

Immortal 331

Chapter 331: Secrets on Both Sides

Zu An exhaled in relief. I guess another unlucky fellow got the short end of the stick. Didn't I say it earlier? This Mirror Mirage really is quite dependable.

Then again, why does that figure look slightly familiar?

The instant that figure started running, a shrill scream rang out. A teacup lid shot out through the roof.

It was so fast that he almost couldn't see it.

Almost instantly, the lid struck the black-clad figure.

"Ahhh!" With a cry, the black silhouette fell off the roof and into the air.

Zu An's gave a start. This person's voice sounded familiar! So was that impressive chest, which no stealth gear could possibly hide. All of this made it clear that this was a person he was close to.

The gloomy, raspy voice spoke again. "Dabao, I'll leave the matter outside to you."

"Yes, adoptive father should rest. Your son will definitely capture that assassin for father to deal with!" This was most likely Wei Dabao, of the Wei Clan of Brightmoon City.

Quick footsteps swiftly followed this pronouncement.

Zu An detached himself from the wall and moved away cautiously.

That dark and mysterious person surely possessed a terrifying level of cultivation. He could seriously injure someone from so far away with just the lid of a teacup! If he had been a little more serious, that intruder would have been dead for sure.

Only when he'd left the area completely did he finally let go of the breath he held. He rushed off in a certain direction.

A figure was limping towards a rock garden. She had made it through the guards with great difficulty, but she was already at her limit.

That mysterious strike had almost completely scattered her vital energy. Although she had survived it, she was still seriously injured. At this rate she probably wouldn't make it out.

Just then, someone suddenly grabbed her hand. Horrified, she was just about to retaliate, when she saw a face she never expected to see.

"Follow me!" Zu An said.

She was masked, but those familiar eyes and massive chest still gave her away.

Who else could it be besides big Manman?![1]

He didn't have time to ask her why she was here, because there were already guards nearby. He ran, pulling her behind him.

Once Pei Mianman recognized him, she stopped resisting, and fled with him into the dark night.

Zu An wasn't familiar with the Wei clan estate. He sensed guards everywhere, and the master of the Wei clan was personally out searching for the intruder. He had no choice but to bring Pei Mianman back to his room.

Soon afterwards, the door to the room was slammed open. A group of people charged straight in, weapons drawn.

The one in the lead was a middle-aged man, who had a strong resemblance to Wei Hongde. He was most likely the Wei clan's master, Wei Dabao.

"Brother Wei, what is going on..." Zu An had already stripped and jumped back into the tub. He looked at Wei Hongde, an 'astonished' expression on his face.

Wei Hongde said apologetically, "Sorry, brother Zu, but there is an intruder in the estate. We came here because we were worried that this intruder was coming to disturb brother Zu."

"Who would possibly be so daring as to cause trouble in the Wei Estate?" Zu An was sneering inside. They clearly suspected that the assassin was here, or else they wouldn't have barged straight in.

"We don't know exactly, but we are certain that the intruder is a woman," said Wei Hongde. At the same time, he began to make introductions. "This is my father. Father, this is Zu An. He saw my younger brother home tonight."

Wei Dabao nodded. "The Chu clan's young master is indeed a talent."

"I greet uncle," Zu An said quickly. "However, I fear that I'm not in a state to carry out a proper greeting. My apologies."

Wei Hongde hurriedly said, "You don't need to stand up!"

He really didn't want to see that scene from the dungeon again.

Damn it, I'm thinking about it again!

Wei Dabao walked over to Zu An. "You're too polite!" he said. "Our clan's little Suo has been under your care in the academy. It is we who haven't properly found a chance to thank you yet."

As he said this his eyes darted around the room, clearly searching for something. Finally, he arrived in front of the tub and looked inside.

The last thing he expected to see was a large amount of petals floating on the surface of the water. He couldn't see inside at all.

This didn't trouble him however. He quietly sent his ki into the tub. When he didn't detect anyone inside, he nodded inwardly. "All right, you should get some rest. We still need to continue searching for the assassin."

Zu An waved his hand with a smile, as if he had no idea what was going on. "I won't see everyone out then."

The Wei clan contingent left, tactfully closing the door on their way out.

When they had left, Wei Hongde asked, "Father, did you notice anything?"

Wei Dabao shook his head. "There was no one else inside. I was probably just over-thinking."

"That assassin is indeed female. There's no way she would have anything to do with him," Wei Hongde echoed in agreement.

"We'll continue looking elsewhere. I refuse to believe that a wounded female assassin can run that far." Wei Dabao grunted. He continued with his search, his subordinates trailing behind him.

When he was sure that they had left, Zu An quickly lifted Pei Mianman out of the bathtub. "Are you all right?" he asked.

Seeing that she was still only half-conscious, he began chest compressions.

"Cough cough..." Pei Mianman coughed out a few mouthfuls of water, and she finally came back to her senses.

Zu An smiled. "If you still hadn't woken up, I would've had to give you mouth-to-mouth."

Pei Mianman gave him a weak look. "Why do you always have to be so indecent?"

She leaned against the edge of the tub. "Just how did you fool them just now? With the Wei clan master's level of cultivation, there should have been no way he couldn't see through the water."

Zu An laughed loudly. "Who knows? Maybe he saw how large my chest muscles were and suffered a huge mental blow, and his mind became so alarmed that he wasn't able to carry out a careful observation." He had actually used Blue Mallard's mastery over water to seal off her aura—however, such a thing was too hard to explain.

Pei Mianman turned around and saw his naked body. Her cheeks blushed a rosy pink. "Help me out of here already."

"Oh, okay." They couldn't stay in the tub forever.

Because she had always been soaking in water, Pei Mianman's entire body was drenched, and her clothes were sticking to her body, showing off her figure.

Zu An supported her to her feet. The warm, soft feeling of her body made him instantly hard.

Pei Mianman subconsciously looked downwards. She was given the fright of her life, and her heart pounded frantically. Are men all... all...

Zu An had the decency to be embarrassed. "Sorry about that, it's not on purpose."

Pei Mianman didn't reply. She crawled out of the tub red-faced. It took her some time to overcome her embarrassment. "By the way, why are you here too?"

"I brought Wei Suo back home, but he vomited all over my clothes. I decided to take a bath and change my clothes here. By then, it was already dark. When I heard that the clan was out hunting an assassin, I went over to take a look out of curiosity. I never expected that it would be you." Zu An said, shading the truth slightly.

"It seems as if our fates are somehow tied together." Pei Mianman sighed. "If it wasn't for you, I might already have been buried here."

Zu An laughed. "This is what it means to be brought together by fate!"

Pei Mianman leaned against a pillar and gave him an annoyed look. "Does Chuyan know that you are flirting with me like this behind her back?"

Zu An laughed. "You were clearly the one who flirted with me first."

Pei Mianman snorted. "Then why do I feel as if I was the one who fell into your trap?"

In the beginning, she'd been confident that her charm and skill at seduction would make taking down a drafted son-in-law an easy task. She thought she would have him eating out of the palm of her hand with no effort at all.

Who knew that she would end up being the one who felt like she was being toyed with instead?

Zu An supported her to a seated position. "So what brought you all the way to the Wei clan estate?"

"I was searching for something," said Pei Mianman.

Zu An was startled. Were the two of them after the same thing?

"What were you looking for?" he asked quickly.

Pei Mianman's reply was also direct. "I'm not telling you."

Zu An grew gloomy. "Didn't I just save your life? Besides, we're such good buddies. How can you do this to me?"

Pei Mianman looked at him. Her injuries had made her face extremely pale. Her eyes, which were always hard to read, were no longer smiling. "You haven't been straight with me either, have you?"

Chapter 332: Impossible Escape

Pei Mianman was sharp-witted, and there was no way she could believe that someone of Zu An's character would bother to send a drunk friend home, and even be willing to stay the night.

Zu An's face went rigid. "I was looking for something too," he admitted.

Pei Mianman probed further. "What were you looking for?"

Zu An shook his head while putting on his clothes. "I can't tell you. It involves too many other things."

Pei Mianman snorted. "I have my own reasons for not telling you as well."

Zu An chuckled. "Let's not talk about such unpleasant things then. Let's talk about some happier things. For example, why don't you take off your clothes..."

Pei Mianman was given a fright. She immediately took a few steps back. "What are you trying to do?"

Zu An said, "Don't misunderstand, that's not what I mean. Your entire body is soaked, and you're injured as well. You'll easily fall sick if you keep those clothes on."

"That's an easy problem to fix." Pei Mianman was just about to summon her black flame to evaporate the water from her clothes. Thankfully, she recalled that using elemental power here might alarm the Wei clan's guards.

Besides, her injuries were severe, and even drying off her clothes with the black flame was most likely impossible.

"You suffered a direct hit earlier, and there's no way for you to escape right now. I think it's better for you to stay here and recover." Zu An unfolded a side of the blanket. "You can jump straight into bed after you take off all of your clothes. I won't peek at you."

Pei Mianman grunted. "I don't think you have the guts to do it anyway. You know I'll tell Chuyan if you try." Something Zu An said tickled her mind. "How did you know that I was attacked?"

Zu An forced a smile. "I was there too. How else could I have saved you so promptly?"

Pei Mianman was shocked. "You weren't discovered?!"

Zu An smiled. "It's probably because I'm a man with integrity."

Pei Mianman just couldn't figure out how she'd been discovered while someone with a much lower level of cultivation could remain hidden. Perhaps she was just unlucky enough to have taken the bullet for him. "The person in that room has a level of cultivation that is just too terrifying. Even such a long-ranged attack almost took my life on the spot."

She had never suffered injuries so severe ever since she'd begun her journey of cultivation.

That strike had practically destroyed all of her ki in one go.

"That's why you need to heal up quickly! I'll do what I can to dry out your clothes." Zu An didn't mention anything about helping her treat her injuries. This world was different from the wuxia novels he'd read before—external ki couldn't be used to treat injuries the way internal qi could. He couldn't do anything to help even if he wanted to lend a hand.

Of course, if they made the most intimate of connections through the Primordial Origin Sutra, he could treat her injuries directly. However, there was no way Pei Mianman would take him seriously if he suggested this.

"How are you going to dry them here? Don't tell me you have some fire-element abilities?" Pei Mianman probed curiously.

"Who says you need to control fire to dry clothes?" Zu An responded in a cocky manner.

Pei Mianman hesitated a while before saying, "Fine, turn around then."

She knew that she couldn't just keep wearing these wet clothes.

There was no way she would have agreed if another man had suggested this, no matter how wet her clothes were. However, since it was Zu An, she was still willing to tolerate it.

The two of them had a strange relationship that fluctuated between friendship and hostility. In a strange way, under certain circumstances, they were more willing to rely on each other than anyone else.

When Zu An turned around, Pei Mianman slid out of her soaked outfit, revealing her flawless and perfect body. "You had better not look!"

"Don't worry. If I really wanted to look, then I would do it openly and honorably. Why would I resort to peeping?" Zu An said helplessly.

Pei Mianman's face turned red. This guy always spoke in such a roguish manner, but he was clearly much more interesting than all the other upright gentlemen she'd met before.

She wiggled her way into the blankets, then said, "I'm done."

Zu An now turned around. Seeing how tightly she wrapped the blankets around herself, he couldn't help but laugh. "Are you really that scared of me peeking at you?"

Pei Mianman snorted. "Haven't you seen enough already?"

Her words made both their hearts tremble slightly.

Pei Mianman's expression grew somewhat unnatural. She coughed a few times and said, "Hand me the medicine from inside my clothes."

Zu An fished out a bottle of restorative medicine from her clothes and handed it over to her.

It was probably a good idea for him to prepare something like this as well. Unfortunately, he didn't have a single bottle of Faith in Brother Spring on hand.

The only alternative was to try to get some from Ji Dengtu. However, what he'd done to Ji Xiaoxi was still fresh in his mind. There was no way he was getting any medicine from her dad if he ever found out about it. In fact, getting skinned alive would be getting off lightly.

Pei Mianman reached out a hand to take the bottle, but quickly pulled her hand back under the covers when she remembered that she wasn't wearing anything right now.

"I find myself in a slightly... inconvenient situation. Could... could you take out a pill and fe-... feed it to me?" Pei Mianman said in embarrassment.

Zu An was momentarily stunned, but recovered his wits quickly. "No problem!"

He fished out a pill. Even though he couldn't recognize what sort of medicine this was, the smell of it alone let him know that this was a high-level restorative medicine.

He supported Pei Mianman with one hand while feeding her with the other.

Pei Mianman lowered her head slightly and swallowed the pill.

When her lips touched his hand and he felt the warmth of her tongue, Zu An's heart skipped a few beats.

His eyes couldn't help but look further down. Pei Mianman's movements had inadvertently exposed a large amount of soft, white skin.

"Do you want me to pull it down a little more for you to have a better view?"

Zu An instantly replied, "I would never refuse such an offer, if you're so willing."

"Pull it down my ass!" Pei Mianman hadn't expected this guy to really be that thick-skinned. She pulled up her blanket at once and kicked him away. "Piss off. Dry my clothes for me! If my clothes aren't dry, I'm going to leave with your clothes! Hmph!"

"Sure, sure," Zu An laughed. He sat down in a corner to sort out her wet clothes, glancing in her direction from time to time.

Even though only her head was exposed, he still had to admit that this woman was beautiful.

He always saw her flirtatious and graceful side. This natural and refreshing side she showed today was completely different.

As if she could sense his gaze on her, her cheeks grew even more red. However, she didn't say anything.

Just like that, a few hours passed. Pei Mianman sighed and slowly opened her eyes.

Zu An asked, "So? Have your injuries healed?"

Pei Mianman rolled her eyes. "I wish it were that fast. I was only able to temporarily stabilize my condition and recover some freedom of movement. By the way, how are my clothes doing?"

"They're already done." Zu An brought her a neatly-folded set of clothes.

"Huh? I saw you cover them in a layer of ice just now. How did you dry them so quickly?" Pei Mianman was extremely confused.

"This is called sublimation! You don't understand physics, so I can't really explain it to you either. Right now, what's most important is getting you out of here," said Zu An.

It would be even harder for her to get away once the sky brightened.

Moreover, if she tried to leave then, there wouldn't be anyone to help her escape.

It was unfortunate that he hadn't come in a carriage. If he had, he could just bring her out with him.

"You should put on your clothes first." Zu An said while looking out the window. He noticed the glow of brightly-lit torches dotting the estate grounds. Clearly the Wei clan guards were still hunting for the intruder. The security was extremely tight.

Chapter 333: Bringing it Forward

"Leaving now will be quite difficult." Pei Mianman's voice came from right beside his ear.

Zu An jumped in fright. “You got dressed that quickly?”

Pei Mianman’s smile dripped with charm. “I can take them off even more quickly. Do you want to see?”

Zu An was momentarily speechless. “I’m going home to tell my wife that you’re trying to seduce me.”

Pei Mianman rested an elbow on his shoulder. She said with a smile, “Go ahead and rat me out, then. Let’s see who Chuyan believes—me or you.”

Zu An felt slightly miffed at that.

He still gave his own reputation a solid B grade. However, anyone else would have definitely chosen to believe Pei Mianman.

“If you want to strip, then please, by all means.” Zu An replied, refusing to show any weakness.

Pei Mianman scoffed and moved her arm away. “I just wanted to test you for Chuyan’s sake. Pah! Just another scumbag!”

Zu An looked at her beautiful and sweet appearance. This really is a troublesome little demon... no, wait, a massive demon.

The two of them joked around a little more before returning their attention to the main matter at hand.

A worried expression appeared on Pei Mianman’s face when she saw the endless number of figures moving about outside. “I might be able to get out if I wasn’t injured, but now...”

Even though she didn’t finish her sentence, her meaning was obvious enough. Her chances of making it through were slim to none. If they ended up drawing the attention of the mysterious expert, that would be the end for her.

Zu An pondered for a moment before saying, “I have a way to help you draw away everyone’s attention. You have to seize that chance to get away.”

Pei Mianman was alarmed by his suggestion. She hurriedly shook her head. “No! Chuyan would never forgive me if something were to happen to you.”

Zu An said with a smile, “Don’t worry, I have my own ways. I won’t be in any danger.”

His confident tone dispelled Pei Mianman’s doubts. This guy was full of weird tricks anyway. “Be careful, then,” she said.

Zu An nodded. He left quietly through the window and headed towards a pond he remembered passing by earlier.

Once he was near enough, he summoned Blue Mallard. The water surged powerfully, creating a wave that was several dozen meters in height.

The huge disturbance immediately alarmed everyone in the Wei clan estate. All the guards who were carrying out the search nearby rushed in the direction of this new threat.

Satisfied, Zu An made to leave. However, he hadn’t even taken half a step before his body suddenly froze. A shriveled elder was flying right towards him.

The terrifying waves of ki pouring out from him instantly identified him as the person who had wounded Pei Mianman.

Damn it! How could I be that unlucky?

When the other party noticed him, Zu An immediately broke out in cold sweat.

The elder frowned. Just as he was about to make a move, Wei Dabao hurried over and quickly said to him, "Father, that is a guest in our estate! He is the Chu clan's young master Zu An..."

When he heard these words, the elder's eyes lit up. "You are that Zu An?"

"Zu An pays his respects to elder!" Zu An's heart was pounding. The other party seemed to have heard of his name before.

That was probably not good news. Being on the mind of a terrifying expert was enough to make anyone uneasy.

"Not bad, not bad." That elder gave him a casual once-over, but didn't say anything else.

"Young master, why are you here?" Wei Dabao asked Zu An.

Zu An reacted quickly, immediately coming up with an excuse. "I couldn't fall asleep, so I came out for a walk. Who knew that there would suddenly be such a huge disturbance? I came here to check out what was going on."

He had clearly just come from the pond, yet his words implied that he was heading towards the pond. However, thanks to his acting skills, no one saw through this small discrepancy.

Wei Dabao smiled sheepishly. "The estate is in a bit of a mess today. Apologies if we've disturbed your rest."

"Uncle is too polite. What's going on in the estate?" Zu An asked in puzzlement.

"A small vermin got in. It's nothing major," said Wei Dabao. "Young master, please return to your room and rest."

"I'll leave you all to it, then." Zu An bowed respectfully and headed back to his room.

Wei Dabao watched his departing figure. "Adoptive father, do you think he is the one who started that disturbance?" he asked.

The elder shook his head. He looked towards the pond and said, "The disturbance was something only a sixth or even seventh rank water element cultivator could create. He doesn't have that level of cultivation."

Wei Dabao exhaled in relief.

"I heard that he displayed great talent during the Clans Tournament between the Chu and Yuan clans. Is that true?" the elder suddenly asked.

Wei Dabao was surprised. He hadn't expected this adoptive father of his to be so interested in Zu An. However, he still replied, "Indeed. He actually defeated Yuan Wendong, who was at the fifth rank. That result was a shock to everyone."

The elder's voice grew quiet. "Fifth rank? But from the fluctuations in his aura, he shouldn't have reached the fifth rank yet."

"Correct. It seems to have been his sword technique... or perhaps his movement technique that was rather peculiar," Wei Dabao replied.

"Movement technique..." The elder's smile took on a strange aspect, as if he already knew about this. "Do you know who his master is?"

Wei Dabao shook his head. "I haven't heard of him having any masters. I only know that he's learned some things from Brightmoon Academy."

"Could it be that in Brightmoon Academy..." The elder muttered to himself, turning this information over in his mind.

"By the way, why does adoptive father have so much interest in him?" Wei Dabao probed.

"Just idle curiosity," The elder said indifferently.

With that, he turned around and walked off. He had expected the presence of another intruder earlier. However, since the threat had vanished, so did his interest in these worldly affairs.

Idle curiosity? Wei Dabao obviously didn't believe him. However, since his adoptive father said it was so, he didn't dare press the issue.

When he was far enough away, Zu An finally released the breath he was holding. His back was completely soaked through—an instinctive reaction when facing such a powerful expert.

Sigh, I'm still too weak.

When can I speak and act as I please, and meet whoever I want to meet?

When he returned to his room, the gorgeous beauty was already nowhere to be seen. However, there was a slip of paper left under the blanket. Two words were written on it: 'Thank you'.

There was also a faint imprint of her lips, made with the red lipstick she wore.

"This fox demon really doesn't give up a single chance to tease me!" Zu An chuckled. He was exhausted from running around all night. He lay down on his bed and quickly entered the land of dreams, surrounded by the light fragrance of a beautiful woman.

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The next morning, Zu An bid the Wei clan farewell. Old Mi was at his doorstep as soon as he returned to his room in the Chu clan. "I heard that you went to the Wei clan last night."

"Yeah." Zu An was startled. This fella was always in the estate. How did he have such quick access to information?

“Did you find it?” A hint of anticipation burned within Old Mi’s eyes.

Zu An awkwardly took a step back. He was getting gay vibes from this old man. “I looked around, but ran into a terrifying and mysterious expert, so I didn’t dare go any further.”

“An expert? How high was his cultivation?” Old Mi asked hastily.

Zu An gave him a rough comparison. “Many, many levels above me.”

Old Mi was silent for a moment.

He suppressed his anger and asked, “What did he look like?” His voice was unnaturally dark.

“He looked skinny and shriveled...” Zu An gave him a rough description of the elder’s appearance.

Old Mi’s expression grew extremely agitated. He immediately grabbed Zu An’s arm. “Did you show him your movement technique? Yes or no!”

Zu An’s arm ached from the grip of his fingers, which were like metal clamps. “I didn’t! I entered the estate using the pretext of seeing Wei Suo home! I didn’t need to use any movement techniques.”

Only then did Old Mi sigh with relief. “All right. That’s good. Remember, you absolutely must not display this movement technique in front of that man, and you cannot mention anything about me to him. Otherwise, it will be the death of you.”

“Okay...” Zu An nodded quickly. It seems most likely that Old Mi is the one this fellow is looking for.

What exactly was that thing that Old Mi was looking for, then?

Also, what is the story behind Old Mi? Why was he so scared of that person?

Old Mi turned away from Zu An, his eyes gleaming with a slight ferocity. I’ll have to bring forward my plans for possessing this fellow. Good thing the last two materials I needed just came in...

Chapter 334: Before and After

After Old Mi had left, Zu An wondered to himself how he was going to deal with all of this.

Suddenly, an elegant fragrance wafted over. He turned around and saw Chu Chuyan was standing there, a cold expression on her face.

“What are you doing here, dear wife?” This was a happy surprise! It was rare for her to come looking for him.

Chu Chuyan was just too gorgeous. Just looking at her once a day would be enough to keep his bad mood away.

“I heard that you didn’t come home last night.” Chu Chuyan swept her eyes over him, her gaze landing on his clothes. She seemed to be looking for something.

Zu An nodded. "Wang Yuanlong invited me out yesterday. Wei Suo drank too much during the party and needed someone to send him home. When we got there, he vomited all over me, so I washed up there. By the time I was done, it was already very late, so I spent the night there."

"Oh." Chu Chuyan said no more, and turned around to leave.

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 233 Rage points!

Zu An was completely baffled. Why the heck are you getting angry at me?

He rarely got any Rage points from her. Even when he did, it would be two digits at most. Her temper seemed to be getting worse recently, for whatever reason.

A thought suddenly occurred to him. He laughed and said, "Wife, did you wait up for me all night last night?"

Chu Chuyan's body went rigid. A trace of red spread across her neck. However, she scoffed and replied straight away, "Pui! You wish."

She quickened her steps and ran off.

Zu An's smile grew even bigger, but it was quickly replaced by a frown. He'd given up a night with his lovely wife just because of Old Mi's stupid mission. Oh the sacrifices that had been made!

After breakfast, Cheng Shouping urged Zu An to go to the academy. This was his responsibility as a study companion.

Zu An was in a gloomy mood. Having to attend school everyday really was a bother.

The amount of stuff he could learn from the academy was limited. After all, he hadn't learned any of his best techniques at the academy. Whether he went or not didn't make much of a difference to him in terms of knowledge.

Unfortunately, he was a teacher at the academy. It didn't matter if a student skipped classes once in a while, but a teacher was held to a very different standard.

He'd already stayed away from the academy for many days earlier on. If not for his relationship with Jiang Luofu, he would've long been stripped of his status as a teacher.

I need to find a chance to ask that gorgeous principal if I can keep the privileges of a teacher without needing to fulfill a teacher's responsibilities. Zu An's mind was obsessed over this matter. It seemed like a perfectly reasonable request to him. After all, most of the advancements in society only came about because people were lazy.

Chu Huanzhao was already waiting by the entrance of the estate. She flew into a rage when she saw him. "Stinky brother-in-law! You went out and had fun without me again!"

You have successfully trolled Chu Huanzhao for 23... 23... 23...

Zu An laughed in embarrassment. "I was invited out for drinks. You can't even drink! Wouldn't your mom and your sister kill me if I'd brought you with me?"

"But... you can't just go off without saying anything!" Chu Huanzhao was still upset. She'd waited happily for him after class the day before, but the only one who appeared was Cheng Shouping with his dumb face.

"Okay, okay, I won't do it again," Zu An replied immediately.

Chu Huanzhao looked at him doubtfully. "Did you leave me behind on purpose because I ruined your relationship with Ji Xiaoxi?"

Zu An put his hand over her mouth at once. He looked all around, and then exhaled in relief when he saw that no one was paying attention. "Lower your voice! You're a woman, so you need to learn to behave more gracefully! You can't go around gossiping so loudly..."

Chu Huanzhao snorted. "Yeah, yeah, I'm not as graceful as your Ji Xiaoxi."

This kid really is cute... The way she puffed her cheeks greatly amused him. He couldn't help but give them a pinch.

Chu Huanzhao was just about to say something, but the sudden pinch made all the air leak out of her. Her harsh criticism was reduced to an indecipherable mumbling.

Chu Huanzhao smacked his hand away and glared at him. "Smelly brother-in-law!"

Zu An grew depressed. You can get angry all you want, but where are my Rage points?!

It seems like being too close to her isn't a good thing either. Should I turn her upside down and spank her to earn Rage points?

Jiao Shanhe, Feng Daniu, Zhou Lujin and the other guards whispered discreetly among themselves.

"The young master is always together with the second miss, and they are always touching each other as well. This isn't good... right?"

"What the heck do you know? Our second young miss didn't say anything herself, so why are you getting all worked up?"

"Obviously because I don't want to be punished by the Madam for not stepping in to do something about this!"

A collective chill ran down their spines when Qin Wanru's fierce and imposing figure appeared in their minds.

Cheng Shouping nudged his way over too. "Hehe, this is where all of you are wrong. Honestly, I feel like the second miss will belong to the young master sooner or later. If that happens, the Madam wouldn't be able to lay blame on us anymore."

The light of truth suddenly dawned on them.

"You make so much sense!"

"The young master is truly a model for all men!"

"I really need to find a chance to seek some proper guidance from him... I can't even handle my woman at home."

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When they arrived at the academy, Chu Huanzhao suddenly cried out in surprise. She ran over to the uptight discipline master Lu De, who was standing by the entrance. "Huh? What happened to your eyes, Discipline Master?" she asked.

Lu De, who always emphasized the importance of appearance, actually had a black eye, as if someone had punched him.

However, his cultivation was at a high level, and he was normally a fierce character. Who would dare hit this man?

Lu De covered his left eye in embarrassment. "I bumped into the wall by accident when I got up from bed last night."

"Oh my! Just how tough was that wall for our Discipline Master Lu to end up like this?" A mocking voice drifted over. Bai Susu was clearly delighted at Lu De's misfortune.

"Is that any of your business? Can't a man slip up once in a while?" Lu De fired back. He never got along with Bai Susu.

Bai Susu laughed mock-flirtatiously. "I'm obviously worried about your body. My dear discipline master, you have to take something to nourish yourself. Not only was your eye hurt, but getting up in the middle of the night might signal some kidney problems!"

He giggled and strutted off after saying this.

"How can a sissy like you have the nerve to say that someone else has kidney problems? Pui!" Lu De spat at his departing figure in disgust.

He became even more furious when he saw the students huddling around him. "What are all of you staring at? Get inside!" He had no idea where the nutjob who attacked him the night before had come from.

That fellow's cultivation had clearly been much higher than his, yet he didn't go for a killing blow, but toyed with him like a cat with a mouse. It was almost as if that person was trying to figure out his martial skill.

If he wasn't already familiar with Bai Susu's character, he would've thought that that fellow had sent someone to deliberately embarrass him.

Chu Huanzhao stuck out her tongue at the fuming discipline master, then quickly dragged Zu An with her into the academy.

They went to their respective classrooms when they arrived inside. Wei Suo expressed his thanks to Zu An when he saw him. He had gotten so drunk the night before, and he was grateful that Zu An had taken the trouble to send him home.

Zu An clearly told him not to worry about it, and took the chance to indirectly ask Wei Suo about the mysterious expert in his clan.

However, even though Wei Suo was an expert gossip, he didn't seem to know anything about his own family's affairs.

Not wanting to make himself too obvious, Zu An stopped probing.

The next class was his arithmetic class. This was a class not even Sky class students were that interested in.

However, Xie Daoyun and Zheng Dan took the initiative to attend his class, which drew a flock of male students.

Zu An sought out the two girls after class and said with a bitter smile, "Young ladies, please do not attend my class again in the future."

"Why not?" Xie Daoyun asked, puzzled. Zheng Dan's confused expression mirrored her own.

Zu An sighed. "I planned to slack off during my classes, but you two brought your army of admirers with you, which left me with no choice but to teach seriously! It's tiring, you know?"

Xie Daoyun and Zheng Dan were both speechless for a moment, before Xie Daoyun burst out laughing. "You really are too different from an ordinary person."

"But of course! How could any ordinary person be so handsome?" Zu An replied.

Xie Daoyun had a blank look on her face. Clearly, she couldn't keep up with his pace.

Zheng Dan grabbed her hand and turned around to leave. "There's something wrong with that fellow's head," she said quietly. "We'd better not let him lead us astray."

"Is that so? I think there's something special about him, though." Xie Daoyun smiled. First, it was that remarkable song, then came the outstanding literary skills that he had displayed the night before. She couldn't resist turning to look at him again, but for some reason, he was waving right at her! She jumped in fright and turned around at once. Her heart was pounding ferociously.

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes and whispered something to her.

Xie Daoyun nodded. "I'll leave you to it, then. I'm going back to class."

Zheng Dan pretended to go to the bathroom. When Xie Daoyun's figure disappeared around a corner, she changed directions at once and returned to Zu An.

Zu An had an awkward expression on his face. "I wonder what this student needs from me?" he asked.

Zheng Dan's expression was reserved. "Teacher, I have a question about something in class that I didn't understand. Could you explain it to me, please?"

The students nearby all sighed in admiration. Miss Zheng really was studious! No wonder she was such an outstanding individual.

The Zheng clan had many business dealings, so it wasn't all that strange for her to have an interest in arithmetic.

The two of them chatted as they walked. For all appearances, it looked exactly like a teacher instructing an obedient student.

When the two of them reached a fork in the road, they surreptitiously turned into a remote corner. Without restraint, Zheng Dan threw herself right into his embrace and began to kiss him frantically.

Neither of them noticed the old man standing under the shade of a tree a distance away. He had a strange look on his face. "The Chu clan's young master really is..."

He tried his best, but couldn't find a fitting adjective. He wasn't all that interested in such things, and even found himself feeling slightly disgusted by it.

He shook his head and went off in a different direction, further into the academy. "Who should I test out next?" he muttered to himself.

Chapter 335: The Young Master Is Formidable

If Zu An had seen him, he would've immediately recognized him as the mysterious expert from the Wei clan.

After hearing that Zu An seemed to have learned quite a few things from the academy, he decided to drop by and look around.

The first to suffer his wrath had naturally been Lu De. However, after sparring with him for almost half a day, he didn't notice any connection between this man and the one he was looking for.

Thus, he began hunting for his next target.

Soon, the effeminate Bai Susu entered his line of sight. For some reason, he'd always loathed freaks like these who appeared half-man, half-woman.

He quietly headed in Bai Susu's direction. The academy had many guards both in the open and in hiding, but he moved through all of them as if no one was there.

Zu An had no idea that he had been targeted. He was engrossed in the game he was playing with Zheng Dan, which chiefly consisted of seeing who could hold their breath longer.

After playing for a while, this game wasn't enough to satisfy Zu An any longer. He grabbed her thigh and lifted her entire body, pressing her firmly against the wall.

Zheng Dan's face became thoroughly red. "Someone might walk by and see us!" she said in panic.

Even though this area was rather secluded, it was still part of the academy grounds. They couldn't be certain that no students would walk past.

"Why don't we gamble, then?" Zu An whispered in her ear.

Zheng Dan's heart trembled. She bit her lips and said weakly, "You need to be fast..."

...

When Zheng Dan returned to the classroom, Xie Daoyun gave her a strange look. "Why is your face so red? Do you feel uncomfortable anywhere?"

Zheng Dan shook her head. "I'm fine."

Not only was she not feeling uncomfortable, she was feeling the exact opposite.

There was an extremely bold and daring side to her hiding underneath her reserved and graceful exterior. However, what had just happened was definitely too risky!

Her heart had been pounding throughout the entire affair. If anyone had passed by and seen them, her reputation would have been completely ruined!

Yet somehow, the more stressed out she felt, the more stimulated she became, and the more sensitive her body became.

She couldn't maintain a properly studious posture anymore, and lay on the desk in an alluring manner. Right now, she felt so lazy that she didn't even want to lift a single finger.

A large number of male students noticed that her mannerisms seemed quite different. They constantly snuck looks at her, swallowing audibly.

That was as far as they went. They knew that her fiancé was the commander of the River Patrol Army and the governor's son, so none of them dared to treat her with disrespect, for fear of provoking the Sang clan.

Zheng Dan ran into Zu An again in the evening, when classes ended. However, this time, she only flashed him a faint smile and nodded in greeting.

To everyone else, this seemed like a normal exchange. After all, Zheng Dan was polite to everyone.

Zu An really had to give this woman credit for being an incredible actress. How could someone behave one way in public, and then act so differently when no one else was looking?

"What are you thinking about, brother-in-law? Why is your smile so weird?" Chu Huanzhao ran over to him excitedly. When she saw him waiting for her here, she absolutely beamed.

"Am I smiling?" Zu An rubbed his own cheeks.

"Hmph! You were smiling as though something really good had happened!" Chu Huanzhao suddenly gave a slight jolt of surprise. "Why did you change your clothes?"

"Oh, I got them dirty just now, so I had to change into a different set," Zu An replied.

There was no way he could let himself be careless again! Chu Chuyan would always be able to notice even the slightest bit of perfume on him. How could he continue making the same mistake?

"Oh..." Chu Huanzhao had no reason to doubt him.

Zu An noticed Ji Xiaoxi not too far away. This girl really was ridiculously cute! No wonder that Ji Dengtu doted on her like a maniac.

I might be no better than him if I had a daughter this cute.

“Hi Xiaoxi!” Zu An waved towards her. It would be good if he could purchase some medicine through her.

Pei Mianman’s injury the night before had reminded him that he couldn’t count on his Rage lottery for restorative items. He had to keep some restorative medicine on him.

And of course, in Brightmoon City, no other clan’s medicine could compare to the Ji clan’s.

However, Ji Xiaoxi jumped like a startled rabbit upon hearing his voice. She bolted off in a hurry without even turning around.

Zu An stared after her, speechless.

“Huanzhao, do I really look like that much of a scoundrel?” He was clearly miffed by this reaction.

Chu Huanzhao looked him up and down, then proceeded to nod fiercely. “You do! You really do look like the worst sort of person!”

Zu An just stared at her.

Chu Huanzhao snorted. “It’s your own fault for looking at her when she didn’t have any clothes on. It would be weirder if she didn’t avoid you.”

Chu Huanzhao herself had only believed that it was only a coincidence after a long and laborious explanation from him.

However, she really couldn’t stand the idea of this brother-in-law of hers cuddling with Ji Xiaoxi, especially with the latter naked as the day she was born. Her own clan had put in all the hard work to secure him. To have someone else come in and snatch him away just like that—it really was too much!

“Lower your voice please!” Zu An hissed in embarrassment.

He turned around and spitted his followers with a glare. “Did any of you hear anything?”

Feng Daniu and the other guards were completely shocked. Their young master had actually seen Ji Xiaoxi naked? However, they immediately shook their heads when they saw his threatening expression. “We didn’t hear anything!” they said in unison.

Only Cheng Shouping’s fawning voice carried a different tune. “The young master really is formidable, even Ji...”

Jiao Shan and the others covered his mouth before he could finish speaking. “This fellow misheard you! He’s misheard you!”

One could get attached to even a pair of underwear if one wore it long enough. They couldn’t bear to see this guy get into trouble.

“Hmph!” Chu Huanzhao cooled her murderous gaze as well, and dragged Zu An off with her.

When they returned to the Chu Estate, Zu An noticed a familiar carriage parked outside.

A maid came running out of the carriage as they appeared. "Young master Zu, our young miss invites you to meet with her."

"Who is your young miss?" Chu Huanzhao cut in front of Zu An vigilantly. Just what the heck is going on? Why are more and more women running to my brother-in-law's side?

That maid smiled sweetly. "Young master Zu will know when he arrives."

Sensing Chu Huanzhao's displeasure, she added, "My young miss is just over there. It won't take long."

Zu An patted Chu Huanzhao's head. "Little Huanzhao, don't worry. I'll head over and take a look."

Chu Huanzhao snorted angrily. She wanted to tag along too, but the maid stopped her, saying that the invitation was for Zu An alone. She was forced to stay behind, her mouth forming into a pout.

"I'm not waiting for you!" Chu Huanzhao shouted in protest, before she stomped inside. However, just after she passed through the gates, she couldn't resist the temptation any longer. She hid in the shadows and spied in the direction of the carriage.

A pair of soft hands opened the door as Zu An arrived at the carriage. "Ah Zu, please come in."

Zu An smiled as he laid eyes on the incredibly glamorous woman inside. "Why isn't Honglei coming in for some tea?"

Qiu Honglei smiled. "I fear that those inside might not welcome me, so I decided not to make things difficult for everyone."

Zu An smiled awkwardly. He still remembered how the study had been turned into a battlefield the last time she had been invited inside. "Right then, what did you want to talk to me about?"

"Can't I come without a reason?" A hint of bitterness flashed across Qiu Honglei's eyes.

Zu An sighed. Sometimes, not even he could figure out what was real and what wasn't.

Qiu Honglei handed over a set of neatly folded clothes. "Thank you for lending me your clothes the last time. I never had a chance to return them to you."

"Haha, you're really too kind. It's just a set of clothes, though. You didn't have to make a trip all the way here just for that." Even while Zu An was saying this, he wondered if he should find the opportunity to lend her something else.

If they continually lent things to each other back and forth, wouldn't their relationship grow naturally closer?

"I found this conch in your clothing as well." Qiu Honglei brought out an exquisite conch from beside her. "This thing seems quite interesting. Can I have it?"

Zu An was embarrassed. "This..."

If it had been anything else, he would've straight up given it to her. However, this was something that he'd borrowed from Shang Liuyu. He'd had it for so long without returning it. How could he have the nerve to give it away?

Qiu Honglei tossed the conch into his hands with a smile. "You got it from another girl, didn't you? Don't worry, I was just joking around."

Zu An put it away in embarrassment. "If I get the opportunity, I'll surely get you another musical item in the future."

Qiu Honglei smiled. "I'll remember those words." Her voice suddenly took on a serious tone. "There's another important matter I needed to speak with you about."

Chapter 336: Ambush

Zu An was taken aback by her sudden change of expression. "What is it?"

Qiu Honglei hesitated a little before saying, "Ah Zu, do you really plan to spend your entire life in the Chu clan?"

Zu An chuckled. "My gut isn't all that great, so I'll probably have to eat soft rice my entire life." [1]

Qiu Honglei sighed. "Young master is such a talented person. Why do you put yourself down like this? Besides, even if you want to mooch, there are more options out there than just the Chu clan."

Zu An couldn't help but laugh. "Then can I mooch off of you?"

A perfect blush spread across Qiu Honglei's cheeks. "You are welcome to, anytime."

Zu An sighed. "I fear that I am quite the greedy person, though. I want to mooch off everyone if I can."

Qiu Honglei was stunned for a moment, then lamented, "I really don't know anyone else who can make such dirty thoughts sound so righteous."

Zu An said, "I guess I'm just more sincere than those other hypocrites."

Qiu Honglei smiled. "All right then, let's talk about the main matter at hand. I've recently received news that the Chu clan will meet its end soon. As a friend, I wanted to advise you to leave this sinking boat."

Zu An's mind filled with alarm. "Can you explain in more detail?"

Even though the Chu clan's current situation was challenging, they were still a formidable dukedom! Surely they could hold on through the current crisis. Moreover, they even had quite a sizable private army. He really couldn't imagine how a clan like this could be wiped out.

Qiu Honglei shook her head. "I apologize, I cannot expose my sources. I only came here to warn you because of our friendship."

Zu An knew that she had a mysterious background, and he didn't want to pressure her about it. "Even though I'm full of issues, one of my issues isn't selling out my friends. How can I leave the Chu clan if it is facing disaster?"

Qiu Honglei was confused. "But I've heard that the Chu clan doesn't treat you well!"

Zu An smiled. "Some here don't treat me well, but there are others who do. I cannot fail to live up to their expectations."

A warm smile appeared on his face when he thought of Chu Huanzhao and Chu Chuyan.

Qiu Honglei grew quiet for a long time. Finally, she said, "Fine, I understand. It seems like I cannot change your mind, so I can only wish you well."

Zu An said with a smile, "Does your promise to become my concubine still hold?"

Qiu Honglei was stupefied. This guy's skin really was so thick! However, she felt no disgust toward him. Instead, she replied cryptically, "If you are still well the next time we meet, then of course it will still hold."

"Then, will we be friends or enemies the next time we meet?" Zu An probed.

After a slight hesitation, Qiu Honglei said, "Of course we'll be friends."

Zu An sighed in relief. "That's fine, then. You know what they say—good guys die early, while scoundrels live forever. A terrible person like me will live until I can make you my wife."

"You..." Despite her voice containing a hint of displeasure, she wasn't truly angry at him. "All right then. I await our next meeting."

After her carriage had left, Zu An fell into deep thought, pondering over this new piece of information he'd just received.

"She's already left, so why are you still staring in that direction?" Chu Huanzhao had returned to his side. Her voice was full of dissatisfaction.

"Let's go find your big sister," Zu An said in a serious tone.

Chu Huanzhao didn't dare to joke around when she saw his grim expression. She quickly followed behind him.

...

Chu Chuyan listened to all he had to say. In the end, she still had doubts about the information.

"Danger? But the Chu clan is doing quite well right now. The Whale Gang has been eliminated, which has dealt a heavy blow to the illicit salt trade, allowing our Chu clan to recover this source of income. Things should only improve from here on out."

"We should still be careful." Zu An didn't want to betray Qiu Honglei either. After all, she went out of her way to warn him, so he couldn't just ignore her.

"Don't worry, we'll be careful." Chu Chuyan's smile really was too beautiful.

Chu Huanzhao couldn't help but hug her. "Big sis, I think you're smiling a lot more nowadays."

"Really?" Chu Chuyan rubbed her own cheeks and subconsciously gave Zu An a look.

Their eyes met, and she blushed.

...

Old Mi was already waiting for him when he returned to his room.

Panicking, Zu An quickly said, "I'll look for that case the next time I go to Wei Estate..."

Old Mi cut him off before he could finish what he wanted to say. "There is no need. For now, you don't have to go to the Wei Estate."

"There's no need?" Zu An was stunned. "Has senior already found what you were looking for?"

"No, but I've found a way in. From now on, I'll look for it myself," Old Mi said, all the while looking at Zu An.

Zu An had a strange look on his face. If you had a way in, why did you bother sending me?

Also, why is this guy's expression so weird?

Old Mi seemed to be looking at him the way a predator looked at its prey, or perhaps the way a chef looked at his ingredients.

Zu An shivered. Was this guy a cannibal?

Old Mi got up to leave. "That's all. I just came to tell you not to go to Wei Estate anymore, and also to make sure that you take care of your own safety."

"Take care of my own safety?" Zu An was momentarily stunned. This fella acted like a fiend one second, and then became kind and caring the next. He was completely befuddled.

However, he wasn't in the mood to think about this right now.

...

When evening descended, he headed to the Unvoiced Residence.

Now that he had the Mirror Mirage, it was incredibly easy for him to move around.

He arrived outside the residence and gave the window a gentle push. When he found that it wasn't locked, he grew even happier.

Chu Chuyan was staring nervously in that direction. She exhaled in relief when she confirmed his identity. "Why are you here?"

Zu An was taken aback. Don't you already know the answer? You even left a window open for me! Why keep up this charade?

However, he knew that Chu Chuyan was shy, so he didn't call her out. "It's because I miss you, of course!"

As the words left his mouth, he pulled her into a tight embrace.

Chu Chuyan's face turned red as his mischievous hands wrapped around her. She took out a key and gave it to him. "Take this key. It will allow you to pass through the restrictions placed around the Unvoiced Residence."

Zu An was overjoyed. His bashful wife had finally accepted him!

"I feel like entering through the window is more interesting, though," Zu An said quietly beside her ear.

Chu Chuyan felt ticklish, and pulled her head away. "But I don't like the feeling it gives me... It feels like we're doing something wrong. Leaving the window open also leaves me feeling scared and on edge. What if someone else comes in?"

Zu An saw the sense in her argument. "I guess my wife is still more meticulous than I. Come and give your husband a kiss!"

"You're so annoying..." Chu Chuyan sounded displeased, but she still wrapped her arm subconsciously around the man embracing her.

The way Chu Chuyan was acting... Zu An felt like he was going to explode.

When he was with Zheng Dan, he had sought excitement. But now that he was with Chu Chuyan, he was full of tenderness, and his movements were smoother and gentler.

No wonder all of the other wives get jealous!

After they had been going for a while, Zu An suddenly froze. Chu Chuyan looked at him with her misty eyes. She said with a gentle voice, "It's okay."

"But you're busy dealing with the issues facing the Chu clan right now! It'll be bad if you get pregnant!" Zu An was definitely not someone who wanted to be tied down by kids.

Chu Chuyan shook her head. Her entire face was red as she said, "It's fine. I can use my ki to force it out."

How could Zu An still hold himself back?

...

The next morning, Zu An and Chu Huanzhao noticed that Bai Susu also had a black eye. Unlike Lu De, both of his eyes were swollen.

Lu De roared with happiness. "Oh my goodness! Isn't this our Mr. Bai? Could you have also bumped into a wall in the middle of the night? Wow, you managed to do both eyes at once!"

"Screw you! Lu De, was it out of bitterness that you planned your revenge on me?!" Bai Susu's entire body was shaking.

"Please cease such venomous slander! You got into this mess yourself! Why are you implicating me?!" Lu De felt incredibly refreshed. All the gloominess from the day before had instantly vanished without a trace! He swaggered into the academy, whistling all the way.

...

After that, a new teacher would turn up injured each day. Everyone in the academy was alarmed. Was the academy haunted?

Jiang Luofu returned to her office in the evening. The light was quickly fading. As she walked along the street, her long and beautiful legs shone with an enchanting luster. It might have been because of her stockings, or perhaps just the natural glow of her skin.

Suddenly, she stopped and frowned. "I reckon you're the reason for the strange events in the academy recently?"

Chapter 337: Brother-In-Law Looks so Pale

"As expected of the principal of Brightmoon Academy. I thought I was already being quite careful, yet I was still discovered." A skinny and shriveled figure slowly emerged from behind a tree.

He wore black, and his entire body was bound tightly, all the way to up his head, exposing only his two eyes. It was impossible to observe his physical characteristics so gather any further information about him.

Jiang Luofu looked at him coldly. "Who are you? Why are you targeting our academy's teachers?"

The black-clad individual sighed. "I thought the principal was someone formidable, but it seems I was being foolish. You're fully aware that there's no way I would answer these questions, yet you still asked them anyway."

Jiang Luofu nodded. "You're right. A poor choice of words on my part."

She undid her hairpin. Her long hair uncoiled, cascading down her back like a waterfall.

The black-clothed man was stunned. Even though he had no feelings towards the opposite sex, he had to admit that this woman before him was extremely beautiful. With her long legs and the aura of confidence she possessed, she was clearly a beauty that not even an imperial concubine could hope to match.

Jiang Luofu seized his moment of distraction to make her move. Her toes tapped lightly against the ground, and she shot forward like a streak of lightning. In an instant, her jade hairpin arrowed towards the eyes of the black-clad individual.

Many years had passed since she'd last gone all out against an opponent. However, the pressure this individual gave off was too great, so she didn't dare hold back.

However, two inches from the man's face, her jade hairpin stopped.

Two fingers clasped the jade hairpin in place. Her opponent flicked his fingers.

An incomparable wave of power surged toward her.

Jiang Luofu almost lost her grip on the jade hairpin. However, her reactions were fast as well. With a flip of her wrist, the jade hairpin spun quickly.

The force of the spin allowed the hairpin to break free from the black-clad man's fingers, forcing him to let go.

Jiang Luofu used this opportunity to do a backflip. Those beautiful legs that Wei Suo constantly drooled over now became the most dangerous of weapons.

Her long legs rose like powerful dragons, instantly sending several dozen strikes towards this black-clad man's various vitals.

The man had to use both his arms and legs to fend off this dazzling series of blows.

When he finally found an opening to retaliate, Jiang Luofu had already pulled back to create some distance between them. She stared at him vigilantly.

"You're still so young, yet you already possess such powerful cultivation. It truly leaves one in admiration." For a second, the black-clad man looked like a senior admiring a junior. The next instant, he attacked.

His movements weren't fast—at least that's how it seemed on the surface. He looked just like an ordinary old man. However, a streak of afterimages trailed behind him.

Jiang Luofu knew that this was the result of the old man being so fast that even the surrounding light and shadows had become distorted. Her jade hairpin floated in midair in front of her. With a swipe of her hand, the jade hairpin split into nine hairpins of various shapes.

She tapped the backs of each hairpin, and the hairpins shot towards the black-clad man like arrows.

Each hairpin possessed a different attribute, and they trailed multi-colored streaks of light as they flew through the air with a shrill whistling noise. They stabbed towards the black-clad man like nine flying swords.

"Interesting." The black clad man continuously deflected these incoming hairpins with his fingers.

Deflecting the hairpins didn't seem too difficult for him, but it did slow down his advance.

Jiang Luofu wasn't happy about this at all. The closer this old man got, the greater the pressure she felt.

"Let's end the game here, my long-legged beauty..." Halfway through his sentence, the black clad man suddenly broke out in a fit of coughing.

His complexion paled. With a tap of his toes, he shot into the clouds, stepping on thin air to disappear into the darkness.

Jiang Luofu was just about to take out a little bell, but she put it away again when she saw her opponent flee. She looked in the direction he'd disappeared to. "I wonder if he is ninth rank or master rank..." she said gravely.

Both ninth and tenth rank cultivators could walk on air, but the former couldn't maintain it for a long time.

That man seemed to have still been holding back, so it was hard for her to judge the exact level of his cultivation.

The black-clad man swiftly left Brightmoon Academy behind and fled for a remote place, coughing intensely. He tore off his mask and covered his mouth with a handkerchief. Only then did his coughing stop.

Looking at the dark-red blood staining the handkerchief, the black clad man muttered, "My life is already nearing its end... where are you hiding..."

...

If Zu An had been there, he would've definitely recognized him as the mysterious expert from the Wei Estate.

He would've also guessed at the reason behind the black eyes that the academy's teachers had been sporting recently. This old man was clearly feeling those teachers out.

This would have then led him to the conclusion that this old man was after him, which would set off even more alarm bells in his head.

However, he had no inkling of any of this. His days were spent in blissful ignorance.

In the day, he and Zheng Dan left traces all over the remote areas of the academy. At night, he would pursue the meaning of life with Chu Chuyan in the Unvoiced Residence.

Chu Chuyan had completely lost her initial shyness and reservation, and was now welcoming him calmly and cooperatively...

One day after classes, Chu Huanzhao suddenly looked Zu An over intently. She even walked a few circles around him.

"What are you doing? Is there something on my face?" Zu An rubbed his cheeks in confusion.

Chu Huanzhao couldn't restrain herself any further. "Brother-in-law, you look so pale and sallow."

Zu An was left speechless.

Chu Chuyan and Zheng Dan were both exceptional beauties, but not even his body, forged by the Primordial Origin Sutra, could keep up this schedule day after day.

"Is there too much schoolwork? You are both a student and a teacher at the same time. Maybe you should ask the principal to assign you fewer classes." Chu Huanzhao was clearly worried about him.

Zu An flushed with embarrassment. "Don't worry, I have everything under control."

"Let's find Ji Xiaoxi and get some medicine for you. I'll look for her if she is still ignoring you," Chu Huanzhao said.

"Haha, it's all right, I'll head over to Divine Physician Ji's place myself. In fact, I'll go right now! Go home first without me." Zu An had to say this in order to convince Chu Huanzhao to head on home first.

If she followed him to Ji Dengtu's place and learned the real reason why he was so pallid recently, wouldn't she kill him right there and then?

However, his main purpose in paying that divine physician a visit wasn't for that sort of medicine. Instead, he was after some restorative medicine.

His cultivation technique forced him to suffer a multitude of wounds. The last few experiences had taught him just how important it was to carry such medicine with him.

The entrance to the Ji Estate was still as crowded as usual.

However, Zu An was a long-time customer. He strutted straight into the back courtyard.

To be honest, he didn't really want to meet with that old pervert. He had messed with the divine physician by giving him the book about cuckolding, and there was the recent incident with Ji Xiaoxi as well. It was entirely possible that the old pervert would murder him the instant they met.

However, Ji Xiaoxi had roundly ignored him recently, so he couldn't buy anything off her. His only remaining option was to look for Ji Dengtu.

Just as he was about to head inside, he suddenly bumped into Jiang Luofu. The other party was startled. "Why are you here?"

"I wanted to buy some medicine." Zu An didn't find it all that strange to see her here. She was Ji Dengtu's relative, after all.

If I had known this was going to happen, I would've walked a little faster and 'accidentally' ran into her!

Jiang Luofu grunted in acknowledgment and continued to walk away in a cool and elegant manner. Suddenly, she turned around and said, "Oh, by the way, you need to be careful when you're in the academy."

"Why?" Zu An was taken aback. Why did it sound like she was warning him?

Had his fun time with Zheng Dan been discovered?

"A mysterious expert has been visiting the academy in secret recently. We still do not know his objectives, but his intent is surely malicious." A frown crossed Jiang Luofu's face as she recalled what had happened that night.

Zu An sighed with relief. Thank goodness his activities with Zheng Dan hadn't yet been discovered.

After giving him this warning, Jiang Luofu left, seemingly preoccupied with her own thoughts.

Right at that moment, Ji Xiaoxi just happened to walk out, carrying a wicker basket filled with medicinal ingredients. Zu An's eyes brightened. He immediately rushed over to her.

Of course, Ji Xiaoxi turned around immediately and fled like a ghost.

Zu An was just about to chase after her when Ji Dengtu suddenly appeared before him, spitting him with a furious glare. "Damned brat, did you bully my Xiaoxi?!"

Chapter 338: Bad News

Zu An jumped in fright when he sensed the old pervert's killing intent. He hurriedly waved his hands and said, "I didn't, I really didn't!"

Fuck me! I'm super dead if he finds out that I saw his daughter naked and even laid a hand on her!

"Then why did Xiaoxi run away as soon as she saw you?" Ji Dengtu sneered.

Zu An's mind moved at the speed of light. "Maybe I'm just too charming? It's normal for girls to behave shyly in front of those that they secretly love, isn't it?"

A wave of rage surged within Ji Dengtu. "Are you saying that my daughter would actually fall for someone like you?!"

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for 444 Rage points!

Zu An changed his excuse right away. "That's not what I'm saying! I meant that Xiaoxi is really, really kind and gentle, and she possesses the most delicate nature. It's normal for her to act a bit awkwardly sometimes!"

Only then did Ji Dengtu's anger subside somewhat. However, a kernel of doubt remained. "If I remember correctly, the two of you were on good terms before."

"Elder should know that the thoughts of a young lady are constantly changing. No one knows what they are thinking sometimes," Zu An said.

It was true that his daughter had been acting strangely recently. She didn't talk to him no matter what he asked, and she would even yell at him sometimes. He nodded in understanding. "What you say does make some sense."

However, something else immediately came to his mind. "Heh, I'll let you off for now regarding what's going on with Xiaoxi. I want to know, though—what kind of hot garbage did you lend me the last time?!"

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for 666 Rage points!

Zu An smiled awkwardly. "What... what's wrong?"

"Why were all the women close to the male lead..." Ji Dengtu began his angry tirade, but trailed off as a thought struck him. He looked behind him guiltily. Thankfully, his daughter wasn't there, but he still lowered his voice and said to Zu An, "Why were they all humiliated instead?"

He got angry whenever he thought about this. That night, he'd finally been in the mood. He closed all of the doors and windows, and then jumped in bed to enjoy his book.

It was still all right in the beginning. However, as he continued to read, things started to take a strange turn.

The female lead was captured by the villain!

He expected the male lead to valiantly show up to save her at the crucial moment, but he never appeared, even after the female lead had been defiled several times...

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for 696 Rage points!

He felt as if he himself had been cuckolded. He glared furiously at Zu An.

Zu An wore a puzzled expression. This guy is still thinking about that?

“That’s why you shouldn’t imagine yourself as the male lead...” Zu An advised.

Ji Dengtu was dumbfounded. “Who else would I imagine myself as, if not the male lead?”

“You can imagine yourself as the one who NTR... ahem, I mean, the villain who defiled the female lead. You could even put yourself in the shoes of the female lead.” Zu An shared the wisdom he’d gained from the online forums of his past world with Ji Dengtu.

“Villain? Female lead?” Ji Dengtu glared at him. “Why would I ever do that?!”

He had been left in a withered state for half a month after reading that book. A shadow still loomed over his mind whenever he recalled this.

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for 999 Rage points!

“How about I give you a different story, then?” Zu An asked, seeing the extent of Ji Dengtu’s fury.

Ji Dengtu flat out refused him. “No way! I need to know the ending of this story.”

Zu An was speechless for a moment.

Bro, are you a masochist? You clearly hate it, so why do you have to finish it?

Ji Dengtu’s voice took on a threatening tone. “You’d better write the rest of this story properly! Make sure the male lead takes revenge and gets to experience the pure love that he deserves in the end! Don’t let any of this previous cuckolding garbage happen again!”

Zu An was completely bowled over by this request. “I’m sorry, but I didn’t write this book. I only transcribed it for you.”

“I don’t care! If I see any of that stuff again, I’m going to beat the crap out of you!” Ji Dengtu said angrily.

You have successfully trolled Ji Dengtu for 200 Rage points!

“Um, I’ll try my best.” Like hell I’ll go through the efforts of writing a new story just for you. I’m just going to give you the original story! It’s up to you if you want to keep reading.

I’ll just pick up more medicine today. I won’t come back here in the future, so you can keep dreaming about beating me up.

Ji Dengtu finally nodded in satisfaction. “That’s more like it. What did you come here for anyway?”

Finally, they had come around to the main matter at hand. “I wanted to purchase some medicine from you.”

Ji Dengtu examined him in a cursory manner, then nodded. “Indeed, you do need some supplementation after exhausting yourself so much.”

Zu An stared at him in puzzlement.

Ji Dengtu stroked his beard, and he lowered his voice as if he were gossiping. "The young miss of the Chu clan seems so cold and indifferent on the outside, as if she was disinterested in worldly desires. Who knew she would have such needs?"

Zu An couldn't contain himself.

"Stop, stop! I only want to buy some restorative medicine from you."

What in the world are you talking about? Chu Chuyan will die from embarrassment if she heard what you'd just said! Also, what kind of a reputation would I have left if this sort of thing leaks out?

"Restorative medicine..." Ji Dengtu lost interest at once when he heard this. He randomly pointed to one side. "Help yourself over there. Ten taels of silver a bottle, take your pick."

Zu An walked over and sampled them. He was unsatisfied. "These are just ordinary goods. I need the best stuff! I want the stuff you gave Xiaoxi. I tried them in the dungeon the last time, and the effects were pretty good."

"Damn it! No wonder everyone always says that daughters only lose you money," Ji Dengtu cursed. He rummaged through a side cabinet and fished out a porcelain bottle. "These are Soul Return Pills. No matter how serious your injuries are, you can be saved as long as you still have a single breath left in you. Of course, if you run into someone stronger than me, then this medicine might not be effective. One pill costs five thousand taels of silver—no bargaining! I'm only selling this to you at this price because you've given me some interesting stories. Anyone else would have to fork over ten thousand taels at least!"

"Five thousand taels of silver?" Zu An was shocked. Just how many taels of silver had he shoveled into his mouth in that dungeon?

"Hmph, if you think it's too expensive, then don't buy them." Ji Dengtu reclined in his rocking chair and put on a 'take it or leave it' expression.

Zu An smiled. "How can life-saving medicine even be considered too expensive? How much more do you have? I'll buy it all."

This bottle looked like it had ten pills inside, which didn't seem enough to him.

Ji Dengtu snorted. "I almost forgot that you were a walking moneybag. This medicine is hard to prepare, and the ingredients are rare as well. I'm not selling the rest. I need to save them for my Xiaoxi."

There was no way Zu An could continue pressing him when he heard that they were for Xiaoxi. This old man really is crazy over his own daughter. He's always thinking about her.

"Then I'll buy some regular medicine as well." He would definitely suffer injuries frequently, but he probably wouldn't need to use the most precious medicine every time.

"Xiaoxi, help Zu An wrap up the medicine." Ji Dengtu hollered. He didn't feel like doing this stuff himself.

However, a long time passed with no response. His expression sank. "Xiaoxi?"

After calling out several more times, Ji Xiaoxi finally replied. "I'm not coming out! Wrap it yourself!"

“Heh, look at this silly girl. She’s becoming more and more rebellious.” Ji Dengtu got up, his expression that of a stern lecturer. However, he couldn’t bear to do it in the end. He turned around and glared at Zu An. “Are you certain you didn’t bully her?”

“Of course I didn’t! You can call her out and ask her if you don’t believe me!” Zu An said confidently. He thoroughly understood Xiaoxi’s nature. There was no way she could possibly be brave enough to speak about what had happened.

Ji Dengtu finally believed him. He personally wrapped up the medicine for Zu An.

When he saw just how much medicine Zu An was buying, Ji Dengtu gave him a strange look. “Just how many enemies did you end up provoking? What the heck do you need all this medicine for?”

“It’s always better to be more careful.” Zu An smiled innocently.

Ji Dengtu snorted. “You’d better stay further away from Ji Xiaoxi in the future. You’ll surely be a negative influence on her.”

Zu An smiled bitterly. Isn’t Ji Xiaoxi already staying far away from me? She doesn’t even talk to me anymore.

The total bill was sixty thousand taels of silver. Zu An stored the medicines in the Brilliant Glass Bead. He finally relaxed a bit.

With food in the pantry, the mind is at peace!

I should prepare some food and daily necessities as well.

Zu An strolled around the market. The storage space in the Brilliant Glass Bead was massive anyway, and stuff stored inside it didn’t spoil.

...

When he returned to the Chu Estate, he discovered that a heavy aura hung over the entire place.

“Something major has happened!” Chu Chuyan said as soon as she saw him. Her voice was gravely serious.

Chapter 339: Predicament

Zu An was greatly alarmed by Chu Chuyan’s serious expression. “What’s wrong?”

“Follow me to the meeting hall. I’ll tell you everything along the way.” Chu Chuyan grabbed his hand and walked into the estate.

“My father has been detained in the Glorious Sun City by Sang Hong.” Chu Chuyan said.

Zu An was shocked. “What?! Father-in-law is a formidable duke, and his cultivation is so high. How could Sang Hong dare to detain him? Even if he dared to, there’s no legitimate reason for it!”

“He has a reason,” Chu Chuyan explained. “It was all about the salt permits.”

Zu An finally learned the whole story after Chu Chuyan filled him in.

Under Chen Xuan's torture, Wang Yuanlong had exposed the route along which the Wang clan's salt permits were being transported, and the timing of the caravan.

The salt permits just happened to be two days away from Brightmoon City.

Chen Xuan had immediately sent out men to seize the salt permits.

The Wang clan was already reeling from the looting of their trade station, and they had barely managed to scrape together the funds for this last batch of salt permits.

There was no way for them to acquire more salt permits for quite some time.

The Chu clan, however, needed the Wang clan's help to bring their stockpiles of salt to market.

The Wang clan had no choice but to beg Chu Zhongtian for help. Out of compassion for his friend, and in consideration of the Chu clan's own circumstances, Chu Zhongtian decided to pass off the advance salt permits as the stolen permits.

When the Wang clan finally made it through this trying period, the advance salt permits could be replaced. Everything was to be kept top secret.

However, things took an unexpected turn. A sudden, unannounced investigation had been carried out on the Chu clan's most recent batch of salt permits. When the salt commissioners discovered that these salt permits weren't the right ones, Sang Hong used it to kick up a huge fuss, and detained Chu Zhongtian.

Zu An sighed. "It seems like Sang Hong was well prepared. This might even have been a trap that he'd set up himself."

Chu Chuyan shared his sentiments. "We were careless."

There was one thing that Zu An couldn't understand. "Wait, didn't you say that all of the salt commissioners were on our side? How did Sang Hong suddenly find out about this?"

Chu Chuyan shook her head. "This is the strangest part of it all. Sang Hong probably managed to turn some of those salt commissioners to his side."

Zu An held her hand, which was slightly cold. "Honey, I will always be by your side. I'll help the Chu clan get through this."

"Thank you..." Chu Chuyan forced a smile. She didn't think that there was anything he could do, especially with the situation already so dire. However, his words still brought her a hint of warmth.

"Screw that Chen Xuan! Even in death he still haunts us." Zu An muttered to himself. This whole matter had begun with Chen Xuan stealing those salt permits. Things wouldn't have gotten so out of hand otherwise.

By this time, the two of them had already arrived at the discussion hall.

"I demand an explanation for this, sister-in-law!" Chu Yuepo's furious roar reached them as soon as they walked through the door.

Zu An was surprised. Chu Yuepo had always given him the impression of a chubby, friendly uncle. He had never seen him so angry before.

"Indeed, I was kept completely in the dark regarding this as well, and yet it is I who has to clean up this mess! All of you have really gone too far this time!" Chu Tiesheng's voice was icy-cold.

Qin Wanru was being chewed out by Chu Tiesheng and Chu Yuepo. Her face was ashen, but there was nothing she could say to defend herself. She knew that she was in the wrong.

Chu Chuyan quickly stepped forward. "Second and third uncles, we shouldn't be focused on who should be blamed for this. What we need to do right now is find a way to deal with this issue."

"Your words sure sound nice! However, you can't deny that you hid everything from us. Only now, when things have gone south, do you finally remember the rest of us." Chu Tiesheng scoffed.

Chu Chuyan frowned. "We hid this from everyone else because this was an extremely important and delicate matter. We had to maintain absolute secrecy."

"And look at just how well you all managed to keep this secret! Didn't it still leak out in the end?" Chu Yuepo said. "If only the few of you knew about this, then who was the one who leaked this information?"

He looked at Chu Chuyan and then at Qin Wanru, his meaning obvious. Clearly, one of the two had leaked the secret out.

Qin Wanru and Chu Chuyan were both so angry that their faces turned a deathly white. However, neither of them could think of a suitable rebuttal.

Zu An stepped in front of the both of them. "The two of you really are something! How dare you use this chance to bully a widow and an orphan!"

Qin Wanru and Chu Chuyan stared at his back with a mixture of bewilderment and indignant anger.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 666 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 233 Rage points!

Zu An was shocked. I'm speaking up for you two right now! Why are you getting angry at me?

However, he soon realized the issue. He said with an awkward laugh, "My bad, my bad. You aren't a widow, and you're not an orphan either."

If Chu Zhongtian had heard him, he would have surely flipped out no matter how good his temper was.

Only with this admission did the two women's complexions improve.

"What makes you think you have the right to speak up in such a place?!" Chu Tiesheng said coldly.

Zu An maintained his composure. "I just wanted to speak up for my wife since I couldn't stand your bullying anymore. Besides, for better or for worse, I am considered part of the main branch of the clan."

Aren't you all just members of the side branches? How is it that you guys are allowed to speak, but I'm not?"

"Utterly preposterous!" Chu Tiesheng immediately erupted in anger. Even Chu Yuepo glowered at Zu An. Their status as side branch members had always been something that gnawed at their minds.

You have successfully trolled Chu Tiesheng for 886 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Chu Yuepo for 668 Rage points!

"Enough, enough!" Qin Wanru finally spoke up. "How much more time are we going to waste arguing?"

Chu Tiesheng snorted. "It's not that we want to argue, but your main branch always keeps a firm grasp on every single affair. Although it's said that Third Brother and I control the iron and salt businesses respectively, everyone knows that this is in name only."

Chu Yuepo parroted, "That's correct! There would have never been such a huge slip-up if you had just consulted with the rest of us first!"

Zu An said, "It's easy to talk a big game after the fact. However, didn't father-in-law take the risk because he was thinking about the welfare of the Chu clan as a whole? The Chu clan has been struggling to even make ends meet, so we obviously need to save as much as possible."

Even though Chu Chuyan hadn't told him these things, he could fill in these blanks himself.

Qin Wanru's expression eased a little. She had never been fond of Zu An's slick mouth, but now that he was speaking up on their behalf, she suddenly found him much more pleasing to the eye.

Having a man standing in front of you always helped to settle one's unease.

Qin Wanru's thoughts drifted instinctively to Chu Zhongtian. She didn't know when he could return safely.

"Save, save, save—in the end, you all didn't save anything, but threw the entire Chu clan away! Sixteen million taels of silver! Where in the world will the Chu clan be able to gather that much money?!" Chu Tiesheng said furiously.

You have successfully trolled Chu Tiesheng for 358 Rage points!

"Sixteen million?" Zu An gave a start. Why was the number so high?

He had just been thinking about his own wealth, and how he could use it to help his wife through this crisis. In the end, there was still a missing zero behind his total net worth.

"The royal court sets restrictions on the sale of salt in order to prevent salt merchants from dumping their goods into the market at will. If one wishes to obtain salt permits ahead of time beyond the stipulated quota, then besides the 1.5 taels of silver needed per permit, an additional 2.1 taels of silver needs to be paid in advance." Chu Chuyan paused for a moment, her expression becoming downcast. "In addition, to prevent salt merchants from engaging in covert activities, it is expressly stipulated in writing that those who do not make this advance payment will be fined several times the required amount."

"More than half of the sixteen million taels of silver demanded of us are in fines." Chu Tiesheng continued where she left off. "The only way such a sum can possibly be paid off is if we sold off the entire Chu clan!"

Chapter 340: Bewitching Potion

"I will think of a way to solve this problem. There is no need for you to continue," Chu Chuyan said coldly.

"You're going to think of a solution? What sort of solution could you possibly come up with?" Chu Tiesheng said disdainfully. Just as he was about to continue, he suddenly felt the temperature in the room fall by several degrees. Sensing that she was now truly angry, he didn't dare to continue pressing her on this matter. "Whatever. I'll just wait and see for myself what your solution is."

He stormed off in a huff.

Chu Yuepo took his leave as well, his expression cold. Soon, Qin Wanru, Chu Chuyan, and Zu An were the only ones left.

Zu An couldn't contain his indignance. "Aren't they going too far? They're all itching to pick a fight as soon as father-in-law leaves. If we let things be, won't they end up planning a rebellion or something?"

"The second and third branches have always coveted our power, and want to replace us," Qin Wanru explained. "There is no way they would pass up such a golden opportunity to make trouble for us."

Ever since she'd found out Zu An and her daughter had consummated their marriage, she had abandoned her previous unrealistic delusions and begun to accept him. Moreover, he had spoken up in their defense earlier, and so she was willing to share more of the Chu clan's secrets with him.

Zu An sighed. "The world really is a strange place sometimes. When bad things happen, strangers might end up being more reliable than those who are close to you. Even if strangers don't lend a helping hand, they at least won't hit you while you're down."

Qin Wanru's voice was downcast. "What does saying these things do for us? Figuring out a way to resolve this matter is still our top priority."

Chu Chuyan said, "I think we should gather together the money to ransom father back first."

"This is sixteen million taels of silver that we're talking about! How could we possibly amass such a huge amount of money?" Qin Wanru grew pessimistic as she recalled the astronomical figure.

Chu Chuyan also grew quiet. The Chu clan was already deep in the red after suffering years of losses. Together with the many expenses of the clan, their cash reserves were very limited.

After the eradication of the Whale Gang, their salt business had started to pick up. Their income had just begun to grow when this crisis blew up.

Now that the truth behind their salt permits had been exposed, their salt business was marked as illegal, and this revenue source had been cut off.

The only means left to them was to sell everything they owned. However, if they did that, would there be any meaning left in the Chu clan's bitter efforts to protect their ancestral property?

If even the property inherited from their ancestors was sold off, faith in the Chu clan would surely crumble. When that time came, the Chu clan would truly be finished.

Zu An said, "I have around two to three million taels of silver that can be used to bail out father-in-law. Unfortunately, the Plum Blossom Sect has already been eradicated, so the seven-and-a-half million taels of silver they owe me cannot be collected. Otherwise, I could at least solve half of this problem."

Chu Chuyan was given a shock. "Where the heck did you get so much money?"

She knew a little about his transaction with the academy, but she also knew that nothing much of value was left behind by the Plum Blossom Sect. How did he suddenly put together two to three million taels of silver?

Zu An said proudly, "Your husband is really awesome, don't you know? I even managed to land a wife like you—what's so hard about making a bit of money?"

Chu Chuyan's face turned red. "You don't have a shred of decency," she scoffed.

At the same time, she looked guiltily at her mother.

Qin Wanru didn't get mad this time. Her voice was instead tinged with gratitude. "Ah Zu, thank you for choosing to help the Chu clan in our moment of crisis. Chuyan didn't choose the wrong person to marry after all. However, our Chu clan hasn't yet fallen to the point where we need to rely on our son-in-law's private stash. If that were to happen, we might really become the laughingstock of the entire city."

Zu An was completely speechless. It sounded just like how the ancient families in China refused to touch a wife's dowry. Faced with this situation, what was the point in holding on to such useless pride?

"Ah Zu, you should go back and get some rest," Qin Wanru said. "I still have some matters to discuss with Chuyan."

Zu An had never planned on getting involved with the Chu clan's matters, nor did he have much interest in the details. He was relieved by her dismissal.

...

He came across Chu Huanzhao soon after leaving. She ran straight into Zu An's arms when she saw him. "Brother-in-law, will dad come back?"

Some guards saw how close the two of them were behaving, but they turned around in unison and pretended that nothing had happened.

These intimate actions seemed to happen too often nowadays. Since both Madam and First Miss hadn't said anything about it, they knew that servants like themselves were in no place to say anything either.

However, they could not ignore the fact that it was the second miss who had taken the initiative to throw herself into the young master's embrace...

Just what kind of strange power did the young master have? Even though he was somewhat handsome, he wasn't stunningly so. Just how had he seized the first miss' absolute favor and made the second miss so infatuated with him?

What was even harder to understand was that even Madam seemed to be treating him better recently.

Sigh... we're all so envious!

Zu An noticed the Rage points coming in. These fellas really were quite good at acting. They looked completely unfazed on the outside, but they were probably cursing the hell out of him inside.

Can't you all find it in yourselves to get a little more angry, though? What is with all these single-digit numbers?

You don't even dare to get really angry. No wonder you all can only stand to one side and admire my awesomeness.

He would've definitely gained an explosive amount of Rage points if he'd spoken these words out loud.

However, his past experiences had taught him to weigh the pros and cons. There were Rage points that were worth farming, and Rage points that would never be able to make up for the losses that he incurred while going after them.

He gently patted the young lady who was shaking in his arms. "Don't worry, your dad will definitely be okay," he consoled her.

"But I've heard that things are extremely serious this time! I've heard that it's really, really bad..." Chu Huanzhao rubbed her eyes. She was clearly not convinced.

"Your dad is so amazing! He'll definitely be able to overcome this." Zu An wiped away her tears.

"Besides, your mom and your big sister will surely think of a way to save him too."

"But I've never seen mom and big sis look so discouraged before! They seem very pessimistic about our chances of saving dad." Chu Huanzhao was still extremely depressed.

When did this brat suddenly turn into such a gloomy and depressed person?

Zu An rubbed her head with a smile. "Even if you don't trust your mom or your big sis, you have to trust me! I will think of a way to save father-in-law as well."

"Really?" Chu Huanzhao immediately became happy again.

Zu An nodded. "Of course!"

"Brother-in-law is the best!" Chu Huanzhao's desolation left her immediately. She began to prance about in happiness.

The guards were all stupefied. She didn't have confidence in First Miss or Madam, but instead put her faith in the young master?

Just what kind of bewitching potion did the young master use on the second miss?

"I'm so useless, I only know how to play around every day... When something serious happens, I can't even help mom or big sis. I'm not even as good as you." Chu Huanzhao suddenly became dejected.

Zu An stared at her, speechless.

What do you mean, you're not even as good as me?!

Despite this outrage, Zu An still consoled her. "You're still young, you'll be able to help out once you grow older."

"Really?" Chu Huanzhao blinked, still doubtful. At least she seemed to have some self-awareness regarding her own abilities.

"Of course!" Zu An said firmly. This girl had always been compared to her big sister since she was little, so there was no way that she would have much confidence in herself. He knew the importance of encouraging her.

"Brother-in-law is the best!" Chu Huanzhao grabbed his arm. Her face was beaming with smiles.

Feeling the soft warmth on his arm, Zu An's expression became a little strange. Why does it seem like this kid has grown recently...?

...

After all that effort, Zu An finally managed to console her. He returned to his residence, and found Old Mi watering the plants in the courtyard.

This fella looks like a gardener, but he's actually a terrifying old fiend. Zu An cursed, but he had a brilliant smile on his face. "Greetings, Elder."

Old Mi grunted in acknowledgment. He also smiled, but it seemed slightly terrifying on his ugly face.

Zu An asked, "By the way, Elder, the Chu clan is facing some difficulties right now. Since you're so powerful, is there anything you could do to help us?"

Since this old man had chosen to hide in the Chu clan, Zu An figured that he was probably some Chu clan ancestor, or perhaps someone who shared a friendship with the Chu clan. There was no way he would remain indifferent to their plight. Having someone with his cultivation on their side would surely ease their current situation.

Old Mi shook his head. "The Chu clan's foundations were slowly built up over a thousand years. How could it be destroyed that easily?"

What kind of reasoning is this? Zu An was puzzled. How could he say that a clan built up over a thousand years couldn't be destroyed?

He couldn't find a way out for the Chu clan, not when they were on the hook for sixteen million taels of silver. Even the four great clans of Brightmoon City together might not be able to put together that much cash.

“Stopping fretting over nothing. Why would the glorious Chu clan need to be rescued by a drafted son-in-law like you?” Old Mi scoffed. “Besides, the entire Chu clan added together isn’t as important as you. Your only job is to take care of yourself. You absolutely cannot let any danger befall to you.”

With that, Old Mi left. He clearly didn’t want to hear any more requests about saving the Chu clan.

Zu An cringed when he heard those words. Please don’t tell me that the old man was confessing to me.

Gross, gross...

Zu An went to the Unvoiced Residence several times in the evening, but Chu Chuyan never returned.

Zu An snuck into the meeting hall and discovered that it was still brightly lit. From time to time, people came and went, many of them trusted aides of the Chu clan.

Chu Chuyan was probably thinking of a way to save the Chu clan.

Zu An’s heart ached. His wife was beautiful, strong, and most importantly, capable. However, being too competent came with its own drawbacks. From a young age she had had to bear many responsibilities that she shouldn’t have had to.

In his previous world, all the young ladies around her age in his past world enjoyed their years of youth to the full. Simps willing to do their bidding crowded around them. Their days were spent in endless enjoyment. Where would anyone find a trace of such hardships in their lives?

Zu An drifted off to sleep in the Unvoiced Residence. The next morning, he was awoken by Chu Chuyan. “Ah Zu, come with me on a trip.”