

## Immortal 411

### Chapter 411: Sarcastic Old Fart

Zu An hadn't expected to run into Xie Daoyun here. "Where did Miss Xie just return from?" he enquired hurriedly.

Xie Daoyun slowly walked over to him and said with a smile, "There was a poetry exchange in the neighboring commandery. I've just returned from there."

The poetry exchange hadn't actually ended yet. However, she hurried back once she heard that something major had happened to the Chu clan.

This young woman really had to be praised for pursuing the arts so whole-heartedly. He would have teased her a little under different circumstances, but he wasn't in the mood right now.

"Miss Xie, please step aside. Blades have no eyes, and I fear that you might accidentally be injured," warned Zu An. The Red Cloak Army and the city defense were already on the verge of battle. If they really engaged each other, a delicate girl like Xie Daoyun might well be ripped apart.

Xie Daoyun instead suppressed her voice and said, "Are you stupid? Why aren't you capturing me to force them to open the gates?"

She staggered, throwing her straight into his arms. Then, she let out an absolutely terrified scream. "Oh my! What are you trying to do? I'm so scared!"

Zu An stared blankly at the young woman who had flopped in his arms.

Chu Yucheng and Chu Hongcai were left in a daze, as were the three thousand members of the Red Cloak Army

Even Pang Chun and the defenders of the city gates couldn't believe what they had just witnessed.

Miss Xie, do you think we're blind?

Zu An was incredibly amused. If she had been part of the entertainment industry in his previous world, everyone would have been cursing her for being just another pretty face! She was sure to win the Worst Actress Award.

However, he quickly went along with her. In a flash, he brought a blade up to her neck and shouted loudly towards the city gates, "I am holding Miss Xie hostage! Open the gates if you don't want anything bad to happen to her!"

At the same time, he leaned closer to Xie Daoyun and whispered into her ear, "Thanks."

Xie Daoyun had never been carried in a man's arms before. She had been in such a hurry to help out earlier, and had given it little thought. However, just by being carried like this, and feeling the warm air from his lips caressing her ear, she felt all the strength drain from her. Her face reddened, and she said quietly, "You owe me two favors now."

This man had promised her a song the last time she helped him, yet she had never received anything after all this time.

Zu An chuckled and said, "I'll never be able to repay my debt of gratitude. How about I compensate with my body?"

Xie Daoyun had no reply.

Why is this man so shameless? Does Chuyan know about this?

Pang Chun yelled, "Zu An, you and Miss Xie can be considered friends, yet you dare use her as a hostage? Isn't this going too far?"

Zu An said with a smile, "I will definitely pay City Lord Xie and Miss Xie a visit in the future to apologize. Vice Magistrate, I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to make a compromise today."

He chose his words carefully, tacitly choosing to not expose the situation.

Pang Chun's expression darkened. In the end, he gestured for his men to open the gates. He knew that he wouldn't be able to stop Zu An and his men if they fought. Now that he had been offered an excuse to back down, there was no point in stubbornly persisting with it. He was sure that the Xie clan would back him up if he was somehow made accountable for his actions.

The other soldiers had long since pissed their pants in fear. They heaved a collective sigh of relief when they heard this, and quickly opened the gates.

In his mind, Pang Chun berated these soldiers for being so cowardly, but he continued to act tough on the surface. "Zu An, you will definitely regret what you've done today."

Zu An didn't seem to mind at all. "I'm someone who only cares about the now. I won't ask too much of the future."

As the gates slowly swung open, Zu An said in a clear voice, "Our objective is to protect the Chu clan. Do not harm any civilians. You are not permitted to act against any of the city's soldiers without my order."

"Yes, sir!" his troops responded in unison. There was no unnecessary noise or chatter. They all had extremely serious expressions, as if they were all machines built for war.

Pang Chun envied them intensely. These are real elites! My subordinates are all useless idiots!

Xie Daoyun's fragile heart was shaken. No wonder her father had always harbored reservations towards the Chu clan! No matter where, this army of theirs was a power that couldn't be overlooked.

"Enter the city!" Zu An commanded. The Red Cloak Army entered through the city gates in formation. A few soldiers formed a rear guard, their bows at the ready, prepared to defend the advancing column from an ambush.

Zu An felt an intense admiration. Just how much time and resources did the Chu clan invest to raise such an army? No wonder the Chu clan was still in the red despite their massive salt business.

This kind of army of elites could even make an inexperienced bum like him seem like a famous general!

Chu Yucheng nudged his horse over with a grin on his face, his expression full of admiration. "Ah Zu, since you still need to command the troops, how about we put Miss Xie on my horse instead? I'll take care of her, and I guarantee that I won't let her escape!"

Xie Daoyun darted behind Zu An immediately and rejected his proposal right away. "I don't want to!"

Chu Yucheng stared blankly at her.

Miss Xie, he's your kidnapper... What the heck are you doing, hiding in his arms? Can't you show even a little professionalism?

Chu Hongcai laughed in delight. "Fatass, you're about to crush your horse to death all on your own. How do you still have the nerve to approach Miss Xie?"

"Piss off! I don't wanna hear that from your monkey-lookin' ass. This is called being 'thick', okay?" Chu Yucheng was pissed.

As the two of them argued noisily off to the side, Zu An said to Xie Daoyun, "I've really wronged Miss Xie this time."

Xie Daoyun kept her head lowered but grunted in acknowledgement. Her face was slightly red.

Zu An jumped off and carried Xie Daoyun onto his horse. With a flick of the reins, he urged the horse forward.

Pang Chun found a chance to approach Xie Daoyun as they entered the city. "Miss Xie, what are you trying to do? Does the City Lord know what you're doing?" he asked via ki transmission.

Xie Daoyun's lips remained still as she replied. "Were you really going to battle the Red Cloak Army if I hadn't given you an excuse to step down? For starters, this is a battle between the Chu clan and the empress. Why are you getting involved?"

Pang Chun was stunned by her revelation. Only now did it all make sense to him. Oh yeah, I'm on King Qi's side. Why am I getting all excited?

Of course, he would never say that out loud. He was still an official of the court after all, and his duty to his station had made the earlier situation almost impossible to sort out.

"Thank you Miss Xie!" Pang Chun chuckled. Miss Xie had a truly sharp mind. Not only had she defused the crisis, she'd taken personal responsibility for it.

"Contact my dad for me. Maybe this matter will finally make that old fart come to a decision," Xie Daoyun sent. Zu An set a quick pace, rapidly leaving the city gates far behind, and she was only able to get this final message in.

After being in his arms for a while, Xie Daoyun suddenly frowned. "Can you shift your sword behind you? It's poking me."

Zu An's face reddened. He adjusted the thing in his lap a little. "Okay."

This really wasn't his fault! Xie Daoyun's body was so soft, and she was giving off a nice fragrance. The two of them were riding so close to one another. It would have been weirder if he'd had no reaction at all.

After a while, a tinge of redness appeared on Xie Daoyun's neck as well. She had clearly realized what that thing had been.

However, neither of them opened their mouths to broach this topic.

Just like that, the two of them quickly followed the Red Cloak Army to the Chu Estate.

Liu Yao had received the news a while ago. He led his contingent of imperial guardsmen out to face them. "What are you all trying to do? Are you thinking of rebelling?"

Zu An said coldly, "General Liu must have misunderstood. A lot has happened in Brightmoon City recently, and we were worried that some hoodlums might start some trouble while you guys are carrying out your investigation. I've brought these men with me to ensure the safety of all of our esteemed guests from the capital."

After saying this, he gave an order to the Red Cloak Army. "Surround the Chu Estate. Do not allow anyone to disturb General Liu's investigation of this case!"

Meanwhile, still seated in his lap, Xie Daoyun blinked. Everyone said that this kid was from the streets. Then why did his methods seem like something a wily old fox would cook up? Who in the world had taught him these things?

He and the general were clearly enemies, and yet he'd found a just and honorable reason that the other party couldn't argue against!

This guy was a veteran in this arena!

"You little bastard, do you think that I, or these imperial guardsmen with me, need your protection?" Liu Yao was furious. "Get the hell out of my sight!"

As soon as he finished his sentence, a translucent projection of a large palm materialized in the air, reaching towards Zu An. This fella had managed to get away once, and because of that, he had managed to whip up this mess. He had to capture this brat!

He wasn't about to underestimate the three-thousand strong Red Cloak Army. While they were yet to find a stable footing, he would take the opportunity to capture their leader. With him gone, the leaderless army wouldn't be a problem at all.

As for this bloody Zu An, he would show him what proper torment looked like. How dare an ant like you dance in front of me?

## **Chapter 412: Persuasion through Virtue**

Zu An's face grew pale when he saw the hand descending. Just as he was about to evade, a troop of archers rushed out from the Red Cloak Army behind him, and fired a volley at the translucent projection.

The arrows these men fired were wrapped in a layer of red light. The flight of orderly arrows resembled a meteor shower.

Zu An was amazed. This was just like the arrow enchantments in the movies!

The red meteor shower crashed against the translucent hand. The projection was instantly scattered, and the arrows continued to travel forward.

However, they had already exhausted a lot of their power, and were quickly cut down by the imperial guards.

Zu An's eyes widened. He would never have expected an army to possess such power.

Liu Yao's expression had grown terribly ugly. His attack had failed spectacularly in front of so many people! He roared in rage and drew his blade. A hundred-meter long streak of blade ki hacked downwards towards the Red Cloak Army. He wanted to completely disrupt this army's formation!

"Assemble!"

Orders sounded one after another. At once, the men of the Red Cloak Army raised their shields forty-five degrees over their heads. Their small shields swirled with blue radiance, and a giant shield materialized in the sky above them.

Liu Yao's hundred meter blade of ki had looked incredibly powerful in the beginning, but it immediately paled in comparison to this massive shield.

There was a tremendous boom. The blade of ki shattered into several large chunks, and those chunks broke apart further into smaller pieces.

A circular wave rippled out across the surface of the giant shield, but it remained intact.

Zu An observed this entire process intently. He noticed that this ripple was eventually distributed across each individual soldier's shield.

Even the greatest power would no longer seem as terrifying once it had been divided several thousand times.

How could Zu An pass up such an excellent opportunity? He glanced at Liu Yao and snickered. "Does General Liu have something else to show us?"

This provocation was just too much. Liu Yao felt as though he was about to implode from anger.

You have successfully trolled Liu Yao for 999 Rage points!

"If you have any skill at all, stop hiding behind your army! Come out and face me!" Liu Yao roared. He could crush this puny shrimp with a single finger, yet he couldn't do anything if he hid behind an army.

Zu An sighed. "Is it just me or are you really stupid? An expert at the pinnacle of ninth rank wants a young junior to challenge him alone? Is there something wrong with my ears?"

This man had already made it clear that he wanted to bring down the Chu clan, and there was no way he would change his mind even if Zu An was a little nicer. Since that was the case, what was the point in

holding back? He would just say whatever it was he wanted to say. That way, he'd be able to vent his frustration, and even earn some Rage points along the way.

"You..." Liu Yao almost choked on his breath. He knew that his demand had been unreasonable, but he'd thrown it out mainly because this kid's smug attitude had driven his rage to the edge of madness.

You have successfully trolled Liu Yao for 991 Rage points!

Xie Daoyun spoke up at this time. "General Liu, young master Zu has come here mainly out of worry for the safety of Brightmoon Duke and the others. I ask the general to recognize his filial piety and permit his troops to guard the surrounding area."

Liu Yao gave Xie Daoyun a look. He knew that she was giving him a reason to back down, so his expression eased a little. "You must be Xie Yi's daughter? I've heard about your talent, even when I was in the capital city. You were one of the candidates considered to become the crown princess. We were close to becoming relatives."

Zu An gave Xie Daoyun a surprised look. He hadn't expected her to be one of the crown prince's choices. Didn't that mean that he'd almost embraced the crown prince's woman?

Xie Daoyun blushed. "General Liu is joking. This humble one has only shallow learning and ordinary looks. I am not worthy of the crown prince's kindness."

She had heard about this before, but everyone in the Xie clan knew that there were too many variables to be looked at when choosing the crown princess. The Xie clan's background wasn't illustrious enough to be connected to the crown prince in marriage, so it wasn't a big deal to them.

Furthermore, with what they knew about the crown prince, she had no desire to be with him even if she were chosen.

Liu Yao continued, "Why is Miss Xie here? I heard that they took a hostage to get into the city. Were you the hostage? Hmph! These people are absolutely out of control! They dare to publicly seize the City Lord's daughter, and use her as leverage to barge into the city! Speak up if you have any grievances! I and all of these imperial guards will bring you justice!"

He had already made his decision. As long as she gave the word, his subordinates would kill Zu An. If the Red Cloak Army dared to resist, that would be perfect.

Even though the number of imperial guardsmen was small, their strength was not. This also gave them an avenue to involve the City Lord's own troops.

Even if they ultimately lost, it would still be easy enough for him to escape afterwards. The Red Cloak Army could absorb his attacks by relying on their formations, but they couldn't prevent his escape.

Meanwhile, fighting against the Imperial Guard and the City Defense Army would be an offence serious enough to warrant the eradication of a clan. There would be nothing left for him to be worried about, and he would have completed the task he'd been given.

No one could have predicted that Xie Daoyun would smile at him and say, "Thank you General Liu for your good intentions. Ah Zu and I are friends. He didn't actually kidnap me."

When he heard this, Chu Yucheng nudged Chu Hongcai and whispered, "Bro, why the heck do so many girls like him? He's surely not as attractive as me, and my body is so much better than his."

Chu Hongcai gave his bucket-like build a look and sneered. "Do you have no self-awareness at all?"

However, the scene from the Immortal Abode appeared in his mind again. Back then, Qiu Honglei had seemed so full of affection for Zu An. He immediately felt heartbroken.

The other Red Cloak Army soldiers looked at each other in dismay as well. After all, Chu First Miss was already the equivalent of a fairy in their eyes, yet she had ended up marrying someone they had never even heard of.

Quite a few of them had looked into this mysterious young master, and had obviously heard of his various affairs. They weren't expecting the City Lord's esteemed daughter to give up so much for him! Just what was so good about this fellow?

In contrast to their curious and interested expressions, Liu Yao's expression had gone completely dark. "Miss Xie, do you know what you are saying?"

Xie Daoyun smiled and said in a refined and courteous manner, "This junior is fully aware of her actions."

Liu Yao was appalled at how stubborn she was. Is the Chu clan already on King Qi's side? I have to report this back to the empress as soon as possible.

Seeing his lack of a reply, Zu An said, "We want to meet Master and Madam. I hope General Liu will grant us this favor."

Liu Yao felt like his eye sockets were splitting. This brat was going too far!

You have successfully trolled Liu Yao for 666 Rage points!

At that moment, a bright and clear laugh rang out. "Brightmoon Duke hasn't been convicted of anything yet, so I believe he is not a criminal. It's perfectly reasonable and fair for family members to wish to see each other."

A group of riders were headed in this direction. The one in the front was none other than the City Lord of Brightmoon City, Xie Yi. At his side was a man who was even prettier than a woman; none other than Xie Xiu.

"Dad!" Xie Daoyun called out with joy at their arrival.

Xie Yi gave her a look. "Get over here already. Hugging another man like that... are you trying to start a scandal?"

"Oh..." Xie Daoyun lowered her head in guilt and stuck out her tongue. Then, she said quietly to Zu An, "Ah Zu, I'll take my leave."

"Okay. Thank you for today," Zu An replied with a smile.

Xie Daoyun's face went red. She quickly walked over to Xie Yi's side.

Seeing how his sister was acting, Xie Xiu couldn't help but give Zu An a look. I wanted to be your friend, but it seems you want to be my brother-in-law?

Then again, when did my sister start getting along with him?

Liu Yao spoke as well. "So, it's City Lord Xie! Why have you come?"

Xie Yi smiled. "I heard that some misunderstanding had taken place, so I came here to have a look."

"What sort of misunderstanding could there be? Since Zu An is considerate enough to offer to secure the surrounding area, I'll leave it to him." Liu Yao suddenly smiled. Now that Xie Yi was clearly standing with the Chu clan, he knew that, if he insisted on a fight, he would be the one that would be losing out. There was no need to persist with this any longer. Either way, once there was concrete proof, they could slowly settle the debts owed by the Chu clan and Xie clan at their leisure.

Zu An was stunned at his instantaneous transformation. He thought that he was already shameless enough, yet compared to these old foxes, he was clearly still lacking! There was no way he would be able to change appearances that quickly.

However, since the other party had backed down, there was no reason for him not to abuse this fact. "General Liu, why couldn't you have said that earlier? If you had, I wouldn't have had to use my virtue to convince you."

Liu Yao flew into a rage. "What did you say?!"

You have successfully trolled Liu Yao for 666 Rage points!

### **Chapter 413: An Ingenious Gift**

Zu An shrugged. "Strength is everything in this world. Since strength is a virtue, I've clearly used my virtue to convince you."

Liu Yao was about to explode from anger. How could there be such a shameless person in this world?

This was indeed a world where the strong reigned. If he'd lost to someone stronger, then so be it.

But how many men did Zu An have on his side? Had he relied on his own strength at all? He was relying on this Red Cloak Army, which numbered three thousand!

Fucking dogshit!

You have successfully trolled Liu Yao for 999 Rage points!

Zu An had a taunting look on his face. Come at me, bitch. He now realized how moderately Chu Zhongtian had acted all this time. He had such a huge force behind him, yet he tried his best not to offend anyone. That was why everyone tried to step all over him, and treated the Chu clan like a bloody doormat.

Since that was the case, he would instead take a completely opposite approach! He needed to make an example out of someone, and this Liu Yao was the best candidate.



Sometimes, you just had to kick someone's ass to scare the others off!

Xie Yi was worried that these two sides might really get into a fight. It seemed wrong to mediate, yet not stepping in also seemed wrong. He quickly walked over to appease Liu Yao, "General Liu, please do not get angry. This humble official has some things to consult with you about. This way please..."

He led Liu Yao over to one side as he spoke. Xie Daoyun also hurried over. She was beautiful and graceful, and shared a slim connection to the crown prince, which made her a perfect choice to help ease the tension.

Liu Yao gave Zu An a resentful glare, but decided against any further action in the end. He followed Xie Yi to the side for a chat.

Xie Xiu arrived at Zu An's side. He sighed and said, "Brother Zu's performance today has completely changed my opinion of you! You actually dared to go against a cultivator at the pinnacle of ninth rank!"

Zu An scoffed loudly. "What's so special about the pinnacle of ninth rank? I've already played around with master and grandmaster rank cultivators before."

He really wasn't lying. Forgetting Old Mi and Wei Dan for a moment, none of those individuals in the secret dungeon had been weaker than Liu Yao.

Xie Xiu stared at him without speaking.

Since he didn't know about these things, he treated Zu An's words as simple boasting. He didn't really care about it anyway, since there was something else he was concerned about. "By the way, what is going on between you and my sister? I've never seen my sister take the initiative to help someone else like this before!"

"Oh, just a little bit of this and a little bit of that," Zu An said with a smile.

"What do you mean?" Xie Xiu began to panic.

"Just go ask your sister." Zu An smiled mysteriously. Then, he called for some people to follow him into Chu Estate.

The imperial guardsmen moved to stop them, but when they recalled how even Liu Yao had been defeated, they were at a loss as to what to do.

Fortunately, Zu An didn't bring everyone in, but only selected a few dozen to accompany him. The rest of the men were left outside the gates.

Xie Yi, who had been keeping an eye on him, finally exhaled in relief. He was glad that Zu An had the good sense to know when to stop, and hadn't become openly hostile towards the Imperial Guard.

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were shocked and overjoyed when they saw him enter with his Red Cloak Army escorts. Chu Yucheng and Chu Hongcai hurried off to visit their own family members after they paid their respects.

Qin Wanru was the more excited of the two. "Ah Zu, you didn't disappoint me after all!"

“Master, Madam, it’s all right now. With the Red Cloak Army outside, none of these people would dare to start any trouble in Chu Estate!” Zu An smiled.

Chu Zhongtian was still worried. “But the debts that the salt commissioners have left behind are still there. Even if they don’t torture us to extract our confessions, the Chu clan is still done for if they continue with the investigation!”

Qin Wanru snorted. “What’s there to be scared about? We’ll just live as refugees in the wilderness if it comes to it. The Blackwind Stockade and the Whale Gang were doing just fine before. Is our Chu clan inferior to them?”

This woman really is irritable! Thank goodness Chuyan isn’t anything like her.

Zu An wiped the sweat off his brow and said, “Relax, it’s not that bad. It’s not as serious as Madam thinks. The account book that was stolen isn’t the real one.”

Qin Wanru and Chu Zhongtian looked at him, bewildered.

Zu An thus explained what Chu Chuyan had done with the account book to them.

Chu Zhongtian roared with laughter. “My Chuyan really is smart! Hahaha!”

Qin Wanru also smiled. The huge weight bearing down on her had finally lifted. However, another thought struck her immediately afterwards. “That brat! How dare she deceive me? I’m going to discipline her properly once she gets back!”

...

Zu An ordered the Red Cloak Army to set up camp nearby as he left the interior of the Chu Estate. It was clear that they wouldn’t leave until the investigation of the Chu clan was over.

Xie Yi was worried that hostilities would accidentally spark between the Red Cloak Army and Imperial Guard, so he had Xie Xiu and Pang Chun order the City Defense Army over, in case anything happened.

Liu Yao felt extremely irritated, but the Red Cloak Army was just too strong. Xie Yi had also clearly expressed his intentions to shield them. His hands were well and truly tied.

However, he was in no rush himself. Time was on his side. All he needed was to examine the account book. Once he had concrete proof, it would be easy enough to convict the lot of them.

Once they were convicted, no one would be able to help the Chu clan, unless Xie Yi openly rebelled.

Even if Xie Yi did step in to help the Chu clan, it wouldn’t matter either. He would just ask the emperor to issue an imperial edict, and then they would proceed to suppress all those who dared to step in.

Hmph, Zu An, just you wait! You can keep up your smugness for a few more days. Soon, I will make you understand just how cruel this world is!

Zu An felt his lips curl when he saw the Rage points flowing in. Coward. Come at me now if you have the guts!

He chose to ignore Liu Yao, and went to find Xie Daoyun instead.

She'd been a great help earlier, after all, and he had to thank her properly.

Zu An was surprised to see that her carriage was about to leave. "Where is Miss Xie going?"

The carriage curtains were drawn, revealing Xie Daoyun's graceful figure. "Miss Zheng is getting married today. Since we share a good relationship, I am going to offer her my congratulations."

"What?!" Zu An was shocked. He had been so preoccupied with everything that was going on, it had completely slipped his mind that it was already the following day.

"Teacher Zu, do you want me to bring a congratulatory gift in your stead?" Xie Daoyun winked mischievously.

She didn't know about the secret that Zu An and Zheng Dan shared, but the two of them shared a teacher-student relationship in the academy. It was still expected of Zu An to congratulate her on her marriage.

"No need, I'll congratulate her myself." Zu An said in a downcast voice.

Xie Daoyun was shocked to see how sullen Zu An's expression had become. However, she didn't think too much of it. "Ah Zu, do you want to go together?"

She was worried that Zu An might get into further conflict with Liu Yao. The Xie clan might not be able to stop them if that happened, so she wanted to separate them first, if possible.

"Sure, give me a moment." Zu An smiled. He ran back to explain a few matters, and then he entered Xie Daoyun's carriage. "I'm ready."

Xie Daoyun blushed. I did say we could go together, but I didn't tell you to get in my carriage!

She opened her mouth to object, but the two of them had just ridden on the same horse, so it felt a little unnatural to refuse him now. She left her objections unvoiced.

However, she still felt a little uncomfortable sitting with another man in such a private carriage. She immediately looked for a topic to alleviate her awkwardness. "Ah Zu, what do you plan to do now?"

"Obviously, I will act according to how the situation unfolds," Zu An replied.

Xie Daoyun hesitated, but decided to carry on with her reply. "I shouldn't really be saying these things, but as a friend, I can't watch you continue to sink into the abyss."

Zu An was stunned. "What is Miss Xie saying?"

Xie Daoyun pursed her thin lips. "I know that Brightmoon Duke has chosen a neutral stance. However, even though maintaining neutrality may seem as though you are refraining from offending either side, the reality is that you will end up upsetting both sides. All the disasters that have fallen upon the Chu clan have been precisely because of this. The Chu clan is already on the verge of collapse! Are you all really still going to maintain your neutrality?"

Zu An said with a smile, "Is Miss Xie trying to recruit me in King Qi's stead?"

Xie Daoyun sighed. "I won't deny that I am trying to rope you in. However, these are also the sincere words of a friend. Even though your Chu clan has the three-thousand strong Red Cloak Army, what can you all do against the powerful imperial court with just a mere three thousand men?"

"Moreover, once you lose your Chu clan's land, the salt mines and the iron in the mountains, what can your Chu clan rely on even to sustain this force?"

"Everyone knows what Brightmoon Duke is like. I refuse to believe that he will allow the Red Cloak Army to attack caravans like how the Blackwind Stockade does. Without any income, the Red Cloak Army will soon crumble. When that happens, it would be too late for regrets."

"What you say makes a lot of sense," Zu An said. "We will carefully consider your offer."

Xie Daoyun looked carefully into his eyes for a long time, before she finally said, "I don't know why, but I feel like your words aren't sincere. I don't sense the slightest bit of nervousness from you. Instead, it looks like everything is going according to your plan. However, I really do not understand how the Chu clan can possibly come back from this!"

Zu An smiled and said, "Let's talk about something casual, like romance. I don't want to discuss this any further."

The image of the two of them riding on a single horse suddenly appeared in her head, and her cheeks grew red. "Who wants to talk about romance with you?" she said with a snort.

She looked out the windows with a guilty expression. She suddenly noticed that there were soldiers following behind the carriage, which startled her. "Why did you bring the Red Cloak Army with you? What are you trying to do?"

Zu An looked out the window in the direction of the Sang clan's estate. "I'm going to congratulate them on their wedding."

He'd left most of the Red Cloak Army behind to protect the Chu clan, but brought a few hundred men along with him to the Sang Estate.

Xie Daoyun obviously didn't believe him. She said in panic, "I know that you and the Sang clan share many grudges, but this is Zheng Dan's important day! Please don't do anything reckless!"

She began to feel regretful. What in the world had she been thinking when she'd invited him to come with her? This guy loved to start trouble! Disturbances sprang up around him no matter where he went.

"Don't worry, I won't." Zu An smiled. His eyes were hard to read.

Xie Daoyu didn't know what to make of his response. Not knowing what to say, she couldn't help but worry inside. The first thing she was going to do after reaching the Sang clan was to send someone to contact her father.

Zu An looked out the window. Unlike the heavy atmosphere that had hung around the Sang Estate during his last visit, it was now decorated with large red lanterns and symbols of luck.

A lively atmosphere had already sprung up around the estate. The marriage of a governor's young master and the Zheng clan's first miss was a huge deal. All the important figures in the city were present.

If Zu An hadn't suddenly brought the Red Cloak Army into the city, Xie Yi and Liu Yao might have been here as well.

The servant at the gate announced the guests and their gifts.

"First miss Xie has arrived with twenty-eight of the highest quality eastern pearls as a congratulatory gift."

"The Chu clan... huh? The Chu clan's young master has arrived with... with a green hat as a congratulatory gift." [1]

The festive and lively Sang Estate suddenly grew quiet at these words.

All of the people here were respectable figures. Most of them knew about the grudge between the Chu and Sang clans.

They had just been discussing the confrontation between the Red Cloak Army Zu An brought back and Liu Yao. Why was one of the main figures involved suddenly showing up here?

Also, what in the world was up with that hat?

#### **Chapter 414: Your Green Hat is Crooked**

News of this quickly reached Sang Hong and Sang Qian. They led a group of men over to welcome them.

Sang Qian was dressed in festive wedding finery, his face radiant and full of confidence.

Everyone around him had nothing but praise in their hearts for him. Sang Qian had been born handsome, and now that he was all dressed up, he looked even more suave and outstanding.

The guests from all over Brightmoon City whispered among themselves.

"Young master Sang looks quite happy today!"

"Of course he does! You'll be excited too if you could marry a beauty like Miss Zheng and bring her into the bridal room."

"But the arrival of the Chu clan is rather inauspicious... I wonder how they will deal with that."

"Tsk, the age of the Chu clan is already over. Even the emperor himself favors the Sang clan. What can the Chu clan even do?"

...

The endless discussion washed over him, but Zu An was completely unaffected. With an amused expression, he watched the father and son duo arrive.

“So it was my dear niece Xie who came! We’ve cost you quite a lot this time, haven’t we? Haha. Your father already brought over a generous gift earlier on.” Sang Hong deliberately avoided looking at Zu An, and only greeted Xie Daoyun.

Xie Daoyun smiled and said, “Uncle is too polite. That was my father’s own kindness, while this is my own. I am good friends with Miss Zheng, so it is only proper that I bring a gift myself.”

Sang Hong said with a sigh, “Niece is both beautiful and considerate! I really wonder who will be so blessed as to marry you in the future!”

Xie Daoyun blushed, and she lowered her head in embarrassment.

Zu An was clearly unhappy. “Lord Sang, aren’t you being too discriminating? Both of us arrived at the same time, but you’re only praising Miss Xie? What about me?”

Sang Hong felt his mood sour immediately.

Sang Qian, too, was at a loss for words.

Everyone around them looked in his direction. Do you really have no idea why those two only praised Miss Xie?

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 250 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 357 Rage points!

Sang Hong pretended to be surprised. “If it isn’t young master Zu! All of you are guests. Naturally, our Sang clan welcomes all those who come to offer their sincere congratulations to us.”

Sang Qian wasn’t as composed as his father. “What kind of gift is this?” he demanded angrily.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 666 Rage points!

He noticed that Zu An’s gift was a hat, and a green one at that.

The green hat bore no significance in this world, but he instinctively knew that this wasn’t a good gift.

Zu An smiled. He handed the hat over to him. “I liked the hat’s color, and thought that it suited Brother Sang’s style. Here, I’ll put it on for you.”

He moved to put it on his head right after he said this.

Sang Qian was afraid that there might have been something hidden inside. He took a step back in alarm. “Who gives hats as a wedding gift? Are you only here to cause trouble?!”

Zu An sighed. “I came here with a sincere gift! Because of some people, our clan has become so poor that I couldn’t bring over a gift as precious as Miss Xie’s pearls. However, my intentions are equal! Could it be that the powerful Sang clan only receives expensive gifts, and refuses all gifts that aren’t worth as much?”

Even though they knew that he was deliberately starting some drama, the guests around them still began to whisper among themselves. Indeed, it’s the thought behind the gift that counts, even if it’s not valuable.

Moreover, Brightmoon Duke was well known for the strength of his character, and many people in Brightmoon City had received his favor. To see that the Chu clan couldn't even afford to bring a proper congratulatory gift was unfortunate, and they couldn't help but feel sympathy.

Sang Qian was clearly angered by the whispers around him. "You bastard, you came here to cause trouble!" he yelled.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 777 Rage points!

"Qian'er!" Sang Hong shouted at him. "Everyone who comes today is a guest! Today is your day of celebration, so you must accept all gifts."

"But..." Sang Qian felt like something was amiss, yet he couldn't really put his finger on what it was.

Zu An smiled. "Lord Sang is most wise. Come, Brother Sang, let me put this on for you myself."

After saying this, he put the hat straight onto Sang Qian's head.

Sang Qian wanted to move out of the way, but his dad shot him a look, and he forced himself to stand rigidly in place.

Of course, if they had known the meaning behind the wearing of a green hat, they would never have agreed to it.

"Sigh, don't move, Brother Sang! It's getting all crooked." Zu An adjusted his hat for him again, and only then did he nod his head in satisfaction. "Not bad, not bad. This hat really suits Brother Sang."

He had a feeling that, many years later, the phrase "wearing a green hat" would circulate throughout this world, and it would all be because of his moment...

Sang Hong said in a low voice, "Young master Zu, are you satisfied now? If there is nothing else, then please head on home. Of course, if you wish to attend the ceremony and have a drink, we welcome you as well."

Zu An put away his smile and said in a serious tone, "No way! Of course I'm not done yet. I came here today precisely because I have some debts to settle with Lord Sang."

"You have some debts to settle with my father? Like hell you're settling anything today!" Sang Hong roared angrily.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 358 Rage points!

He came from a distinguished background, so he always looked down on a nobody like Zu An. However, it was precisely this nobody who had ended up acquiring Brightmoon City's number one beauty. She was a goddess that countless young masters couldn't even imagine themselves with, and yet she had ended up in the hands of a toad like Zu An.

That was why he was always irritated the moment he saw Zu An.

Sang Hong sneered as well. "Brightmoon Duke might have the right to speak such words in front of me. What right do you have? You're still far off."

His tone was full of disdain. Many of the guests also roared with laughter when they heard this. In their eyes, Zu An was clearly overestimating his capabilities.

Leaving aside the Sang clan's status for a moment, Sang Hong is still an eighth rank cultivator. How can a young brat like you even have the nerve to say something like that?

"Does this give me the right, then?" Zu An said with a snort. He issued the pre-arranged signal, and a group of Red Cloak Army soldiers barged in ruthlessly, surrounding all of them.

Sang Qian's face grew dark. This was his wedding celebration, so he'd obviously left the majority of the River Patrol Army in their barracks, and had only brought a few higher-level officers with him. Only a few clan servants protected the courtyard of the estate right now. They were no match at all for these Red Cloak Army soldiers.

Sang Hong was actually quite shocked. He already knew that Zu An had brought the Red Cloak Army into the city to face Liu Yao's Imperial Guard, but he hadn't expected him to bring them here as well.

Of course, having been in politics for so long, he was already used to swapping appearances quickly. "What is young master Zu trying to do? Surely we can just talk things out?"

Zu An sighed in his heart. Without the Red Cloak Army, who would ever treat a fifth rank cultivator like him seriously?

Strength was still the most important thing in the end.

Since the other party was clearly concerned by the Red Cloak Army, there was no need for him to hold back. "You put on that high and mighty act just now, but now you're happily willing to talk things out? Don't you feel the least bit embarrassed?"

"You'd better not go too far!" Sang Qian roared in fury.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 888 Rage points!

Not even someone as shrewd as Sang Hong could endure such constant harassment from a child. "I just didn't want a noisy dog to disturb the wedding. Don't think for a moment that I am actually scared of you."

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 996 Rage points!

He took a step forward, and a great wave of pressure surged outward, fueled by his eight ranks of cultivation. Many of the guests around him were alarmed by this sudden development. Unable to withstand the pressure, they backed away one by one.

Many members of the Red Cloak Army stepped forward to help block the pressure that Sang Hong was releasing.

Zu An stood perfectly still, as if nothing was wrong. He said with a smile, "General Liu looked down on our Chu clan's Red Cloak Army, and insisted on fighting. Unfortunately, he lost, and lost badly. Does Lord Sang wish to try your luck as well?"



Sang Hong's expression flickered several times. He reacted immediately, quickly retracting his aura. "Young master Zu must be joking. The Chu clan's Red Cloak Army is famous throughout the lands. How could this humble one not know about that? However, as inhabitants of this world, we should all seek to be reasonable. A wedding is a major event. Barging in with an army on someone's wedding day to bully them is hard to excuse no matter where it happens, am I correct?"

"Bully?" Zu An almost burst into laughter. Sang Hong was the last person he had expected to use this word against him.

"Ah Zu!" Xie Daoyun also tugged at his sleeves. She sent him an urgent transmission via ki. "You'll cause a public outrage by doing this! The troops serving under Sang Hong will hear of this soon. If a huge battle breaks out, the Red Cloak Army won't be able to fend off both the City Defense and Imperial Guard, no matter how strong it is!"

Of course, as a member of the Xie clan, she didn't want to see the situation get out of hand. If it did, they would surely be dragged into it as well.

"Fine. Out of respect for Miss Xie, I'll reason with you all." Zu An's words immediately made Xie Daoyun blush.

## **Chapter 415: The Wedding**

"What a slick talker!" Sang Qian sneered. This guy really never gives up a chance to tease a girl!

But Miss Xie is from a distinguished clan, and she would clearly despise such crass... methods.

Somehow, Xie Daoyun looked extremely shy right now! Sang Qian grew more and more annoyed. What the hell is wrong with these girls? Do all girls like this type of shit?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian 412 Rage points!

Zu An was a little surprised. What's up with these sudden Rage points? Are you jealous that I'm more popular than you?

Of course, he didn't mind them at all. In fact, the more points the better!

"So, what does young master Zu have to say to us?" Sang Hong looked at the Red Cloak Army soldiers behind Zu An and roughly assessed their numbers.

"I believe Sang Qian was lying on his bed like a dead dog not too long ago." Zu An deliberately glanced over at Sang Qian while saying this.

"Dead dog?" Sang Qian was so angry he wanted to draw his blade, but he couldn't find the hilt of his sword despite reaching for it several times. He belatedly remembered that it was his wedding day, and he obviously wasn't carrying a weapon with him.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 666 Rage points!

Sang Hong held him back to prevent him from acting recklessly. He was worried that his son might ruin everything.

Zu An continued, "It was you who begged me to save him, and you even agreed to many conditions. Among them, you agreed that the Chu clan would not be your enemy anymore, and that you would take no further action against the Chu clan. Is that correct?"

Sang Hong smiled. "I believe there must be some sort of misunderstanding. I have always admired Brightmoon Duke's character, and our relationship with the Chu clan has always been good. Why would I act against the Chu clan?"

The expressions of everyone around them became very strange. This was the perfect example of lying through your teeth!

Seeing Sang Hong's apparently friendly smile, Zu An cursed him in his heart for being a wily old fox. "Lord Sang cannot cannot alter a promise no matter how slick your tongue is. After all, you made a vow. Are you not afraid that you would suffer heavenly wrath by going back on that vow?"

Sang Hong put away his smile. "Indeed, I did make such promises. I have also kept my promises, and have not gone back on my word."

"You haven't gone back on your word?" Zu An became furious. "Then why are Liu Yao and the Imperial Guard here conducting an investigation? I know that you were the one who bribed Chu Tiesheng back then, and you obtained the Chu clan's account book from him. This was what you used to entrap the Chu clan!"

Personally, he was quite curious. Sang Hong had violated his oath, after all. Why hadn't he suffered the wrath of heaven?

After all, more than one person had told him about the severity of violating an oath.

This was something held dear by everyone in this world. All of them feared the so-called wrath of heaven.

Why hadn't Sang Hong suffered this heavenly wrath?

He himself had no idea what this heavenly wrath was. He wondered if he had to expose this to the world before the heavens would do anything.

That was why he'd come all the way here and started this commotion.

The crowd erupted into a clamor when they heard what he said. Even though the upper classes of Brightmoon City knew all about the Sang clan's intentions, most of the lower-level clans weren't aware of the details. Now that they had heard this, all of them were equally shocked and excited. They were all curious to see how the Sang clan would respond.

This marriage ceremony really was worth coming to, and they counted themselves fortunate to be able to witness such a huge drama unfold.

Sang Hong wasn't as flustered or angry as Zu An imagined he would be. He replied calmly, "Please consider the amount of time between Chu Tiesheng taking your account book and you healing Qian'er. Back then, I vowed that I wouldn't act against the Chu clan anymore, and I've abided by that vow these past few days. I've only been focused on preparing for my son's wedding. As for the investigation by the

Imperial Guard, even if I were somehow involved, it was surely something I put into motion beforehand. It doesn't clash with my oath."

A smug smile spread across Sang Hong's face after he said this. Clearly, he looked down on Zu An, and thought very little of his attempt.

Zu An was stunned. What the hell? Even such a thing was considered okay?

Sang Hong looked at Zu An, and his smile became ambiguous. "Is young master Zu satisfied with this reply?"

Zu An's expression flickered several times. In the end, he sighed and said, "Lord Sang really is good at scheming and plotting. I'm honestly impressed."

"Young master Zu is too kind with your praise. You are still young, but with your wit, I believe you have excellent prospects as well," said Sang Hong.

Xie Daoyun was surprised. She sensed great appreciation in Sang Hong's voice. Why did it sound as if he was trying to win him over?

Far from seeing it that way, Zu An only felt even more disgust when he heard this. Wasn't he just mocking him for being inexperienced?

He had always been extremely proud of his trolling skills. He was always the one pissing people off and embarrassing them, yet he had ended up falling for this old man's tricks.

Putting aside their enmity, he really did have to give Sang Hong some respect. This old man had terrifying foresight and a brilliant, scheming mind, and he acted boldly and decisively. His plotting had even brought the massive Chu clan to the brink of annihilation.

At that moment, a different voice spoke. "Since this misunderstanding has already been cleared up, I would like to ask young master Zu to please leave. Do not disrupt my little girl's important day any further."

The one who spoke was the Master of the Zheng clan, Zheng Yutang. He looked at Zu An with an unkind expression. After seeing how his daughter had behaved around Zu An the last time, he could tell that something was not right, even though his daughter hadn't said anything.

Everyone else thought that Zu An had come because of the issues revolving around the Chu clan, but he was worried that it might have something to do with his daughter. That was why he wanted to chase this little fiend away before he caused any further problems.

Of course, he couldn't be blamed for this. Between the son of a governor and a drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan, anyone would choose the son of a governor.

Furthermore, the Zheng clan was already bound to the Sang clan in many ways. There was no way they could change Zheng Dan's proposed partner now.

However, Sang Hong smiled and said instead, "Actually, if young master Zu wishes to join the wedding feast, we will still welcome you."

Zheng Yutang wanted to say no, but it seemed inconvenient to say so, since his own daughter was the reason for it. He could only swallow his words and go along.

Zu An said with a laugh, "Lord Sang is too kind. I won't refuse the offer."

Sang Qian's expression became ugly. He obviously didn't want to see this guy at his wedding! However, since his father already gave the offer, he couldn't refuse Zu An now. The best he could do was to turn around with a snort, and head back inside.

His reaction did not go unnoticed by Zu An. Oh? He seems pretty unhappy.

As such, he said, "Miss Zheng is my student after all, and young master Sang is getting married to Miss Zheng. Shouldn't you greet me respectfully the next time you see me?"

Sang Qian ground his teeth and kept walking.

Sang Hong shared his son's feelings, and even Xie Daoyun was left speechless.

Sang Qian pretended not to hear anything. He hastened his steps, his face as dark as a thunderhead.

Sang Hong was also worried that something else might happen if he stayed out there any longer, so he quickly headed back inside as well. His heart was filled with incalculable regret. Just why did I have to say that he could stay?

Zu An let out a deep sigh. "I fear that Miss Zheng won't be at all happy once she gets married..."

Everyone whipped their heads around to look at him. Who said this sort of thing at someone else's wedding? Then again, considering his grudge with the Sang clan, it wasn't all that surprising.

"Why?" Xie Daoyun couldn't help but ask.

Zu An explained, "I spoke so loudly, yet young master Sang didn't hear me. Doesn't that mean that there's something wrong with his ears? Divine Physician Ji told me that the cause of such an issue, especially when one is so young, is most likely a weak kidney." [1]

"A weak kidney?" Xie Daoyun's face went red. As someone who was well read and knowledgeable, she naturally knew what this signified.

Sang Qian staggered and almost fell. He was so angry that he turned around and made ready to assault Zu An.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 811 Rage points!

Sang Hong pulled him back. "Calm down! He's taunting you on purpose. Today is an important day for you. Don't complicate matters any further."

"But that bastard keeps strutting around with that smug look! I'm about to go crazy!" Sang Qian's face was entirely red.

Sang Hong consoled him. "Don't worry, the Chu clan will be finished soon. He won't be able to act this cocky for long."

Sang Qian gritted his teeth. "I will skin him alive and make him regret being born into this world!"

Sang Hong frowned. He actually admired Zu An's talent and wanted to take him under his wing. However, if his son harbored such a severe grudge against Zu An, there would be no point in forcefully trying to win him over. I'll think about this later.

After the earlier turmoil, the wedding program began to move more quickly.

Eventually, someone shouted, "The bride has arrived! The bride has arrived!"

Everyone turned their heads to look. A woman dressed in the bright-colored clothes of a new bride slowly walked over, escorted by a maid.

Even though there was a veil over her face, it was still obvious from her gorgeous figure that she was an incredible beauty.

Zu An recognized Zheng Dan from a single look. After all, he was familiar with every part of her. She seemed a little more voluptuous than before, more mature, and a large part of that was because of him.

A smile subconsciously spread across Sang Qian's face when he saw Zheng Dan. Hmph! Zu An, all you can do is make empty boasts! Soon, I'll be the one with a beauty in my arms, while you can only watch jealously from the side.

He quickly walked forward and held onto the end of a red silk ribbon. Zheng Dan held the other end. Just like that, he led the bride inside.

Zu An felt a slight impatience when he saw that the two of them were about to conduct the wedding rites. Why wasn't the thing that he'd prepared here yet?

#### **Chapter 416: On the Verge of Erupting**

Zu An panicked. Even though he was certain that what he was waiting for would surely come, he wasn't certain if it would be arriving today.

If it came today, everything would be perfect. If it didn't, however, was he supposed to just watch as Zheng Dan and Sang Qian cemented their union as husband and wife?

Even though they had both known that this was going to happen, and he'd even gone as far as to poison Sang Qian with Ji Dengtu's drug to make him impotent, he couldn't prevent a strange mix of emotions from welling up in him as he watched the two of them proceeding with the wedding rites.

Sigh, it was just a casual fling! What am I doing, getting my emotions mixed up in this? Aren't I just shooting myself in the foot?

A gentle voice spoke into his ear. "Ah Zu, I heard you gave Sang Qian a green hat?"

Zu An raised his head. Zheng Dan was walking while holding that red ribbon. Everyone was praising her for her gracefulness, yet none of them knew that she was actually talking to Zu An through ki transmission.

"What else can I give him?" Zu An replied in a huff.

"You're too evil." Zheng Dan's voice sounded different, and her expression under the veil was surely more amazing. "Sang Qian might kill you if he knew what a green hat really meant."

Zu An laughed. "You are the only other person who knows what it symbolizes. He won't find out if you don't tell him."

Zheng Dan sighed. "Ah Zu, you've already had your fun with him. It's already too late to stop this marriage between our two clans. Please don't do anything that would put you in danger."

"Too late? Maybe not," Zu An said with a cold laugh.

Zheng Dan bit her lip. "I would just drop everything and leave with you if I only had to worry about myself, but this marriage goes beyond just Sang Qian and myself. It represents the joining of the Zheng and Sang clans, an arrangement that will bring mutual benefits to countless people. I really cannot back out of it."

"I'm sure you also know that I am only marrying him in name. I won't let him touch me. Besides, after what you did, he can't do anything to me even if he wanted to."

Zu An replied, "Don't worry, I won't make trouble for you through my actions."

Zheng Dan sighed deeply. "I hope so."

A host of ceremonial procedures followed. Sang Hong glanced in Zu An's direction several times, and sighed in relief when he saw that he was only drinking alone.

The situation would quickly grow complicated if Zu An really decided to start something during this wedding.

Xie Daoyun gave Zu An a strange look. "Ah Zu, is there something going on between you and Miss Zheng?"

"Why would you think that?"

"I don't know either, but I feel like your relationship with her is quite strange," Xie Daoyun said. "Zheng Dan would always consult you about arithmetic in the academy, but that's probably unavoidable if she wishes to help out with her family's business. However, you're acting weird today as well! You look like a frustrated lover, full of unrequited love, drowning your feelings in alcohol."

Zu An was stupefied. Women really possessed a ridiculous sixth sense! She'd managed to get this close to the truth from just these clues?

"Miss Xie's imagination really is rich. You must have read quite a few romance novels in your spare time." He naturally wouldn't admit to it. Even if he didn't care, he still had to show consideration for Zheng Dan's reputation.

Xie Daoyun's face heated up. "I read all kinds of books in my spare time," she said, her voice tinged with embarrassment.

Zu An laughed and said, "Have you read 'Sweet Pampered Wife: Dominating Sword Immortal's Ninety-Nine Days of Searching For Love'?"

Xie Daoyun looked at him in shock. "You like that book too?"

Zu An felt his jaw drop open.

You've really read it?

Was this book some kind of drug? Why else would both the normally cold and arrogant Chu Chuyan and the publicly acknowledged genius Xie Daoyun actually appreciate this kind of stuff?

Xie Daoyun immediately grew excited when he mentioned this book, and launched into an enthusiastic and highly-detailed discussion with him.

Why in the world would Zu An have read this book, though? He tried his best to reply to her absent-mindedly. He had already seen his fair share of such dramas with female leads in his previous world, so he could more or less guess at the plot.

Eventually, the loud voice of the master of ceremonies sounded. "It is time for the bride and groom to pay their respects!"[1]

Zu An frowned. All of the other rites had been observed, and the ceremony had moved into the most important phase.

Sang Qian and Zheng Dan walked forward together, with the red ribbon between them, stopping at a table covered in red cloth in the center of the hall. Incense and red candles were arranged on top. This was known as the 'heaven and earth table'.

The master of ceremonies shouted: "First, pay your respects to heaven and earth!"

The two of them slowly knelt down, and bowed three times towards this table.

"Second, pay your respects to your esteemed parents!"

Sang Hong and Zheng Yutang sat on an elevated platform, stroking their beards as they observed the two people below them with smiles. This scene clearly brought them great happiness.

"Lastly, pay respects to each other!"

This was the final step. The two of them were about to pay their respects to each other as official spouses.

A sudden, sharp crash interrupted the proceedings, and everyone immediately looked towards the source of the sound.

"Sorry, sorry, my hand slipped. My wine cup fell accidentally and broke," Zu An said in embarrassment.

Both Sang Hong and Sang Qian were less than amused by this.

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 444 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 444 Rage points!

This is such a vital moment! Just how much of a fool did you have to be to accidentally drop a wine cup at this moment? Aren't you basically telling everyone that you don't approve of the marriage?

The expressions of the guests began to change, one after another. They were about to be treated to yet another mouth-watering drama.

Sang Hong coughed. "Young master Zu, please be more careful."

With that, he waved his hand towards the others. "Please continue."

The master of ceremonies shouted, "Pay respects to each other!"

Another crash, and a second cup fell to the ground.

All eyes darted towards the shattered cup by Xie Daoyun's feet, whose face flushed red. She hurriedly waved her hands. "It wasn't me, it wasn't me..."

Sang Hong obviously knew that it wasn't her. His gaze shot at Zu An. "Young master Zu, do not go too far!"

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 666 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 666 Rage points!

Zu An shrugged innocently and said, "That wasn't my fault. She was the one who dropped it."

Xie Daoyun was extremely annoyed. This guy was too shameless!

Sang Hong took a deep breath, and then he said to everyone. "It's just a misunderstanding. It's all just a misunderstanding. Please continue."

The master of ceremonies gulped. His throat was about to go hoarse from all this hollering. He really hoped that nothing else would go wrong. "Husband and wife, pay your respects to each other!"

Zu An was holding a plate in his hand, about to throw it to the ground, when he suddenly froze. A figure was already standing in front of him, grabbing on tightly to his wrist. "Young master Zu, you aren't going to say that this is also an accident, are you?"

Zu An was shocked to realize that his wrist had been grabbed. With a twist of his wrist, he struggled free at an inconceivable angle. He quickly backed up several zhang and looked at Sang Hong vigilantly.

An eight rank expert was no joke after all!

Sang Hong was stunned. He hadn't expected that Zu An would be able to struggle free from his grip.

The technique he'd used seemed to be the Pei clan's Entangling Feathersilk Art. Did he have the Pei clan behind him?

"The one called Zu, Are you trying to start trouble? Guards, capture this despicable bastard!" The constant interruptions had left Sang Qian utterly furious.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 999 Rage points!

By now, his River Patrol Army brothers had already arrived. Together with his father's eight ranks of cultivation, there was no need to fear the Chu clan's Red Cloak Army anymore.



His soldiers had already been given prior instructions. They rushed out one after another, at the same time that the Red Cloak Army burst in to surround and protect Zu An. A battle was on the verge of breaking out at any second.

The surrounding guests quickly fled to the sides. Even though such drama was always worth watching, it wasn't worth getting swept up in, especially if they were too close!

Sang Hong's patience was running thin as well. "Zu An, I have always treated you with all due respect, yet you've disturbed my son's wedding again and again. State your intentions!"

You have successfully trolled Sang Hong for 567 Rage points!

"What do you mean? Your clan is clearly to blame for providing cups and plates that are so easily knocked over! Why are you blaming me for that?" Zu An cried out as though severely wronged. Since this old man wants to play the fool regarding the Chu clan's problems, then he should have no problem with me learning a trick or two.

"Dad, don't waste your time talking to him! Just get rid of him!" Sang Qian grabbed a blade out of his servant's hand.

Zheng Dan raised her veil slightly, looking at Zu An with a face full of worry. She had no idea how he was going to wriggle out of this situation.

He wasn't usually such a reckless person! What was going on? Could it be because of me...?

Her expression oscillated between joy and worry.

Sang Hong snorted and said, "If I don't teach you a lesson today, you might come away with the impression that my Sang clan is easily bullied!"

With a wave of his hand, archers appeared on the rooftops all around them. All of them had drawn bows, aimed towards Zu An and the Red Cloak Army.

After being humiliated by the Red Cloak Army earlier, how could he not take any preventative measures?

When Sang Qian had contacted the River Patrol Army, he had also secretly assembled some men to lie in wait nearby.

Seeing the situation Zu An was in, Zheng Dan could no longer hold herself back. "Father-in-law, today is Dan'er's important day. It would be really inauspicious if blood was spilled today!"

Xie Daoyun was alarmed. Zheng Dan's words seemed reasonable and fair on the surface, but she felt as though Zheng Dan was definitely speaking up for Zu An!

Sang Hong frowned. His would-be daughter-in-law's words had clearly given him pause.

Just as he was hesitating, the main gate opened, and a shrill voice called out, "An imperial edict has arrived!"

## **Chapter 417: A Sea Change**

All eyes turned towards the main gate at the announcement that an imperial edict had arrived. A wave of frenzied discussion followed.

“Why would an imperial edict arrive at this time?”

“Are you dumb? Lord Sang is the trusted aide of the emperor and empress, so it’s only natural that they would offer their congratulations! Who knows, Miss Zheng might even be fortunate enough to receive a title!”

“Tsk, even though the Zheng clan has always been a great clan in Brightmoon City, they are still a merchant clan without much status. This changes everything!”

“What’s the point of getting jealous? Why don’t you produce a great beauty like Miss Zheng as well, if you have the skill? Maybe then you’ll have a chance to change your social class too.”

...

Sang Qian was extremely pleased when he heard these discussions. “Dad, the emperor actually sent his congratulations! This is an amazing surprise!”

Sang Hong didn’t reply. Instead, his expression became grave. From what he knew of the emperor, his son’s marriage wasn’t worth His Majesty’s attention.

It really was hard to say whether the imperial edict was good or bad, considering that it had come at such a time.

Soon, a group of soldiers entered in a single file. These warriors were extremely proud. It was clear that being stationed in the capital had given them a natural sense of superiority towards those in Brightmoon City.

These soldiers split into two rows in an orderly manner. Then, an elderly man dressed in official robes slowly walked in, holding up a bright yellow scroll.

This man had a full head of white hair, yet he didn’t give off a feeling of great age. Rather, he seemed to glow with life.

His sharp gaze swept across the surroundings. Zu An was startled. The presence that this person gave off was even greater than Liu Yao’s!

Next to him, Xie Daoyun gave a startled cry. “A king has come personally!” she said in a hushed voice. She recognized his identity from his official robes.

“King?” Zu An’s eyes narrowed. After all, in this world, a king wasn’t determined purely by bloodline. That was only one of the prerequisites. The second was that the individual had to have reached the master rank!

This was actually a master rank cultivator!

He wondered who was the strongest—this guy, Old Mi, or Wei Dan.

In truth, these three were all way stronger than him. Any one of them could easily kill him, so it didn't really matter who was stronger.

"King Liang!" Sang Hong immediately rushed over to greet him. As fellow officials in the capital city, he obviously recognized this individual.

King Liang Zhaoyi was an uncle of the current emperor. He was the oldest member of the imperial clan, as well as a man of virtue and prestige.

Sang Hong felt his unease grow. He had good self-awareness, and knew that not even his own wedding would be worthy of a personal visit from King Liang, let alone the marriage of his son.

King Liang nodded in his direction, and then said with a loud voice, "Linchuan Commandery Governor Sang Hong and Brightmoon City River Patrol Army Commander Sang Qian, come forward to receive the imperial edict!"

"Long live the emperor!" Sang Hong and Sang Qian were both shocked. They quickly knelt down to receive the imperial edict.

King Liang unfolded the imperial edict with a cold expression and began to read the contents. "The righteous emperor's imperial order states... The father and son of the Sang clan have been granted this emperor's favor, yet they forged evidence to slander the local officials and court ministers, causing great disorder within the court. Their official positions will be stripped henceforth, and they are to be escorted back to the capital immediately!"

Zu An didn't understand some of the strange words used in the imperial edict, but he understood the most important line. A smile appeared on his face. His wife really was dependable! A new imperial edict had been dispatched so quickly! He was worried that it would take a few more days. By then, Zheng Dan and Sang Qian would've already been married, and it would have been too late!

An uproar broke out once all those gathered around understood the contents of the imperial edict.

What was going on?!

Wasn't Sang Hong the emperor's trusted aide? His prospects had seemed boundless just a second ago. Why had they suddenly been stripped of their positions and treated like criminals?

The one most shocked by the news was undoubtedly Sang Qian. He'd been waiting for the emperor's blessings with a big smile on his face, imagining just how he was going to brag to everyone in his circle. Who would've expected that he would end up trapped in this type of nightmare?!

The huge gulf between his expectations and the harsh reality left him completely stupefied. "No! That's impossible! It's definitely fake! It's fake!"

He couldn't control his emotions any further, and began to yell.

King Liang frowned. He said coldly, "Oh? Are you claiming that this imperial edict I am personally reading off of is fake?"

“No! That’s not what I’m saying! But...” Sang Qian’s thoughts were already a complete mess. “We’ve worked so hard for the emperor all this time! Why are we being punished instead? There must be some kind of misunderstanding! Yes, there’s definitely a misunderstanding!”

King Liang’s voice took on an icy edge. “Are you questioning His Majesty’s judgment?”

Sang Qian wanted to say more, but his father stopped him. Sang Hong asked, “I had a bad feeling from the start, but I never expected that it would really end this way. However, I am still quite confused. How did I lose? What went wrong?”

King Liang chuckled. “Lord Sang will understand once you return to the capital city.”

Sang Hong felt his heart well up with resentment. As fellow subjects of the court, he would have expected at least that much from the other. Why was King Liang kicking them while they were down?!

He suddenly remembered a case back in the capital that he’d presided over, involving a servant under King Liang. He’d judged that case impartially, and showed no preference towards King Liang. That was probably when he had taken offence. Was he using this as a chance to get revenge?

The emperor knows about this grudge, yet he deliberately sent him! Could it be that I, Sang Hong, have already been thrown away completely?

King Liang sneered when he saw his flickering expression. With a wave of his hand, he ordered, “Arrest everyone involved!”

His group of ruthless soldiers charged towards the members of the Sang clan as soon as he finished speaking.

The sudden flurry of activity finally snapped Sang Hong out of his daze. With a bitter laugh, he said, “Today is my son’s wedding day. Could you at least allow them to complete the final portion of their marriage ceremony?”

“Young master Sang is getting married?” King Liang looked at Zheng Dan, who stood nearby. She was dressed in beautiful wedding clothes, which instantly named her the bride. She had a very good figure—Sang Hong knew how to pick his daughter-in-law. “Since you’re already married, then you’re a member of the Sang clan. You’re to be taken away as well, in accordance with the emperor’s will.”

Sang Hong felt as if a bucket of cold water had been dumped on his head. If they were going to the extent of capturing a new bride, didn’t that mean that the emperor wanted to execute the whole clan, down to the third generation?

He knew that the emperor had always been a harsh and merciless man. He had even considered himself one of the emperor’s blades these past few years, one that specialized in getting rid of troublesome individuals.

Even though he was all alone now, he believed that he had always remained loyal and devoted to the emperor all these years. He’d even gotten rid of many thorny problems for the emperor! He’d been sure that he would have at least had a few decades of retirement to enjoy. As for his skills going to waste, that would be something he would think about later.

He never thought that this day would arrive so quickly.

While Sang Hong felt like he had been thrown into an ice bath, The members of the Zheng Clan were even more alarmed. They thought that they found a great patron to latch onto, and that they were finally going to climb up into the upper echelons of society. However, they were now faced with a calamity that was about to lead to the eradication of their entire clan!

Zheng Yutang rushed out and said, “Long live King Liang! We are being wronged! We never participated in the Sang clan’s conspiracy! We had no idea what was even going on! Even this marriage has been forced on us by the Sang clan, using their authority! We are also victims!”

Sang Hong was in such a daze that he heard none of this, but Sang Qian exploded with anger. “You shameless bastard! Who was it that begged us to accept this marriage? How dare you speak such words now?!”

Zheng Yutang immediately said, “Everyone, look! I am supposed to be his elder, yet he speaks to me without a trace of respect! You can easily imagine how unfair our clan has been treated! What can our Zheng clan do if the Sang clan wields their authority to force this marriage upon us? Please judge this situation fairly, King Liang!”

All the other guests had strange looks on their faces. The Zheng clan had not stopped bragging about their upcoming marriage with the Sang clan recently. Every single member of the clan, from the clan master down to their servants, had been brimming with joy.

Of course, it was mockery for the sake of mockery. They clearly understood that, with the Sang clan’s sudden collapse, no one wanted anything to do with them.

“Enough!” King Liang said in a huff. He obviously cared little for the details. “Regardless, you are considered a part of the Sang clan if you’ve already completed the marriage ceremony. You will be escorted back to the capital city. As for your punishment, the commandant of justice and the imperial censors will be the ones to decide that.”

Everyone in the Zheng clan turned pale. It was one thing if it were just Zheng Dan alone. However, they feared that the Sang clan had badly offended the emperor. The consequences of that would reach beyond Zheng Dan, and could lead to the execution of the entire clan.

However, against a glorious king who was a master rank expert, a meager Zheng clan had no right to resist.

Several soldiers walked over to Zheng Dan with chains, about to detain her.

## **Chapter 418: When the Popcorn Eats You**

Zheng Dan’s body trembled. Her mind had already gone blank a long time ago.

She had chosen to sacrifice her own happiness and agree to the marriage, all because of the Zheng clan.

But now, not only had this marriage failed to benefit the Zheng clan in any way, it had instead placed the Zheng clan in great danger.

Her father's words had caused her even greater embarrassment. Even though she knew that he was doing this for the Zheng clan's sake, their reputation would be left in tatters even if they made it safely through this ordeal.

She frowned when she saw those guards coming to arrest her. She used to be one of the giants of the Linchuan Commandery's underworld, so she subconsciously wanted to resist. However, she quickly realized that even if she managed to escape, the Zheng clan members here wouldn't.

Furthermore, King Liang was an incredibly powerful master rank cultivator himself. There was no way he would let her get away.

Just then, a figure stepped in front of her to block the path of the oncoming soldiers. "Wait a moment."

Even though she was only looking at his back, she still recognized this person. After all, she was exceedingly familiar with her own man's body.

"Who are you?" King Liang gave him a look, a contemptuous expression flickering in his eyes. Just a puny fifth rank cultivator. The gulf between us is as wide as the distance between the clouds and the dirt.

"Who I am is not important. My reason is," Zu An replied.

In her heart, Xie Daoyun scoffed. And you still insist that there's nothing going on between the two of you!

It might have just been a random guess before, but she was actually suspicious now.

After all, the Zheng clan and the Chu clan were enemies, and Zu An and the Sang clan hated each other as well. There was no reason for him to speak up for Zheng Dan now.

Was this really all because of the teacher-student relationship they shared in the academy?

Who would believe that?!

Despite this, Xie Daoyun still respected him for being able to speak frankly, even in the face of a master rank cultivator's pressure. If she'd been in his place, she wouldn't have been able to utter even a single word.

How could she possibly know that Zu An had already crossed paths with many master rank big shots?

King Liang sneered. "Reason? What is this reason that you speak of?"

Even the father and son duo from the Sang clan were looking at him. They didn't know why he would speak up for them at such a time.

Zu An said, "Respected sir, you said earlier that the young miss is part of the Sang clan. Forgive me, but I beg to differ. There are several hundred guests here, and everyone witnessed that Miss Zheng and Sang Qian only paid their respects to heaven and earth, and to their parents. The two of them have yet to pay their respects to each other. Strictly speaking, they are not married yet. That is why Miss Zheng cannot be considered a part of the Sang clan. The Zheng clan clearly has thoughts of abandoning this marriage as well. Zheng Clan Master, am I wrong?"

Zheng Yutang nodded right away and said, "You are absolutely correct! My daughter is not marrying him anymore! She won't!"

"You!" Sang Qian erupted into fury. The Sang clan had already experienced an absolute tragedy, yet the Zheng clan kept kicking them while they were down!

He couldn't help but seethe with hatred for the Zheng clan. Zu An was also caught up in his anger.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 999 Rage points!

King Liang said coldly, "Whether or not she is a part of the Sang clan is not something for you to decide. This entire wedding had already been arranged, and only the final step is missing. Isn't that the same as being a part of the Sang clan? If we endorse such behavior as you suggest, wouldn't others follow suit? Weddings would become a complete joke! Wouldn't my Zhou Dynasty fall into chaos then?!"

Zu An frowned. This guy clearly had no intentions of letting Zheng Dan go! Given the Zheng clan's status, there was no way they could afford to offend a king. This made the situation much easier to understand. King Liang bore a grudge against the Sang clan! He planned to destroy the entire Sang clan!

He couldn't help but shoot a glance at Sang Hong and his son. He thought that only the Chu clan hated them, but it turned out there were actually so many other people who hated them as well! Just what did you all do to get yourself into such a situation?

The situation had just become much tougher to deal with. How was he going to save Zheng Dan now?

Should I just tell everyone that she's my woman?

But that's too risky! I might be able to farm some more points from that idiot Sang Qian, but I still won't be able to save Zheng Dan. Both of our reputations might be done for as well...

Zheng Dan's urgent voice sounded in his ear via ki transmission. "Ah Zu, you cannot let them know about our relationship! There's no way I could continue living if you do that! Even if I am captured right now, I might still be okay. Dying would still be better than embarrassing my clan. Please!"

Zu An was stunned.

Woman, did you plant a bloody parasite in my mind or something? How could you have known what I was thinking?

Sang Qian couldn't take it anymore. "Zu An, why do you keep flirting with my wife? What kind of relationship do the two of you have?!"

Zu An looked at him. I could tell you, but I don't know if you want to hear it. It's way beyond flirting, man...

However, he still chose to respect Zheng Dan's decision. "What kind of nonsense is filling that head of yours? Miss Zheng is my student, so I don't want to see her get involved. Am I not allowed to speak some just words? Aren't you ashamed to be her fiancé? It's almost as if you're afraid that they won't capture her. You're disgusting!"

The surrounding guests began to whisper among themselves. They looked at Sang Qian with strange expressions.

Zu An spoke up for the Zheng clan even though they usually harbor hostility towards one another, but you seem to want to drag the Zheng clan down with you! Their characters couldn't be more different.

Faced with a sea of scornful looks, Sang Qian felt as though his lungs were about to explode. What the hell is the problem with wanting to be with my wife? Why are you guys treating that bastard Zu An as some kind of hero just because he said a few words?!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 1024 Rage points!

King Liang's voice suddenly cut in. "Zu An? You are the Chu clan's young master?"

Zu An quickly gave him a respectful greeting when he sensed King Liang's gaze shift to him. "Yes, I am. I pay my respects to King Liang."

Since this King Liang really wanted to get rid of the Sang clan, Zu An surmised that he could be one of the important officials recorded in the Chu clan's account book.

Chu Chuyan had gone to the capital to threaten those officials, so King Liang might be here because of her actions. That was why being a little more polite wasn't a bad thing.

"Good, good." King Liang smiled while stroking his beard. "I was looking all around for you, yet you ended up appearing right in front of me. Capture him too!"

Zu An's expression froze immediately. What the hell?

Everyone else was stunned. The two of them had been chatting pleasantly just a second ago. How did they suddenly become hostile towards each other?

Zheng Dan couldn't hold herself back any further, and ripped off the veil covering her face. "Is there some misunderstanding? He only spoke a few words for my sake! Why is he being punished too?" she said in a panic.

Xie Daoyun was just about to speak, but she immediately shut her mouth when she heard this. Zheng Dan already said everything that she'd wanted to say.

These two really are interesting...

The two of them were close, but she had never caught wind of anything.

"The bride sure is beautiful!"

"Miss Zheng is worthy of her reputation as one of Brightmoon City's great beauties. She is even more stunning in her wedding gown."

"What a pity that she's become the wife of a corrupt official. I wonder if she'll be sent to a government whorehouse in the future."

"Keep dreaming! Even if a woman like her ends up in a government whorehouse, only those at the very top will get to play with her. Folks like me and you can forget about it."



Even though they were all whispering quietly, their words could not escape the ears of trained cultivators. Sang Qian's eyes began to twitch rapidly. These bastards usually treated him with great respect, but now, they even dared to fantasize about his wife?

However, something else was fueling his rage even more. Zheng Dan hadn't said a thing when the Sang clan was unceremoniously destroyed. And yet, she chose to speak up when something was happening to Zu An?

And she even took off her veil?

According to custom, the bridal veil could only be undone in the bridal room. It was extremely inauspicious otherwise!

He looked at Zu An, and then back at Zheng Dan. The suspicion inside of him only grew. Unfortunately, there was no way to confirm his doubts right now.

He suddenly remembered the green hat that Zu An had given him. He was so angry he took it off and threw it to the ground, stomping it beneath his feet.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 357 Rage points!

Everyone noticed his strange behavior, and they began to question one another curiously.

"Why is he so angry?"

"Does a green hat have some kind of implied meaning?"

...

Zu An couldn't be bothered with all that right now. He stared at King Liang and waited for his reply.

King Liang chuckled. "He clearly isn't being punished for speaking up for you. His crime is much more severe. He has stolen that which belongs to the emperor!"

#### **Chapter 419: The Embroidered Envoy**

Zu An was initially confused by what he'd heard. His first reaction was that this old man was trying to start something out of nothing.

I've never even been to the capital city before, let alone stolen something that belonged to the emperor!

However, his eyes suddenly widened as he remembered the conversation between Wei Dan and Old Mi. Old Mi apparently led a group of men in search of the 'Phoenix Nirvana Sutra', but he grew greedy, and killed the others. In the end, he made it seem that the whole group of them had been wiped out, and then he went into hiding.

Unfortunately, there were no absolute secrets in this world. The palace had still caught wind of it, and sent Wei Dan to investigate.

However, Wei Dan was already dead, and he never learned that Zu An possessed the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra before his death. Did he somehow manage to contact the imperial palace before he died?

Or was it because of something else?

He couldn't be sure either. Lost in his thoughts, he only reacted as the soldiers approached him.

Sang Hong already had too many things to worry about, and did not resist. However, Zu An was a transmigrator, and the concept of imperial power had not been engraved into his mind. There was no way he would just let this happen.

When the soldiers appeared in front of him with shackles, he disappeared in a flash.

King Liang's eyes narrowed. "You are quite daring! You dare to go against the imperial edict? The Chu clan is truly reckless nowadays!"

Zu An was afraid that the Chu clan would be implicated in his actions, so he said with a sullen voice, "I am myself, and the Chu clan is the Chu clan. Don't throw your sewage water at the Chu clan too."

King Liang sneered. "You seem to have a backbone. Unfortunately, all those who go against the imperial edict are traitors!"

Xie Daoyun quickly rushed forward just as he was about to issue another command. "Respected king, is there some type of misunderstanding here? From what I know, Zu An has never left Brightmoon City in his entire life, let alone gone to the capital city. How could he have anything to do with His Majesty, let alone steal one of his possessions?"

Everyone else present shared the same confusion. Zu An was merely a drafted son-in-law, and only began to show some promise recently. He was just a kid from the streets. How could he possibly have stolen something from the emperor?

Even Sang Hong was baffled. He had a clear understanding of just how terrifying the emperor's cultivation was. Forget about Zu An, not even he could steal a single thing from the emperor. He really had no clue why a random person like Zu An would be accused of such an act.

Xie Daoyun's appearance was exceptional. Her words were natural and unrestrained as well, and her bearing was extraordinary, which helped to draw King Liang's attention. "You are...?"

"This humble one is Xie Daoyun. My father is Brightmoon City Lord Xie Yi." Xie Daoyun greeted him in a graceful and dignified manner. Those around her were in awe. She truly had the bearing of a daughter from a distinguished clan.

"So, you are Miss Xie." King Liang's expression eased a little. He was clearly familiar with the matter of choosing the crown prince's wife as well. "What's wrong? Does City Lord Xie also wish to get involved with this criminal?"

Xie Daoyun hurriedly said, "Of course not! I am merely asking this in order to ease everyone's doubts. After all, claiming that Zu An has stolen something belonging to the emperor is truly inconceivable. I fear that the common people will not be convinced with just that. I hope King Liang can tell us what he has stolen."

Zu An sighed. Miss Xie really was too kind. They had only met a few times, yet she willingly spoke up for him in this moment of crisis.

Zheng Dan also gave Xie Daoyun a curious look. Even though her close friend always treated everyone with kindness and grace, she knew that Xie Daoyun was actually a sharp and intelligent girl. She really couldn't understand why she would take such a risk for a man.

However, that was a thought best explored another day. The more people who helped out Zu An right now, the better.

King Liang puffed out his cheeks. "I apologize. The matter is confidential, and I cannot speak about it. I must ask Miss Xie to move aside, or else you will be treated as a criminal as well."

"Confidential?" Sang Hong's eyes narrowed, a pensive look appearing in his eyes.

Xie Daoyun gave Zu An an apologetic look. "Ah Zu, I've already done what I can. I cannot cause trouble for the Xie clan."

Zu An smiled. "What do you mean, Miss Xie? I am already extremely grateful that you spoke up for me."

He already knew from associating with Zheng Dan that the daughters of great clans had many things to worry about. Every action they made would invariably involve their clans. That was why there was no way for them to act willfully on their own.

Xie Daoyun was stunned by his smile. She was always surrounded by cocky and arrogant men, but all of them revealed their true selves the moment they ran into trouble. Meanwhile, Zu An had offended the emperor himself, yet he was somehow still so optimistic! She really admired such boldness.

King Liang waved a hand. "Arrest him!"

With his status, there was no way he would arrest such a junior himself.

After what had just happened, the soldiers didn't dare to be careless. More than a dozen soldiers surrounded him, activating formations and techniques together. This was already more than enough to capture a normal cultivator.

"Who dares harm our young master?!" A troop of red-cloaked soldiers charged in and surrounded Zu An, confronting King Liang's troops.

"The Red Cloak Army?" King Liang instantly recognized who these men were. He sneered and said, "I've heard about the reputation of the Chu clan's Red Cloak Army. Now that I've seen it for myself, this army truly is quite something. You all actually dare to openly defy the royal court!"

A red-robed officer walked up to Zu An and asked quietly, "Young master, what is going on?"

This was a king, and he had even come bearing an imperial edict. The pressure that he gave off was way beyond Liu Yao's. Furthermore, only a small detachment of the Red Cloak Army was present. Things would not go well if they really clashed with each other.

"I don't know either." Zu An smiled helplessly. "Don't worry about me. I don't want to drag the Chu clan into this mess."

The officer said, "The young master does not need to worry. We are all good men. None of us fear death!"

How could their conversation escape the ears of King Liang? He sneered and said, "You all really are something! I wouldn't have believed it if someone else told me that the Chu clan intended to rebel, but it seems clear to me that the Red Cloak Army really does plan on defying His Majesty!"

Zu An said quickly, "You all are not to get involved in this matter! Quickly, return to the Chu Estate to protect Master and Madam! That's an order!"

The two young women, Zheng Dan and Xie Daoyun, had been unwilling to involve their clans in their own troubles. As a man, how could he do something like that?

He didn't even wait for a response. With a light tap of his toes, he rushed off.

Even though he didn't want to involve the Chu clan, there was no way he was going to let himself get captured so easily!

Two pitch-black chains appeared in front of his eyes as soon as he began to move. They moved at a shocking speed, yet made no sound. It was as if night was descending upon this world, and the darkness seemed to contain a demonic aura.

He trembled. He tapped his toes against the ground again, forcefully changing his path and dodging to the side.

Before he could catch his breath, two more chains flashed over, shooting towards his feet.

He tumbled awkwardly, evading the chains. He already felt taxed to his limit.

Another six iron chains flew at him from all directions, aiming at his limbs, waist, and neck, and sealing off every possible direction of escape.

Seeing that there was no way he could avoid them, Zu An took out his Tai'e Sword in a panic and hacked at the chains.

\*Clank clank clank!\*

Sword and chain collided continuously. Sparks flew in all directions. Not even the razor-sharp edge of the Tai'e Sword could cut through these chains! Only sparks flickered in the darkness.

He felt his hands go numb. The ki within his body was surging wildly.

He finally caught a glimpse of his attackers. These were the ten warriors who had escorted King Liang. Their clothes were clearly different from an ordinary soldier's garb, and every single one of them had what looked like a unicorn embroidered on their collar. He'd learned from one of Shang Liuyu's classes that these creatures were xiezhi, creatures that were rumoured to be able to distinguish between good and evil.

These soldiers held pitch-black chains in their hands. These chains were still moving, and it looked as though they might attack again at any time.

King Liang was shocked. "You actually managed to escape from the Embroidered Envoy's Demon-capturing Prison! I am quite surprised."

"The Embroidered Envoy?" Sang Qian was incredibly shocked. He glanced towards his father.

Sang Hong said in a low voice, "The Embroidered Envoy is a special force that serves at His Majesty's side. All of them are extremely skilled, and act on behalf of the Son of Heaven. Even though they act as bailiffs who are responsible for capturing criminals, they do not actually report to the court's Commandant of Justice. I thought that the emperor assigned them to King Liang to deal with us, but it seems like that isn't the case at all."

## **Chapter 420: Where Did Dad Go?**

Sang Hong replied his son absent-mindedly, his full attention on the warriors of the Embroidered Envoy. What in the world did you steal from the emperor?

"The Embroidered Envoy was sent to deal with Zu An?" Sang Qian's eyes widened. He never expected a kid from the streets, one that he looked down on, to actually be this crazy! Zu An had actually provoked the emperor!

However, something stood out to him. "The cultivation of these Imperial Envoy members don't seem to be that high, though. They aren't as strong as you make them out to be, dad."

Sang Hong shook his head. "Don't be deceived by outward appearances. Most of the Imperial Envoy members are around the fifth to sixth rank, but they excel in cooperative techniques. The Demon-capturing Prison King Liang just mentioned is a formation technique personally created by the emperor. It excels in capturing cultivators who are much higher level than themselves.

"The Soul-reaping Chains in their hands are specially made. Once they strike a cultivator's body, the ki of those with lower cultivations will be scattered instantly! Those whose cultivation levels are higher will also be affected, and a large chunk of their real strength would be instantly shredded."

Sang Qian was disbelieving. "There has to be a limit to their strength, right? They're only around the fifth rank. I refuse to believe they could detain you, dad!"

Sang Hong revealed a bitter smile. "I won't be able to stop them if they really wanted to hold me down."

Sang Qian was stupefied. "They're that powerful?"

Zu An advanced by leaps and bounds surely because of whatever he stole from the emperor! Yes, that has to be it! What a pity, you still have to pay the price for your actions!

Sang Hong sighed deeply. "The most terrifying part of the Embroidered Envoy isn't their Demon-capturing Prison. It's the fact that they act at the behest of the emperor!"

Sang Qian was just about to ask what sort of things they did at the emperor's orders, but a new development on the battlefield drew his attention.

Two Embroidered Envoy members suddenly moved. Their chains became perfectly straight and rigid. They stabbed these towards Zu An's chest like two spears.

Meanwhile, the chains wielded by two other embroidered envoys did the exact opposite. Their chains became soft as silk, and wrapped around him.

Zu An deflected the incoming iron chains with his sword. He shuddered fiercely from the impact.

His ki density was already equivalent to a sixth rank cultivator, while these Imperial Envoy were all at the fifth rank. None of them would be his match if he'd fought them one on one. Why was this battle taking so much out of him?

He suddenly noticed that there was a faint layer of blue light surrounding one of his opponent's bodies, which continuously streamed towards his companions. Blue light surrounded his companions' bodies as well, which flowed back towards him.

Zu An was shocked. It was a formation! He'd witnessed the power of the Red Cloak Army with his own eyes before. Even a ninth rank expert had been defeated so easily back then! He hadn't expected things to change so quickly. It was now his turn to have a taste of the gang bang...

Despite all the thoughts racing through his mind, he didn't stop moving. Now that he realized that clashing with them head on was a bad idea, he changed his strategy. He flicked one of the iron chains in front of him upwards with the Tai'e Sword, and used it to block the chain aimed at his back.

Zheng Dan had been watching nervously the entire time. Her fists tightened on the edges of her sleeves when she heard Sang Hong's explanation.

She immediately cheered inside when she saw this move. She never expected Zu An's sword skills to be so exquisite! It seemed to carry the traits of the academy's Thirteen Forms of Elementary Swordplay, but also glimmers of Chu Chuyan's Snowflake Sword.

If she was in his place, she probably wouldn't be able to do what he was doing. Other than being a crazy pervert, his talent for cultivation was truly frightening!

Her joy was short-lived, and her heart immediately began to pound again. Another iron chain was headed in his direction!

Zu An had just used his sword to deflect the previous chain. His sword wouldn't make the block in time!

"Be careful!" She couldn't help but cry out.

Sang Qian suddenly turned to look at her. The sight of his wife looking on nervously at another man immediately lit a bonfire of rage within him.

Zu An, you fucking bastard! I cannot live under the same sky as you!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 740 Rage points!

At this time, the other six embroidered envoys, who had been waiting for their moment, now made their move. They could tell that Zu An wouldn't be able to avoid that final iron chain as well.

The moment he was locked down, they would send out the other six iron chains and restrain him completely. He would have no chance of escaping then.

Seeing that he was on the verge of being tangled by that iron chain, Zu An suddenly extended two fingers.

His fingers were slender, and sparkled in the sun. Many of the women watching suddenly felt a sense of inferiority.

Both Xie Daoyun and Zheng Dan bit their lips at the sight of these two slender fingers facing the crude, black iron chains.

A malicious smile emerged on Sang Qian's face. This fellow was going to get his hand crippled! An iron chain imbued with the power of ten embroidered envoys wasn't something he could deal with if he used both of his arms, yet he wanted to face it with two miserable fingers? They would be instantly shattered!

However, his smile quickly froze. Those two fingers he'd thought would be instantly shattered actually clamped down on that terrifyingly powerful chain!

Huh? This technique... King Liang felt as though he'd seen such a finger technique somewhere before, but he just couldn't pinpoint where.

Sang Hong gave an astonished cry. His judgment had been right after all! This kid was definitely a genius! If only he'd taken him under his wing earlier!

He couldn't help but glance over at his son, who was watching this battle with delight. If he'd known this was going to be the case, he would've brought his daughter along with him instead. Of course, back then, he could never have predicted that this Zu An would be way more useful than the Zheng clan.

Zu An's Shining Finger clamped down on the chain, but he immediately felt the strength bursting within that chain. He gave his wrist a quick flick, sending a wave of power surging along these chains to the other end.

This chain flew towards the six incoming embroidered envoys, thrashing like a frenzied snake, sending them flying backwards.

None of them had expected this sudden development. They were caught completely off-guard. The chains they had flung out tangled together, and there was a loud explosion. The bodies of the six embroidered envoys trembled violently, and they groaned in pain. They had all suffered severe damage.

Zu An's own power was obviously not enough to defeat ten embroidered envoys. He had used his own ki to set off the enemy's ki, which had been held inside of those chains. In that instant, the six of them, wrapped in their own iron chains, had suffered an attack that was equal in force to ten of their own.

It hadn't been that difficult for Zu An to evade those four previous attacks. What he was afraid of were the six embroidered envoys who had been biding their time, waiting for an opportunity to capture him.

There was no lack of powerful cultivators present. When they analyzed everything that happened, they too understood what had been going through his mind. They were thoroughly impressed by this fellow's outstanding battle instincts. Was he really a piece of trash, like everyone constantly claimed he was?

Zu An used this chance to use Grandgale, blinking several hundred meters away. Since he was up against a master rank cultivator, he immediately used Grandgale again. He didn't care about exhausting his remaining uses. His only thought was that he had to get as far away as possible.

"What kind of movement technique is this?!"

Cries of alarm rang out amongst the crowd. Zheng Dan was aware of this skill, but Xie Daoyun rubbed her eyes in disbelief. As for the others, they were even more shocked.

Sang Qian's face turned deathly pale. How was this possible? How could that guy be such a monster?!

He turned around and asked, "Dad, what is he... huh? Dad, where did you go?"

Surprise flashed across King Liang's eyes when he saw Zu An's speed. However, he sneered and said, "You think you can escape me?"

A master rank cultivator could fly through the air! No matter how fast you are on the ground, it is nothing but a useless trick when faced with a master rank cultivator!

He rushed into the sky, but suddenly noticed another person in front of him.

His face darkened, and immediately thrust out a palm.

Sang Hong's expression grew serious as well, and he faced this oncoming attack with two palms.

A huge explosion erupted, releasing an incredibly powerful shockwave which knocked all of the guests off their feet. The candles on the heaven-and-earth table, as well as the lanterns and all the decorations in the Sang Estate, were sent flying.

King Liang landed back where he'd been standing before, his arms behind his back. Meanwhile, Sang Hong slammed into the ground like a sack of sand, smashing a massive hole into the Sang Estate's carefully-curated marble flooring.

King Liang gave him a cold look. "Sang Hong, do you know what you are doing? You dare help a criminal escape?!"