

## Immortal 301

### Chapter 301 - Great Minds Think Alike

Zu An was stunned. "We're waiting for someone?" he asked. "Who are we waiting for?"

"Xie Xiu," Shang Liuyu replied.

"Xie Xiu?" Zu An took a while to process this information. "So, the principal even managed to get Xie Xiu to tag along with us! This principal is truly wise! With him around, it would be so much easier to take over Plum Blossom Sect's holdings."

Although Xie Xiu's usually behaved somewhat frivolously, he was still the city lord's son. His presence would help to smooth most of the official procedures along.

Shang Liuyu shook her head. "Luofu didn't arrange for him to come. She wanted you to be the one to invite him."

"I have to invite him?" Zu An was dumbstruck.

"Yes." Shang Liuyu smiled. "The academy can't just announce to the world that it has accepted your seven-and-a-half million taels of silver, let alone let someone like Xie Xiu find out. We'll need you to step forward and front this. I'll just pretend to be helping you."

Zu An was speechless for a while.

Are you serious? That gorgeous principal loves wearing black stockings so much that even her heart has turned black! She really won't pass up even the slightest chance to use me!

"Do you feel troubled?" Shang Liuyu asked.

"Not at all." Zu An shook his head. Honestly speaking, Jiang Luofu already treated him quite well. The promissory note for seven-and-a-half million taels of silver would only have rotted away if left in his hands anyway, so he'd taken the opportunity to exchange it for some assistance, and Jiang Luofu had been most generous with her help.

Zu An finished weighing up the pros and cons. "Let's look for Xie Xiu."

Shang Liuyu had no objections, and followed him as he made his way to the Sky class. Along the way, she asked him several times about his relationship with Zheng Dan.

Zu An offered a series of ambiguous, non-committal answers.

Sensing that he didn't want to talk about the matter, Shang Liuyu smiled gently and didn't press further.

The two arrived at the Sky class. Zu An called for Xie Xiu while taking the opportunity to observe the class. Clearly, Chu Chuyan rarely came to school.

Zheng Dan hadn't returned to class either.

“What do these two... teachers need me for?” Xie Xiu found it really hard to address Zu An as his teacher. However, there was nothing he could do about it. He had called him out of class precisely using his authority as a teacher!

The teacher lecturing the class was overcome with joy when he saw Shang Liuyu, and had little attention to spare for anything else.

Shang Liuyu smiled. “It’s not I who need you for something, but rather Zu... Teacher Zu.”

Why do I feel weird calling him ‘Teacher’ as well?

Xie Xiu stared at Zu An with a bitter smile. “Tea... teach...”

Zu An laughed and hooked his arm around him. “You don’t have to do that. Just call me Ah Zu when we’re not out in public.”

Xie Xie laughed awkwardly. “Ah Zu, what did you need me for?”

Zu An replied, “You were there when I won seven-and-a-half million silver taels from the Plum Blossom Sect, right? Back then, Mei Chaofeng wrote out a promissory note for me. Since he has already passed on, there is no way for him to pay me back this debt, so the only thing left for me to do is to try to take over his assets. I came to you because I need some help.”

“Me?” Xie Xiu was only interested in skirt-chasing, and he really couldn’t care less about these official procedures, let alone something this big. He was just about to turn Zu An down when his eyes were drawn to Shang Liuyu standing beside him. “What is teacher Shang doing here with you?” he asked in confusion.

Zu An said, “Of course she’s here to help me recover the debt.”

Xie Xiu’s eyes widened. “Brother Zu really is incredible! Teacher Shang is known for being a noble and virtuous person who cares little for worldly pursuits. Yet somehow, you were actually able to convince her to help you out!”

Zu An laughed, “You’re flattering me. I’ve always been a popular guy.”

Xie Xiu had no response to that.

After a short pause, he agreed to go along with them. After all, even if he didn’t mind offending Zu An, he didn’t want to leave Shang Liuyu with a bad impression of him.

There wasn’t a single man in the academy who didn’t fancy a gentle and pretty female teacher like Shang Liuyu.

Even though Xie Xiu’s feelings for her weren’t as fervent as some others’, being in the company of such a great beauty was still a joyous affair.

Helping Zu An out was just a side issue.

“Haha, you’re the best!” Zu An clasped his fist respectfully. He didn’t bother thinking about why this guy accepted. All he cared about was getting this job over and done with.

The three of them left the academy together with a small group of specialists.

Given her nature, Shang Liuyu was already doing the principal a huge favor just by following along. Asking any more of her would have made her upset.

Along the way, Xie Xiu went all out, trying to engage Shang Liuyu in a variety of topics.

Even though his philosophy had always been to never abandon an entire forest for a single tree, Shang Liuyu was just too beautiful! Even his dao of women was being shaken.

He scrounged up all sorts of reasons to strike up a conversation with her, and even used some of his methods of seduction.

Unfortunately, Shang Liuyu responded to all of his desperate attempts in a polluted but disinterested manner.

Sensing her attitude, Xie Xiu admitted defeat for now. He shifted his attention to Zu An. "Brother Zu, my admiration for you has only grown."

"You, admire me? Why?" Zu An replied instinctively, his mind still preoccupied by his interactions with Zheng Dan.

"Just how did you convince teacher Shang to come with you? You've even picked up Immortal Abode's Qiu Honglei! Once might be a coincidence, but when such a thing happens several times, there's definitely a reason behind it!" Xie Xiu looked at him with expectant eyes.

Zu An waved a hand casually. "You've got it all wrong."

"How so?" Xie Xiu asked curiously.

"You've missed out on some other important girls. Chu Chuyan, for example," Zu An said proudly.

This was a complete, 360-degree capture! Of course he was proud of his accomplishment.

Xie Xiu ground his teeth silently.

Bro, even if you're amazing, there's no need to show off like this in front of me, is there?

"What can I do?" Zu An muttered to himself. "When a man is too outstanding, he naturally ends up having to deal with these sorts of problems."

Xie Xiu's teeth creaked, and his jaw began to ache.

Shang Liuyu, who was listening in on their conversation, resisted the urge to roll her eyes.

It took Xie Xiu some time to dispel his gloominess. "Right. By the way, Ah Zu, just how did you come up with that 'Smiling, Proud Wanderer' tune the last time?"

Zu An forced out a smile. "Didn't I say that I wasn't the one who came up with it?"

"Ah Zu, you're too humble." Xie Xiu said with a sigh.

Zu An grew dejected as well. Why do none of you all believe me when I'm telling the truth?

"Is brother Xie also interested in music?" he said instead.

"Truth be told, I actually don't have the slightest bit of interest in it." Xie Xiu laughed. "I only picked up a bit of it to chase after girls."

Zu An was shocked then grabbed Xie Xiu's hand. "Bro, great minds think alike."

Shang Liuyu took a deep, calming breath and stayed quiet.

"Since brother Xie isn't interested in music, why did you ask me about this? If you want to use that song to pick up some girls, please, feel free," Zu An said nonchalantly.

"It's not for picking up girls," Xie Xiu smiled bitterly. "However, my older sister is quite interested in that song. She has many things she wants to ask you about."

His expression froze in the middle of saying this. Zu An had just said that he only learned music in order to pick up girls, yet here he was, offering up his sister to him... wasn't he basically sending her like a lamb into the tiger's den?

Fortunately, Shang Liuyu saved him from his embarrassment by interrupting them. "Ah Zu, I've also heard about this 'Smiling Proud Wanderer' matter earlier today. Didn't you tell me the last time that the song 'Scenery of Home' was the only one you knew?"

## **Chapter 302 - Impersonation**

Zu An gave an embarrassed laugh. He scratched his head and said, "That's different... I only know how to play a single song on that instrument."

Xie Xiu sighed in praise. "You are so humble! This almost doesn't seem like Ah Zu's style."

Zu An figured that what he said made sense. So what if he had plagiarized someone else's work? It wasn't like anyone in this world would know anyway.

Wait... what the heck am I saying! It should be an honor to introduce this world to the culture and works of art from my previous world! Why the heck am I feeling guilty?

Shang Liuyu hummed a few notes. The tune was none other than the melody of 'The Smiling, Proud Wanderer'. "Ah Zu, I really like this song. It feels so free and unrestrained, and I feel all fired up just listening to it. It sounds like a war song of the beast tribes. It's quite similar to that B... B... what was it again?"

She was a foreign language teacher after all, so she was very experienced. That was why no one doubted her words when she compared it to a war song of the beast tribes.

"BGM. It means background music," Zu An explained.

"BGM..." Shang Liuyu muttered to herself. She was proficient in many languages, but she didn't know what race this language belonged to.

After being stumped for a while, she gave up trying to figure it out. “I heard that you won over the Immortal Abode’s most popular courtesan queen using this song. Is that true?”

Zu An waved his hand dismissively. “Those are all just exaggerated rumors. You can’t just believe anything you hear nowadays.”

“It wasn’t true?” Shang Liuyu was shocked. She gave Xie Xiu a confused look.

“But it was because of this song that you won Lady Qiu’s favor!” Xie Xiu cried in support.

“Nonsense. It wasn’t this song that won me her affections—it was my attractiveness and talents,” Zu An replied in a deadly earnest manner.

Everyone in their group—Xie Xiu, Shang Liuyu, and even those following them—was stupefied.

How could such a shameless person exist in this world?!

Shang Liuyu was the first to recover her composure. “Ah Zu, why don’t you make a song for me some time? Your songs are all quite interesting.”

‘Scenery of Home’, ‘God of Gambling’, and ‘The Smiling, Proud Wanderer’ were truly refreshing. They were completely different from the songs of this world, yet still full of musical sense. It was easy to become inspired by these songs.

“Sure!” Zu An agreed straight away.

Behind them, Xie Xiu felt jealousy overcome him. I would’ve asked my sister to teach me a bit more about music if I had known that it would come with so many benefits!

A short while later, the group arrived at the Silverhook Casino. Zu An held the promissory note from the Plum Blossom Sect in his hands—Shang Liuyu had given it to him earlier— and began the takeover.

Plum Blossom Sect was in turmoil after Mei Chaofeng’s death, and even Plum Blossom Seven, who was in charge of the Silverhook Casino, had been killed by an enraged Shi Kun, which threw matters into further disarray.

Zu An represented the Chu clan to some extent. Moreover, he had Brightmoon Academy’s employees and even the City Lord’s son with him. Together, they represented Brightmoon City’s three greatest powers. How could anyone from the Silverhook Casino dare to resist?

Even if there were objections to the takeover, neither Zu An or Shang Liuyu had to do anything to address them. The group of professionals dispatched by the academy took care of all of them.

Xie Xiu didn’t know what kind of deal Zu An reached with the academy. He couldn’t help but feel shocked. Why would the academy help Zu An out so much? This fella really was one-of-a-kind. So many people hated him, yet another group of people loved him.

The professionals that Jiang Luofu had sent with them were indeed outstanding. In no time at all, they had already taken inventory of almost all of the Silverhook Casino’s assets and negotiable instruments, and froze their accounts. Everyone who used to work under the Plum Blossom Sect was chased out, and seals were plastered over the doors.

In the future, the academy would send logistics personnel to recruit new workers, carry out renovations, and carry out other necessary tasks.

With the awesome efficiency of the academy, Zu An's takeover of Plum Blossom Sect's assets was more or less assured. Xie Xiu figured that it wouldn't hurt to get on the good side of these two great powers, so he ordered some of the Yamen's subordinates to come and help out.

This made matters go much more smoothly. The work they had originally planned to complete over several days was practically completed within a day.

"Ah Zu, you had better invite me out for something nice after all of this today. I'm so exhausted, and my back is killing me!" mid-way through, Xie Xiu had begun to grow tired. After all, this playboy was too lazy to even help out with his own family's affairs—what the heck was he doing here?

The only saving grace was Shang Liuyu's dreamy presence. She was just too beautiful, and the two hardly ever spent any time together. Being this close to such a beauty was a form of enjoyment on its own. This was the only reason why he had lasted this long.

Zu An laughed. "Xiu'er, are you really suffering from back pains at your age? Perhaps there's something wrong with your kidney? You really need to get that checked out."

Xie Xiu was less than amused.

Everyone around them snickered. Even Shang Liuyu smiled.

Xie Xiu was completely speechless. Bro, are you blind? My body is in amazing condition, okay? How would I be able to play around with all those girls otherwise?

Why don't we have a little contest if you don't believe me?

As soon as he had that thought, the scene that he'd witnessed in the dungeon appeared in his mind, and a terrible feeling instantly ran through his entire body.

Damn it! Forget it, I won't compete against you.

You have successfully trolled Xie Xiu for 66... 66... 66...

Under the onslaught of resentment, Zu An only laughed. "I was just joking, man. Of course I'll invite everyone out for some good food later."

Everyone cheered, immediately motivated by that statement. Xie Xiu felt a little better as well.

There was one last place left to go. As they were sorting through the place, someone tossed a middle-aged man over to the academy teachers. "Teacher Shang, Teacher Zu, this fella tried to run off with a bunch of deeds and banknotes."

Someone else recognized the man. "Isn't this guy Plum Blossom Four, from the Plum Blossom Sect?"

Zu An took back the deeds and banknotes. He snorted. "No wonder I felt like some things were missing while we were cleaning out the rest of Plum Blossom Sect's holdings. So they were all here with you!"

Bitter resentment filled Plum Blossom Four's eyes. "I hope you go to hell, Zu An! You won't be able to laugh for long!"

The Plum Blossom Sect has done extremely well for themselves in Brightmoon City over these years. As the fourth-ranked brother of the sect, his daily existence had been incredibly comfortable. However, this Zu An fellow had come in and ruined everything.

Their sect leader was killed, the glorious Plum Blossom Sect had crashed and burned, and he himself became a stray. How could he not seethe with hatred for the one who had caused all of this?

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Four for 999 Rage points!

Zu An sighed. "Even your sect leader is dead, bro. Aren't you just wasting your breath?"

Shang Liuyu wasn't a fan of these scenes. Her brow furrowed, and she walked off to one side. Xie Xiu eagerly followed after her. Talking to these Plum Blossom Sect fellows would really make him feel like he'd fallen down to their level. He much preferred staying with this beautiful teacher.

"I heard that Blackwind Stockade's Chen Xuan is already after your life!" Plum Blossom Four spat angrily.

Zu An laughed. "It seems like you know a little. But then, aren't I still perfectly alive?"

I suppose, since Chen Xuan and Mei Chaofeng were brothers, everyone in the Plum Blossom Sect knows about this.

Plum Blossom Four sneered. "Of course it's not that easy to kill you while you're under the Chu clan's protection. However, you will soon face the wrath of the Whale Gang. No one in Brightmoon City can expect to survive for long after offending both the Blackwind Stockade and the Whale Gang!"

"The Whale Gang?" Zu An was shocked. He'd been trying hard to get more intel about this exact gang. "How did I offend the Whale Gang?"

"Hmph! These deeds and banknotes were meant for Whale Gang's boss. He'll obviously get mad at you since you've stolen his stuff!" A flicker of joy flashed across Plum Blossom Four's eyes. Clearly, just thinking about how Zu An was going to be dealt with made him happy.

"You were planning to give this stuff to Whale Gang's boss?" Zu An was shocked. "You've met Whale Gang's boss before?"

"Of course not. But I made an appointment to meet with him." Plum Blossom Four laughed. The Plum Blossom Sect was a sinking ship, and all the remaining members of the sect were trying their best to flee to safety. Plum Blossom Four had planned to use the few assets under his control to secure him a place with the Whale Gang.

After all, he was one of Plum Blossom Sect's higher-ups, and was willing to offer up such a huge gift. This made the Whale Gang's boss take him seriously, and he even agreed to meet with him personally.

But he was just a step too late, and had ended up being captured by this fellow. Otherwise, he would've already moved on from this disaster.

“You can forget about trying to get any intelligence about the Whale Gang from me! I definitely won’t... argh!” Before he could finish, Zu An shoved a pill into his mouth. He was horrified. “What did you feed me?!”

Zu An smiled. “Nothing, just a pill with some parasites sealed inside. If you don’t get the antidote within a day, the parasites will incubate and start laying eggs. Your blood will transport its eggs all throughout your body, and then they will swim to your brain on their own to slowly devour your brain matter... Tch, tch, tch, I wonder what kind of sound they make when they start chewing?”

“Stop... please stop...” Plum Blossom Four almost wet his pants when he heard the onomatopoeia.

He wasn’t scared of regular poisons. If he died, he died. However, this sort of suffering would leave him alive while he wished fervently for death instead!

Zu An’s face grew cold. “If you wish to save yourself, then hurry up and tell me about your meeting with this boss. Leave nothing out. I’ll give you the antidote once I’m satisfied.”

It seemed like this guy was really afraid of these parasites. Zu An had spent a lot of time thinking about what he could best use to scare his enemies. All the horror movies he’d watched before provided great source material, but he still felt like bugs were the most effective. Sure enough, this fella had broken down so quickly.

“I’ll talk, I’ll talk...” Plum Blossom Four was shaking. He quickly spilled everything he knew.

Zu An fell deep into thought as he processed the information that had been provided. After a short time, he said, “All right. I’ll give you the antidote after I meet with the Whale Gang’s boss.”

Plum Blossom Four immediately waved his hands in panic. “Young master Zu, I’m dead for sure if that boss finds out what I did!”

The Whale Gang was part of the merciless underground world, and they always acted viciously and mercilessly. Sometimes, they didn’t just kill a single person, but targeted their entire family instead. This was what Plum Blossom Four was scared of.

“There’s nothing to be afraid of. I’ll just pretend to be one of your subordinates. How could the Whale Gang’s boss possibly recognize me? I’ll give you the antidote once everything is over, and I’ll even let you go with some retirement money. The choice is yours.” Zu An’s mind was already set on finding out more about this mysterious Whale Gang. This way, he could bring a happy surprise home for his wife.

Plum Blossom Four’s face became gloomy. Eventually, he nodded. “Fine! I hope you keep your promise!”

### **Chapter 303: Please Don’t Raise Any Flags**

Zu An raised his chin up high. “Look who you’re talking to! I’ve always been an honest husband! I never lie!”

“All right, I’ll trust you for now.” Inside, Plum Blossom Four was full of misgivings. Deep down, he felt that this guy was completely different from how he was describing himself.



However, he really didn't have a choice.

Zu An ran over to Xie Xiu and patted him on the shoulder. He slipped him a banknote. "Bro, I'll have to trouble you to entertain everyone first. I'll drop by a little later."

He felt like he would be humiliating Shang Liuyu if he gave her money, so he could only entrust this to Xie Xiu.

Xie Xiu frowned. "How can I take your money? Hurry and take it back."

Zu An laughed. "I know that young master Xie has money, but I really should be the one treating everyone today."

"Fine." Only then did Xie Xiu feel at ease. "But Ah Zu, where are you going now?"

"I just have some things to take care of first." Zu An said vaguely. He then walked over to Shang Liuyu to let her know as well.

Shang Liuyu was somewhat surprised when she heard that Zu An had things to take care of. However, she let him go without pressing him for further details.

Xie Xiu eagerly sidled over to Shang Liuyu's side. "Teacher Shang, I know a new restaurant whose dishes are quite outstanding. Right this way!" he said in a fawning manner.

Shang Liuyu only smiled politely in return, and she slowly walked off.

Xie Xiu followed after her. Even he himself was put off by his actions. When it came to those girls that he played with, he had always come and gone as he wished. Yet now he followed Teacher Shang around like a dog.

However, Teacher Shang really was too outstanding! She was completely different from the other girls he got together with, and he couldn't help but humble himself before her.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An had changed into a set of ordinary Plum Blossom Sect attire, and followed Plum Blossom Four to the meeting place that he and the Whale Gang's boss had agreed to beforehand. Along the way, Zu An asked in detail about what he had to be careful of.

He had thought of enlisting the academy's help. However, Shang Liuyu didn't excel in cultivation, and he was worried that something bad would happen to her if he brought her along.

Plum Blossom Four also said that the mysterious boss of the Whale Gang was always careful. If there were too many people in their group, it would easily draw suspicion.

The meeting was imminent, and there was no time for him to contact the Chu clan to send backup. In the end, he decided he might as well take his chances without extra help.

He had the freedom to choose whether to fight or to run. With his current level of cultivation and experience, he was confident that he could keep himself alive.

Besides, he wasn't going there to pick a fight, but to gather information. Why would the gang boss bother with a 'lowly person' like him at all?

Out of an abundance of caution, this gang boss had reserved a private room in a first class restaurant.

A tough looking man stopped them while they were still downstairs. He checked them thoroughly for weapons. Satisfied, he gestured for them to head on upstairs.

Meanwhile, several other gang members examined the streets outside closely to make sure that they weren't being followed by anyone. Only then were they allowed to pass.

Zu An admired their sense of caution. This was exactly like how the crime syndicates in TV dramas operated!

Wait, but this Whale Gang really is a real-life crime syndicate...

As they reached the second floor, someone opened the door for them.

Plum Blossom Four gulped. He was already incredibly nervous. Zu An reached out a hand and gave his back a gentle push, partly in encouragement, and partly as a form of silent threat.

Plum Blossom Four had no choice but to brace himself and enter. Zu An followed behind him while secretly observing his surroundings.

There weren't many people inside at all. Compared to the heavy security outside, the interior of the room seemed almost empty.

There was only a single person sitting at the table. Shock jolted through Zu An's mind when he saw this person. The Whale Gang's boss is female?

Not only was she female, she was a gorgeous one.

Even though she wore a mask, her well-proportioned figure and fair skin were terribly seductive.

For some reason, Zu An sensed something familiar about this person. However, he just couldn't put his finger on where exactly he'd met her before.

The eyes of the Whale Gang's boss fell on him, and he hurriedly lowered his head. He didn't dare continue staring at her. After all, he was currently acting as Plum Blossom Four's subordinate, so he had no right to let his eyes roam around freely.

"I... I pay my respects to the boss of the Whale Gang..." Plum Blossom Four hadn't expected the gang boss to be a beautiful woman either. Even though he was nervous, he still swallowed subconsciously, and stole glances at her long legs which were crossed under the table.

That woman chuckled. Her voice seemed to swallow up his very soul. "Plum Blossom Four is too polite. We are all one family from now on. Did you bring the goods?"

"The goods... the goods are here."

Plum Blossom Four immediately broke out in cold sweat. Most of the banknotes had already been seized. Only a few that were left were real, and all of the others were fake.

"Please allow me to take a look first." The woman reached out her fair and soft hand towards him.

Plum Blossom Four swallowed. He cursed Zu An endlessly while recalling the words he'd been told to say. Just as he was about to speak, the woman suddenly let out a startled cry.

"Gang boss, what's wrong?" Plum Blossom Four's heart began to race when he noticed the other party looking towards the subordinates behind him.

The Whale Gang's boss tapped her fingers lightly on the table. "Who are these people?" She looked over the group of men with a thoughtful expression.

"Gang boss, they are all my subordinates. They lack experience, so I beg the gang boss not to take offense if any of them have acted rashly," said Plum Blossom Four.

"Don't worry, I was just asking casually." The young lady laughed and stood up. She walked up to the group of them and paced around them slowly. "It came to my mind that, even though the Plum Blossom Sect is already falling apart, these people are still willing to follow you. They really are loyal and courageous men."

Plum Blossom Four took out a handkerchief and dabbed at the fine sheen of sweat covering his face. "Indeed, indeed. These men have always remained faithful and true. That is why I wanted to bring them with me when I join up with your gang."

The young lady chuckled. "I have always been fond of talented individuals, and these seem like such charming and intelligent youngsters."

Zu An frowned inwardly. Something was well and truly amiss.

Someone with the status of the Whale Gang's boss should be focused on discussing business with Plum Blossom Four. Why would she pay any attention to his subordinates?

Perhaps someone had seen through his disguise?

That shouldn't be the case, though! He considered his disguise to be very passable. Plum Blossom Four hadn't given anything away either, so there shouldn't have been any way for the members of the Whale Gang to recognize him.

He gradually calmed himself with these thoughts. The last thing he wanted was for her to notice him acting strangely.

"If the boss is happy then I'm happy," Plum Blossom Four said with an apologetic smile.

"This one seems to be the most attractive." The young lady had stopped at Zu An's side.

Zu An suddenly smelled a delicate fragrance. His expression grew horrified as realization struck him, but it was already too late. The young lady moved as fast as lightning, sealing away several of his body's acupoints.

## **Chapter 304: Entering the Tiger's Den**

Zu An's nose filled with the scent of a familiar fragrance. It was at that moment, he knew he'd fucked up.

If he could recognize her through her smell, there was no way she would fail to recognize him, since he only had on some Plum Blossom Sect attire as a disguise.

However, he was just a step too slow. His acupoints had already been sealed by the other party, and he couldn't move a muscle.

Plum Blossom Four was alarmed. He got to his feet in a panic. "What is the gang boss doing?" he demanded.

That young lady scoffed. With a flick of her finger, her nail guard shot straight through his forehead.

Plum Blossom Four's entire body shook, and he fell limply onto the table, a flattering smile frozen on his face.

Seeing this, the other Plum Blossom Sect members turned and tried to run.

They had no idea what had just happened, but since the young lady had suddenly made a move, they knew that something had gone terribly awry.

If Plum Blossom Four hadn't been killed, they might have found the courage to put up a fight.

However, Plum Blossom Four had met his demise in an instant! All of them were quaking in fear, rushing to be the first one out of the room.

They didn't believe they could outrun the Whale Gang's boss. However, as long as they were faster than their companions, and the Whale Gang was stalled while dealing with the stragglers, then they would still have a sliver of a chance at survival.

Unfortunately, the young lady gestured with a finger. As if controlled by some mysterious force, the water on the table—which had been spilled while tea had been made earlier—flowed together to form a dozen or so droplets.

With a flick of the young lady's finger, the droplets flew outward with tremendous force, impacting on the backs of the fleeing Plum Blossom Sect members.

In the blink of an eye, their backs were torn to bloody shreds. Their screams came to a sudden, shuddering halt.

"Boss, what happened?" Alarmed by the sudden disturbance, the men from the Whale Gang, who had been stationed outside, rushed in.

The young lady was already lounging leisurely in her chair. She took out a new nail guard and put it on. "It's nothing. Clean up the mess."

Her subordinates made no further comment. For the Whale Gang, casually killing a few people was an exceedingly common occurrence.

"Ya Xiao, examine the things he brought." The young lady pointed at Plum Blossom Four.

“Understood!” A large man walked over, his beard tied in knots. He ruffled through Plum Blossom Four’s pockets and fished out a stack of paper. “This piece of shit... apart from some genuine banknotes, everything else is fake! I’m going to kill all of these Plum Blossom bastards!”

He walked over to Zu An, cracking his knuckles menacingly.

“I still have a use for this person. You all may leave,” the young lady said in a disinterested manner.

Even though her tone was nonchalant, the Whale Gang members remained completely serious. They cleaned up the room and left quickly.

Ya Xiao—who, just a moment ago was acting tough—left as well, taking Plum Blossom Four’s with him.

Zu An sighed deeply when the door closed behind them. “Who would have expected you, who always seem so weak and delicate, to actually have such an awe-inspiring side?”

That young woman removed her veil, revealing a familiar face underneath. Who else could it be but Zheng Dan? “I guess we can only say that you don’t understand women at all. The prettier the woman, the better they are at lying.”

Zu An snorted. “I really don’t understand you. You usually seem as though you wouldn’t even harm a fly, and yet you’ve taken four lives without even batting an eyelid.”

“Were you talking about Plum Blossom Four’s men?” Zheng Dan laughed softly. “These fellows have relied on Plum Blossom Sect for survival over the years, and have committed every crime imaginable. They ought to have died a long time ago. They should be grateful that I didn’t torture them.”

“Should I be thanking you in their place?” Zu An said mockingly.

“They don’t need to thank me. If they are to thank someone, then they should be thanking you. If I hadn’t been busy thinking about how to deal with you, they wouldn’t have had the pleasure of such a quick death.” Zheng Dan stood up and walked over to his side.

Zheng Dan’s faint fragrance lingered around him. Zu An laughed. “So, have you figured out how you are going to deal with me?”

“Not really. I honestly didn’t expect to meet you under these circumstances.” Zheng Dan rubbed her temples. She could feel a headache forming.

Zu An sighed. “Everyone is wondering who the boss of the Whale Gang is. To some extent, you are even more mysterious than Chen Xuan. Who would have expected the boss of the legendary criminal organization who carries out such ruthless killings to be the upright and proper young miss of the Zheng clan?” He stared at the beautiful woman in front of him. “Just which side is your true self?”

“Which side do you like better?” Zheng Dan moved to his side. The tip of her fingernail slid gently across his face, eventually coming to rest on his neck.

Zu An’s throat grew dry. He hadn’t forgotten that Plum Blossom Four had died with just a flick of her nail guard. “Of course I prefer that bashful young lady that I had pressed up against that wall.”

Zheng Dan's face reddened, but she quickly covered it up. "Hmph! You better stop that nonsense. I'm not the same me from before. If you make me upset, you might just find yourself missing a tongue."

Zu An laughed. "Would you be able to bear seeing me lose my tongue?"

Zheng Dan narrowed her eyes. The killing intent that erupted from her made Zu An jump in fright.

The tip of her nail curled just beneath his chin. A dangerous smile appeared on her face. "Stick out your tongue then. Shall we see if I can bear to see you lose it?"

"Mmmmm!" Zu An shook his head frantically. He dared not stick his tongue out. If he really lost his tongue because of this, it would really be too tragic a tale.

Having sensed her true killing intent, Zu An didn't dare provoke her further.

He really couldn't associate this dangerous beauty with that refined and gentle daughter of a noble clan.

He began to wonder if this woman was bipolar.

There was a rapid knocking on the door.

Zheng Dan frowned. "What is it?" she said coldly.

Ya Xiao's voice came from beyond the door. "Gang boss, news from the island. There are important matters to be discussed. Please head back."

Zheng Dan put on her veil again. She opened the door. "What kind of information is it?"

Ya Xiao shook his head. He handed her a sheet of paper. "It doesn't say, it merely respectfully requests for you to return."

"I'll head back and see what's going on," Zheng Dan said grimly. She usually had to play the role of the Zheng clan's first miss, so she wouldn't head to the island unless there was an important matter.

However, she wasn't too worried just yet. Despite the urgency in the coded message, it clearly wasn't a catastrophic situation yet. She knew that the island itself wasn't in any danger.

It was probably some sort of business-related or other important decision that needed her to be present. These things happened from time to time.

Zheng Dan pointed at Zu An. "Bring him along."

Zu An was extremely gloomy. He'd set out to obtain intelligence about the Whale Gang's boss and their hideout, and managed to do so, but the way he obtained it... He really couldn't bring himself to feel at all happy about it.

Ya Xiao frowned and gestured toward Zu An with his hand. "It won't be easy for us to move through the city while dragging someone along with us. How about we just find some place to get rid of this Plum Blossom scoundrel?"

Zheng Dan glared at him. "Are you telling me how to do things?"

Ya Xiao broke out into cold sweat at once. "This humble one doesn't dare!" he said in a panic.

Zu An gave her a mental thumbs-up. This was what a gang boss should be like!

However, this side of her really was too different from that gentle and reserved girl that he was already used to.

A black sack was thrown over Zu An's head, after which he vaguely felt his body being thrown into a carriage. It felt like he was bundled in and out of four or five different carriages in quick succession, before things started to settle down.

From the gentle rising and falling that he was experiencing, he figured that he had been transferred to a boat.

At first, he thought that Zheng Dan would come and free him, but it seemed like she had no intention of doing so. He was thrown into the hold of the cabin as if forgotten.

What the heck! Are they worried that I'll remember the way to Whale Gang's base?

After that sudden angry thought, Zu An quickly calmed down. The way they were treating him surely meant that they had no intentions of killing him. If they had instead let him observe the way to their secret base, they would really have no choice but to silence him.

Just then, he remembered that he now knew Zheng Dan's identity. Would she really let him go just like that? His mind wrestled with the two options.

In the same boat, Zheng Dan was conflicted as well.

The cool breeze didn't dispel her unease. She couldn't figure out how to deal with Zu An either.

She hadn't expected to encounter Zu An in that restaurant either. She could tell from how he'd wrinkled his brow that he'd already recognized her, and she had to make a snap decision.

It was all that fellow's fault for messing with her so much, that she had even forgotten to change her fragrance when she changed her outfit. If she'd been clear-headed, she would never have made such a simple mistake.

She really had no idea how she was going to deal with him. There was no way she could let him go, since he'd already discovered her identity. Once she was exposed, not just herself and the Whale Gang, but the entire Zheng clan, would face a disaster.

However, killing him seemed like a bit of a waste.

Forget it. I'll try and see if I can still get those promissory notes off him.

It wasn't only Plum Blossom Sect's seven-and-a-half million taels of silver. The casino that was discreetly supported by the Zheng clan also owed him five hundred thousand taels!

Not only had she failed to obtain any information from the attempts to honey trap him, she'd instead suffered severe losses herself!

It was time for her to change tactics. If soft methods wouldn't work, she had to resort to harder methods.

That fellow could just break under torture...

While the two of them were wrapped up in their thoughts, the boat arrived at Whale Island.

Zu An was brought out. The black sack over his head was removed and he could finally see light again.

He examined his surroundings. They were on a small island. A faint mist covered everything, and there was no other land in sight. He was impressed by the size of Brightmoon Lake—it was even large enough to hide such a place! It truly was vast and mysterious.

“Gang boss, should we throw this guy into the prison?” Ya Xiao asked.

After a slight hesitation, Zheng Dan said, “Bring him along with me.”

She was worried that something might happen if she let this fellow out of her sight. The Whale Gang was full of ruffians. A single misstep and this guy might just wind up dead.

Besides, it wouldn’t take long to settle whatever important matter had brought her here. She could slowly settle things with him once she was done.

The group thus headed straight into the meeting hall. Just as they were about to reach the hall, a playful voice drifted over to them. “Hm? Just trying to find a way to get rid of him was starting to give me a headache, but it seems like all that effort wasn’t necessary! Isn’t this the Chu clan’s young master, Zu An? Didn’t you have many experts protecting you? How did you end up here?”

### **Chapter 305: An Unreasonable Request**

Zu An looked towards the source of the voice and jumped in fright.

A red-haired man was standing there, a domineering expression on his face. He looked at Zu An as if he was looking at livestock waiting to be slaughtered.

“Chen Xuan! Why are you here?” Zheng Dan frowned and said in a heavy voice.

This man was obviously Chen Xuan, master of the Blackwind Stockade. He hadn’t expected to see Zu An captured! This really was an unexpected pleasure.

Chen Xuan sighed. “I had some matters to discuss with the gang boss, but I didn’t know you weren’t on the island. I must ask for your forgiveness.” Chen Xuan clasped his fist in apology.

Zheng Dan frowned. This guy was a big shot as well. Even though his apology wasn’t that sincere, she wasn’t in any position to criticize him further. “May I ask why the Stockade Master wished to see me?”

Chen Xuan laughed. “Let me get rid of that bastard before we get to the important matters,” he said.

As the words left his mouth, he leaped forward, his large hands reaching towards Zu An.

Zu An’s entire body was sealed, and there was no way for him to resist. He could only watch as those hands descended towards him like a falcon’s claws.



Countless thoughts raced through his mind. He tried to come up with a way to get away, but there was just no time.

I'm dead!

Just then, he felt a fragrant breeze. Zheng Dan appeared in front of him, hand outstretched to meet this attack.

In an instant, the two of them exchanged a single blow. Chen Xuan did a backflip, glaring at Zheng Dan as he landed. "Gang boss, what is the meaning of this?"

He tried to hide his incredible shock. This woman's cultivation was far higher than he had imagined!

He wasn't the only one who was shocked. Zu An was also stunned. He was amazed that Zheng Dan had saved him, and doubly amazed that she was so strong.

Chen Xuan was a sixth rank cultivator, yet Zheng Dan had stood her ground in this exchange! Was she also at the sixth rank?

That should have been impossible!

Zheng Dan looked coldly at Chen Xuan. "I was just about to ask Stockade Master Chen the same thing."

Chen Xuan pointed at Zu An. "You well know that I hold a great grudge against Zu An. Considering our relationship, I do not believe it too big of a deal for you to hand over this prisoner of yours to me. Am I wrong?"

Zheng Dan replied, "If it were someone else, I would take no issue at all. However, I still have a use for this person, so I must apologize instead."

Chen Xuan was momentarily surprised, but soon flashed a quick smile. "Whatever. I'll have many chances to kill him in the future, anyway. I'll grant the gang boss this favor today."

"Thank you for your understanding." Zheng Dan found his response slightly strange. Chen Xuan was known to be a rude and unreasonable person. Why was he so agreeable today?

"Now, can the stockade leader talk about what brought you here?" Zheng Dan asked.

"Let's talk more inside." Chen Xuan laughed loudly, gesturing for her to enter the meeting hall.

A strange feeling troubled Zheng Dan. It was suddenly as if this Whale Gang actually belonged to Chen Xuan. She almost felt as if the master of this place was receiving her as a guest.

Despite her discomfort, she decided not to bicker over such a small issue. She merely walked towards the meeting hall, her face overcast.

"Gang boss, you've returned!" A small, skinny man with a long mustache welcomed her with a smile.

This was Liu Chan, a man who served as her second-in-command and a military advisor. He was the one in charge of everything when Zheng Dan wasn't present on the island.

"Were you the one who issued that message?" Zheng Dan asked quietly.

Liu Chan replied just as quietly, "Yes. Chen Xuan suddenly paid a visit to the island and none of us knew what to do, so I had no choice but to seek you out."

"I see." Zheng Dan walked straight to the boss' seat. Chen Xuan took the first seat to her left. The other important figures in the Whale Gang took their places in order.

Ya Xiao was one of these men. He sat in the fifth seat, behind Liu Chan.

Zu An was thrown into the furthest corner of the room.

He watched as some servants brought out tea. It was clear to Zu An that they were about to discuss some important matters. Once they were done with their discussions, they would then deal with him.

He didn't believe Chen Xuan would give up so easily. Zheng Dan had protected him once, but she might not do so a second time.

Let alone the fact that Zheng Dan probably wanted him dead as well.

He hurriedly called out to Mi Li. "Big sis empress, big sis empress? Both of us are done for if you don't come out now!"

But there was no response no matter how he called out.

Mi Li's soul had been poisoned, and she had gone into hibernation in order to eliminate the poison. It seemed hopeless to rely on her aid this time.

This woman really doesn't care at all! She's not at all worried that my life will end soon. Zu An cursed endlessly.

But cursing wasn't going to get him anywhere. He could only rely on himself now.

Unfortunately, no matter how hard he tried, he just couldn't think of a single way out!

The rope wrapped around himself was easy enough to deal with. The problem was that Zheng Dan had sealed off all of his acupoints, which prevented his ki from flowing. He couldn't even move his body.

I could slowly open up the acupoints if I could move even a single strand of ki. Zu An closed his eyes. He turned his senses inward, trying to see if he could gather any ki inside of him.

Unfortunately, Zheng Dan was extremely skilled at acupunctural sealing. He couldn't move even the slightest bit of ki.

Just as he was about to fall into despair, he suddenly discovered a wisp of icy coldness.

Huh?

At first, he thought that he'd been mistaken. However, after further careful testing, he determined that there was indeed a trace of icy coldness within the depths of his dantian.

This is...

Zu An was overjoyed. He couldn't be more familiar with this energy! There was no way to mistake Chu Chuyan's aura after treating her day after day.

Why did Chu Chuyan's frost ki exist in his body?

He had spent some time practicing the Snowflake Sword technique she had given him, but he didn't seem to have achieved any notable results. He didn't even manage to cultivate a strand of its aura.

He had no idea if it was because of the excess of yang energy in his masculine body, or if it was something else.

This trace of frost energy had clearly not been cultivated by him on his own. As he pondered it over, a thought suddenly emerged.

Could it be that he'd taken this from her body while the two of them were intimately connected?

He hurriedly tried to move that strand of cold energy, but it curled up into a ball and refused to move at all.

A stroke of inspiration hit him, and he tried to summon it using the Snowflake Sword's flow path.

Sure enough, the strand of cold energy finally moved.

This strand of extremely pure cold energy swam about his meridians. It seemed like a small wisp, yet it flowed endlessly, continually spreading through his entire body.

He was completely focused on this cultivation, and was oblivious to what was happening around him.

...

Zheng Dan sipped her tea and said, "What brings the stockade master to our island today?"

Che Xuan said with a laugh, "There are some leftover details regarding the issue of salt permits that have yet to be sorted out."

Zheng Dan grew unhappy. How dare he call her all the way back here for such a trivial matter?

However, she knew that the other members of the Whale Gang could do little in the face of a personal appearance by Chen Xuan. There really was no choice but to call her back to mediate.

As such, she held back her irritation and had some subordinates formalize the details, after which they signed several written agreements.

It was a complicated affair, and it eventually led to Zheng Dan loosening her collar. Why do I feel slightly warm today? Is it because my mood is all over the place?

Chen Xuan laughed when he noticed her movements. "Gang boss, there is another matter that I have always been curious about. I hope the gang boss can help me ease my confusion."

Zheng Dan forced a smile. "Stockade master is now the Whale Gang's ally, so feel free to speak your mind. I will do what I can, as long as it is something I can you help with."

"You said it yourself!" Chen Xuan's eyes wandered about her body hungrily. "I have always been curious as to what the gang boss looks like. Could you remove your veil so that I could have a look?"

Zheng Dan's face immediately grew dark when she heard his request.

## Chapter 306: Eighteen Spring Winds

“Stockade Master Chen, what is the meaning of this?” Zheng Dan’s face was as dark as a thunderhead. This request was too disrespectful! She had to know why he would ask such a thing of her.

Chen Xuan laughed. “It’s exactly what I said! I can tell that the gang boss is an extraordinary beauty just from your figure alone, so I’m dying to see that exceptional face behind the veil as well!”

“Stockade Master Chen, I’ve treated you as a guest all along, yet you insist on pushing things too far! From today on, all agreements between the Whale Gang and the Blackwind Stockade are invalid.” Zheng Dan was now completely angered. “Someone see this man out!”

She considered using their home field advantage to kill him outright, but decided otherwise in the end. Chen Xuan’s cultivation level was just too high. Moreover he’d been able to survive being pursued by many powerful experts over the years, so he definitely had some trump cards up his sleeve.

Since she had no confidence in being able to kill him, the only thing left to her was to chase him off the island.

This really was a headache. What was she to do if this fellow grew angry because of this embarrassment, and decided to storm to the island one day and kick up a fuss?

However, the strange silence that followed her command cleared her head immediately. She straightened. “Did you not hear what I said?” she said to Liu Chan.

Liu Chan snickered. “Of course I heard you. However, the rest of us want to see what the gang boss looks like as well.”

Zheng Dan’s eyes narrowed. So this was the source of the strange feeling she’d gotten when she had first arrived on the island. This man already had an ulterior motive.

Ya Xiao, who had followed Zheng Dan back, suddenly slammed his palm on the table. “Mister Liu, what is the meaning of this? How dare you disrespect the gang boss?”

“Ya Xiao, please calm down. Everyone knows that you admire the gang boss, but have you ever seen her face, even though you’ve served as her henchman for so many years?” Liu Chan sneered coldly.

“I...” Ya Xiao’s breath caught. Indeed he hadn’t! To be honest, this had left him quite sad as well.

“Bootlicking won’t get you anywhere in the end. You might as well go for broke like the rest of us. Of course, if you join us, we’ll let you have your share of the pie,” Liu Chan said, laughing.

“Shut your mouth!” Ya Xiao’s entire body was shaking. He just couldn’t stand his goddess being humiliated.

Zheng Dan spoke up at this time. “Liu Chan, I don’t believe I’ve treated any of you poorly. Why have you betrayed me?”

“Poorly?” Liu Chan sneered. “Objectively speaking, you haven’t treated us poorly. However, you’re still a woman, after all. You rarely appear on this island, and even when you do, you’re masked. Having a

woman be the gang boss is already quite absurd in itself, yet you still have to shroud yourself in mystery. How can any of us not harbor suspicions? We might end up being betrayed without even knowing it.”

“That’s all?” Zheng Dan frowned. In truth, she was aware that it was easy for the situation to get out of hand if an enemy invaded the island while she was away. However, she was the first miss of the Zheng Clan, after all, so there was no way she could always remain on the island. There was nothing she could do about this situation.

Despite this, she tried her best to mitigate these feelings of unease. She’d employed both grace and force when necessary, and she felt like she had done quite well. However, reality had now given her a slap to the face.

“Of course not,” Liu Chan continued. “Our illicit salt business has only gotten better and better over the years, yet for some strange reason, you’ve deliberately restricted the amount we could sell! There’s money there to be earned, yet we’re not allowed to go after it. What can we say about that, other than that women are too cowardly? It’s fine if you want to be a coward, but you’re deliberately making it hard for all of us brothers, obstructing our path to greater riches! Since that’s the case, we’re left with no choice but to look for a more competent boss!”

“What do you know about any of this? All this is because... because...” Zheng Dan was utterly furious, yet there was no way she could finish her sentence.

There were some things she just couldn’t say.

The reason she had created the Whale Gang was to generate extra income for the Zheng clan. However, the Zheng clan was involved in the legal salt trade, so she couldn’t take risks that were too great, for fear of personal exposure.

On top of that, the Sang clan was in charge of the River Patrol Army. If the illicit salt smuggling got too out of hand, they would be caught in a bind as to whether or not to crack down.

It was only because the Sang clan wanted to deal with the Chu clan that they loosened the restrictions on illicit salt these past two years.

However, Sang Hong wasn’t a court governor, so there was a limit as to how far he could go. That was why they couldn’t fully abolish all of their restrictions on the sale of illicit salt.

There were all sorts of reasons for why she had chosen for them to operate the way they did. However, there was no way for her to tell them all these reasons.

Those Whale Gang leaders all snickered inside. They thought that she had run out of words to rebut them.

Chen Xuan chose this moment to speak. “Boss Guan, there is no need for you to get angry. It’s quite tiring for a woman to run around all over the place. Why not choose to be my housewife instead? You’ll still get whatever you want, and all of these men will still be your subordinates. Leaving these people aside, even the Blackwind Stockade’s members must respectfully call you elder sister! Your status will be way higher than what you currently have here.”

“You want me to become your housewife? You’re just another toad lusting after a swan!” Zheng Dan scoffed. Her tone was full of disdain.

She came from a rich and influential clan, and the patriarch of her fiancé’s clan was the governor. She had such an illustrious background—how could she possibly wish to become the partner of a bandit?

No matter how great his reputation was, Chen Xuan was still a bandit in the end.

He’d meet his end sooner or later at the hands of the authorities.

“A toad lusting after a swan...” Chen Xuan’s face turned cold, his tone also changed. “Miss Guan, do you think you’re so special? Being a housewife in our stockade is already a huge blessing for you! Otherwise, once the drugs begin to take effect and I’ve had my fun with you, I’ll toss you over to these subordinates. I’m sure they’ll be ecstatic to have their former boss serve them.”

Liu Chan and his group of conspirators were all looking at her with blazing desire in their hungry eyes.

Their beautiful gang boss stood on such a high and unreachable perch, and always shrouded herself in mystery. Which of these men hadn’t fantasized about ravaging her body at night?

All this while, they could only rely on their imaginations. Now, however, they had a real chance.

“Drugs? What drugs?!” Zheng Dan’s mind was thrown into a panic.

Chen Xuan roared with laughter. “I’ve always been a careful person. Even though I don’t believe that your cultivation is higher than mine, you are still a gang boss, after all. I was afraid that you might pull out some weird tricks, so I had these guys put some stuff in your tea earlier.”

Zheng Dan hadn’t gotten too flustered even after learning of her subordinates’ betrayal earlier. Now, however, her expression grew dark. She looked at her teacup.

How could she have predicted that she would be poisoned by her own people?

She hurriedly tried to force the poison from her body. Off to the side, Chen Xuan shook his head. “It’s useless. This drug is called ‘Eighteen Spring Winds’. The effects are rather peculiar. Most people are satisfied after one round, but those under the effects of this drug need to do it at least eighteen times before the effects are eliminated. Otherwise, you’ll be set aflame with sexual desire and implode.”[1]

He paused for a while, then continued, “Honestly speaking, I’m not even sure if I have the ability to go eighteen rounds. Luckily, I have the help of all your lackeys here with me today. Hahaha!”

“Despicable!” Zheng Dan was furious and humiliated. She discovered that she couldn’t force out the poison at all! Moreover, her body was growing hotter and hotter. She made up her mind to attack Chen Xuan before the drugs took full effect. At the very least, she would take him down with her.

### **Chapter 307: The Cooked Duck Has Flown Away**

Meanwhile, Zu An was circulating that strand of cold energy through his body using the ‘Snowflake Sword’ chant.

He found it all rather strange. There was clearly not much of the cold energy, yet it seemed to swirl about endlessly.

He didn't know that this was actually a trace of cold source energy Chu Chuyan's body had relinquished to him when they had joined as one. This was the fruit of over ten years of cultivation, yet he had gotten it from her so easily.

Of course, Zu An didn't practice some sinister technique that stole the energy from others to enhance his own strength. It was due to his special constitution and the specialized treatment method that he employed. Since he had been treating Chu Chuyan by removing the frost from her body while also practicing the Snowflake Sword, he had coincidentally drawn in a portion of her cold source.

Back then, the cold energy within Chu Chuyan had spiked dangerously. In some way, losing a small portion of source energy had lessened her injuries somewhat.

She would quickly regain what was lost after she recovered and started cultivating again.

However, the benefits that Zu An derived from this were just too great! The Snowflake Sword was a technique that usually required the practitioner to put in years of hard work in order to become proficient. With this trace of cold source energy, he had saved himself ten years of effort.

Once he had completely assimilated it, he could attain proficiency in the Snowflake Sword technique that would rival Chu Chuyan's in her early teens.

Wait, doesn't that sound kinda sad?

Of course, Chu Chuyan had always been outstanding. In her early teens, she had already cultivated to a reasonably high level.

Zu An continued to drive the cold source energy through his body. He gradually broke through the seals Zheng Dan had placed on his body.

Once he completely recovered his mobility, Zu An summoned the Poisonous Prick and cut through the ropes holding him in place.

The meeting hall had descended into a complete frenzy. Zheng Dan had launched an all-out attack on Chen Xuan, forgoing any thought of defense.

Chen Xuan fought in a more reserved manner. The other party was already poisoned, and moving about like this would only speed up the effects of the drugs within her body. There was no need for him to go toe-to-toe with her at all.

Liu Chan and the others didn't dare get close to the battle. After all, their gang boss had accumulated quite a bit of prestige over the years.

Instead, they all moved aside to watch the battle. Their only job was to cut off her escape.

Zheng Dan attacked Chen Xuan with over ten different moves, but all her attacks were calmly neutralized by the stockade master.

Her heart instantly sank, hitting rock bottom. Her attacks were ineffective, and she could feel her own heart rate accelerating, her entire body growing hotter by the second. Even her vision was growing blurry. The poison had clearly begun to take effect.

She knew that only disaster awaited her if she continued to remain here. Her survival instincts forced her to run.

However, those double-crossing gang members surrounded her, blocking any possible escape. Moreover, with Chen Xuan around, her chances of breaking out were very slim.

She fell into despair. She thought of ending her own life while she still had the strength to do so, instead of allowing herself to be humiliated at the hands of these despicable people.

She couldn't help but glance towards the corner where she'd put Zu An, her heart full of regret. If she had known this would happen, she would never have brought him with her to the island.

Considering the grudge that Chen Xuan held against him, there was no way he would make it out alive.

Bringing him here had clearly been a death sentence.

Her heart was heavy with feelings of apology. As her gaze landed in the corner, she did a double take. The person in the corner had somehow disappeared. Zu An was nowhere in sight!

He probably recovered his ability to move and secretly ran away.

Zheng Dan's mind almost went blank.

She had been feeling all guilty about her role in his expected demise, and yet this fellow had run away without even saying a word when he saw that she had been surrounded.

Disappointment and frustration welled up inside her.

The gang members surrounding her were all surprised when they noticed the change in her demeanor. However, they didn't dare to rush forward, fearing that she had put on an act to bait them in.

Chen Xuan's cultivation was high enough that he was willing to take the risk. He made a move towards her.

Suddenly startled, Zheng Dan's beautiful figure leapt backwards gracefully, evading his attack.

However, the power in his strike was so fierce, the air displaced by his fist still blasted the veil off of her face, sending it flying into the air and revealing her tender and beautiful face.

There were stunned expressions all around the room. A sudden silence engulfed the entire hall.

Some were shocked by her beauty, but even more recognized her identity. After all, the members of the Whale Gang frequented Brightmoon City often, and the Zheng Clan was known to be involved in the trading of legal salt.

"The Zheng Clan's young miss!"

"Zheng Dan!"



Chen Xuan had a look of shock on his face. He really found it hard to associate this flirtatious and sexy Whale Gang boss with a legendary lady from a noble clan.

However, after his initial shock wore off, his heart overflowed with ecstasy. He had truly struck gold this time!

Perhaps it was true that a fatal attraction existed between those of different social identities. He was someone who constantly reveled in violence and blood, and he had no interest in women who were like himself. He had always had an inexplicable desire for pampered, distinguished young ladies instead.

Now, aside from Chu Chuyan, Zheng Dan was the most famously esteemed daughter in Brightmoon City.

He had expected that he would just be having his way with a woman from a criminal gang. Who knew that she would turn out to be a lady from a distinguished clan?

A surge of excitement ran through his body as he thought about this.

This was not even counting the Zheng Clan that stood behind her, which represented even greater opportunities.

Now that Chen Xuan knew who she really was, he had no plans to share her with the others.

There was no way he would be willing to let such a pure and distinguished daughter go! He would personally take care of the effects of the 'Eighteen Spring Winds', even if he needed to take stimulants himself.

Zheng Dan's mind had gone completely blank. In the end, her identity had been exposed.

The Zheng Clan was surely done for, even if she ended her own life.

After all, there was no way those in the room wouldn't leak this secret out.

Once the authorities learned that she was the one who had established the Whale Gang, not even the Sang clan could protect the Zheng clan. The Chu clan wouldn't let them go unpunished, and neither would the other clans. Even the royal court would seek to carve out their own pound of flesh.

If she had known this would happen, she would have cut up her own face!

At that moment, a figure rushed over and grabbed her hand. "Why are you standing there and acting all dumb? Start running already."

Hearing this familiar voice, Zheng Dan, whose mind was mired in despair, suddenly felt a hint of warmth.

"Who is that?!"

This figure had appeared abruptly, as if out of thin air. Chen Xuan jumped in fright. The group of them were just about to chase after this intruder when he suddenly scattered a huge puff of white powder.

It turned out that Zu An had snuck away in the chaos. However, as he walked away, the more he reflected on his actions, the more unpleasant they seemed to him.

Even though this woman had kept him bound all this time, she had still saved his life when Chen Xuan had confronted him.

Leaving her surrounded by hostile attackers just didn't sit well with him.

Of course, there was no way Zu An would've bothered if she hadn't been a pretty girl. He also thoroughly enjoyed the chats they'd had before, which was why he bothered going back for her.

However, he didn't just rashly charge in to save her. Instead, he picked up some lime powder as a weapon first before returning to the meeting hall. He used Grandgale to break in, and then used Grandgale again to break out, fleeing as swiftly as his feet could carry him.

Most of the gang members were blinded by the lime powder, but this obviously didn't include Chen Xuan.

He already recognized the rescuer to be Zu An. He roared in shock and anger, and instantly took off after them.

The few who weren't blinded by the lime powder also followed.

Zheng Dan fled together with Zu An, her hand in his. Her heart was still full of astonishment. How did that guy move so quickly just now? He was so fast, even she had not been able to see how he had appeared.

From their past interactions, she was confident that Zu An's cultivation was much lower than hers, yet there was no way she could move as quickly as he had.

As Zu An turned around, their gazes just happened to meet. Panic and annoyance welled up in him in equal measure.

"Why are you looking at me dumbly? Where should we be running to?"

This was his first time on the Whale Gang's island, and his head had been covered in a bag most of the time, which had prevented him from seeing his surroundings.

Zheng Dan blushed. She quickly pointed out a direction. "Head that way. There should be a small boat there. I prepared it beforehand, in case of an emergency."

Zu An grunted in acknowledgement. He pulled her along with him in the direction indicated. "Huh? Why is your hand so hot?" he asked suddenly.

Zheng Dan gave him a resentful look. Didn't this guy already know the answer to this question?

At that moment, there was the sound of a great disturbance behind them, and Chen Xuan came rushing out, his face as hard as iron. How could he look on as his cooked duck flew away[1]?!

### **Chapter 308: I've Never Done Something so Idiotic before**

Zu An felt discouraged. Chen Xuan's cultivation was higher than his, so his speed was obviously much greater as well.

Even though the Sunflower Phantasm movement technique was formidable, it only excelled in maneuvering over short distances.

Of course, if he could use Grandgale freely, he would have already left Chen Xuan far behind him.

“Isn’t there anyone you can still use to get us out of here?” Zu An asked in panic. Those in the meeting hall were all the higher-ups in the gang, but there was surely no way they could have contacted everyone ahead of time in order to organize this mutiny. Otherwise, news of this betrayal would have leaked out a long time ago.

However, Zheng Dan shook her head and said, “I am only rarely on the island. These subordinates are practically all under Liu Chan’s control.”

Zu An was completely speechless for a while. “Aren’t you just a bit too much of a failure as a gang boss?” he finally said.

Zheng Dan felt embarrassed as well. She was the Zheng clan’s young miss, and she was going to become a madam in the future. She had little interest in blood or violence, which was why such a situation had developed.

Just as Chen Xuan was about to catch up, someone suddenly rushed out to block his path.

Chen Xuan roared out, “Piss off, asshole!”

He attacked viciously with his first strike, catching the newcomer full-on and causing him to vomit blood.

However, his opponent did not give up. He continued to face off against Chen Xuan. “Gang boss, you need to get away!”

“Ya Xiao!” Zheng Dan grew emotional when she saw his bloodied body clinging to Chen Xuan’s leg. Her beautiful eyes filled with tears.

“We need to escape, quickly. Don’t let his actions go to waste.” Seeing her begin to have thoughts of turning back, Zu An pulled her after him quickly and continued running.

Zheng Dan bit down on her lower lip until she drew blood. She was clearly full of anger and hatred.

“You can only get revenge if you stay alive,” Zu An reminded her, worried that she might do something stupid.

Zheng Dan trembled. She suddenly remembered that she had been poisoned by that filthy drug, and she would meet an extremely bitter end if she stayed behind. She gave up on her thoughts of going back.

“Ya Xiao didn’t even know what I looked like all these years, nor did he know who I was. I’m truly sorry...” she muttered quietly to herself.

Zu An sighed. “This world will always have young lads willing to risk their lives for those they love...”

I definitely won’t do something that stupid.

But he then quickly recalled his experiences in the dungeon. Hadn’t he also risked danger this time to save Zheng Dan?

I guess we’re all idiots. What right do I have to mock him?

The two of them finally reached the shore. There was a hidden dock within the reeds, and a small boat was tied to it.

Zu An didn't have time to undo the rope. He hacked through it with his Poisonous Prick, and then jumped in with Zheng Dan and began rowing frantically.

Unfortunately, he had never rowed a boat before, so he had no idea how to do it. The more strength he used, the more the small boat spun about in place.

Zheng Dan couldn't help but smile. This was the first time she saw him in such a silly state. "Let me do it," she said quickly.

She stopped Zu An and proceeded to roll up her sleeves. The water's surface rippled, and the small boat shot out in a straight line.

Zu An sighed in admiration. "What the heck? You'll make a killing if you start a ferry business!" Zheng Dan: "....."

Didn't he know the situation they were in? What was wrong with this guy's head?

There came a loud whoosh from behind him. Zu An turned around and saw Chen Xuan running crazily across the water's surface, his face red as he charged at their boat.

"Why the heck do you have this kind of superpower too?!" Zu An was stunned. Wasn't this guy only at the sixth rank? Why was he flying now?

But he quickly surmised that such a feat shouldn't be too difficult for those of higher cultivation levels. After all, he wasn't soaring freely in the sky, but skipping across the surface using the strength of his strides.

Zheng Dan clenched her teeth. She stood up and gestured behind them with a hand. A wave of water surged up behind them.

It was only a foot tall in the beginning, but the wave grew larger and larger, eventually reaching several tens of feet in height.

Zu An's eyes widened completely. That sweet-tempered and delicate demeanor he was used to seeing was completely an act!

He sighed to himself. Why are all the women at my side so tough?

Chen Xuan was unfazed when he saw this huge wave. He drew his long blade.

He hadn't used his blade when he fought against Chu Yucheng and Chu Hongcai in the Immortal Abode, but he used it this time.

There was a flash of cold light. His blade ki created a giant phantom sword in midair, which slashed downwards.

It almost felt as if this blade could cleave the Brightmoon River in half.

The tremendous blade ki sliced through the huge wave in front of him and continued on forward, towards their small boat. Chen Xuan clearly wanted to destroy their boat so that they wouldn't have any way to escape.

Zheng Dan's arms crossed in front of her. A screen of water formed in front of her and blocked that overbearing sword energy.

"Pfft!"

Blood spurted out from Zheng Dan's mouth. She was thrown into the air as though rammed by a speeding carriage, and she seemed destined to fall into the water.

Zu An reached out and caught her in his arms. The tremendous force had thrown him about as well.

"What's wrong?" Zu An asked with concern. His eyes were drawn to the blood trickling down the corners of her lips. Her body's temperature was also incredibly hot.

Zheng Dan groaned, her voice terrifyingly soft and delicate. "It's nothing... it's just that..."

She couldn't finish her sentence. After all, her situation was just too embarrassing for a young lady to explain.

"Why do you look like you've taken an aphrodisiac?" Zu An mumbled to himself. Her face was blushing crazily and her eyes were misty. He wasn't unfamiliar with this sight.

Snow had looked exactly the same back then.

"You keep asking even though you already know the answer." Zheng Dan gave him a resentful look. This guy is making fun of me on purpose!

"What do you mean?" Zu An was stunned. He had been completely focused on unsealing his acupoints through the use of the Snowflake Sword technique earlier, and was unaware of what had transpired in the hall.

Chen Xuan's arrogant and overbearing voice came from behind them. "Hahaha! I thought the gang boss would have some type of exceptional cultivation, but it turns out that this was all you had!"

Zheng Dan wiped away the blood around her lips. She said angrily, "You're despicable! If it wasn't for... if it wasn't for... I won't have lost to you so easily."

"If you didn't suffer from my 'Eighteen Spring Winds'? You should just cease your struggles! The effects will only grow stronger the more you resist! Isn't your entire body burning up now? You really want to embrace a man, don't you?" Chen Xuan roared with laughter.

"Eighteen Spring Winds?" Zu An was shocked. He could guess just from the name what kind of effects this drug had. No wonder Zheng Dan was acting like this.

Just who came up with such an indecent name?

But he noticed Zheng Dan's embarrassment, and was ticked off by how arrogantly Chen Xuan was behaving. He drew the beauty in his arms closer to him and said with a raised voice, "Isn't she embracing me right now? What are you hollering like an idiot over there for?"

Chen Xuan's breath caught. When he saw Zheng Dan's body grow limp in Zu An's embrace, he suddenly felt like all of his efforts had instead gone towards helping another man.

"You son of a bitch! We haven't even settled our past debt, yet you've provoked me again! Very well, I'll teach you what it means to rather be dead than alive once I get my hands on you," Chen Xuan said through gritted teeth.

You have successfully trolled Chen Xuan for 999 Rage points!

Zu An sighed. "You've already said the same thing so many times. Look at me, I'm still fine and well! It turns out the glorious Blackwind Stockade Master Chen Xuan is just another good-for-nothing who is only good at running his mouth!"

Zu An could hear Chen Xuan's teeth grinding from where he was. This time, Chen Xuan didn't reply, but dashed toward them instead, his face a dark mask of rage. He vowed to himself that he would only satisfy his anger after he skinned this bastard alive.

You have successfully trolled Chen Xuan for 1024 Rage points!

Just as he began to accelerate, he noticed something amiss. The water beneath his feet had suddenly turned into ice, which shattered instantly and gave way under the force of his steps.

Caught off guard, his entire body sunk into the water.

Zu An had deliberately angered him, then secretly harnessed the cold energy of the Snowflake Sword to form a thin layer of ice over the surface of the water.

"Go!" With a kick, Zu An sent the small boat further downstream.

Using Grandgale, he teleported himself towards the shore, cradling Zheng Dan in his arms. Then, with a few more leaps, they disappeared into the trees.

Remaining on the boat would be disadvantageous for them. It would be difficult for them to escape once Chen Xuan resurfaced.

He had also noticed a Whale Gang ship approaching from a distance.

Since escaping via water was out of the question, it seemed a better idea to escape into the mountains and rely on the complex terrain. This way, they at least had a chance to throw off their pursuers.

Unfortunately, his face had been covered the entire way here. He knew nothing about the defenses of this place, and it was hard to get his bearings. He could only instinctively run in the direction of the most complex-looking terrain.

By the time Chen Xuan leapt out of the water, Liu Chan and the others had reached him in their ship.

Chen Xuan's face was overcast. "Chase after them!" he yelled, pointing at the small boat in the distance.

The Whale Gang's ships were fast. They caught up to the rowboat quickly, and discovered that there was no one in it.

"I think they went ashore over there," deduced Liu Chan and his crew.

"I swear I'll catch them today!" Chen Xuan was fuming with rage. Even if he couldn't get revenge on Zu An right away, he couldn't let Zheng Dan slip through his fingers.

Otherwise, wouldn't all of his careful planning only serve to benefit another man?

I, Chen Xuan, have never done something so idiotic before!

When Liu Chan and his crew saw that he was about to rush ashore, then hurriedly pulled him back.

"Stockade master, you must not go there! We are approaching the borders of Hidden Dragon Mountain! There are wild beasts in the area that can cause serious harm!"

"Wild beasts? Do you think I'm scared of some beast?" Chen Xuan sneered. Their Blackwind Stockade was based out of this mountain. Practically all the surrounding beasts had been captured and eaten by them.

If he were venturing into the depths of some other mountain, he wouldn't dare to act rashly even though he was a sixth rank cultivator. However, he had never heard of any formidable fellows appearing around Brightmoon City.

Like hell he'd be scared!

His metal element cultivation gave him a practically-invincible body. Even if he ran into a beast of the same level or one level higher than he, he was still confident that he could protect himself.

He only had a single goal in his mind: He had to catch the poisoned Zheng Dan as soon as possible. He hadn't even had the chance to enjoy himself yet!

### **Chapter 309: The Secret of the Hidden Dragon Mountain**

Chen Xuan leapt towards the shore and ran after the fugitives into the mountains.

Liu Chan exchanged looks with the other Whale Gang higher-ups. They had no choice but to send their subordinates back to the island, and follow Chen Xuan into the mountains themselves.

Firstly, they wanted to leave their new boss with a good impression, and secondly, this matter was just too important. There was no way they would feel at ease without personally seeing Zheng Dan captured.

Thirdly, they couldn't let go of the fact that their gang boss was an extremely ravishing woman. If the effects of the Eighteen Spring Winds really lived up to its astonishing name, all of them were hoping that they could get in on the action.

Under other circumstances, none of them would dare to challenge Chen Xuan. However, they were dealing with the Eighteen Spring Winds! She had to go eighteen rounds!

Which man could manage this feat alone?

It was completely impossible, no matter how strong Chen Xuan was!

Wouldn't it be their time to shine once he collapsed from exhaustion?

Liu Chan gave his companions a look. He figured that these fellows were most likely thinking along the same lines as himself.

His heart began to burn with desire whenever his thoughts turned towards that beautiful and unreachable gang boss. His footsteps quickened.

...

Zu An ran aimlessly with Zheng Dan in tow. He had no idea what his bearings were, and was running entirely on instinct.

He tried to leave as few traces as possible to confuse his pursuers.

At first, Zheng Dan managed to keep pace with him. However, soon afterwards, she stumbled and almost fell over.

Zu An ran to support her in a panic. He noticed that her entire body was incredibly weak. Her chest was rising and falling rapidly, and she was gasping for breath.

He sighed and smacked his head in regret. "Maybe we should've just jumped into the water if I had known this would happen. Perhaps a rinse in cold water will get rid of the drug's effects."

Zheng Dan shook her head. "I cannot fall into Chen Xuan's hands. Quickly take me away from this place."

Her entire body was limp, and Zu An had no choice but to carry her. He started running through the trees again, with her in his arms.

He sensed something amiss. The last time he ventured out to the outskirts of Brightmoon City to look for goubaos, he'd run into so many vicious creatures. Wasn't this place even further away from Brightmoon City? Why hadn't he run into any vicious beasts yet?

He quickly dispelled these thoughts for the moment. The highest priority right now was still to evade the pursuit of Chen Xuan and the others.

After running for some time, Zu An's eyes suddenly brightened. He pointed at a cave nearby. "There is a cave over there. Let's get some rest first, and see if we can deal with your poison."

Zheng Dan's mind had already started to slip. She could only subconsciously grunt in approval. Her arms instinctively wrapped around his neck.

Her body subconsciously twisted about in his embrace.

Zu An swallowed his saliva. Sis, do you know how much you're tempting me right now?

Their two bodies were pressed closely against each other. Zheng Dan only wore a thin dress that did little to conceal her svelte figure. He could still clearly feel the heat given off by her body.

His mouth felt really dry. It was only with great difficulty that he controlled himself. I can't take advantage of someone like this! I have to at least try and see if there's another way out, even if it's only for the sake of my conscience!

The two of them made it inside the cave. This cave seemed to be much larger than usual.



After walking for a period of time, everything before them suddenly brightened. A huge open area came into view.

The path they had just passed through was already quite wide, but this space was many times bigger.

But before Zu An could feel happy, his entire body went rigid. He noticed a massive figure not too far away.

This body was several dozen zhang[1] in length. This giant crimson dragon was circling in midair, flying around a glistening, shiny bead.

Several times, the dragon flew close to the bead, only to fly away again. It seemed like this bead was of vital importance to this dragon.

Zu An's throat went dry. He suddenly remembered that this mountain outside Brightmoon City was called the Hidden Dragon Mountain, but a dragon had never appeared all these years. He just assumed that this was some random name someone had given it. Who knew there would really be a dragon in here?!

Even though he didn't know how strong this dragon was, he knew that, no matter which world one was in, or whether it was in movies or books, dragons were always powerful creatures.

Moreover, he could feel that the pressure this creature gave off was even greater than what he'd felt when facing Zhang Han in the dungeon.

No wonder there were no beasts along the way! What beast would be dumb enough to come close to this place, with a dragon living here?

"What happened? How did you end up provoking such a terrifying enemy?" A shocked voice suddenly spoke in his head.

Zu An was immediately overcome with joy. "Big sis empress, you're finally awake!"

Mi Li grunted. "I only roused myself quickly to take a look after sensing such a powerful aura, which is greater than anything you've faced before. What exactly is going on?"

"It'll take a while to explain." Zu An didn't know where to start.

Mi Li cut him off. "Forget it, let's get out of here first. That fellow seems to be working on something critical at the moment, so it hasn't noticed you yet."

Zu An nodded. This was precisely his thought as well. He withdrew carefully and quietly.

"Ugh..." Right at this moment, Zheng Dan moaned in his arms. She twisted her body about while slowly opening her eyes. "Ah Zu, ah... why is there such a long..."

Zu An knew that he was in trouble as soon as she spoke. He began to run for his life. Unfortunately, he couldn't use Grandgale anymore.

The massive dragon's tail swept towards him.

Feeling the tremendous force of the wind, Zu An cried in alarm, "Be careful!"

He turned around at once, using his back to shield Zheng Dan.

**\*Bang!\***

A muffled noise rang out. Zu An felt as if he had been rammed into by a speeding truck. Blood poured out of his mouth as his body flew through the air.

He could no longer hold onto Zheng Dan, who fell to the ground.

“Ah Zu!” Zheng Dan screamed bitterly when she saw Zu An’s body fly through the air like a ruined sandbag.

She wanted to help him, but the effects of the drug had already made it impossible for her to even walk. She was powerless.

“Ignorant human, you dare defile this king’s peace?”

“Hm? A human woman.”

A muffled voice sounded from the cavern depths. This dragon was clearly a high-level life form, capable of human speech.

Zheng Dan was struggling towards Zu An, trying to see if he was still alive.

A giant dragon tail wrapped around her waist and instantly pulled her back.

“Let... me... go!” Zheng Dan frantically struggled against the dragon’s tail, trying to free herself, but the tail didn’t move in the slightest.

She was lifted into midair. A big dragon head moved close to her, its two scarlet eyes giving off endless pressure.

After looking her over for some time, that giant dragon began to speak. “It is actually a pretty woman. This king likes how your body smells right now.”

Zheng Dan remembered something Shang Liuyu had mentioned in one of her classes in the academy. Something about how it was in their nature for dragons to enjoy lewd things. Don’t tell me this guy is going to...

Her heart skipped a beat, but she forced herself to remain calm.

The two of them were so different in size, so how would that be possible? At worst, she’d just die.

She couldn’t help but turn to look towards the cave’s entrance. When she thought about how Ah Zu had died for her sake, she figured there wasn’t much meaning in remaining alive either.

The words uttered beside her ear snapped Zheng Dan out of her self-pity. “There is no need to look anymore. Your lover’s cultivation is too low, and he has surely perished from my strike. Follow this king in the future, and you will understand the true happiness of a woman.”

**Chapter 310: Fragrant Barf**

Zheng Dan was speechless.

Wasn't this dragon just slightly too disgusting? However, all of her attention was focused on the words 'surely perished'. Her heart turned to ashes immediately.

Not even she could contend against this dragon's strength, let alone Zu An, who was weaker than her.

"Why aren't you resisting at all? This king will only feel happier the more you struggle!" The crimson dragon was rather unsatisfied. He raised a claw, easily slicing through her skirt.

Her skirt seemed as though it was cut by a blade, falling off neatly and exposing her fair, snow-white thighs.

"Despicable!" Learning of Zu An's death had sobered her up a little. Despite the drug's effects, Zheng Dan's entire expression radiated with shame and indignance.

Unfortunately, faced with this massive dragon, her strength was like that of an ant. She thought about summoning her elemental power, but this dragon was most likely the fire element. This cave was full of ferocious fire elements—where would she find any traces of water element that she could use?

"Haha, things are much more interesting now." That giant dragon roared with laughter when it saw Zheng Dan struggling.

"My beloved beauty, please wait for me. I shall be able to assume human form once I completely refine this Brilliant Glass Bead. I will then pour my love all over you." The red dragon placed Zheng Dan in a corner of the cave. It released a breath that quickly formed a mist around her which prevented her from moving.

This was a completely unnecessary precaution. The effects of the drug in Zheng Dan's body were fully activated. Only the thought of Zu An's death had helped her regain a moment of clarity. There was no way for her to move her body now.

The crimson dragon nodded in satisfaction when it saw her obediently lying in the corner. It focused all of its attention on refining the bead floating in midair.

...

Meanwhile, outside the cave, Zu An's body lay motionless. Suddenly, his finger twitched, and feeling slowly returned to his body as well.

A wave of pain ravaged his body. Zu An gritted his teeth, his face contorting. He had no idea just how many of his bones had been broken just now.

"You should be glad. If your body hadn't been forged by the Primordial Origin Sutra, you would have already been turned into a puddle of flesh," Mi Li said. "You just had to show off in front of a woman. Look at you now." She seemed to be taking perverse pleasure in his suffering.

Zu An took a long breath to suppress the pain. He snorted. "No matter how painful it is, it still doesn't hurt as much as when you beat the shit out of me."

Mi Li had no reply.

She thought back to the scene where she had hacked at him endlessly, yet he crawled back up again and again. Back then, his entire body had been drenched in blood, every inch of him covered in wounds. She couldn't help but feel slightly regretful.

Zu An turned back towards the cave. "Big sis empress, can you win against that dragon?" he asked, his voice downcast.

Mi Li's projection shook her head. "My strength has fallen sharply after I turned into soul form. The effects of the 'Red Tears of Lady Xiang' are also too powerful, affecting even my soul. All of my attention is focused on purifying it right now, so I cannot do anything to that dragon.

"Even if I did have a way to get rid of that dragon, I still wouldn't do it. Why would I throw away all of the hard work I've put in during this period, perhaps even suffer serious injury to my soul, all for the sake of a woman I have nothing to do with?"

From her tone, Zu An could tell that there might really be a way to deal with that dragon. He was just about to speak, but she spoke ahead of him. "Please do not tell me that you'll commit suicide or something if I don't save her. I, Mi Li, have always been a resolute and firm-willed woman. I never cower under threats."

Mi Li sneered. "If I am exploited by you every time, then I'll never recover. At that point, I might as well just let myself die early."

Zu An smiled in embarrassment. "Well, I didn't threaten you."

Mi Li grunted. "Who would have thought that an ordinary man like you would be such a skirt-chaser! You looked like you would go through life and death for the sake of your wife, and then you slept with that elf not long afterwards! How much time has passed since then? Yet look at you now. How are you already with another girl?"

Zu An sighed. "What can I do? When your luck with ladies is too great, you really become powerless sometimes."

Mi Li had nothing to say to him.

If she had run into someone like this while she was still empress, she would have immediately ordered his castration.

Zu An managed to crawl to his feet. The Primordial Origin Sutra boosted his recovery abilities far beyond that of ordinary people. Even though he had been seriously injured, he had already recovered enough to move.

Mi Li jumped in fright when she saw him walk towards the cave entrance. "What the hell are you doing? Are you really going to throw away your life for that woman?"

There was not a single person who understood his strength better than her. Even though he had many tricks up his sleeve, all of it was meaningless in the face of absolute strength.

"Don't worry, I have a plan." Zu An said calmly.

He had to save Zheng Dan. She'll die if I leave her in her current state.

He had learned about the lascivious nature of dragons from the academy's records. Even though he didn't understand what the two of them could even do, given their difference in size, there was no way he could watch Zheng Dan meet such a tragic ending. Not if he considered himself her friend.

"I won't save you if you get into trouble!" Mi Li stomped her feet in anger. Even though she said this, she still followed along out of worry.

Zu An activated his Mirror Image technique, which had been given to him by Qiu Honglei. His aura grew more and more faint, until no one else could detect him.

Mi Li was shocked. When did this guy learn this trick?

He was clearly right in front of her, yet she couldn't sense him at all! Even with her cultivation, she had to fully focus her mind and stare at him several times before she could sense his existence.

Zu An quietly reached the end of the tunnel, but didn't continue on further.

After all, even though Mirror Mirage could hide his aura, it couldn't hide his physical body. If that crimson dragon saw him, he would still be done for.

He carefully examined his surroundings. The crimson dragon was still continuously flying around the sparkling bead.

"Oh? That bead seems quite incredible." Mi Li looked at that bead pensively.

How could Zu An be bothered with a bead right now? All of his attention was on Zheng Dan's safety.

He looked high and low, and finally saw the corner Zheng Dan was lying in. She seemed like she was still okay for now.

"You want to save her?" Mi Li couldn't help but ask. In her opinion, this was the same as courting death.

Zu An didn't reply. He withdrew silently.

When they were finally back outside, Zu An said, "I'll get some people to help out."

"We are in the wilderness right now! Where would you find anyone?" Mi Li asked in confusion.

A mischievous smile appeared on Zu An's face. "There will definitely be people around."

Chen Xuan and the Whale Gang lackeys were right at their disposal!

Besides, Chen Xuan was out to get him, and Zu An had always wanted to deal with this constant threat. He just never had a chance.

However, a great opportunity had finally presented itself!

As for Liu Chan and his conspirators, he was sure that Zheng Dan didn't want to keep them alive after they learned of her true identity.

Of course, from his perspective, it would still be best to keep one or two alive, to help the Chu clan deal with the illicit salt smuggling.

However, he couldn't be bothered with all of that right now. He would let fate decide whether any of these fellows would remain alive.

He began to head back down the path that they'd taken to reach the cave. He had hoped that he'd thrown their pursuers off before, but now he was praying that they weren't that stupid.

Fortunately, after walking for a while, he heard activity ahead. It was Liu Chan's group, grumbling at each other for losing their targets.

Chen Xuan was with them, his face sullen. It was with great difficulty that he finally obtained the Eighteen Spring Winds, yet all of his efforts had only helped that Zu An out. He felt like his heart was bleeding!

You have successfully trolled Chen Xuan for 666 Rage points!

Zu An revealed himself at a distance away, laughing heartily. "I'm not trying to target anyone here, but all of you are trash! None of you could catch up to me even though I was carrying someone!" he mocked them.

Chen Xuan looked up, speechless.

Liu Chan, too, had nothing to say.

Everyone else from the Whale Gang stared at him, mouths open.

Did something happen to this guy's head? Why had he run back, especially after he'd already gotten away?

Despite this initial reaction, their anger flared immediately afterwards, as they finally processed what that lout had said.

How the hell were they supposed to endure such mockery?

These Whale Gang members were all quick-tempered to begin with. They spent their days wading through violence and blood. How could they ever swallow such anger?

They screamed as one, and chased after the one who mocked them.

Chen Xuan hesitated, sensing something amiss. He had always been a careful person.

However, his mind kept drifting to Zheng Dan. He knew that the poison had most likely taken effect completely, and he had to seize her before another man got to reap the benefits.

As such, he was compelled to follow the Whale Gang members. He figured that, no matter what kind of schemes this Zu An brat had cooked up, his strength was too low in the end. He didn't pose any threat to him.

Even so, he was content to let Liu Chan and the others go ahead of him. If there were truly some sort of trap, these guys would be the first ones to fall into it.

Zu An took to his heels when he saw all of them chasing after him.

He could hear Mi Li's sneer in his mind. "These are you so-called helpers? Forgive me for speaking bluntly, but that dragon doesn't even have to worry about his food getting stuck in his teeth while he's busy chewing all of you up."

"I have a plan!" Zu An hissed in a low voice.

Because of the rugged terrain and the obstacles in the forest, no matter how much faster Chen Xuan was than Zu An, he still couldn't catch up to him.

After keeping pace for a while, he suddenly stopped, a frown on his face.

Liu Zhan and the others noticed this. "Boss, what's wrong?" they asked.

"Something isn't right. I can feel it. This fellow is deliberately drawing us in that direction," Chen Xuan said quietly, clearly troubled.

Liu Chan was doubtful. "Boss, aren't you being a bit too careful? Even if that is what he is trying to do, so what? We've been chasing after him all this while, and he surely hasn't had time to lay any sort of trap. There are so many of us here, and even you are here as well. Killing him will be all too easy."

The rest of them voiced their agreement. Their minds were clouded over, burning with desire, thinking about how helpless Zheng Dan was. How could they think about anything else?

Chen Xuan was the only one with a clear head. "Do none of you sense anything strange? We didn't even run into a single beast along the way. There can only be two possibilities. One, this place is too desolate, so no beasts roam these parts. The chances of this being true are small. The second possibility is that this is the territory of a powerful beast, so no other beasts dare to approach this place."

The others grew alarmed when they heard this. He seemed to be making a good bit of sense.

Zu An noticed that his pursuers had stopped. He knew that they were probably suspicious. After all, Chen Xuan had managed to stay one step ahead of the law after all these years. He was definitely more careful than the average person.

This was something that he had prepared for. He activated his Fragrant Barf skill. "What a group of trash! I'm not going to play around with you all anymore! I'm going to play with your gang boss instead!"