

Immortal 401

Chapter 401: I Saw Something In You

Too many things had happened recently. The Chu clan had suffered all manner of misfortune, and Zu An had been dragged into a huge conspiracy. He'd almost lost his life.

He was constantly under pressure, and his mind had no time to relax.

Even last night, when things finally calmed down and he tried to get some sleep, he was still woken up in the middle of the night. He was still being hounded, even in his dreams.

Only now, thanks to Zheng Dan showering him with gentleness and affection, were these negative emotions finally laid to rest.

Zheng Dan herself looked like a sunflower that had just been devastated by a storm. "Sorry, I was too rough," Zu An said apologetically.

Zheng Dan gave him a look of complaint. "You've only just realized that?" She put on her clothes and got off the bed. However, her legs buckled as soon as she stood up.

Zu An smiled as he offered an arm to help support her. "Don't leave! There's still so much time before the school day ends."

Zheng Dan tidied up her messy hair while she said, "So many people saw me go looking for you earlier. Wouldn't rumors spread if I stayed too long?"

After being around her for so long, Zu An was well-acquainted with her nature. They could go as crazy as they wanted to in private, but she cared about her public image, and the honor of her own clan. She would never allow the slightest stain to dirty either of these. Knowing this, he didn't pressure her further.

"I'll give you the medicine that Sang Hong wants another day," Zu An said. He didn't want Sang Qian to recover that quickly.

Zheng Dan smiled sweetly. "Sure. I'm really leaving now."

She pulled his face towards her own and kissed him. Then, she left in high spirits.

The instant she walked through the main entrance, however, her happiness instantly vanished, replaced by her usual graceful demeanor. There was no way anyone could tell that she'd just experienced something so wild.

Zu An slept for a bit, and then paid Ji Dengtu a visit after classes were over.

It would've been more convenient to look for Ji Xiaoxi, but it didn't seem appropriate to ask a girl about this matter.

Ji Dengtu's eyes widened when he heard his request. "I've heard about performance-enhancing pills, but I've never heard of impotence pills. What kind of weird fetish do you have?"

Zu An's face darkened. "Stop wasting my time. Do you have them or not?"

Ji Dengtu leaned into his recliner and slowly rocked back and forth. He waved his hand nonchalantly. "Nope. I only save people. Why would I make something stupid like that?"

Zu An's heart sank. "I'll pay extra!"

Ji Dengtu's eyes lit up, and he subconsciously straightened his body. However, after a small hesitation, he leaned back into the chair again. "Stop trying to tempt me. Considering the way I was brought up, I would never ever do something like this. You're looking at the wrong person."

Zu An silently took out a book. "Part two of the previous story."

Ji Dengtu's pupils contracted, and his expression became serious.

Zu An thought that he was about to get angry, but a big smile blossomed across his face instead. He grabbed the book and said, "I knew I saw something in you!"

Zu An stared at him, speechless.

Ji Dengtu flipped through the book, tossing a small green bottle over to him. "Three drops, and it'll do exactly what you want it to."

Zu An was quite fond of this straightforwardness. "Is the effect permanent? Don't tell me that the victim will recover after a while."

Ji Dengtu was clearly displeased by his question. "Are you doubting my skills? How could Ji Dengtu's medicine lose its effects? Of course it's permanent! My skills are unparalleled!"

Zu An gave him a look of suspicion. "What were you planning to do with such a drug?"

Ji Dengtu's face became red. He said angrily, "Of course it was for research! Do you think I'll take it myself?"

Zu An had a strange look on his face. "Don't tell me you made it for my father-in-law."

Clearly, this man's obsession with Qin Wanru gave him adequate grounds for suspicion.

"Do I seem like that type of person?" Ji Dengtu's conscience was clearly guilty. "Leave, get out! Stop bothering me. I want to read this book."

"Huh? Why do you need tissues if you're just reading a book?"

"You're the one who wrote these books! Don't you possess any self-awareness at all?"

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Zu An headed straight back to Chu Estate after leaving the Ji Estate. He reported Sang Hong's offer to Qin Wanru.

Qin Wanru had been at a loss as to what to do when she first saw him, but she immediately grew agitated when she heard what he said. "Sang Hong, you despicable person! You actually plotted against Zhongtian even while he was imprisoned!"

Zu An's tone was grave. "Indeed. We reported the recovery of the missing salt permits a while ago, so they should've released father-in-law a long time ago. Sang Hong has definitely involved himself behind the scenes. That's why I had no choice but to agree. We can only discuss things with father-in-law after we save him."

"Ah Zu, thank you for everything you've done for the Chu clan. I... I don't even know how to thank you." Qin Wanru's expression was terribly conflicted.

"I was only doing my duty." Zu An chuckled. "Of course, if Madam wants to thank me, then just give Huanzhao to me as well. I think she's pretty cute."

Qin Wanru was momentarily dazed, after which her face became entirely red. She picked up a nearby feather duster and began to whack Zu An. "Damned brat! How dare you actually think of such a thing!"

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 66... 66... 66...

Zu An dodged her blows, pleading with her all the way. "Ow, ow! I was joking! Madam, how can you take it seriously?!"

The two of them ran around in circles in the room. The guards outside looked at each other in dismay.

"What's going on?"

"Why is Madam hitting young master?"

"You just don't get it do you? Their behavior is so unrestrained because they've already grown close!"

"That explains it! You guys have really seen through everything!"

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After a while, the two of them finally stopped their little chase. Qin Wanru was gasping for air, her chest rising and falling heavily. She was still recovering from a serious injury, and all this activity had clearly tired her out.

Zu An said with concern, "Madam, you were just injured not too long ago. Please don't exhaust yourself like this."

Qin Wanru's face became slightly red for some reason. She snorted. This kid's movement really is fast. Even though I'm weak right now, I'm still at the sixth rank, and yet I couldn't even catch up to him in this cramped room! No wonder he managed to escape from a master rank cultivator.

Zu An was worried that she might continue scolding him, so he quickly changed the topic. "What worries me the most right now is that he might still harm father-in-law even if we agree to his offer. What do we do then?"

Qin Wanru said, "I'll arrange meetings with a few people. There are still some people out there that our Chu clan can count on. I'll also dispatch Yue Shan to personally oversee things. He'll keep an eye out from the shadows."

Zu An exhaled in relief. "That makes me feel much better."

Qin Wanru seemed a little hesitant. “Your medicine is probably really precious, isn’t it? It can heal even the most severe injuries.”

Initially, she had thought wrongly that Zu An had used his other method to save her. However, when she finally calmed down, she realized what had actually happened. She was experienced, after all, so she could tell if she’d slept with a man.

With all that he had said earlier, she was now even more certain that it was this medicine that had saved her that day.

This brat really is cheeky! He had the nerve to make that sort of joke! I was worried about it for such a long time...

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 3... 3... 3...

Zu An was stunned. Didn’t you just thank me? Why are you getting angry now? Also, can’t you get a little more angry if you’re going to get angry at all? This amount is completely useless!

Didn’t you contribute hundreds of points to me for no reason back then?

Of course, these were just jokes. “Everything is worth it if we can save father-in-law,” Zu An replied.

Qin Wanru opened her mouth, but she didn’t know what to say. In the end, she could only say, ‘Thank you.’

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A few days passed. When Qin Wanru had made the necessary arrangements with the prison, Zu An contacted Zheng Dan.

Zheng Dan personally came to invite Zu An over.

Zu An saw the carriage, and went right in. “You didn’t ride a palanquin today. Is it because it’s easier for me to get into a carriage?”

Zheng Dan blushed. She lowered the curtains and quickly said, “We’re going straight to the Sang Estate. You’d better not mess around.”

Chapter 402: You Should Be Calling Me Uncle

Zu An chuckled. “I know of a way that won’t mess up your clothes and hair.”

Zheng Dan felt her heart sway. She shot him a look, but still moved over to him.

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When they arrived at Sang Estate, Sang Hong was already waiting by the gates to welcome them.

The life and death of his son was tied to this, so he couldn’t be bothered with maintaining the propriety that his status required. He had to show the other party some respect.

"I don't deserve to have Lord Governor welcome me personally like this," Zu An said as he faced the bearded middle-aged man in front of him. Even though this man looked gentle and refined, he reminded himself that he was actually a vicious viper.

"I'm not acting in my official capacity today. Just treat this like a normal meeting between two clans." Sang Hong laughed heartily and said, "You are an outstanding youngster after all! Brightmoon Duke has found himself an excellent son-in-law."

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 444 Rage points!

His various schemes to take down the Chu clan had been so meticulously planned. He had taken into account so many different factors, and had been full of confidence in his success. Yet, in the end, this little devil had popped out of nowhere and ruined all of his plans.

Zu An noticed the Rage points flowing in, saw the smile on this middle-aged man's face, and immediately cursed inside. He really was a hypocritical old fox.

He laughed in reply and said, "Sir Sang also found a good daughter-in-law! Miss Zheng really is great."

Sang Hong was stunned. He didn't know why Zu An would describe Zheng Dan in such a strange manner.

Zheng Dan's face reddened. She wanted to scream at Zu An right now! She knew that this future father-in-law of hers was a meticulous person. She immediately greeted him, worried that he might suspect something. "I pay my respects to Uncle Sang."

Sang Hong gestured for her to stand back up. "Dan'er, your complexion seems quite good today."

Zheng Dan's complexion was much rosier and brighter than usual. Sang Hong figured she was just overjoyed that there was a chance his son would be saved.

Zheng Dan bit her lip. She didn't dare say anything else, in case she blew her act.

Zu An wasn't used to putting on all this pretense in front of a wily old fox, and said directly, "Lord Sang, there is no need for us to waste time. When does Lord Governor plan to release my father-in-law?"

Sang Hong smiled. "This young brother is rather straightforward. Let's get straight to the point. Actually, we've already released Brightmoon Duke the moment you walked through the Sang Estate's main gates."

Zu An's eyes brightened. "Lord Sang knows what he is doing after all. Since my father-in-law has already been released, I will bid you farewell. I must go to see him." He turned around to leave.

Sang Hong glared at his back, his mouth agape.

This kid just refused to behave as others expect him to!

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 512 Rage points!

He said coldly, "I fear that the journey from the prison to Brightmoon City is long, and the roads are treacherous."

Zu An turned around at once. "I was just joking with Lord Sang to liven up the atmosphere! Since I'm already here, how can I not pay Brother Sang a visit?"

Off to the side, Zheng Dan pursed her lips and kept in a laugh. This guy really was a rascal!

The way she was brought up had made her dislike such rascals. However, watching Zu An behave in such a fashion again and again, she had slowly developed an attraction to it.

Sang Hong forced a smile. "Thank you for taking the trouble."

Zu An quickly followed him into a bedroom. As soon as he entered, he was overcome by a strong medicinal smell.

Sang Qian was lying on the bed, lacking his usual high-spirited appearance. He was haggard and weak, and the medicine applied to him made him look even more wan and sallow. He seemed to have aged considerably since their last meeting.

Sang Hong sighed. "I've already tried everything I could, but I'm only just barely keeping him alive. If you can save him, aside from releasing Brightmoon Duke, I promise that I will never act against the Chu clan again. At the same time, you will be considered a friend of the Sang clan. You can request anything you wish of us."

Would you give me your future daughter-in-law then? The thought instantly popped into his brain.

He resisted the urge with great difficulty. Instead, he coughed lightly and said, "I haven't thought of anything yet."

Sang Hong smiled. "That's fine. This favor will never expire. As long as it is within my ability, I will surely not turn you away."

Zu An had an ambiguous smile on his face. "To be honest, I am worried that Lord Sang might go back on your words."

"This is but a trifling issue." Sang Hong had already predicted his doubts. "I can make a solemn vow. I'm sure you know that vows are quite powerful in this world."

Zu An was stunned. He hadn't expected that this middle-aged man would dare make an oath.

Seeing no opposition from Zu An, Sang Hong made a serious vow over the conditions he had just laid out.

Zu An was finally convinced. "There was no need for Lord Sang to go so far! How could I possibly have doubted your honored self? Hahaha...."

Sang Hong cursed him in his heart. Why didn't you stop me before I made that vow then?

This kid really is a cunning little fox!

He snorted inwardly, but remained unfazed on the surface. "If you would, young brother."

Zu An wasn't in the mood to walk over to him. He tossed a red bottle to him instead. "Give this to him, and he should be able to regain his life."

Sang Hong's breathing became rushed as he accepted this bottle of red liquid. His son's life was tied to this, after all!

He looked at the physician beside him, then handed the bottle to him.

The physician was just about to remove a drop to test the medicine's effects, but Zu An stopped him immediately. "Don't say I didn't warn you! This medicine is incredibly precious. The patient has to ingest all of it. If it fails to save him just because you wasted a drop, heh..."

The physician's hand trembled. How could he dare to proceed with testing the medicine? If the young master ended up passing away because of what he did, all the blame would fall on his shoulders! He would be done for!

Sang Hong's brow furrowed. He was clearly weighing his options.

He was clearly uncertain, but asked anyway. "I made a vow just now to make you feel at ease. Would you be willing to make a vow as well?"

Zu An sneered. "There was no way for us to immediately verify those conditions of yours, so of course we needed you to take an oath! However, we'll see the results of my end of the bargain soon enough. Why do we need to go through all of that? If the medicine doesn't work, you can immediately take your revenge."

Sang Hong was in full agreement. If the medicine didn't work, he would just rip this kid to shreds on the spot.

With that out of the way, he personally supported his son and poured the medicine drop by drop into his mouth. Using careful control of his ki, not a single drop was wasted.

He noticed that a trace of green was mixed in together with the red liquid, all of which entered his son's body.

He watched his son nervously after administering the medicine. Zheng Dan also got up on her toes and looked over.

She felt extremely conflicted. She was worried that Sang Qian wouldn't be able to recover, and that Sang Hong would kill Zu An. However, if Sang Qian did recover, then what would the two of them do after she got married?

In a few moments, a hint of red returned to Sang Qian's cheeks, and his complexion visibly improved.

"Divine medicine! This is simply divine medicine!" The physician beside him was stupefied.

Sang Hong was also full of excitement and anticipation. His arms were even shaking in his sleeves. "Qian'er, Qian'er?"

A while later, Sang Qian opened his eyes. "Dad!"

He'd clearly hung on to a strand of consciousness after he'd been seriously injured. However, it hadn't been enough for him to be completely aware.

Now, when he called out to his dad, he suddenly felt as though could move. He subconsciously crawled out of bed. The physician was so shocked, his eyes were about to pop out of their sockets.

He was the one who understood most clearly how close Sang Qian was to death! Yet now, a little weakness aside, Sang Qian looked no different from a normal person.

“Physician, how is Qian’er’s condition?” Sang Hong demanded immediately.

The physician took a moment to check Sang Qian’s pulse, then said with a smile, “Congratulations, Lord Governor! The young master is doing well. He should make a complete recovery after a few days of rest.”

“Excellent, excellent!” Sang Hong was incredibly excited, and hurriedly said to Zu An, “Thank you, young brother!”

“You?” Sang Qian’s eyes fell on Zu An, and a wave of annoyance washed over him.

“Your dad is addressing me as ‘young brother’. You should be calling me uncle,” Zu An said in a dissatisfied tone, picking idly at his ears.

Sang Qian stared at him, utterly speechless.

Even Sang Hong and Zheng Dan, standing by his bed, were stupefied.

The Rage points streaming in almost made Zu An burst out in joyous laughter.

“You damn brat, what did you say?!” Sang Qian had never gotten along with Zu An to begin with. His taunting only made him immediately erupt with anger.

Zu An sighed. “Is this how you speak to the one who saved your life?”

Sang Hong immediately cut in. “Qian’er, don’t be rude. Quickly, thank young master Zu. He saved your life.”

He was still worried that Sang Qian’s condition had yet to stabilize completely, so he didn’t dare to offend Zu An at that moment.

Sang Qian clearly resented the idea. “Dad!”

Sang Hong glared at him. “Do what I say!”

Only then did Sang Qian unwillingly clasp his fist towards Zu An. “Thanks.”

Zu An purposely leaned his ear in closer. “What are you thanking me for?”

Sang Qian forced himself to remain silent.

Why was this kid so petty?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 444 Rage points!

Sang Hong also grew annoyed. “Young master Zu, Qian’er has just recovered and needs rest. Please, do not get him too worked up.”

Worried that father and son might really go after him if he pushed further, Zu An rose and bid them farewell. "Since things are pretty much settled, I'll take my leave."

Sang Hong nodded. "Dan'er, please see young master Zu out."

He didn't dare call Zu An young brother again, afraid that it would somehow come back to haunt him.

Zheng Dan got up and bowed towards him with a smile. "Understood."

"Miss Zheng is so pretty. It's such a delight to have such a beauty accompany me." Zu An's eyes roamed all over her body, and he gave Sang Qian a smug look.

Sang Qian frowned at him.

This brat's gaze... Why does it give me such a bad feeling? Something is definitely amiss.

Zheng Dan was desperately alarmed by his roving gaze. She was afraid that father and son would realize the truth.

Only Zu An could read their real thoughts. The more he acted like this, the less chance there was of them growing suspicious. Besides, it earned him a good chunk of Rage points.

As Sang Qian watched the two of them leave, he was reminded of Zheng Dan's endless charm, and his breathing grew rushed. His own fiancée seemed so much more seductive than before.

He swallowed, then said unhappily, "Dad, why did you have to make Dandan accompany that guy?"

The thought of his own fiancée accompanying another man made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I just want to make sure Dan'er keeps an eye on him when he leaves. I wouldn't feel at ease if it were anyone else," said Sang Hong. "There are some things I need to talk to you about."

Chapter 403: I Have Money

Sang Hong gestured for the physician and the other attendants to leave. Then, he asked, "Qian'er, how do you feel? Is there anything wrong with your body?"

Sang Qian shook his head. "No, I feel pretty good. I feel as strong as a bull."

"That's good. That brat's medicine really is miraculous." Sang Hong was amazed.

Sang Qian's voice grew downcast. "Dad, are you really going to let that brat and the Chu clan go?"

He'd clearly heard the agreement between the two of them.

Sang Hong smiled but didn't say anything. Sang Qian panicked. "Dad, if those salt permits are back in the Chu clan's hands, that means those mysterious experts were most likely sent by the Chu clan! I was injured so severely because of them. Zu An himself might even have participated in that attack!"

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You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 444 Rage points!

Zu An noticed these Rage points flood in as soon as he left the Sang clan. It seemed he had saved an ungrateful wretch. Annoyed, he took the chance to squeeze Zheng Dan a few times as revenge, which made him feel better.

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Meanwhile, in Sang Qian's bedroom, Sang Hong shook his head and said, "I already carefully investigated the incident that took place that night. Those mysterious people weren't from the Chu clan. They might be from a devil sect instead."

"Devil sect?!" Sang Qian was shocked. He clearly understood the meaning behind these two words. He remained silent for a long time, then finally said, "Even if the Chu clan wasn't directly behind this, the fact that the salt permits ended up in the Chu clan's hands means that it has to be connected to them somehow. The two parties have probably been colluding with each other for a long time."

He began to grow agitated. "Dad, did you try to convict them of the crime of colluding with a devil sect?"

"Any claims involving a devil sect is a huge matter. Without any proof, it's best not to inadvertently alarm the enemy." This was how Sang Hong was. He would rather refuse to make a move if it's results weren't guaranteed, but when he did strike, it was certain to be fatal.

He'd believed that his plans to deal with the Chu clan were more than adequate, yet that brat Zu An managed to foil everything.

"Are we really going to just let them go like that?" Sang Qian really found it hard to accept such an outcome. Seeing how close his father was to giving in, he thought of a plausible reason. "Dad, don't forget that you are here on the emperor's orders! You'll be punished for sure if you don't complete this mission!"

Seeing how worked up his son had become, Sang Hong's head started to ache. His son was excellent in every way, but he was just too impulsive. If he had his younger sister's cool-headedness and wit, Sang Hong would have much less cause to worry.

He was worried that all this excitement would be detrimental to his son's injuries. He quickly said, "Don't worry, I've already made some arrangements. Chu Zhongtian will have quite a show waiting for him once he gets back."

"What do you mean?" Sang Qian grew curious when he heard what was being implied.

Sang Hong smiled. "I made arrangements for those jailers to 'accidentally' leak out scandalous rumors between Zu An and Qin Wanru. Chu Zhongtian will surely be furious once he hears them. No matter how magnanimous he is, he will most likely grow hostile towards Zu An."

Sang Qian's eyes lit up, and he gave his father a thumbs-up. "Brilliant! Ginger really is spicier the older it is!"

Sang Hong stroked his beard. "Besides that, I also prepared a huge gift for them..."

Sang Qian was in complete admiration of his father. He always thought that his father was too careful, and seemed to be scared of every little thing. Now, however, he understood just how perfect his father's grasp of timing was, and how vicious he could really be.

There was still one matter that worried him. "Father, didn't you make a vow that you wouldn't trouble the Chu clan or Zu An anymore? Wouldn't this incur the wrath of heaven?"

A deep and profound expression appeared on Sang Hong's face. "There's plenty of wiggle room when it comes to oaths like that."

His son had a dumbfounded look on his face. Sang Hong sighed. If his daughter was here, she would've immediately understood what he said. His son was still sorely lacking in this area.

However, this was his only son after all, so he took the time to explain patiently. "The oath I made stated that I wouldn't go against the Chu clan anymore from then on. However, I did all those things before I made the vow, so it doesn't violate it at all.

"Besides, I'm convinced that the Chu clan will definitely be finished this time. So there's nothing for me to do anymore."

Sang Qian burst out in laughter. "I admit defeat! Dad, you are truly awesome!"

Sang Hong suddenly said, "I thought at first that dealing with the Chu clan was but a simple matter. However, there were so many disruptions to my plans, and all of them tied to Zu An's appearance. That kid is quite talented. Once the Chu clan falls, I am actually interested in taking him in. If Qian'er can accept it, I would even make him my son-in-law."

Sang Qian's smile froze instantly. He objected right away. "Dad, how can you make such a joke? How can some dirty mutt from the streets be worthy of being my brother-in-law? My little sister is such a great beauty as well! Why would she ever fall for someone like him?!"

Sang Hong frowned. "You cannot let yourself be blinded by hate. You should learn to see the strengths of your enemies as well."

Sang Qian snorted. "Whatever, I don't care. I will never acknowledge a brother-in-law like him. Little sister has so many admirers in the capital. Why would she need someone like him? Besides, he's already the Chu clan's drafted son-in-law."

Sang Hong laughed. "You do make some sense. We'll talk more about this later. If my suspicions are correct, he probably won't agree to this either.

"By the way, let's settle your marriage with Miss Zheng over the next few days. Almost everything has already been prepared. We wanted this to be an omen to chase away bad luck, since your condition was still extremely unstable. However, now that you're better, we can turn this wedding into a celebration instead." In Sang Hong's mind, Zheng Dan really was the Sang clan's lucky star. This had come about merely as a superstition to ward away bad luck, but they had really ended up making it through this ordeal. His son had recovered!

He wanted to complete this marriage as quickly as possible, to make sure this luck held.

Sang Qian's eyes lit up. "Okay!"

Zheng Dan was beautiful and graceful. Her reserved and conservative temperament had always left him enchanted.

He'd wanted to devour her a long time ago, but she had never let him even touch her. This left him with an itch that went unscratched.

Wouldn't he be able to do whatever he wanted with her once they got married?

He felt a mysterious sense of excitement when he imagined himself pressing down on that graceful and reserved woman.

Zu An made his way back to the Chu Estate to report on the results of his negotiations with Sang Hong. Qin Wanru said excitedly, "According to the news we received from Yue Shan, Zhongtian has already been released! He should be home in a few days."

"I offer my congratulations to Madam ahead of time," Zu An said with a smile. "Madam hasn't gotten much sleep these past few days. You can finally rest easy."

Qin Wanru gave him a complicated look. "All of this was thanks to you. Chuyan didn't choose the wrong person after all."

At the same time, she was rather surprised. It wasn't that unexpected for Chuyan to have excellent judgment, but why was little Huanzhao always bragging about how great he was as well? That seemed really strange.

"By the way, when is Chuyan coming back?" Zu An couldn't help but ask. They were newlyweds, so they shouldn't be spending so much time apart.

"She's wrapping up things on her side as well," Qin Wanru replied. "She should be able to return in a month or so."

"A month?" Zu An's heart sank. He had to sleep all alone for another month...

Zu An headed straight for the Unvoiced Residence after leaving the study. He had already moved all of his things over.

Old Mi was already dead, so he didn't have to put on an act anymore. He would just sleep in Chu Chuyan's fragrant bed!

No one else in the estate found this shocking. Zu An had done so much for the Chu clan this time around, and he had proven his strength as well. No one doubted his status as the young master anymore.

He lay on Chu Chuyan's bed and held up the recording mirror that he'd borrowed from Qin Wanru. He placed a call to Chu Chuyan.

The mirror was soon connected to its counterpart. The image of an icy beauty appeared on the surface. Who else could this be but Chu Chuyan?

Chu Chuyan gave a start the moment she saw that it was Zu An. "Ah Zu, did something happen in the clan? Where's my mother?"

"There's nothing wrong at all, everything has been resolved. I borrowed this mirror from your mom. I miss you, my wife." Zu An moved closer to the mirror and gave it a smooch.

Chu Chuyan's face turned red. "I'll be able to return soon. You were all that the clan had to rely on this time! Thank you!"

Clearly, Qin Wanru had already informed her about everything.

"Oh my, aren't you treating me like an outsider? But..." Zu An changed the topic and said, "If you really want to thank me, then call me a good husband. Call me your dear husband. Please?"

"No~" Chu Chuyan was extremely shy—how could she bring herself to say something like that? Her eyes immediately grew focused. "Hm? Where are you right now?"

"Your room of course." Zu An shone the mirror around proudly. "See, I've already moved all my stuff over."

"Ah!!" Chu Chuyan's face grew entirely red. "Wouldn't everyone in the estate know about us, then?"

"Of course!" Zu An said proudly. "I've done so much for the Chu clan, and even bled for the Chu clan. Everyone in the Chu Estate has already acknowledged me! They can see that we are a proper couple now!"

"Hmph, what are you saying? We were always a proper couple," Chu Chuyan said in embarrassment.

Zu An chuckled. "Who was it that was too embarrassed to let others know before?"

Chu Chuyan's ice-cold face grew as red as an apple. "All right, all right. The recording mirror uses up a lot of ki stones. Hang up already."

"I'm not hanging up, I have money!"

Chu Chuyan buried her face in her palm.

Chapter 404: An Imperial Envoy

Zu An refused to end the call, and stayed on this 'video call'. Chu Chuyan finally couldn't take it anymore and said, "You might have money, but I don't have enough ki stones with me!"

It was one thing if he actually had something important to say, but he was just chatting about daily life with her! She had to be careful even though the Chu clan was wealthy!

Seeing that Chu Chuyan was beginning to grow anxious, Zu An said with a smile, "I'll hang up once you call me the best husband."

"I'm not saying that. I can hang up on my end."

"Are you really going to refuse your dear husband's love?"

Chu Chuyan gritted her teeth but remained silent.

In the end, however, she still broke down under his constant pestering. "You're... you're the best husband," She said quietly.

Zu An beamed. He moved his ear closer to the mirror. "What did you say? I couldn't hear because it was too soft. Could you say it louder?"

"Drop dead!"

Chu Chuyan's face was entirely red. She could bear it no more, and cut the connection.

Zu An was speechless. A video chat in this world was actually such a luxurious thing! His previous world was so much more convenient.

However, the individual strength of the people in this world had the potential to be so great. I guess there are always pros and cons to everything.

Zu An lay down on the bed and thought about his next steps.

He knew that, although those outside the clan might not know about what had happened these past few days, there was no way the Wei clan wouldn't know.

Despite that, not much had happened these past few days. This was probably the calm before the storm.

He actually felt a bit apologetic. After all, Wei Dan was Wei Suo's adoptive grandfather.

Even though Wei Dan hadn't died at his hands, he had still been involved in the events surrounding his death.

However, what surprised him was that Wei Suo didn't seem at all sad. In the times that he had met him in the academy, nothing seemed to have changed for him.

Maybe Wei Dan's identity was so secret that not many people in the Wei clan even knew much about him.

There was also Sang Hong to consider. Even though he'd made a vow, Zu An knew there was no way that old fox would let matters drop just like that.

Increasing his own strength was still the most important thing. Unfortunately, he hadn't developed an elemental ability after reaching the fifth rank. If he could awaken a fire element ability, then his cultivation speed would increase drastically.

Relying on Rage points alone was way too slow.

He also had Qiu Honglei to think about. He'd paid the Immortal Abode another visit, but there was still no sign of her. It was as if she vanished into thin air.

He was suddenly hit with a wave of guilt. He looked all around him, and then he muttered, "My beautiful wife, it's not that I am looking for other girls. Your bed just smells so good, and I can't control my own imagination!"

...

Two days later, Chu Zhongtian finally returned.

The entire Chu Estate was decked out in festive decorations to welcome his return. The entire clan was brimming with joy and liveliness.

Chu Zhongtian looked much thinner than before. Because of his status, it was unlikely that he was subjected to any physical punishment before he had been sentenced for his crimes, but it seemed as though he had certainly suffered a great deal of mental anguish.

After all, he had almost brought down the entire Chu clan with him, and this had plagued his mind constantly.

Fortunately, Zu An and his wife had resolved all of the clan's worries.

Chu Zhongtian's eyelids throbbed when he thought of Zu An. He recalled the discussions the jailers had while he was in prison. Even though they had been pretty far away, how could their conversation escape the ears of an eight rank cultivator?

"Did you all know that there's some internal upheaval going on within the Chu clan?"

"I've heard that young master named Zu An or whatever actually messed around with Qin Wanru. They were caught by Chu Second Master."

"Didn't they say that he'd forced himself onto Madam Chu?"

"You're too naïve! That's surely the story that the Chu clan would tell outsiders. However, a servant girl said that the two of them were close even before that. If Madam Chu hadn't given him the go ahead, would the young master really lose his mind and try something on his own?"

"It's not surprising that such dirty things happen within these big clans."

"Honestly, I'm quite envious of that Zu An fella. I heard that Chu First Miss was an exceptional beauty, but he even managed to get his hands on the beautiful Madam Chu as well. He got a taste of both the mother and daughter! His luck with women really is quite something."

...

If someone had said this straight to Chu Zhongtian's face, he wouldn't have believed a word.

However, these fellows had mentioned all of this while drinking and boasting. They were so far away as well, and they couldn't have known that he was eavesdropping. People often gave more credibility to the information that they 'sought out' on their own.

He couldn't help but be shaken by this news, especially when it was coupled with the injuries he'd sustained in the past that prevented him from sleeping with Qin Wanru. That had always pained him.

Before, he would have absolutely trusted his wife not to engage in such affairs. However, his wife was a mature woman, and this side of her had been neglected for so many years. Surely, she couldn't help but harbor some inner bitterness...

Qin Wanru's radiant greeting cut into his thoughts. "Husband, you're back!"

Chu Zhongtian felt a surge of warmth at his wife's enthusiastic greeting, and he also smiled.

However, upon seeing her smiling face and rosy expression, a loud thud also sounded within his heart.

Qin Wanru had no idea what he was thinking about right now. She had specially arranged for a brazier to be set up by the entrance. She pulled him over and said, "Husband, cross this brazier, so that we can rid ourselves of all this bad luck."

Chu Zhongtian sniffed. "What's the point of such superstition?"

He didn't go near the brazier at all, but walked straight past it with a gloomy face.

Zu An took this chance to walk over to him. "Greetings, esteemed father-in-law."

"Oh," Chu Zhongtian replied indifferently, and headed straight inside.

You have successfully trolled Chu Zhongtian for 711 Rage points!

Zu An was stunned when he saw this notification. What the hell?

Chu Zhongtian always tried his best not to offend anyone! He was the only one who had treated him well when everyone else in the Chu clan was mocking him. He had never gotten angry at Zu An, let alone fed him so many Rage points.

"Dad, what's wrong?" Chu Huanzhao hadn't gone to the academy either, so that she could welcome her father home.

"It's nothing. Huanzhao is still the most obedient." Chu Zhongtian smiled a knowing smile when he saw his daughter. Unfortunately, his daughter had already grown up, so he couldn't lift her up and carry her like before.

Qin Wanru walked over to Zu An's side and said quietly, "Ah Zu, don't you think your father-in-law is acting a little strangely?"

"Definitely," Zu An replied.

Their conversation didn't escape Chu Zhongtian's ears. He knew how much his wife had disliked Zu An before he'd been imprisoned, yet the two of them suddenly seemed so close. Could it be that the two of them had truly engaged in something shameful?

You have successfully trolled Chu Zhongtian for 110... 110... 110...

He might have been able to brush off the previous Rage points, but Zu An didn't dare ignore these points. There was definitely something amiss.

His mind moved quickly, and it hit him that this deluge of Rage points had only begun when Qin Wanru had moved close to him. He immediately realized what was going on, and quickly sent Qin Wanru a message via ki transmission.

Qin Wanru's face immediately grew red when she heard his words. So that was what her husband was worried about! No wonder he was acting so strangely.

She quickly called the welcome ceremony to a halt and dragged Chu Zhongtian into the study for a talk.

"Hmph, it looks like your opinion of Zu An has changed quite quickly," Chu Zhongtian said sourly.

Qin Wanru snorted. "What am I going to do with you? What the heck are you filling your head with? I brought you in here just to tell you that it's not what you are thinking!"

She immediately told him everything that had transpired that night in great detail. Chu Zhongtian was a kind and righteous person by nature. This, together with the deep affection he had shared with his wife for so many years, helped to dispel the last of his doubts.

When the two came out of the study again, he had already buried the hatchet. Chu Zhongtian immediately apologized to Zu An. "Ah Zu, we have much to thank you for over these past few days."

Zu An chuckled. "I'm happy as long as my father-in-law doesn't hate me."

Chu Zhongtian's face went red. "It's my fault for being so muddle-headed. Thinking back, it's probably just another one of Sang Hong's schemes. That person is truly cunning and vicious! You fall into his traps before you even know it."

Chu Huanzhao was confused. "What are you talking about?"

"Nothing!" Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru said in unison.

"You guys are so weird." Chu Huanzhao muttered. Her attention quickly shifted elsewhere. "Dad! We've prepared this huge celebration for you! Come over here!"

The entire Chu clan was awash with joy and happiness for the next few days.

Unfortunately, this happiness was short-lived. One morning, a cavalry troop armored in bright yellow charged straight into the Chu Estate.

"The imperial envoy has arrived!"

Chapter 405: Revenge for My Father, and Revenge for My Stolen Wife

Everyone in the city was deep in discussion regarding what was going on. After all, the appearance of so many yellow-armored cavalry troops was just too shocking.

In this world, the color yellow was used almost exclusively by the emperor.

That was why even though almost no one in Brightmoon City had ever seen an armed escort like this before, they still knew right away that this group of soldiers was surely acting under the emperor's orders!

"What is going on? Why would soldiers from the imperial city appear in Brightmoon City?"

"Has something major happened?"

"They seem to be heading towards the Chu Estate."

"Brightmoon Duke has really been plagued with endless misfortune recently..."

While the people in the streets were discussing this matter seriously, Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were even more anxious. The arrival of the imperial envoy had left them completely shell-shocked.

However, they didn't dare to show any negligence, and quickly came out to greet them.

Two rows of soldiers in bright yellow armor stood neatly inside the Chu clan's courtyard. A middle-aged man stood calmly in the center. The servants in the Chu Estate had already prepared chairs, tables, and fruits for the new arrivals to enjoy.

The envoy sat leisurely, chewing on some grapes. Those from the Chu Estate were the complete opposite, all of them so nervous that they didn't dare make a sound.

After all, the appearance of this armed escort was just too frightening.

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru hurried over when news of this arrival reached them. They too were stunned by the scene before them. Husband and wife exchanged a look; they knew that these men were up to no good.

Chu Zhongtian cleared his throat and greeted them respectfully. "Greetings, General Liu. May I ask what brings you here today?"

The middle-aged man before him was Liu Yao, the general of the Imperial Guard. He was in charge of the imperial guards stationed in the capital, and also a cultivator at the pinnacle of the ninth rank.

He was well-respected for another reason as well—he was the uncle of the current empress!

Even though he looked middle-aged, he was actually much, much older.

Liu Yao slowly swallowed the grape he was working on when he heard Chu Zhongtian's greeting. He continued to remain silent, then spat out the grape skin at Chu Zhongtian's feet.

Qin Wanru was furious. This man was going too far!

Chu Zhongtian quickly grabbed her hand, warning her not to act impulsively.

Liu Yao spoke. "I didn't expect Brightmoon Duke to still remember me, despite only meeting me once in the capital city."

Chu Zhongtian smiled. "General Liu is so heroic, anyone would remember you from just a single look."

Liu Yao roared with laughter. "Rumor has it that Brightmoon Duke is honest and considerate, but I find you quite the crafty man."

He scanned Qin Wanru's body. The rumors were indeed true. Brightmoon Duke's wife really was something. She was curvy and graceful, beautiful and flawless.

Qin Wanru frowned when she sensed his rude gaze. She was unhappy, but the imperial guards standing off to the side, coupled with this man's identity, gave her pause. She could only endure it and say, "Why has Lord Liu come to Chu Estate with so many soldiers today?"

"Thank you so much for the reminder! I would've forgotten if you hadn't brought it up!" Liu Yao slapped his forehead, and then quickly lost his smile. "Someone reported to the court that the salt

commissioners of Linchuan Commandery have racked up a huge debt over the years. Your Chu clan has been accused of bribing many officials in all sorts of different stations.”

Both Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were shocked, and their bodies immediately went cold. The secret that they’d been concealing for so many years had finally been exposed.

Of course, this accusation alone wasn't enough to make them plead guilty. Besides, the Chu clan had never coveted this money either.

Chu Zhongtian said, “Our Chu clan has always operated in an honest and upright manner. We would never do something like that. Where has Lord Liu heard this from?”

Liu Yao laughed. “Brightmoon Duke, the emperor would never have sent me here without sufficient proof. This isn’t something you can blow off with just a few words.”

Qin Wanru spoke up as well. “If I may ask, Lord Liu, you said that someone made a report to the court. Who was it? Could it perhaps be false information?”

“Perhaps Madam Chu thinks that you are being wronged? Or that the emperor is deliberately framing you?” Liu Yao sneered.

Qin Wanru said in a low voice, “Of course that’s not what I meant. However, the Chu clan has established itself in Brightmoon City for hundreds of years, so we might have unknowingly offended some people. It could be those people who are trying to slander us.”

“I guess there’s no harm in telling you.” Liu Yao wouldn’t have bothered if Chu Zhongtian had spoken to him, but since it was this mature beauty who had asked him this, he indulged himself in speaking with her further.

As such, he gestured towards someone outside. “Come in.”

Soon, a cowering figure came shuffling in. His originally handsome face had changed completely, and his eyes darted about constantly. He was clearly full of guilt.

“Hong Xingying!” Those of the Chu Estate recognized him instantly. How could they remain clueless as to what was going on? All of them cursed him endlessly.

They had tried to find him after Chu Tiesheng and Hong Zhong’s betrayal, but the brat had already snuck away. They never expected that he would surface again so quickly.

Hong Xingying grew angry at the barrage of curses. “Are you guys done? All of you had better shut your goddamn mouths! Who knows if you’ll even live to see tomorrow!”

This only served to further shock and incense the members of the Chu clan. However, they were cowed by the fully armed soldiers under Liu Yao’s command.

Qin Wanru glowered at Hong Xingying. “Our Chu clan has always been good to you. Why have you and your father repeatedly betrayed us?”

“Good to me?” Hate burned in Hong Xingying’s eyes. “I’ve worked earnestly for the Chu clan all these years. How many times have I risked everything for you all? It was all because you hinted to me that I

would marry the first miss. In the end, you took in some random mutt off the streets and made him her husband. What does that make me?!”

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for 714 Rage points!

“All my years of hard work and efforts were just a joke to you! I even became the laughingstock of the entire Chu clan!

“I won’t accept this! What’s wrong with trying to reclaim everything that should have been mine?!”

...

Hearing his repeated accusations, Qin Wanru grew so angry that her entire body began to quiver.

“Absolutely disgraceful! I did hint that there was a high chance, but I never promised that Chuyan would definitely marry you! Even though I favored you, the final decision still rested with Chuyan herself! She didn’t choose you, but chose Ah Zu instead. What could I possibly have done?

“I also thought that she’d made a poor choice in the beginning, but now, I’m so glad that Chuyan didn’t choose a disgusting wolf like you! It would have been a huge disaster for our Chu clan!”

Hong Xingying roared with laughter. “What’s the point in saying all of this now? I will surely seize back all that I’ve lost with my own hands!”

Chu Chuyan will still be mine in the end! My only regret is that the bastard Zu An had beaten me to it first...

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for 999 Rage points!

Whatever, there’s still the second miss. I’ll make sure to take everything that I couldn’t get from the first miss from her little sister!

Annoyed by this display, Liu Yao shoved him off to the side. “Are you done blabbering? Who wants to hear all that annoying nonsense? Are you in charge or am I?”

Anger flashed across Hong Xingying’s eyes, but it was clear that this was definitely not someone he could offend. He apologized immediately. “General, please forgive me. I failed to control my emotions on my return.”

“Just go and stand over there.” Liu Yao sniffed dismissively. He turned to look at the husband and wife pair that headed the Chu clan. “Are the two of you convinced now?”

Chu Zhongtian said with a heavy voice, “We are not. Everyone knows that Hong Xingying harbors a deep hatred for our Chu clan. His father even fomented a rebellion not long ago, and was executed for it. How can his words be credible under these circumstances?”

Liu Yao chuckled. “Don’t worry, the emperor has ordered me here to fully investigate this matter. After all, this matter doesn’t concern the Chu clan alone, but also has implications for many important subjects in the court!”

His smile faded, and he gave the order to his troops. “Capture everyone in this estate! We are going to register every single person. Do not let a single one go!”

Hong Xingying's eyes lit up. He volunteered and said, "I'll lead the way. I am familiar with the Chu clan and I know everyone."

The first thing he wanted to do was capture that Zu An. Not only did he hate him for stealing his crush, he had to get revenge for his father's death.

...

Zu An's eyes narrowed when he saw the rows of notifications informing him about earned Rage points. Hong Xingying!

Suddenly, the door to the classroom slammed open.

Chapter 406: The Truth Exposed

Zu An gave a frightened start. He was just about to scold the one who dared to act so brazenly, but he was confronted with an icy-cold face instead.

"Principal... Jiang?"

All of the students in the classroom recognized her, and began chatting among themselves. Some male students even whistled excitedly.

"Wow! I've only seen the principal a few times on campus! I didn't expect to be able to get this close to her today!"

"Those legs are really too much! I can die a happy man if I could be squeezed between those legs just once!"

"That's way too much information, bro. I really didn't need to hear about your weird fetishes. For me, I just want a pair of used stockings."

"Huh?! You're the damn pervert here!"

...

Zu An's face darkened from all this chattering. Aren't these fellows getting a little too cocky? They thought that they were being quiet, but he could hear everything! If even he could hear them, how could they escape Jiang Luofu's ears?

Unexpectedly, the principal paid no attention to them at all. She only said, "This class is changed to self-study. Teacher Zu, follow me."

With no further explanation, she immediately dragged Zu An out of the classroom.

The classroom broke into an uproar immediately.

"Holy shit! Teacher Zu even got his hands on Principal Jiang? He is a bloody legend!"

“How long has it even been since he first came here? Why does every single girl on the list of top beauties seem to have something to do with him? What’s so special about him, anyway? I don’t feel like he’s better than me at all!”

“Heh, keep dreaming. From what I’ve heard from the participants who went into the dungeon, Teacher Zu has a length of...”

The female students in the class had been looking at the male students in disdain, but this bit of information made them all perk up their ears.

“Are you serious?” They all covered their mouths in shock when they heard this, and their faces became completely red.

Meanwhile, Zu An, who had been dragged out of the classroom by Jiang Luofu, was enjoying the feeling of her soft hand around his. He couldn’t help but say, “Principal Jiang, there’s no need for you to be in such a hurry! You could have just said the word and I would have come rushing over. Barging in like that in full view of all the other students will surely stir up some unflattering rumors. I am a married man after all...”

Jiang Luofu had no patience for his bullshit.

“Can you do something about that rubbish mouth of yours already? Something major happened to the Chu clan, and you’re still here fooling around.”

Zu An’s expression froze immediately. “Something happened to the Chu clan? What happened?”

Didn’t they just manage to settle that huge fiasco not too long ago? Even Chu Zhongtian has returned. What else could go wrong?

Jiang Luofu had a grave expression. “Earlier this morning, the general of the Imperial Guard led a contingent of cavalry into the city and headed straight for the Chu clan. They seem to be investigating the accumulated losses incurred by the salt commissioners and the Chu clan’s bribes.”

She gave him a rough explanation of Liu Yao’s status and strength, as well as the significance of the yellow-armored cavalry.

Zu An’s expression flickered as he listened. He finally understood what had happened. This was surely another of Sang Hong’s schemes!

Jiang Luofu continued, “They are going after people from the Chu clan one after another and arresting them right now, so they’ll probably be here soon. I advise you to go into hiding first. Bring Chu Second Miss with you as well.”

“Okay. Thank your principal!” Zu An said seriously.

“Don’t mention it. We are pretty much friends now. Moreover, the Chu clan has always had a good relationship with the academy. Even though there is only so much I can do, I will still do whatever I can.” Jiang Luofu paused. “Right, do you have a place to hide in?”

Zu An hesitated. “The only place is probably Hidden Dragon Mountain.”

The Whale Gang's old hideout wasn't bad, as it was pretty well-hidden. The crimson dragon's cave was a decent choice as well. If they went there, however, he wouldn't have much access to news in the city...

Jiang Luofu said, "The mountain isn't a good choice, for various reasons. You might as well continue to stay in the staff residences."

Zu An was hesitant. "Wouldn't that bring the academy more trouble?"

"Don't worry, the academy has always enjoyed a respected status. Not even the general Liu Yao would dare to barge in unprovoked," said Jiang Luofu. "Of course, you and Huanzhao cannot go out and wander about. It'll be hard for me to keep the two of you hidden if that happens."

"Thank you so much, gorgeous principal." Zu An didn't refuse this offer. He did indeed require a safe hiding spot right now. He would have taken a chance if it had been just him alone, but there was also Chu Huanzhao to think of.

He quickly went to the Black Class to fetch Huanzhao. She was horrified when she heard about what was going on in the Chu Estate, and insisted on going back.

"Huanzhao, please calm down. Everyone in the estate is being captured right now. If you go back now, you'll just be surrendering yourself pointlessly. That's completely meaningless," Zu An said in a low voice.

Chu Huanzhao raised her head and said, "But we can't just sneak off and continue living as though nothing happened! I would rather stand together with mom and dad during this crisis!"

Zu An was stunned. This kid was always causing trouble, but she was quite steadfast and strong-willed. "Don't be in such a rush. I'll go out and take a look first. We'll gather information and think of a plan."

Chu Huanzhao's mood instantly improved. She hooked her arms around his neck and said, "Brother-in-law is the best! If you're going to do something about it, I'm sure everything will turn out okay!"

Zu An smiled bitterly. He didn't know why Huanzhao had so much confidence in him. He didn't even have much confidence in himself this time.

After settling her down in his staff residence and instructing her to pay attention to certain things, Zu An headed to the Sky Class to find Zheng Dan. This was definitely the work of Sang Hong. He wanted to confirm whether she knew anything about this or not.

However, Zheng Dan was nowhere to be seen. Instead, he was greeted with hisses of displeasure.

Wu Qing's voice was the harshest of them all. "Teacher Zu, I know you think Miss Zheng is pretty, but that doesn't mean you can always come looking for her! Don't you care about her reputation at all?"

Pan Long immediately spoke up in agreement. "Indeed! You're already married! You should learn how to act like a proper married man."

"What the heck are you trying to do here? Miss Zheng is going to get married tomorrow!"

Only now did Zu An remember that Zheng Dan had already stopped coming to the academy a while back. He left quickly. He had no time to bicker with these people.

He deliberately presented himself at the gates of the academy, making it seem as though he had left. This would make it easier for Jiang Luofu to cover for him.

He headed straight to the Zheng Estate. The entire clan was decorated with lanterns and banners. The congratulatory messages, which were hung everywhere, were especially piercing to him.

With a cold snort, he walked straight up to the main entrance.

The gatekeeper stopped him when they saw his arrival. "The first miss is getting married tomorrow. She won't meet with another man at this time."

Zu An's face darkened. "I'm sure you remember the last time I was here. Tell her that I am looking for her, and she will agree to see me."

"This..." This gatekeeper really did remember the previous incident. This person seemed rather important to their first miss.

Zu An tossed over a silver ingot. That gatekeeper was immediately overjoyed. "Please wait here, young master. This humble one will send a message."

Soon afterwards, someone invited him inside. Zu An was slightly entranced when he laid eyes on the familiar Zhuluo Residence.

"Ah Zu, why did you come here?" Zheng Dan dismissed her servants and looked at him with pleasant surprise.

Zheng Dan was already dressed in luxurious red wedding clothes, clearly in preparation for the next day's wedding.

She looked absolutely enchanting in her dress. However, her eyes were slightly red. It was obvious that she had been crying not long ago.

"You look really beautiful today." Even though he'd come carrying anger within his heart, her appearance was truly breathtaking.

Zheng Dan pursed her lips. Her eyes suddenly became red. "I'm starting to regret all this. Perhaps you should just take me away with you now."

Zu An sighed. "I fear that's not possible."

"What happened?" Zheng Dan asked at once. Something was clearly wrong with his expression.

Zu An explained the events that had taken place in the Chu Estate. He looked at her intently. "Sang Hong lied to me. Were you involved as well?"

Zheng Dan was biting her lip so hard, it seemed as though she was about to draw blood. "If you don't believe me, I'll go with you right now to stand against the Sang clan!"

She grabbed his hand and began to walk out.

The clan master of the Zheng clan, Zheng Yutang, happened to be standing at the entrance. "Dan'er, what are you trying to do?"

He frowned when he saw their tightly-locked hands.

"Father, I need to pay the Sang clan a visit." Zheng Dan said in a low voice.

"You're going to cause trouble!" Zheng Yutang immediately got angry. "You're marrying Sang Qian tomorrow! Who goes to their fiancé's house at such an hour? That's bad luck!"

"I don't care! I must pay the Sang clan a visit!" Zheng Dan said through clenched teeth.

"No. You are not allowed to go anywhere today! Dan'er, you have always been obedient since you were little. What happened to you today?" Zheng Yutang looked at Zu An. "Did this guy bewitch you?"

He was aware that his daughter had previously approached him to steal the promissory note from the Silverhook Casino. Why did it seem like her act had somehow turned into the real deal?

Damn this Zu An! Does he specialize in stealing the hearts of girls from major clans or something?

You have successfully trolled Zheng Yutang for 432 Rage points!

"I have nothing to do with him..." Zheng Dan quickly explained.

Zu An cut her off. "Enough, I trust Miss Zheng's words. I still have other matters to take care of. I won't disturb you any further."

With that, he took off in a hurry.

Zheng Dan chased after him, but her father stopped her. His expression grew dark. "Dan'er, shouldn't you tell me what is really going on here?"

...

After he left the Zheng clan, Zu An took the time to compose himself. Confronting Sang Hong right now was completely meaningless. He might even be walking straight into a trap. His top priority was to find a way to get the Chu clan out of this mess.

An idea came to him, and he took out the recording mirror to call Chu Chuyan.

Chapter 407: Planting a Bad Flag

The call connected quickly, and Chu Chuyan appeared in the mirror. Her appearance was just as beautiful as before, but she seemed a bit impatient this time. "Ah Zu, I really don't have enough ki stones to chat idly with you! How about this? I'll let you punish me however you want when I come back!"

Zu An's heart stirred when he saw her embarrassment. However, there was something far more important right now. He quickly said, "There really is something urgent this time. Something happened to the Chu clan..."

He quickly told her about everything that had happened in the Chu Estate.

Chu Chuyan's expression changed several times. "The General of the Imperial Guards, Liu Yao... He is a part of the empress' core force. It seems as though the empress plans to reel in the net."

"What should we do now? The Chu Estate has been completely locked down. I got Huanzhao to hide in the academy for now, but I really don't have any ideas." Zu An felt a huge headache coming on. He'd only been able to get rid of Old Mi and Wei Dan because of a lucky break.

Strictly speaking, he hadn't been the one to get rid of those two. Wei Dan had been killed by Old Mi, and he had still been defeated by a dying Old Mi. If the possession hadn't failed, he would've already left this world.

He wasn't a god, and there was nothing he could do when faced with an expert at the pinnacle of ninth rank and an army of wolves. What could he possibly do?

"Don't worry. The Chu clan has remained standing for hundreds of years. It's not that easy to bring us down," said Chu Chuyan.

Zu An was not in the mood for such trite reassurances.

Chu Chuyan suddenly said, "How many men did Liu Yao bring with him?"

"I don't know the exact number, but I suspect there's a few hundred," Zu An replied.

"That's good." Chu Chuyan exhaled with relief.

Zu An couldn't understand her reaction.

A general at the peak of the ninth rank, as well as a few hundred imperial guards. Why wasn't she fazed by such a force?

"By the way, where's Yue Shan?" Chu Chuyan asked.

"I heard that Yue Shan was also captured." Zu An replied. He cursed inwardly. Yue Shan was only at the fifth rank. There was nothing he could do even if he hadn't been captured.

Chu Chuyan said, "I need you to pay the Chu clan a visit and secretly contact my mother. Ask her for the military seal, and recall the Red Cloak Army from outside the city."

Chu Zhongtian had passed the military seal to Qin Wanru before his capture.

Zu An knew that a military seal was needed to move any troops, if not all hell would easily break loose. His anxiety stemmed from a different matter entirely. "What are you trying to do, my wife? Are you going to openly start a rebellion?"

As someone from the modern world, he had many historical examples to use as reference. Starting a rebellion in the early stages of a mature, unified great dynasty was practically asking for death.

Add to that the fact that this was a world where the most powerful individual was the emperor of the Zhou Dynasty, and officials were also placed in their positions depending on the strength of their cultivation. The highest ranking cultivator in the Chu clan was only at the eighth rank! Like hell they were going to be able to fight with such odds.

Chu Chuyan smiled. "Our Chu clan existed even before the Zhou Dynasty, and we are in control of the crucial salt and iron resources. We were able to stand tall for a thousand years! Do you think this was possible because of individual strength?"

"How else?" Zu An blinked. He really was quite curious. Ever since he'd entered the Chu clan, he'd felt as though the Chu clan was just like a lump of dough. It seemed as though any other power could come in on a whim and give them a good kneading.

"It's obviously because of our Red Cloak Army, which has been passed down from generation to generation!" A trace of fanaticism appeared on Chu Chuyan's face. "As long as the Red Cloak Army still exists, our Chu clan will continue to exist! It seems our Chu clan has hidden our strength for so long that everyone really thinks of us as pushovers!"

"No matter how strong the Red Cloak Army is, their numbers are still limited," Zu An couldn't help but say. "Not only that, we will be openly rebelling if they start a fight with the imperial guard, and the emperor himself wields great power. I still can't see a future for the Chu clan."

Chu Chuyan couldn't resist teasing him. "Who knew there would come a time when even you will feel weak?"

Zu An snorted. "If you really do want to rebel, then I'll join you! Others have successfully taken down emperors with a shittier start. I refuse to believe that we can't do the same, if we have such strength to begin with! In the future, I'll be the emperor and you'll be the empress!"

Chu Chuyan gave a frightened start. "You must not randomly speak about such things! There would be big trouble if any officials heard you! I'm not asking you to gather the Red Cloak Army to kill the imperial guards. We'll just use them to scare Liu Yao enough that he won't go too far."

"Intimidation?" Zu An was confused.

"Indeed." Chu Chuyan explained. "The emperor must have a justifiable reason no matter what he does. He cannot do things on a whim. Otherwise, he could've easily taken down our Chu clan, considering how powerful he is. However, doing such a thing would shake the very foundations of his right to rule. After all, if he did such a thing to us, others might start to worry about their own safety. His seat as the emperor would become unstable."

Zu An suddenly understood what was going on. No wonder he had to dispatch Sang Hong, who then used the Yuan clan to compete for the rights to the weapons market, and the Zheng clan to put pressure on their salt business. He used the issue of the salt permits to detain Chu Zhongtian, and then incited Hong Zhong and Chu Tiesheng into starting a rebellion. Not a single one of these schemes could be laid directly at the emperor's feet, and yet they had all ended in failure.

He even sympathized a little with the emperor. He was clearly the strongest in the world, yet he still couldn't do as he pleased.

"That is why recalling the Red Cloak Army serves as a warning for them to play by the rules, and to stop him from going too far, such as using torture to obtain confessions. At the same time, it will prevent him from treating my parents disrespectfully."

Zu An was stunned when he heard all of this. “I suddenly feel as though it was a mistake to take you as my wife.”

Chu Chuyan’s face paled. “Why?”

“My wife is too smart!” Zu An replied. “It won’t be easy to play around in the future!”

Chu Chuyan glared daggers at him.

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 233 Rage points!

“I was joking!” Guiltily, Zu An changed the topic right away. “There’s still something that I don’t understand. Even if the Red Cloak Army intimidates them, Liu Yao will still be able to discover some information through his investigation as long as he remains persistent. After all, the shortfall in revenue resulting from the salt commissioners’ actions still exists.”

“That’s fine. We just need to stall for time,” replied Chu Chuyan.

“Stall for time?” Zu An was stunned.

Chu Chuyan smiled mysteriously. “You’ll understand soon enough.”

Zu An was still extremely puzzled after he hung up the call. But he knew that Chu Chuyan would never do anything without careful thought. As such, he cast aside his doubts and headed off to find Madam Chu.

When he returned to the Chu Estate, he discovered that the surrounding area had already been locked down. Of course, this didn’t hinder him at all.

He was already very familiar with the Chu Estate. Moreover, he was at the fifth rank, and even had the Mirror Mirage skill. Breaking through the cordon of these ordinary Imperial Guard troops posed no difficulty at all.

It was all fine, as long as he wasn’t unlucky enough to run into that ninth-ranked general.

He snuck into the courtyard and stopped near the gazebo in the rear garden. This was where he had been pushed into the water by Snow, and where he’d dragged her in after him.

Distracted by the sudden memory of Qiao Xueying, it took him a while to notice that there were two people talking in the gazebo.

One of them just happened to raise his head. He saw Zu An from a distance away.

Both of them were momentarily stunned. Then, one of them shouted out, “Zu An! That’s Zu An!”

“Damn you Hong Xingying!” Zu An cursed. He took off immediately.

A figure instantly rushed out of the gazebo, his speed many times faster.

The only one with such speed in the Chu Estate was that ninth-ranked general.

Zu An wanted to slap himself in the face. He’d watched so many movies in his past world—how could he possibly not know the price of planting such a bad flag?

He wished he had two more legs to aid him in running, but it was already too late. The other party was way too fast, and had closed the distance in the blink of an eye.

Liu Yao had been bemoaning the fact that he'd been unable to capture Zu An or Chu Second Miss earlier, and there was no way he would let Zu An slip through his fingers this time. He reached out his hand towards Zu An and closed his fist. The projection of a large hand appeared, and began to close in around his prey.

Chapter 408: A Small World

As the translucent palm materialized around him, Zu An found it hard to breathe. Even the air around him was being crushed.

"The hell? Are you the bloody buddha or something?!" He cursed. He didn't want to suffer the same fate as the Monkey King.

He didn't dare hold back. He immediately used Grandgale to teleport into the air.

There were no other openings. That was the only place he could slip out.

Just as he was about to fall, he used Grandgale again, pushing himself several zhang higher.

Liu Yao's eyes widened. According to his intelligence, Zu An was supposed to be around the fourth rank. To be honest, he couldn't care less if this kid was at the third, fourth, or fifth rank. After all, none of that mattered much for someone like him.

How could he have predicted that this kid could fly into the sky?

Was he somehow at the ninth rank?

Even though this was utterly absurd, this was what he was seeing! Keeping his guard up, he immediately rushed into the air to chase after Zu An.

After a while, Zu An had no choice but to land. He couldn't use Grandgale limitlessly.

Liu Yao sighed in relief when he saw Zu An land. So he isn't at the ninth rank after all.

At the same time, he laughed at himself. He'd made a big fuss out of nothing. There was no such thing as a young ninth rank cultivator in this world.

He was done playing hide-and-seek with this brat. He seized an opening and struck with his palm, intending to cripple him first before slowly interrogating him. Either way, he was just a drafted son-in-law, and not a core figure in the Chu clan. Wounding him or crippling him wouldn't make a difference.

The instant Zu An stopped, he heard a sharp whistle coming from behind him. He immediately dodged to the side in alarm, but he still couldn't avoid what was coming.

He felt as though he had been rammed by a speeding car. Blood gushed out of his mouth. He felt as if all of his internal organs had been knocked out of place, and that he was going to break apart.

His vision darkened. However, he knew that there was no way he could faint right now, and quickly bit his tongue to stay awake. Using the Sunflower Phantasm, he fled in three different directions.

Yet again, Liu Yao was stupefied. That strike was strong enough to knock out even a sixth rank expert! Why could this kid still keep running?

Just what kind of a freak was he?

The other party had even split into three identical copies at once, so he had no idea which one to pursue. Zu An quickly disappeared from view.

Liu Yao's expression grew ugly. He immediately gave out orders. "Search the vicinity for a seriously injured young man wearing white! He won't be able to get far! That way, that way, and that way! Search in all three directions!"

Meanwhile, Zu An didn't flee any further, but doubled back to Chu Estate instead. The most dangerous place had now become the safest place. All the soldiers had gone outside to search for him, so it was safer just to stay in the estate.

He'd heard what Liu Yao said as well, so he quickly took off his clothes and changed into a green outfit.

Worried that someone would still recognize him, he took out a mask and put it on. Not only did it change his appearance, the bloodstains on his face and the paleness of his complexion also disappeared.

Only after doing all this did he check his own condition. He had quite a few broken bones, and suffered some damage to his internal organs as well. If not for the Primordial Origin Sutra reforging his body twice and making his body far sturdier than an ordinary person's, he might've already been crippled.

"That old man is awfully vicious!" Zu An immediately used the Primordial Origin Sutra to treat his injuries. At the same time, he swallowed a Soul Return Pill that he'd gotten from Divine Physician Ji.

He didn't want to drink 'Faith in Brother Spring'. He wasn't facing anything life-threatening at the moment.

The Soul Return Pill deserved its reputation as well. He could feel a wave of medicinal force spreading outward from his dantian to nourish his entire body. Coupled with the natural properties of the Primordial Origin Sutra, the speed of healing became much more rapid.

He finally found the room where Qin Wanru was locked up. To his surprise, she wasn't tied up, but sat by her bed with a worried frown.

"Who are you?" When she saw that there was someone outside, Qin Wanru jumped in fright, and subconsciously took a step backwards.

"Madam, it's me." Zu An removed his mask.

"Ah Zu!" Qin Wanru was surprised and happy to see him.

"Madam, you've gone through a lot! I'm going to free you right now!" Zu An rushed in to pull her out. Suddenly, he coughed and spat out a mouthful of blood.

"You're injured?" Qin Wanru cried out in alarm.

"It's fine, it's just a small injury," Zu An said with a smile, wiping the corners of his mouth.

Qin Wanru's tone grew serious. "The only one who can hurt you now is probably Liu Yao. He is at the pinnacle of the ninth rank! How could your injuries be light if you managed to escape from him? I also heard him dispatching troops just now. So you were the one he was chasing after!"

Zu An waved his hand and said, "I'm all right, really. I'm tough and thick-skinned, remember? I've already pretty much recovered. I'll tell you the rest of it once we're out."

Qin Wanru shook her head. "I can't leave. They've sealed away my ki, so I'll only be a burden if I go with you. Besides, your father-in-law is still here. How can I leave on my own?"

Zu An found himself in a predicament. If she was sealed, then it was likely that Chu Zhongtian was as well. There was no way he could extract the both of them with his current cultivation.

"By the way, how is Huanzhao?" Qin Wanru asked, her voice full of worry.

"Madam, don't worry. I've already put her in a safe place," Zu An replied.

"That's good, that's good." Qin Wanru exhaled in relief. Something occurred to her, and reached into her collar. Her face suddenly turned red. "Could you turn around?"

"Oh." Zu An was puzzled, but subconsciously turned around.

"This is for you." Qin Wanru said quickly.

Zu An felt her place a square seal into his hand. He examined it, and was shocked to see that this was a military seal!

What threw him off was that the metal seal wasn't cold, but held an incredible amount of warmth. There was even a lingering fragrance on the seal.

Qin Wanru's face grew red. She said softly, "This thing is really important, so I've always carried it on me. I am the duchess after all. Liu Yao would never search my body even if he searched the entire estate. That's why he didn't find this."

Zu An recalled how she had reached into her collar, so he could guess where it had been hidden. He couldn't help but give her another look. There's that much room in there?!

His ogling made Qin Wanru extremely uncomfortable. She coughed lightly and said, "Take this seal and recall the Red Cloak Army stationed in the barracks on the outskirts of the city. Liu Yao has gone too far! Do they think our Chu clan is that easy to bully?!"

Zu An was stupefied. These two really were mother and daughter! They had come to exactly the same decision this time.

"What are you staring at me for?" Qin Wanru gave a frightened start. She subconsciously checked her own clothes, afraid that she had perhaps forgotten to button her collar back up after taking out the seal.

"That was exactly what Chuyan was thinking." Zu An repeated Chu Chuyan's plan to her.

“That’s my daughter.” Qin Wanru also smiled, but sighed immediately after. “But I fear that things won’t go as smoothly as she expects. Hong Xingying is the one who sold us out, and he even has the account book that she’d left with me. It’s all my fault for being so useless. Chu Tiesheng stole the book during his earlier rebellion.”

“Hong Xingying!” Zu An gritted his teeth in anger. It was that bastard’s fault for pointing him out earlier as well. He’d almost lost his life to Liu Yao because of that.

“Don’t worry, I will tell Chuyan these things. We’ll discuss what to do later. At worst, I’ll just slaughter my way in with the Red Cloak Army and unleash hell on them,” Zu An declared.

Qin Wanru was startled. “Please don’t say such ridiculous things! We can endure living like refugees, but there is no way we’ll survive if we rebel!”

The people of this world clearly felt an innate sense of fear towards their ruler. Of course, the emperor of the Zhou Dynasty was the most powerful man in this entire world, so she had even less confidence that any rebellion would be successful.

There came the sound of footsteps approaching, along with a voice dripping with smugness. “Madam, are you sleeping? Xingying has something to talk to you about!”

Chapter 409: Shining Finger

The two of them jumped in fright when they heard this. Qin Wanru pushed Zu An behind her. “Hide! It’ll all be over if he alerts the Imperial Guard.”

Zu An’s battle with Liu Yao was still fresh in his memory. He really didn’t want to repeat that experience.

As such, he decided to hide behind a screen and assess the situation.

The door opened just as Zu An slipped into hiding, and Hong Xingying strutted in.

Qin Wanru adjusted her hair to hide her alarm. “Why are you here?”

“It’s been a long time! I obviously came to give Madam my greetings.” Hong Xingying was clearly in high spirits.

Qin Wanru sneered. “What? Are you here just to rub it in?”

“I didn’t expect Madam to see through me so quickly!” Hong Xingying made no attempt at denial. “As our ancestors said, ‘If riches and glory are not brought home, it’s the same as taking a stroll at night in expensive clothes’. Your Chu clan doesn’t know how to treat your own people properly. I obviously had to seize this chance to take a good look at the regret on your face.”

“You’re right. We do feel a lot of regret.” Qin Wanru snorted. “I most regret not realizing what kind of person you really were, and not realizing earlier just how much better Zu An was!”

Zu An, who was hiding behind the screen, grew elated when he heard this. Is Madam complimenting me on purpose for me to hear?

Hong Xingying was infuriated when he heard Zu An's name. "Zu An? He is just a lucky bastard who is good for nothing! How can any part of him compare to me?!"

His previously handsome face had become completely twisted with anger and hate. He, who always thought quite highly of himself, had been beaten down again and again by this Zu An. Zu An had already become a nightmare that he could never rid himself of.

Qin Wanru sighed. "The fact that you still cannot see all the ways he is superior to you only serves as further proof of your stupidity."

In her opinion, Zu An was more outstanding than Hong Xingying in every respect.

Hong Xingying was well and truly provoked. He suddenly began to stalk towards her. "Didn't Madam always loathe Zu An? Why are you suddenly protecting him? There are rumors floating around that there was something going on between the two of you. It seems like they are true!"

"You are absolutely despicable!" Qin Wanru was furious. She never expected a servant who used to be so respectful to her to speak in such a manner.

Hong Xingying snorted. "Who are you trying to scare? Do you think you are still a glorious and untouchable duchess? Soon, your Chu clan will cease to exist."

"That may not be so." Qin Wanru was in no mood to entertain her any further. "Get lost. You are not welcome here anymore."

"Heh, I fear that you are not the one in charge of this estate anymore." Not only did Hong Xingying make no move to leave, he instead closed in on Qin Wanru, one step at a time.

"What are you doing?" Qin Wanru's expression changed at once when she saw him getting closer and closer. She backed away in panic.

"What do you think I'm doing?" A crazy expression appeared in Hong Xingying's eyes. "If that Zu An could do it, why can't I?"

He wouldn't have dared to harbor such thoughts before, but the Chu clan's destruction was already inevitable. Qin Wanru's six ranks of cultivation had even been sealed off, while Liu Yao's men were all out searching for Zu An.

Qin Wanru looked exactly like a harmless rabbit in his eyes, and she had even provoked him by bringing up Zu An. Some of the evil thoughts that he had suppressed within his heart began to surface.

"You'd better not!" Qin Wanru was horrified. She tried to dodge him, but her cultivation had been sealed away. In her current state, she was no different from an ordinary person. How could she escape?

Hong Xingying caught up to her with a single step. His hand reached out towards her well-rounded chest.

In his eyes, Qin Wanru had always been untouchable. Even though she was exceptionally stunning, he never dared to entertain any such thoughts about her. Now, however, the situation was different. Once these thoughts had been unleashed, he could no longer control himself.

A feverish excitement began to burn in his eyes when he thought about how he was going to enjoy this glorious duchess all by himself. He grew even more stimulated when he thought about how she was related to the first miss.

However, his outstretched hand was not greeted by the soft sensation that he had imagined. Instead, there was an intense pain. A man was standing between them, squeezing his hand and staring at him coldly.

“Zu An!” Hong Xingying was both alarmed and furious to see him in Qin Wanru’s room. “The two of you really are having an affair!”

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for 666 Rage points!

“Shut the hell up.” Zu An smacked him in the face.

A loud, crisp crack rang out. Hong Xingying was hit so hard that he stumbled. A huge red imprint of a hand covered half his face.

Zu An supported Qin Wanru up at once. “Madam, are you all right?”

Qin Wanru nodded and said in a hushed tone, “Don’t let him get away.”

Zu An looked at Hong Xingying. “Didn’t you say that I’m worse than you in every way? Here’s your chance. Fight me one-on-one! If you win, then Madam is yours today.”

Qin Wanru’s mouth fell open.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 213 Rage points!

Hong Xingying was just about to call the guards, but he swallowed his words when he heard what Zu An said. “Really?”

Zu An laughed. “I mean, if you take me out, who will be around to stop you from doing bad things?”

Even though Qin Wanru more or less understood that Zu An was deliberately stalling Hong Xingying, being used as a gambling chip still left her feeling ashamed and angry.

Hong Xingying’s expression flickered several times. He always believed that his strength was greater than Zu An’s, and he had improved considerably since joining the academy. He had even broken through to the fifth rank not too long ago!

However, the movement technique that Zu An had displayed during the Clans Tournament made him slightly nervous.

Then again, he knew that Zu An was seriously injured from Liu Yao’s earlier attack, and he’d had to evade a number of guards afterwards as well. Zu An had to be close to giving out. If he couldn’t even defeat a seriously injured Zu An, he might as well just hang himself.

“Fine!” Hong Xingying drew his sword. He continued with a sinister smile, “Today, I am going to return the humiliation you made me experience a hundredfold!”

His sword thrust out like a viper as soon as he finished speaking.

Even though he didn't believe that Zu An had much fighting strength left, a lion would still chase down a rabbit with all of its strength.

Seeing the object of his bitter hatred had driven him completely mad. His sword strike flew towards Zu An with a hundred and twenty percent of its usual strength.

An exceptionally powerful streak of sword ki surged across the room. Even Qin Wanru could feel the stinging pain from its sharp winds.

Even though her cultivation was sealed, her vision remained.

This sword thrust was as fast as lightning, and the technique was utterly flawless.

The sword even seemed to flicker with a ring of blue lightning! Clearly, he had awakened the lighting attribute when he reached the fifth rank, an element that excelled in speed and power!

Hong Xingying's aptitude was exceptional after all! His progress had been delayed while he was still serving the Chu clan, but it had advanced greatly after joining the academy.

It really was a pity that someone so outstanding had ended up straying from the righteous path.

She immediately grew worried for Zu An. She had seen his cultivation before, but he was seriously injured right now. His opponent also wielded the lighting element, which boosted his speed and power, and would make his own movement technique less effective...

Her mind suddenly froze, her train of thought left unfinished. All the chaotic sword ki had calmed instantly. The two combatants stood facing each other just a few feet apart, still as statues.

She rubbed her eyes to make sure they weren't deceiving her. The tip of the speeding sword was clasped between Zu An's two fingers! Hong Xingying's face was entirely red, yet the sword wouldn't move forward at all.

"What sorcery is this?!" Hong Xingying was equal parts frightened and alarmed.

Zu An didn't reply. He squeezed his fingers against the blade.

A clean, crisp note rang out, and the sword snapped. He didn't stop there. He rushed past Hong Xingying, the tip of the sword still held between his fingers.

"You... you..." Hong Xingying clutched at his throat, looking at Zu An in disbelief. That finger-based martial skill he had displayed was incredibly profound, and both Zu An's speed and strength exceeded his many times over! This was an utterly one-sided demolition!

How is this possible? Did I get off on the wrong side of the bed today...?

He went to his death without ever comprehending. Wait, I didn't even use my bloody elemental skill...

What a pity!

You have successfully trolled Hong Xingying for 1024 Rage points!

...

Zu An was completely unfazed as he watched Hong Xingying die. He was stronger than Hong Xingying to begin with, and together with the buff that the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra gave him, getting rid of him was just too easy.

"What sort of martial skill was that?" Qin Wanru felt as if she was still dreaming. However, she knew that that finger clasp wasn't as easy as it looked. It was definitely an extremely profound finger technique.

"It's the culmination of a thousand years of... Ahem, ahem, it's called Shining Finger." Zu An really didn't like the word sunflower anymore, so he changed the name.

"Shining Finger?" Qin Wanru was stunned. "That's a pretty good name," she praised.

"Of course it is!" Zu An felt a little proud of himself.

"You should leave. The guards will surely have sensed the elemental fluctuations, and come here to investigate." The sound of hurrying footsteps came from outside as soon as Qin Wanru finished speaking.

"Madam, please be careful!" Zu An wasted no time either and left quickly. On the way out, he collected Hong Xingying's corpse using the Brilliant Glass Bead, to avoid drawing Liu Yao's suspicion.

He headed straight towards the outskirts of the city, where the barracks housing the Red Cloak Army was located. He flung Hong Xingying's corpse into the forest along the way. The vicious beasts of the forest would deal with his corpse in less than half a day.

After taking care of it, he took out the mirror and called Chu Chuyan.

Chu Chuyan's beautiful face appeared on the surface of the mirror soon afterwards. "Ah Zu, you're injured?"

She could immediately tell that something was off.

Zu An felt a surge of warmth. "Don't worry, these minor injuries won't bother me too much."

He then repeated everything he'd seen and heard in the Chu Estate to her. At the same time, he told her about his own worries. "That account book is in the court's hands right now, so we might really end up as refugees soon. Do you know where the Blackwind Stockade is? Why don't we head over there and become kings of the mountain? We can wander the wilderness as a couple."

"Who wants to become the king of the mountain?" Chu Chuyan scoffed. She quickly followed up with a question. "The book I gave you last time... that 'Sweet Pampered Wife: Dominating Sword Immortal's Ninety-Nine Days of Searching For Love'... do you still have it?"

Bringing up this book clearly left her embarrassed as well. Just saying the title out loud made her want to throw up.

Zu An's face darkened. "Can't you tell what kind of situation we're in? Why are you bringing up something like this now?"

"Just answer me. Do you still have it?" Chu Chuyan's tone was urgent.

“Of course! Who else would read something like that apart from you?” Zu An sniffed.

A smile immediately broke across Chu Chuyan’s face. “Then all is well. That is the real account book.”

Chapter 410: Justice is Accompanied by Life and Death

Zu An was dumbfounded. There were question marks all over his face.

He quickly took out that dominating sword immortal book, but it seemed like a completely normal romance novel! Even though some sentences contained a few strange word choices, they didn’t add up to much.

As if sensing his confusion, Chu Chuyan said, “The account book has always been the Chu clan’s main defensive weapon, but it could also bring a huge disaster upon the Chu clan as well. Countless powers have longed for this book, which made me constantly think about how best to keep it as safe as possible.

“However, it was impossible to guard against every possible means. Even if I hid the book in the most secret of locations, it could still be found. That was why one day, I decided to make two copies, one real and one fake. The real account book was hidden in code within Dominating Sword Immortal. After all, no one would suspect that something meant for a young girl’s amusement would contain such important information.”

Zu An was confused. “If I remember correctly, Snow liked to read that book with you, and she was sent by the Shi clan. Weren’t you afraid that she would realize something?”

Chu Chuyan smiled proudly. “Could you be unaware that there are many volumes to the Dominating Sword Immortal?”

Zu An gave a start, and noticed a number in the corner of the book’s cover that proclaimed it as the ninth volume in the series. “Oh my god, why does such an embarrassing book have so many volumes? This author really is something special.”

Chu Chuyan’s face gained a tinge of red. “This book isn’t as bad as you make it sound, okay? The sadomasochism shared by the male and female lead is pretty moving.”

Zu An had no words for that.

He put away the account book with a sigh. “I used to think you were as pure as a white flower. Who knew that you could actually be so sneaky? Not only did you deceive me, you even lied to your own parents!”

He could tell from the way Qin Wanru blamed herself that she had no idea the book she had lost was the fake account book.

Chu Chuyan was somewhat embarrassed. “I didn’t want to deceive you either, but there are just too many people after this account book! It would have been even more troublesome if one of you accidentally leaked this information. Instead of relying on your acting skills, wasn’t it better to just hide it from the start?”

Zu An couldn't resist a dig at her. "Other people lie to their dads, but you lie to your dad, your mom, your spouse, and your younger sister at the same time!"

Chu Chuyan's mouth fell open wordlessly.

"But it all turned out well in the end," Zu An laughed. "It looks like we don't have to live as refugees after all."

Chu Chuyan said with a smile, "I've completed my own preparations over here. If I'm not mistaken, then news should reach Brightmoon City within the next few days."

Zu An exhaled in relief. "That's good. I can strut around with the Red Cloak Army until then. Damn those guys, these bastards think they can just come and go as they please! Do they think the Chu Estate is a public restroom?!"

Chu Chuyan snorted. "What public restroom? Can you pick a better analogy, please?"

...

When the two of them finished their call, Zu An headed straight to the Red Cloak Army's barracks. His previous worry and discouragement had been completely swept away. He now felt amazing.

"Are you all braindead? The Chu clan is already on the verge of extinction, and you still refuse to go in to save it?!"

"Sorry, the Red Cloak Army has always followed these ironclad rules. Unless the Master himself comes, or someone else comes bearing the military seal, we absolutely will not make a move."

"The Master and Madam have both been detained! How could they possibly come here?"

"Don't you even trust us? Would I, the Chu clan's young master, possibly wish harm upon the Chu clan?!"

...

He heard a group of people arguing noisily outside when he arrived at the barracks. The one who seemed most worked up was a fatty, as round as a ball. Who else could this be but Chu Yucheng of the third branch?

The presence of a second youngster surprised him. Compared to Chu Yucheng, this one looked incredibly heroic and valiant.

"Chu Hongcai?" Zu An frowned. Wasn't he being detained?

Even though the evidence pointed to the fact that Chu Hongcai had not participated in Chu Tiesheng's rebellion, he was still Chu Tiesheng's son. His father had been killed in the rebellion, and there was no question that he felt extremely resentful.

Several officers wearing red armor were standing in front of them with firm and resolute expressions. They refused to budge, no matter what the two youngsters said.

“Ah Zu?” By this time, Chu Yucheng had already noticed Zu An. He waved at him right away. “Hurry! Help me convince them!”

“Zu An!” Chu Hongcai was alerted to Zu An’s presence by Chu Yucheng’s words. “Hand over your life, you bastard!” He yelled immediately.

He drew his sword and thrust it at Zu An.

Zu An immediately deflected it with his Shining Finger. Chu Hongcai felt a strange and powerful force travel up his sword and into his hand, and he almost lost his grip.

His reactions were lightning-quick, however, and he used this momentum to launch his next attack. His sword darted about, swift and nimble.

“Guys, stop! We can’t fight amongst ourselves!” Chu Yucheng immediately interposed himself between the two of them.

Zu An frowned. He stopped immediately, worried that he might hurt him.

Chu Hongcai also moved his sword aside, his face a mask of rage. “You damned fatty, get out of the way!” He hollered. “I cannot live under the same sky as the man who killed my father!”

Chu Yucheng cursed. “Are you that stupid? What level of cultivation did your dad and Hong Zhong possess? How could Zu An have possibly killed them? Old Mi was the only one in the Chu Estate at the time who possessed that much strength. Do you really believe every random boast that Zu An makes? Besides, when I got you out, you promised me that you would throw aside your own grudges for the sake of the current crisis!”

Zu An’s face darkened. This fatty really needed to lose some weight, but he was extremely sharp. He’d actually seen right through his boasting.

Chu Hongcai stared blankly for a moment. In truth, he had known this all along. But this matter had been weighing down on him constantly, and he desperately needed a target for his hatred, in order to find the motivation to keep on living. That was why he had subconsciously chosen Zu An as his enemy.

Seeing that he had calmed down, Chu Yucheng turned to Zu An and said, “Ah Zu, you came at the perfect time. I want to lead some men to save Master and Madam, but these guys aren’t listening at all. Help me persuade them!”

He turned back to face those officers. “Perhaps you guys think you don’t have to listen to us since we’re from the branch families, but Ah Zu is here as well! He is the husband of the first miss, so he is part of the main branch. You’ll believe him, right?”

Those officials still shook their heads. “Without the military seal, we cannot comply no matter who it is.”

“Are you guys talking about this?” Zu An fished out the military seal.

The officers all knelt respectfully when they saw it. “Justice can be found everywhere, accompanied by life and death. The heavens are a mirror, our red cloaks serve as proof!”

Chu Yucheng and Chu Hongcai were stunned. They had spent so much energy trying to convince these officers that even their throats had gone dry, yet these fellas didn't budge an inch. But they knelt down as soon as they saw Zu An?

Could you at least not look so snobbish?

Zu An said in a serious tone, "Follow me. We're going back to rescue the Chu clan."

He had initially thought that he would need to say some things to motivate these guys a little, especially since they were facing the imperial guard. To be human was to hesitate, right? Yet, in the end, these officers required no persuasion at all. They quickly summoned all the soldiers and completed their preparations in no time at all.

Seeing how stupefied Zu An was, Chu Yucheng helped to dispel his confusion. "The Red Cloak Army has remained loyal and devoted to our Chu clan ever since the time of our ancestors. They've fought side by side through countless battles. The duties of a soldier are passed on from father to son, and the wives that they married are all maids from the Chu clan. In this way, every single generation of the Red Cloak Army are descendants of the Chu clan, so our fates and theirs are closely intertwined."

His tone was full of pride. This army was clearly a great source of pride for the Chu clan.

"Of course, for the sake of preventing anyone within the clan from using this army to start a rebellion, an ironclad rule was established. Only if the clan master personally arrived, or if the military seal was present, could these troops be mobilized." Chu Yucheng gave him an envious look. "I didn't expect that Uncle would even be willing to give you the military seal! It looks like he really trusts you."

Chu Hongcai couldn't resist a snort when he heard this. He was clearly unsatisfied with this result. "I want to make this clear. I am not doing this for you but for the Chu clan! I want to protect my mother too, because she didn't participate in the rebellion either."

Zu An smiled. "Brother Chu really is a man of honor. I have always admired your integrity. If the Chu clan makes it safely through this crisis, I believe Master and Madam will surely pardon your mother."

It really was quite strange, now that he thought about it. Chu Tiesheng was such a treacherous and despicable character, yet his son, apart from being a bit of a disgusting simp for Qiu Honglei, was upstanding and honest. They were two completely different extremes!

Chu Hongcai's expression finally eased considerably when he heard these words. "Thank you," he said quietly.

He obviously understood Zu An's status within the clan now. With his guarantee, his mother's safety shouldn't be an issue anymore.

The three of them marched into Brightmoon City, accompanied by the three thousand members of the Red Cloak Army.

The city gates had long been locked up when they arrived, and many soldiers stood guard along the gate towers. However, when they saw this red-clad army, all of them were stunned. They gripped their weapons more tightly, and their hands began to sweat.

All of them were aware of the Red Cloak Army's reputation. If they really ended up fighting, they would be absolutely crushed.

A high ranking official challenged them from the city gate. "Mobilizing without an order from your superiors? Is your Chu clan trying to start a rebellion?" he roared angrily.

Zu An recognized this man as Vice Magistrate Pang Chun. As such, he urged his horse forward and held up the military seal. "Who said that no order has been given? I am acting under Brightmoon Duke's orders to bring these men back to defend the Chu clan."

"The respected imperial envoy is currently investigating the Chu clan. What else could you all be doing if you aren't starting a rebellion?" Pang Chun replied.

Zu An chuckled coldly. "It seems like any random clan can come in and bully our Chu clan recently! We are worried that the respected imperial envoy might have been deceived. All we want is to head over and have a chat with him. The Chu clan is already in critical danger. If Vice Magistrate insists on standing in our way, I will have no choice but to disregard our past friendship."

As he finished speaking, the Red Cloak Army gave a uniform battle cry. To a man, they drew their blades and bows in preparation for combat.

For a long time, Zu An had been confused as to the existence of armies in this world, especially when individual cultivators were so strong.

In that instant, however, he finally understood. Even though the individual cultivation of each soldier within the Red Cloak Army wasn't anything special, he could see a light blue glow flowing through their bodies, linking them together. This was surely the result of a formation which seemed to gather up all of their strength.

Suddenly, he felt a great pressure being exerted outward from this army. It was far greater than that of what he'd felt from Liu Yao!

The soldiers guarding the city gates were in even worse shape. The overwhelming pressure made all of them instantly turn pale, and their limbs began to feel ice-cold. They all turned to Pang Chun, urging him to make a decision quickly.

Pang Chun was anxious as well. He understood that these regional troops had not been in combat for a long time, and were no match for these Red Cloak Army elites. However, he still had his duty to carry out! How could he let them inside the city?

I guess dying for my country is the only choice.

At this moment, a carriage slowly made its way over from the outskirts of the city. Noticing the situation, it stopped near the city gates.

The curtains lifted, and a woman in a graceful skirt slowly walked out. "Lord Pang, why are the gates closed in broad daylight? Please open them so that I can enter."

Pang Chun didn't know whether to laugh or cry. "Young miss, could you somehow have missed what is happening here right now?"

The one who had emerged from the carriage was none other than the City Lord's daughter, Xie Daoyun. She turned around as if struck by a sudden realization. "Oh! Young master Zu is also here?"

Pang Chun's face twitched. Young miss, can you at least put a little more effort into your act?