in a meditative sleep. Each time he woke up the emperor was equivalent to eating away at his lifespan.

Sigh, I really want to mess with him again... Zu An thought, but he knew that doing so would only cause him to be ripped apart by a furious Zhao Han.

...

After saying his goodbyes to Zhao Han, Zu An entered the prison King Yan was being kept in. King Yan was taking his anger out on a jailer who was bringing his meal. As someone who normally enjoyed a lavish lifestyle, being locked up inside day after day really wasn’t pleasant.

“What seems to be the matter with this king today? Who made you upset?” Zu An asked, walking over with a big smile.

King Yan harrumphed impatiently when he saw Zu An. He snapped, “You are asking a question you already know the answer to!”

Zu An found a chair and sat down in front of King Yan’s bed, saying, “If the king doesn’t wish to cooperate, even if there’s an intent to right your wrongs, there’s nothing that can be done, you know?”

King Yan trembled. His expression immediately changed into a smile as he asked, "Does Sir Eleven have any advice for me?"

Zu An then said unhurriedly, "Over the past few days of investigations, I discovered that there were many suspicious elements to Golden Token Seven's case, as if someone was deliberately pushing us in your direction. Please think about whether or not you've offended anyone. Who would be the most likely to do such a thing?"

"It's definitely Zhang Jie, it's definitely him!" King Yan yelled, slamming the table and standing up. "That bastard is full of evil schemes. He bears so much animosity against me and wishes to get rid of me more than anything else. There's no one else who could do such a thing but him!"

Previously, he had been worried that pointing fingers at Zhang Jie would only have the opposite effect, so he could only hint at it. But when he heard what Sir Eleven said, he wasn't stupid. He realized that there was something interesting going on and didn't have such misgivings anymore.

"I indeed found some clues related to him," Zu An said vaguely.

King Yan was delighted. He said, "If Sir Eleven can help me purge the injustice, King Yan Manor will definitely remember Sir Eleven's favor."

Zu An replied coldly, "Why would an official need any favors from you when judging our cases impartially?"

This time, he had come precisely to sway King Yan. Zhang Jie was already dead, so it would be a bit too much of a waste to not take advantage of the situation. If he could get King Yan to owe him a favor, they would share some good karma in the future instead. After all, this guy wasn't all that loyal to the empire. Between that and his relationship with the Devil Sect, he could even be of some use in the future.

"Yes, of course, yes. Sir Zu is impartial and leaves this humble king in admiration," King Yan said with an apologetic smile. He had felt that the other party was absolutely repulsive before, but now, he actually found Sir Eleven a bit cute.

"But let's make this clear, this is this and that is that. Golden Token Seven's death might be unrelated to you, but the things on that account book still need to be investigated to see if there are any issues," Zu An said. He still had to scare the other party a bit and apply some pressure, after all. He couldn't let King Yan feel as if he had gotten away too easily.

Sure enough, King Yan's expression changed, but he reacted quickly too and said, "Those things were definitely set up to frame me by that bastard Zhang Jie. I believe that Sir Eleven's eyes are as bright as a torch and will definitely be able to uncover the truth."

Zu An nodded in satisfaction. By letting him out this way, King Yan would really think that he was doing him a favor.

...

After arranging things in Yi City, Zu An planned to return to Violet Mountain. However, he wondered where Yun Jianyue had gone.

While he was sitting in his room in a daze, a sweet voice suddenly spoke by his ear. "Which girl is this handsome big brother thinking about now?"

When he heard the familiar yet unfamiliar voice, Zu An was happy and surprised. He looked in its direction and saw an exceptionally beautiful young lady by the windowsill. Her eyes were sparkling, and she was beaming widely. She had beautiful features and fair skin, and her lips were full and rosy. Even though she was just a beautiful young lady on the outside, she was full of a charm and allure that didn't match her age at all.

"Honglei!" Zu An exclaimed, not having expected to reunite with her here. He had heard that she was sent out on a mission from Yun Jianyue. He rushed straight to the windowsill and immediately took her into his arms. The two of them had really spent more time apart than together.

Qiu Honglei was also really moved. She had been able to recognize Zu An at Violet Mountain, and yet he hadn't been able to do the same. That had made her miss him more and more.

As the two of them tightly embraced each other and shared their pent-up emotions, they eventually kissed. After all, before this, apart from that last step, the two of them had already done pretty much everything. They were already extremely familiar with each other's bodies.

While the two of them were kissing passionately, a light cough suddenly came from off to the side. A voice called out, "Did I come at a bad time?"

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

Chapter 1685: Code Names

The two of them jumped in fright. Qiu Honglei quickly pushed Zu An away. She normally always carried herself in a flirtatious manner, but she was now incredibly embarrassed.

Zu An was also a bit embarrassed. What the heck is this? No wonder they always say that a rabbit doesn't eat the grass by its own burrow! As expected, that easily leads to problems...

Fortunately, he was quite thick-skinned and quickly calmed down, saying, "So it was big sis Yun, haha... I was actually just worrying about you."

Yun Jianyue was a bit annoyed, but she knew that getting angry here was meaningless. It was completely normal for lovers to kiss each other. She couldn't just run over and tell Honglei 'my disciple, I actually have an affair with your man', right?

She replied with a snort, "Don't worry, I won't die anytime soon. But you seem to have wrapped up your work pretty quickly, hm? You cleaned up Zhang Jie's forces so quickly."

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment and said, "Zhang Jie was a court official, after all. There was no way for him to build an entire fort for himself like King Yan."

Furthermore, with the help of City Lord Liao Ling, his trusted aides had all been detained before they could even react. That was why they hadn't repeated the fiasco with King Yan this time.

"Aren't you quite the little genius here? King Yan was praising you the entire time after returning," Yun Jianyue said. She couldn't help but smile when she thought back to what had happened. Suddenly, she added, "Right, Honglei, give him that thing we found."

Qiu Honglei seemed to snap out of her daze. She took out a small paper slip and gave it to Zu An.

"What is this?" Zu An exclaimed, his expression changing a bit as soon as he received the paper strip, because he could sense that the material was different.

It was high quality paper that wasn't easily damaged by water or fire. The booklets each Embroidered Envoy carried with them were all made out of this paper, recording their missions and other clues. The special material was meant to guard against damage. Among the Embroidered Envoy, these booklets often served a similar purpose to his previous world's blackboxes.

For example, if something strange happened to the Embroidered Envoy, the problem could often be identified by checking the booklet. That was often the case when two Embroidered Envoys were working together. If one died and one lived, and the deceased's booklet showed signs of tampering and other traces, that companion would be suspected. That was a way to keep Embroidered Envoys in check by setting them against each other.

Qiu Honglei replied, "This is something King Yan Manor obtained from their investigation earlier. Back then, Golden Token Seven died too mysteriously, so King Yan sent his men to investigate the cause. There's no lack of capable individuals in the king manor. One of them followed all sorts of clues to find this strip of paper Golden Token Seven found."

Zu An thought to himself, No wonder we didn't find any useful clues from Golden Token Seven's remaining possessions. They were probably all collected by King Yan Manor first.

He opened the slip of paper and saw a string of strange names recorded on it. Many of them had some circles drawn around them. It was clear that these names had left Golden Token Seven quite frustrated.

"Stranger, salted fish, servant, tomato, stone, old lady-killer, malva nut, chick, landowner..." Zu An read off as he memorized the contents of the strip of paper. He was a bit stunned. "These are...?"

These things that had been recorded seemed like totally random nonsense. If it hadn't been recorded in Golden Token Seven's booklet, the paper would have just been thrown away as trash.

Yun Jianyue shook her head and said, "We don't know either. But it clearly has a significant relationship with Golden Token Seven's death."

Zu An examined the contents again. Some of the items looked like things one would find in a food market, while some were materials. Were there some names too? He didn't know what kind of hidden message Golden Token Seven wanted to record. He couldn't figure out the code at all.

Qiu Honglei quietly said, "I've actually heard a rumor that there's a group of mysterious people planning to go against that damn emperor. These might be the nicknames of those people."

Yun Jianyue was shocked. She asked, "How come I didn't know about that? Why didn't you tell me about that before?"

Qiu Honglei's face heated up as she said, "I only learned of this by accident two days ago. Zhao Lu told me about it to get closer to me, but I don't know if it's true or not."

Zhao Lu was King Yan's grandson, the son of King Yan's heir Zhao Huang. He was the most famous hedonistic son in all of Yi City.

Zu An thought, Qiu Honglei really does have astonishing charm after all! Even King Yan's heir, who was used to seeing beautiful women, was completely infatuated.

"Is it possible that he was just deliberately misleading us?" Yun Jianyue asked, still upset that her precious disciple had forgotten her master because of a man. She had actually told Zu An something so important first.

Qiu Honglei shook her head slightly and said, "I still have this degree of discernment in my opinion. Furthermore, Zhao Lu definitely doesn't have the ability to scheme like that. King Yan Manor's people were all alarmed as of late, so they were all busy thinking about how to free King Yan. That's why they weren't as careful about these kinds of secrets."

"It looks like King Yan's side managed to find out quite a lot," Yun Jianyue said, sounding a bit dissatisfied. They were clearly allies, and yet the other side had hidden something so important from her.

Zu An was still staring at the names. His first reaction when he heard the information was to believe it, because he had also noticed that there was a crisis brewing amid the seemingly peaceful world. Furthermore, if it were to be directed at Zhao Han, the Fengshan Ceremony was the best chance. However, Zhao Han had the most powerful cultivation in the entire world. Would they really be able to defeat him?

Who could have given someone the name 'salted fish'? Did they come from the Ocean races?

What about 'tomato'? Did they like to eat tomatoes or something?

As for that 'old lady-killer', just who was it who was so shameless as to take on that kind of name? He was probably some edgy narcissist.

Besides that, the term 'chick', in a certain place, had an entirely different and rather humiliating meaning in hookups.

...

As Zu An looked through the names, he more or less guessed their intentions. As dealing with Zhao Han was such a huge thing, they didn't dare to reveal their real names, lest they end up paying a disastrous price. That was why they referred to each other with nicknames instead.

Previously, he had thought that Golden Token Seven was silenced because his investigation had resulted in knowledge of King Yan's rebellion. Now, it seemed he had found out about something even more terrifying, and that was why he was killed. He wondered whether Zhang Jie was a part of the name list.

The three then discussed who these individuals could be. After all, anyone who wanted to go against the emperor had to be a big shot. After thinking about it for a while, they ended up looking at Violet Mountain's nine daoist sects.

“Do you still remember that batch of gunpowder I told you about? My investigation showed that they went missing near Violet Mountain,” Yun Jianyue said.

“Do you think Wang Wuxie is included here?” Zu An asked as he thought of something. One nickname seemed to match his personality.

“Indeed, if these people really wanted to go against Zhao Han, Violet Mountain’s Fengshan Ceremony would be the best chance. Furthermore, Violet Mountain is Wang Wuxie’s territory. Without his involvement, there would be no way of accomplishing these things.”

Zu An nodded. He thought of what Xie Daoyun had mentioned before. The academy’s Yan Xiang had been worried that Wang Wuxie might be disloyal, so he had secretly sent Xie Daoyun to see if there were any killing formations set up. It seemed Wang Wuxie was indeed the most suspicious one.

Apart from him, Zu An felt that King Qi definitely took up another slot. After all, there was no one who wanted to defeat Zhao Han more than him.

...

While they were discussing those things with each other, on the distant Violet Mountain, Wang Wuxie was cultivating in Pure Yang Palace. For some reason, he just couldn’t calm himself down. There had been all sorts of things happening recently around Violet Mountain. Emptiness Isle’s missing disciple still hadn’t been found, so they couldn’t hold the final round of the great competition either...

Suddenly, a disciple reported, “Sect master, a White Jade Sect disciple came to deliver a letter.”

Wang Wuxie was stunned. Then, he suddenly became a bit excited and said, “Hurry and invite them in!”

If it had been any other sect, he naturally wouldn’t act like that. But White Jade Sect had... that person. That ridiculously beautiful figure appeared in his mind.

A White Jade Sect disciple stepped forward and said, “Greetings, State Teacher. This is Sect Master Yan’s personal letter. I hope State Teacher will read it.”

“Yan... Sect Master Yan?” Wang Wuxie repeated, his heart rate even speeding up a bit. He hadn’t expected Yan Xuehen to take the initiative to contact him!

In that instant, he was surprised and suspicious. After all, it wasn’t in line with Yan Xuehen’s personality at all. However, he became a bit scared soon afterward. Could it be that Yan Xuehen was writing with the intent to completely break off relations...? There was actually a chance of that.

When he opened the letter, he discovered that he had never been more nervous in his life. His hands shook slightly as he took out the letter. However, that beautiful and elegant handwriting was indeed Yan Xuehen’s...

When he finished the contents, his nervous expression suddenly changed to one of mad joy. He said, “Go back and tell Sect Master Yan that this king won’t disappoint her.”

Chapter 1686: Ambush

At the Pure Yang Palace, after waiting until nightfall, Wang Wuxie got up from his meditation. He walked outside, his steps seeming especially light and carefree. However, he returned soon after to check and sort out his appearance in front of the copper mirror. When he saw his handsome appearance in the mirror, he nodded in satisfaction. Then, he walked out in large strides.

The letter he had received from the White Jade Sect disciple during the day said that Yan Xuehen would meet him tonight at midnight, at a certain location.

At the time, he had been muddle-headed, and only told the disciple that he definitely wouldn't disappoint Sect Master Yan. That was mainly because he didn't want others to know about their private meeting. Otherwise, if news got out, it would harm Yan Xuehen's reputation.

Even though he was really confused as to why Yan Xuehen would make such an arrangement, that was a letter sent by a White Jade Sect disciple. Furthermore, it was Yan Xuehen's own handwriting, so there was no way it could be falsified.

Maybe Yan Xuehen has started to feel a bit lonely after being alone for so long, and after coming to Violet Mountain, she realized that among all of her pursuers, I'm the one she feels closest to. So, she...

When he thought of that, Wang Wuxie's mood immediately improved. He couldn't help but grin. He stopped in a remote gazebo near Watchful Heart Peak and thought, Yan Xuehen really did spend a lot of time choosing a proper location!

This kind of quiet and peaceful place wasn't known even to many Righteous Sun Sect disciples. However, it certainly matched Yan Xuehen's personality, as she preferred peace and quiet. She definitely didn't want their conversation to be seen by someone else.

Wang Wuxie saw a white-clad figure seated next to the gazebo. Even though it was just the outline of her back, the faint glimmering moonlight was enough to perfectly reveal her fair and graceful figure. Even though Wang Wuxie had always focused on training his emotions and mind, he seemed to become just as nervous as he had been when he was just a young man again.

Why did she arrange a meeting with me in the middle of the night? Does she want to discuss Peng Wuyan's disappearance, or... Does she have something else she wants to say to me?

If it's the former, there's no need to be so secretive, but if it's the latter...

When he thought about how what he had dreamed about day and night could finally occur tonight, he felt as if every single cell in his body were cheering.

After Wang Wuxie sorted out his clothes again, he walked over and softly called out to her, "Xuehen, I'm here." He didn't dare to speak too loudly for fear that someone else would hear, which would be rude to such a beauty.

However, the figure didn't respond. Wang Wuxie was stunned. He thought to himself, Could it be that my voice was too soft? As such, he raised his voice a bit, but she ignored him again. Only her dress fluttered gently in the evening wind.

"Could it be that she fell asleep?" Wang Wuxie muttered, thinking that perhaps she had waited here for too long and was a bit upset, so she ignored him.

Sigh, I should have come here earlier. How could I actually have had Xuehen wait for me here? She really shouldn't have, he thought.

Thus, he apologized while walking closer, but there was still no reaction. He was now a bit confused and called out, "Xuehen?"

He instinctively reached his hand toward her shoulder out of concern that something might have happened to her. However, his expression suddenly changed and he quickly moved backward.

Even so, he was still a bit too late. The white daoist figure suddenly exploded, leaving burn marks on his hand. More importantly, a puff of white smoke emerged, and he accidentally inhaled a bit of it. He soon felt a bit dizzy.

This is bad! I've been poisoned!

In that instant, a dazzling sword slashed toward him from one time. If Lou Wucheng were present, he would have immediately felt ashamed of his inferiority, thinking that the sword he had displayed before was shameful in comparison.

A white palace appeared in the night sky. It was different from the blurry palace displayed by Lou Wucheng. Every single brick of the palace, every single tile, and even the exquisite designs were fully visible. It gave off the proud and overwhelming air of an immortal, as if it would forever be above others, something others could never question.

This was the true Eternal Sword!

It was rumored that the enemies who had died beneath this sword even had peaceful smiles on their faces after being killed by it. It was as if they felt joy from witnessing power at the immortal level, or they had received an award from an immortal.

When Wang Wuxie saw the mysterious intent attacking him, he seemed almost to see a glimmer of hope in the pursuit of immortality. As long as he reached out his hands and embraced that power, perhaps he could even awaken the enlightenment of immortality. Still, as one of the leaders of the nine daoist sects, he was an exceptional person in his own right. He quickly snapped out of his daze and realized that this was the dao Li Changsheng pursued.

I, Wang Wuxie, will use my own dao to reach immortality. How can I borrow the dao of another to ascend to immortality?

His body erupted powerfully with violet ki. A projection of a violet mountain vaguely manifested around him and clashed with the immortal palace. An enormous explosion resounded. The nearby gazebo was instantly blasted to pieces, destroying all the plants in the area.

Wang Wuxie used the recoil of the explosion to fly far away. Even though he didn't fear Li Changsheng, this was definitely a part of a great scheme. Li Changsheng definitely wouldn't be alone.

Sure enough, as he withdrew, two streaks of golden light chased after him like comets. They carried terrifying strength, as if they could blast apart an entire mountain peak.

“Heavenly Sorrow Sect’s Twin Vajra Armbands!” Wang Wuxie muttered, shivering. Guan Chouhai was here too! His expression turned grave. His sleeves lengthened and stretched outward, suddenly becoming as large as flags. A mysterious, gentle force sent the Twin Vajra Armbands flying back.

Just then, a figure leapt out from the rear of the area. He extended his arms, and the armbands returned to them once more. Then, they flew out to attack again.

Among the nine daoist sects, the earth element cultivator Guan Chouhai’s blows were incredibly heavy; not even Wang Wuxie dared to face them directly. His palms shone with violet ki that suddenly divided into two different colors, one black, one white. They formed a great taiji diagram of yin and yang and struck at Guan Chouhai’s waist. The power of absolute annihilation gathered around the taiji diagram; the attack was intended to kill!

Even though Wang Wuxie tried to maintain a calm and refined demeanor, he was definitely not excessively pedantic and inflexible. There was no way he would hold back in this kind of situation at all.

Guan Chouhai was surprised, as Wang Wuxie’s movement skill was too strange. He couldn’t react in time and the attack slammed into him. However, he didn’t explode or die on the spot. Instead, he stomped on the ground. His body trembled strangely, and a similar taiji diagram was sent right back at Wang Wuxie.

“Constellation Reversal!” Wang Wuxie muttered, shivering. He hadn’t expected Guan Chouhai to have mastered that legendary earth element skill! This skill was able to borrow the abundant power of the earth to neutralize and send an attack right back.

He didn’t dare to waste any time on defense. Instead, he took the chance to fly in the other direction. As long as he managed to get out of the trap, as the Righteous Sun Sect’s Sect Master, this was his terrain. He would then have the ability to counterattack.

However, not long after, several streaks of sword lights flew in his direction. They formed an intricate sword formation that looked as if it could dice up anything into mincemeat.

Wang Wuxie’s expression turned extremely serious. He didn’t dodge and simply stretched his palm out. A palm projection made of surging violet ki passed through the sword formation, moving to grab the one controlling it.

That person didn’t expect Wang Wuxie’s move to be so profound. When the palm was about to reach his neck, a streak of lightning flickered. He instantly vanished from his original location, reappearing on a tree several dozen zhang away. He still felt lingering fear as he looked at Wang Wuxie.

“Lightning Flash? Xuan Bajing, I didn’t expect you to have secretly come too,” Wang Wuxie said as he looked at the one on the tree. At that moment, his heart really hit rock bottom.

Xuan Bajing was the Kunlun Void Sect’s Sect Master. This time, the Kunlun Void Sect delegation had been led by elders, so Wang Wuxie hadn’t even considered that Xuan Bajing would secretly arrange an ambush here.

The eight swords flying through the air all returned to Xuan Bajing. They entered their scabbards on his back like peacock feathers.

"As expected of Wang Wuxie. Even with the three of us working together, we only managed to inflict some light injuries on you, while you managed to hurt us," Xuan Bajing said with a sigh.

Wang Wuxie couldn't even bring himself to feel happy. Even though he had managed to fend off those attacks rather well, he had still lost his chance to escape. Li Changsheng and Guan Chouhai were already closing in. He could already tell that he was surrounded.

He couldn't help but glower at Li Changsheng. He spat, "It's always been said that the Immortal Sword is the sword skill closest to an immortal's. It should be incredibly pure and noble, and yet you've used it to do something so despicable! It isn't worthy of its name at all!"

How could he still not realize what was going on? All of this had been a setup. A White Jade Sect disciple had contacted him, even using Yan Xuehen's handwriting to trick him... who else could do that but Li Changsheng?

Chapter 1687: One Breath Three Essence

"What Brother Wang says is wise indeed; it is just that Brother Wang's cultivation is too high, and this is also your Righteous Sun Sect's territory. This humble Li had no choice but to use this kind of plan. I am overwhelmed with guilt inside too," Li Changsheng said with a look of shame. He clearly didn't like this plan all that much either.

Wang Wuxie snorted and said, "You speak so nobly, but you behave like a crook. Li Changsheng, what is the point in pursuing a so-called great dao anymore? You are destined to share no karma with immortality in this life."

Li Changsheng's expression remained calm as he replied, "Since ancient times, how many have even achieved immortality? It is nothing special if I cannot reach it in the end."

When he saw that Li Changsheng seemingly wasn't offended at all, Wang Wuxie felt as if he had punched a pillow. He asked, "Just how did you get Yan Xuehen's handwriting? Furthermore, in such a way that I didn't even see any flaws." That was what he couldn't understand, as well as the reason why he had gotten caught in this trap so easily.

Li Changsheng asked in surprise, "You didn't even suspect that junior sister Yan could be a part of this plan?"

Wang Wuxie said with a sneer, "Fairy Yan is such an outstanding person. Why would she wallow in a mire with you bastards?" He had never loved another woman so much in his life, and he had absolute confidence in his discernment.

Li Changsheng said with a sigh, "There have always been rumors that Wang Wuxie adored junior sister Yan, and that indeed seems to be the case today. Indeed, the letter was not written by junior sister Yan, but rather something I created by piecing together some ordinary letters of hers. Even though the message was not written by junior sister Yan, every single character was personally written, so that is why you did not notice anything was strange."

Only someone like him, who was also from White Jade Sect, would have a chance of having access to so many of Yan Xuehen's letters without drawing suspicion.

Xuan Bajing couldn't help but laugh. He said, "The letter actually isn't perfect at all, as it was pieced together. At first, I was worried that you would be too sharp and wouldn't fall for it, but I didn't expect you to still take the bait. Now it seems that you, Wang Wuxie, aren't as smart as the rumors say, huh?"

"Brother Wang is extremely smart in other ways, but when it comes to Fairy Yan, you become much dumber," Guan Chouhai said with a smile. "Men really are stupid. When it involves the woman they adore, they'll deceive themselves even if there are some oddities."

Wang Wuxie couldn't take such humiliation and shot back "Guan Chouhai, even someone like you has the nerve to talk about me? I still remember how much of a bootlicker you were to Yan Xuehen. Meanwhile, I wouldn't lower myself to do such things."

Guan Chouhai furiously replied, "I can't stand this smugness of yours. The courtship process still has an aspect of face to it, you know. After all, there's a reason why good women don't like those who are too passive. How much have you spoken with Yan Xuehen, and how much have she and I talked? It might just be that she's more familiar with me than you.

"So, mister Wang, you really have no self-awareness. If Yan Xuehen really does end up feeling emotions for someone, it can only be me. Why would she ever make an appointment in the middle of the night with someone like you?"

"Stop trying to look like a good guy! You're despicable!" Wang Wuxie snapped. He didn't even want to waste any energy on being mad at Guan Chouhai. He understood Yan Xuehen's nature best. Why would she ever like someone like Guan Chouhai?

Guan Chouhai could feel the contempt in Wang Wuxie's eyes. He really couldn't take it anymore and began to scream about how he would fight him to the death.

Xuan Bajing couldn't continue to watch and said, "Brother Guan, we have more pressing matters to take care of. Don't waste time getting jealous in this kind of place."

Guan Chouhai looked embarrassed. However, he still changed his mind.

When he felt several energies target him, Wang Wuxie shivered. He wanted to stall for a bit more time and said, "There is one thing that I cannot understand. Even though I did not treat all of you particularly well, at the very least, I did not abuse my power to oppress anyone. Why did you join together to go against me today?"

He spoke while looking around out of the corners of his eyes. Someone had already secretly isolated their surroundings. Even if they fought, no one outside would detect the activity. It seemed that it wouldn't be possible to alert the Righteous Sun Sect's people, so he could only rely on himself to break out of the encirclement.

Li Changsheng sighed and said, "Brother Wang was flush with success the past few years, so of course you would not understand the struggles of others."

Xuan Bajing harrumphed. "And to think that in the past, our Kunlun Void Sect was the brightest and best among the daoist sects, and yet we've been oppressed by the court until we reached our current state. Only a henchman like you who clung to the court was well-off. As for the other sects, which one of us hasn't suffered bitterly?"

Wang Wuxie said in surprise, "It seems you all plan on a rebellion."

He knew that the emperor was coming to Violet Mountain for the Fengshan Ceremony. If they were targeting him at this time, they were clearly going to go against the emperor.

"Brother Wang is intelligent, as expected." Li Changsheng said, nodding in praise. "If Brother Wang is willing to cooperate with us, our nine sects can naturally work together in harmony and face Zhao Han together."

"Even if I agreed now, would you really believe me?" Wang Wuxie replied. He naturally wouldn't let such random words sway him.

Li Changsheng said with a smile, "Of course, we would need Brother Wang to show us a bit of sincerity."

Wang Wuxie didn't ask what that so-called sincerity was, as it would probably be to let them seal his meridians and allow them to detain him. How could he ever agree to something like that?

"So was Emptiness Isle's Peng Wuyan also seized by your side?" he asked bluntly. They had looked everywhere, and yet Peng Wuyan was nowhere in sight. He had no idea who had such magical abilities, to silently kidnap a rather strong disciple on Violet Mountain without causing the slightest disturbance.

Li Changsheng shook his head and said, "We do not know what is going on with that either. It seems there are other formidable individuals hidden on Violet Mountain."

"Just how many sects are involved in this matter?" Wang Wuxie asked. He thought to himself that if all eight sects had joined, that could very well spell the end of his Righteous Sun Sect.

Li Changsheng stroked his beard and said with a smile, "Brother Wang will naturally know if you join us."

Xuan Bajing felt a bit impatient and snapped, "What's the point of wasting all this time with him? He's clearly stalling for time."

Guan Chouhai looked relaxed as he said, "If he wants to stall for time, then let him. Either way, he's already been poisoned. The longer this goes on, the stronger the poison's effects will become."

Wang Wuxie had already begun to feel his vision blurring a bit. He recalled that white smoke he inhaled and asked with a frown, "What kind of poison did you use?" He knew that with his cultivation, normal poison had no chance of being effective.

"Brother Wang's cultivation is too high, so we can only tell you after you've been fully subdued," Guan Chouhai said with a smug expression. Seeing this greatest rival in love fall like this had clearly made him really happy. This guy normally always looks at me with contempt, but look at you now!

Suddenly, Wang Wuxie moved. He knew he would be in a worse situation the longer he waited.

The other three quickly made their moves too. Normally, with their status, there was no way they would work together to face a single opponent. However, Wang Wuxie was too strong, and their objective today was too important. If they failed, none of them would be able to handle the consequences.

The four of them quickly clashed together. Light flickered as they all brought out the most powerful techniques they knew. Energies clashed, destroying everything around them. Even a master rank

cultivator could die from the blast waves if they were present. In just a few breaths of time, the four of them had already exchanged dozens of moves. Every moment was surrounded by peril. A single mishap could result in their deaths.

A while later, they separated again. Wang Wuxie was in the center, gasping for air. He already had many wounds on his body, and his hair was no longer styled as elegantly as usual. He had clearly suffered serious injuries. The other three's clothes were damaged, indicating that they were also injured.

Li Changsheng sighed and said, "It has always been said that you were number one among the daoist sects, but we were never quite convinced. Now that I have experienced it myself, I accept it wholeheartedly."

After all, they were all sect master-level individuals, people who had equal status to Wang Wuxie. They had even ambushed him, and yet they couldn't take him down immediately even after working together. Judging from that, it was clear just how strong Wang Wuxie was.

Wang Wuxie understood his current predicament well, though. The reason why he hadn't lost yet against these three was because they hadn't really worked together. Furthermore, they didn't trust each other either. They had still held back some of their strength to guard against an ambush from each other. That was why he had been able to just barely hold on.

However, he knew that they could make countless mistakes, while he would be finished if he made even one. Furthermore, he could already feel the poison invading his meridians. His ki was already declining to the point where he couldn't endure it for much longer. If this continued, he would lose without a doubt.

He no longer tried to fight vainly. Suddenly, he let out a great roar, and his body split into three copies that ran in three different directions.

"One Breath Three Essence?" Li Changsheng and the others cried out in alarm. At that moment, they couldn't figure out which one was the real one.

Chapter 1688: Shaman

Helpless to do anything else, each of the three could only intercept the figure closest to them. However, after trading a few blows, they immediately noticed that something wasn't right. Even though Wang Wuxie's cultivation was high, there was no reason for them to not even be able to identify the fakes at all.

"The one over here is fake!"

"The one over here is fake!"

"The one over here is fake!"

All three of them cried out at almost the same time. Then, they were all stunned. If the ones they faced were all fake, where was the real one?

They suddenly sensed something and looked in the same direction, where they saw a streak of purple light shoot toward the horizon like a rainbow. The three clones Wang Wuxie had produced were clearly nothing more than a trick, while his real body tried to break out of the encirclement.

Wang Wuxie's move really was outstanding, as they couldn't even identify the fakes without attacking them. However, they didn't have any time to marvel at his tactics, because capturing him was a more pressing issue. In order to chase after Wang Wuxie, the three of them all used their brilliant abilities. Unfortunately, now that he had the initiative, how could they catch up?

Wang Wuxie's expression was cold. Once he gathered his people from the Righteous Sun Sect again and launched his counterattack, these people were going to pay the price. Apart from that, he could also contact some people who hadn't participated in this affair. For example, Yan Xuehen definitely wouldn't participate in such a despicable thing.

Suddenly, a golden 卐-shaped symbol appeared in front of him. It was small at first, but it quickly grew in size. By the time it reached him, it was massive. His fists traced a streak of purple light, smashing apart the 卐 symbol. However, his body also shook a bit from the impact, and he had no choice but to stop for a moment. Guan Chouhai and the others took the chance to surround him again.

"That move of Brother Wang was truly impressive," Guan Chouhai said with a sigh. Producing three clones that could fool them was already exceptional.

Wang Wuxie didn't feel the slightest bit happy. Rather, he looked straight ahead and said, "Master Jian Huang, I did not expect you to have joined in on this too."

"Amitabha buddha!" an old monk replied as he brought his hands together and slowly walked out from the trees. Who else could it be but Tranquility Temple's Master Jian Huang? He said, "This old one didn't want to participate in this affair at first, but the State Teacher's cultivation is too high. It simply wouldn't do if I didn't."

Wang Wuxie said seriously, "Your distinguished self is a person of virtue and prestige. Why would you take the risk of doing such a treacherous and despicable thing with them?"

Master Jian Huang's expression remained calm as he replied, "I believe Benefactor Wang also knows the reason clearly."

Wang Wuxie was silent for a moment. Before the prosperity of the daoist sects, the Buddhist sects had held the position of the state religion. Now, Tranquility Temple had long since lost their former influence, so how could they not be dissatisfied? However, he hadn't expected them to retaliate so boldly.

Still, it really was laughable. The daoist sects and Buddhist sects were working together just to restore the Buddhist sects' former glory.

"There will only be more problems the longer we stall. Let's just deal with him as quickly as possible," Xuan Bajing said. After all, this was Wang Wuxie's territory. Things would get troublesome very quickly if he could get away successfully.

"Benefactor Wang, apologies," Master Jian Huang said, and Buddhist light suddenly erupted from behind him. Then, he slowly brought his hand together. The extremely slow movement instantly created an illusion of countless palms in front of Wang Wuxie.

“Thousand Hand Bodhisattva?” Wang Wuxie remarked. He could tell that this was Master Jian Huang’s special domain. He couldn’t show even the slightest bit of carelessness anymore. In order to face Master Jian Huang’s palms, the violet ki around him turned into countless fists.

He frowned slightly. Master Jian Huang’s attack looked impressive, but in reality, he was holding back quite a bit. He’s probably on guard against Li Changsheng and these others too. It seems that whether or not I’ll be able to get out of this will depend on how well I exploit their lack of trust.

Li Chansheng, Guan Chouhai, and Xuan Bajing made their move. They were much more serious than before, as they had almost let Wang Wuxie get away earlier. They couldn’t afford to be careless again. If Wang Wuxie managed to escape from an encirclement of enemies just as strong as himself, not only would they have no dignity left, but if news got out and Zhao Han found out, they wouldn’t be able to handle the consequences.

Wang Wuxie’s purple ki manifested in all sorts of different forms. Sometimes he attacked, and other times he defended. It really was erratic and unpredictable. However, his opponents were all on par with him. Even if they were still scheming against each other, when they joined forces, it still wasn’t something he could deal with alone.

After exchanging dozens of moves, they separated briefly. Wang Wuxie gasped for breath. He had taken a few more heavy strikes to his body, putting him in imminent danger. The others didn’t dare to get closer for the time being, though. Sensing his desperate yet firm resolve, none of them wanted to become the sacrifice he took down with him.

In that instant, a brief period of silence and calm overcame the place.

Suddenly, someone called out in surprise “What are you all doing here?”

All those present turned around and saw that the Righteous Sun Sect’s Watchful Heart Peak Master Feng Wuchang was looking at them in shock. After all, they were on Watchful Heart Peak. He had clearly sensed that something was strange, and thus had come over to take a look. He hadn’t expected to see such an alarming sight.

“Silence him!” Guan Chouhai cried out, panicking.

If Feng Wuchang ended up talking about what he had just seen, the Righteous Sun Sect would mobilize all their power and they would be in danger. Furthermore, there were still some other sects on the mountain who hadn’t joined the plot. There were also troops from the court.

Just then, Xuan Bajing, who was the closest to Feng Wuchang, made his move. Lightning flickered, and he instantly appeared in front of Feng Wuchang. His palm crashed down from above.

Even though Feng Wuchang’s cultivation wasn’t low, it still wasn’t much at all before a grandmaster. Now that he was being crushed by the enemy’s domain, he couldn’t budge even an inch. He could only watch as the giant hand bore down on him.

Suddenly, a streak of violet ki flickered. Wang Wuxie instantly appeared in front of Feng Wuchang. He blocked Xuan Bajing’s palm while saying, “Junior brother, hurry and contact the other peak masters...”

Before he could even finish his sentence, he felt a sharp pain. He looked down and saw the end of a short blade sticking out of his chest. Xuan Bajing took the chance to strike his major acupoints, seriously wounding him. Wang Wuxie vomited a mouthful of blood, which contained a bit of misty energy that forced Xuan Bajing back. However, he didn't have the strength to pursue the opponent anymore.

These people had set up an ambush on Watchful Heart Peak. As a peak master, how could Feng Wuchang have failed to notice anything? Unfortunately, by the time Wang Wuxie realized that, it was already too late.

Feng Wuchang was already far away, clearly fearing retaliation. He sighed and said, "Brother, I want to climb higher too, you know? With you here, that's simply impossible."

Wang Wuxie was so angry he actually laughed. He asked, "So that's why you colluded with outsiders? Do you even have the ability to protect everything in the Righteous Sun Sect?"

Feng Wuchang replied, "Senior brother, you need not trouble yourself with that."

Wang Wuxie didn't waste any more time with him, and instead glared hatefully at the others. He spat, "I might be finished today, but even if I can't drag one of you down with me, I can still make sure that you won't be able to make a full recovery for several decades. Which one of you wants to be that unlucky one?" He had already given up all hope of escaping. He only wanted to drive a wedge between them to leave behind some hope for the future.

"Amitabha buddha, Benefactor Wang speaks too seriously. We do not have any intention of taking your life," Master Jian Huang said.

Wang Wuxie's expression was cold as he replied, "What, could it be that you are still hoping for me to cooperate with you?"

"Why not?" Guan Chouhai replied with a laugh. "Big sis shaman, it's about time for your entrance."

Wang Wuxie shivered. Could it be...

Suddenly, a black figure slowly walked over from the distance, saying in a hoarse voice, "So many of you came out to surround Wang Wuxie, and you even used such despicable tactics to succeed. It really is disgraceful." It was an old woman whose entire body was wrapped in a black cloak.

"Shaman Sect's Great Elder Wu Wuyan!" Wang Wuxie exclaimed, his hopes turning to ashes. Then, he sent a palm toward his own forehead, clearly trying to end his own life.

The black-cloaked old woman moved. A straw doll suddenly appeared in front of her, and she bowed three times to it. Then, Wang Wuxie was frozen in place, and his vision blurred.

Chapter 1689: A Question

That old woman walked up to Wang Wuxie and asked, "Who are you?"

"I am... Wang Wuxie..." Wang Wuxie replied in a mechanical monotone, his expression completely vacant.

"You need to obey me in the future and do whatever I tell you to do," the old woman named Wu Wuyan said in her gravelly voice.

"I..." Wang Wuxie began, struggles visible on his face. His entire body trembled continuously. It was clear that even though he was in such a muddle-headed state, he still wasn't willing to become the slave of another.

When she saw that, Wu Wuyan took out the straw doll again. She bit the tip of her finger and sent a drop of her blood onto Wang Wuxie's forehead, then smeared another drop over the straw doll's head. Then, she muttered a string of cryptic words to herself. Black runes surrounded Wang Wuxie's entire body. Then, his gaze became completely empty.

Wu Wuyan once again said, "From now on, you will listen to me."

The expressionless Wang Wuxie replied woodenly, "Understood."

...

The others watched the whole process with fearful expressions. These shamans' methods were too frightening! Even though Wang Wuxie had been seriously injured already, and Feng Wuchang had even collected hair, astrological details, and personal items and offered them to Wu Wuyan to achieve such a result, this was still Wang Wuxie! The glorious number one of the daoist sects had actually become Wu Wuyan's puppet!

No wonder Wang Wuxie's first reaction when he saw her had been to try to end his own life. He had clearly understood that he would be restrained after being weakened, but he was still a bit too late.

They all wondered whether, if they were in his place one day and ended up in the clutches of a shaman, would they also be turned into puppets through a similar method?

When she saw their expressions, Wu Wuyan snickered sinisterly. She said, "Don't worry, we only managed to deal with Mister Wang because all of the conditions were just right. This old one doesn't have the ability to restrain all of you too."

The others' expressions eased up a bit when they heard what she said.

Wu Wuyan gave Feng Wuchang a look. She took out a pitch-black porcelain bottle and gave it to him, saying, "Peak Master Feng, I'll leave the rest to you then. Add this gu poison to the other peak masters' food. I believe you should be capable of doing that."

Master Jian Huang said in confusion, "The heavens value virtue. This gu poison won't take their lives, will it?"

"Old monk, you really are hypocritical," Wu Wuyan said with a harrumph. "Don't worry, it's just a drug that will prevent them from causing trouble and ruining our plans. It won't take their lives."

Master Jian Huang put his hands together and said, "Very good, very good."

Feng Wuchang took the black porcelain bottle, then reached out his palm again, asking, "Where's the antidote?"

Wu Wuyan narrowed her eyes and asked, "What are you going to do with an antidote?"

Feng Wuchang harrumphed. "I need at least some guarantee of safety, right? Otherwise, what if you fed me some of this poison? Wouldn't I meet a tragic end then?"

Guan Chouhai commented, "Brother Feng's misgivings aren't completely unfounded. Elder Wu, you should just give it to him."

In reality, with their cultivation, normal poison wouldn't be able to hurt them at all. However, if it was poison made by a shaman elder, they would no longer have such confidence. If not for the fact that they had their statuses to think about, they would have considered asking for the antidote themselves. Now, through Feng Wuchang, they could have some preparation against the poison.

Wu Wuyan harrumphed, then handed over two red pills before saying, "Use them carefully. I don't have any more."

Feng Wuchang's expression changed. He asked, "This is it?" There was no way that he would trust her a hundred percent, so he had to secretly find someone to test the antidotes out. But there were only two, so he wouldn't necessarily be able to confirm if they worked.

Wu Wuyan chuckled and replied, "If I gave you more, what if you decided to secretly give all of the peak masters the antidote?"

Guan Chouhai and the others nodded. She had a right to her misgivings too. Their plan was extremely important, so they couldn't tolerate any mistakes.

Feng Wuchang's expression changed several times. In the end, he put the antidote away and didn't push the issue anymore.

"Right, what about that Emptiness Isle girl? Did you all capture her?" Li Changsheng asked as she looked at Wu Wuyan and Xuan Bajing.

"What girl? Our plan was to take care of Wang Wuxie and our biggest concern was him discovering our plan ahead of time. Why would we do something troublesome like that?" Xuan Bajing replied. Wu Wuyan also shook her head.

Guan Chouhai and Li Changsheng exchanged a look, wondering, "Could it be that it really was done by the Devil Sect's Yun Jianyue?"

Master Jian Huang said seriously, "There seems to be a third force hidden on Violet Mountain. All of us need to be careful."

Guan Chouhai nodded in agreement and said, "It would be best if we continued to investigate in secret. With the main event at hand, we have to eliminate any unpredictable variables."

The others all nodded. After discussing some more things, they went their own ways.

Wu Wuyan took out a little bell and shook it gently. Wang Wuyan's expression gradually returned to normal, and he silently hurried back to Pure Yang Temple. Many disciples saw him and greeted him along the way, and he always nodded in return like usual. There seemed to be nothing strange about his demeanor at all.

...

Meanwhile, in Yi Commandery, Zu An had initially planned to go straight back to Violet Mountain. However, because of Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei's arrival, he wasn't in such a rush to return after this reunion. They continued to speculate about the identities of those who actually dared to go against Zhao Han.

Suddenly, one of Zu An's subordinates reported, "Sir Eleven, there is a young lady surnamed Tang who wishes to meet you. She said you would agree after hearing this."

Zu An was stunned and said, "Bring her to the lobby. I'll go there soon."

The subordinate accepted the order and left. Yun Jianyue remarked with a mysterious smile, "Our Sir Zu always seems to have a beauty waiting to rush into his arms wherever he goes, doesn't he?"

Qiu Honglei looked at him with a suspicious gaze, asking, "Who is this Miss Tang?"

"Who else can it be? It's the one from the Hub of Freedom," Yun Jianyue said, rolling her eyes.

Qiu Honglei exclaimed in surprise, "Big brother Zu actually has such a close relationship with that woman?"

After working with King Yan for such a long time, they naturally knew about Lady Tang from the Hub of Freedom. They had competed with King Yan Manor in many ways, and this Tang Tian'er was quite mysterious. It seemed she had strong connections with both the Hub of Freedom and the Zhenyuan Merchant Group.

Zu An chuckled awkwardly and said, "It's not what you're thinking; we're just friends. She probably came to talk about official business with me. Wait a bit for me, and I'll explain it all to you two." He apologized and left afterward.

Only then did Yun Jianyue explain Zu An's relationship with Tang Tian'er to Qiu Honglei. After all, that was also the reason why King Yan hadn't been able to shift the blame to the Hub of Freedom.

Qiu Honglei suddenly realized what was going on. She couldn't help but complain to Yun Jianyue, "Master, look at what happened after you made me cultivate in seclusion! I clearly came first, and yet I suddenly feel as if all these vixens seized that opportunity!"

Yun Jianyue's eyes twitched. She felt that she was being criticized somehow too. She retorted impatiently, "It's your man who's a skirt-chaser; what does it have to do with me?"

"Master, are there any drugs that can make him dead set on only loving me alone? I heard that the shamans have a love gu poison. I wonder if it works..." Qiu Honglei muttered.

Yun Jianyue was startled and said, "You absolutely cannot mess with the shamans' gu poisons. Furthermore, something isn't right with your thinking. That Zu guy is pretty loyal, and his relationship with Chu Chuyan and the other sweethearts is great. You can't let this way of thinking ruin everything for you!"

Qiu Honglei gave her a strange look before saying, "Master, you used to teach me that men were just toys and that you didn't mind just killing all men off forever. Why are you now telling me to get along with the other women peacefully?"

Yun Jianyue's face heated up. Then, she said angrily, "As if I care about your business. Don't ask me for help with this in the future anymore."

Qiu Honglei quickly tugged on her elbow and said, "Master, I was joking, okay? Don't get upset... Huh? Master, you seem to have become bigger again. How did you do it? Can you teach me?"

Zu An's provocations appeared in Yun Jianyue's mind. She didn't dare to tell the truth. She replied, "You're not that small either, so why do you care about these things?"

Qiu Honglei grumbled, "It's that Pei girl's fault for being too ridiculous..."

...

Meanwhile, Zu An arrived in the lobby. A beautiful figure stood within, sipping on some tea. Perhaps because she had served as the spokesperson of the Hub of Freedom for a long time, no flaws could be picked out from her bearing and etiquette at all. Even just watching her enjoy some tea was a feast for the eyes.

"May I ask what Lady Tang has visited me for?" Zu An asked.

"Hmph, you call me 'little sis Tian'er' when you need me for something, but when you don't, you call me 'Lady Tang'. Sigh, men are all just like pig feet after all," Tang Tian'er said as she lowered her teacup. She no longer had her usual sweet smile; instead, her expression carried a hint of hidden bitterness.

Zu An's breath caught in his throat. He could only ask, "Did you come here because of Zhang Jie? I really am a bit sorry because of that."

Tang Tian'er shook her head and replied, "Zhang Jie wasn't even one of my men, so why would I be upset about that?"

Zu An was stunned. According to what Zhang Jie had told him, the man had claimed to have ties with the former dynasty's imperial clan. Meanwhile, Tang Tian'er was someone from that faction.

"Still, to a certain degree, he could be considered my ally. So, the events that transpired have left me a bit frustrated," Tang Tian'er said. She paused for a moment before asking, "If Sir Eleven hears about our relationship, will he come to arrest me?"

Zu An said impatiently, "You're my good friend, so why would I arrest you?"

When she heard him call her a good friend, a big smile appeared on Tang Tian'er's face. She said, "The reason I came here today was just for one thing. Do you really intend to continue working loyally for the emperor?"

Chapter 1690: A Terrifying Question

Zu An stared blankly for a moment. Then, he cautiously replied, "I receive the court's official salary and I am an Embroidered Envoy, which views loyalty as the highest priority. Why would I not dedicate myself to the service of my country?"

Tang Tian'er sighed and said, "It seems you aren't really treating me as your friend... You aren't even willing to tell me the truth."

Zu An smiled and replied, "Aren't you full of secrets yourself? I didn't ask you to share them all, did I?"

"But I clearly told you more about me than the other way around!" Tang Tian'er said with a pout, clearly not too happy with his response.

Zu An said with a sigh, "I even told you about my Golden Token Eleven status. Do you really still think I don't treat you as a friend?"

Tang Tian'er was stunned. Then, the usual sweet smile returned to her face, her mood clearly improving considerably.

"Now, what really brought you here today?" Zu An took the chance to ask.

"Can I not look for you if I don't need anything?" Tang Tian'er harrumphed, but she still said, "I do have something I need to tell you this time. Think about whether the emperor is still worth your time after you listen to what I have to say."

"What do you mean?" Zu An asked, quickly turning serious when he heard that it had something to do with the emperor.

"You probably understand the reason why the court and the Fiend races are currently fighting, right?" Tang Tian'er asked.

"If I recall correctly, it was because a certain small city was completely massacred by the Fiend races, and then the emperor sent the Qin clan's two State Dukes and their armies to retaliate out of anger, right?" Zu An replied

Now that he thought about it, it had already been a long time since the Qin clan set out to war, but the Fiend races' side wasn't to be trifled with. The two sides had fought bitterly and ended up in a deadlock. Later, Zu An had returned from the Fiend races' territory with a peace offer, creating a turning point.

However, that campaign of mass slaughter had always felt strange. As the Fiend races' Regent, the intelligence he received had stated that the Fiend races hadn't actually done such a thing, and that they believed it was just human race slander. Still, he hadn't really taken it to heart, because there was a chance that they had just refused to admit to it. Furthermore, the Fiend King Court didn't have that much control over distant regions. There was a chance that some local leaders had sufficient autonomy to commit such actions and refuse to admit to it.

Tang Tian'er suddenly said, "It wasn't the Fiend races who committed the slaughter, but rather the emperor."

"What?" Zu An exclaimed in shock. His first reaction was disbelief. After all, even though Zhao Han's character was a bit on the poor side, he was still considered a competent emperor. That small city had been full of his own people, so why would he do something like that?

"You know that our Hub of Freedom excels at gathering information. We noticed that there was something strange with that slaughter, so we sent our people to look into it. Recently, we confirmed that," Tang Tian'er said. She paused for a moment before asking, "Didn't your immediate superior Zhuxie Chixin go missing recently?"

"That's right. He seems to have gone somewhere to carry out a secret mission," Zu An said seriously.

"What secret mission? Wasn't it just to massacre that city's citizens?" Tang Tian'er replied, her expression ice-cold.

Zu An frowned and asked, "Why would they do that?"

"According to the evidence we've collected since then, Zhuxie Chixin seemed to be using the lives of an entire city to make some evil pill. The analysis of the higher-ups of the Hub of Freedom suggests that Zhao Han's heaven and man deterioration is drawing closer, or perhaps he received some type of injury, so he's using the lives of an entire city's commoners as well as their blood essence to replenish himself. But Zhao Han is already unmatched in this world, and I've never heard of him facing anyone recently, so it's likely the former."

Zu An suddenly understood what was happening. He naturally knew what was going on with Zhao Han. In the past, the split soul in the crown prince's body had been killed in Westhound Tomb Secret Dungeon. The damage that had resulted was naturally considerable. Only, he hadn't expected the emperor to be so deranged, to actually use the population of an entire city to refine medicine.

At the same time, he finally knew what was going on with that mysterious name list. He had been wondering why anyone would suddenly be so daring as to face Zhao Han, but they had to have found out that Zhao Han was injured through their own channels. That was why they had begun to grow restless.

"You seem to already believe me," Tang Tian'er said, a bit surprised when she saw his expression. She had thought she would have to explain quite a bit to convince him.

"Do you have proof?" Zu An asked. Even though he was mostly convinced, he didn't show his real feelings on the surface.

"We don't. An entire city's population was killed, so what proof is there to gather? This is just the most likely conclusion we came to after examining many different parties' intelligence," Tang Tian'er said. She then added, "That is, unless we were to arrest Zhuxie Chixin and interrogate him."

Zu An naturally knew that wasn't possible. He asked gravely, "Did you come here to ask for my cooperation?"

Tang Tian'er shook her head and said with a smile, "Not at all. I'm just telling you about it so you don't end up being played by him~" Then, she waved toward Zu An and said, "I still have other things to take care of, so I'll be leaving first. Let's talk some more when we have a chance in the future." Then, she left in high spirits, her mood clearly quite good.

Zu An sank into his own thoughts. There would eventually be a showdown between him and Zhao Han. He had just been making plans for the sake of self-preservation before, but now, he also had those innocent souls to fuel his decision.

As for Tang Tian'er telling him about it, and yet not requesting anything from him, he could understand that as well. It was most likely to plant a seed for the time being. Then, if something really happened, perhaps he would no longer stand by Zhao Han's side.

However, she had no idea that he also wanted to take down Zhao Han. Of course, if he told her about that now, the Hub of Freedom would likely just suspect that he was trying to get into their system and become more wary of him. His current situation was still better.

"Tsk tsk, look at you. The pretty girl has already left, and yet you're still staring in that direction," Yun Jianyue said mysteriously.

Qiu Honglei was by her side, feeling rather strange. Why did she feel as if her master had ended up saying her line? Shouldn't I be the one who's upset here?

It's probably because my master really loves me, and is worried that I might sound jealous and draw resentment. Then, Chuyan might have a competitive edge over me.

Sigh, my master really is the greatest! She's always thinking about me, and yet I'm making her out to be some villain. I have to properly repay her in the future.

Zu An replied with a hint of irritation, "What the heck are you thinking, big sis Yun? She actually just told me a shocking piece of information."

When they heard his serious tone, the two women forgot all about their jealousy. They asked, "What is it?"

Zu An then told them about the slaughter of the city. Qiu Honglei was filled with rage after hearing about such injustice. She spat, "He really doesn't have even a shred of humanity! That dog emperor dares to do something not even a beast would do!"

Yun Jianyue sneered and added, "Compared to these emperors' desires, how much are the lives of ordinary people worth? Especially for someone like Zhao Han, who was rather cold to begin with. But with how despicable his behavior has been, his downfall isn't far off."

She had already made up her mind to spread such information as far as possible to shake Zhao Han's foundation. After all, the Devil Sect had always been pitted against the court.

After they discussed things with each other for a bit, Zu An asked, "What are you two planning to do now? Are you still going back to Violet Mountain?"

Qiu Honglei showed him an ambiguous smile before asking, "Do you want me to return and fight against that Miss Pei?"