

## Immortal 421

### Chapter 421: Flipping Tables

Zheng Dan and Xie Daoyun couldn't help but stare at Sang Hong. They were just as confused as King Liang. Why would Sang Hong do something like that?

Sang Hong struggled to his feet and spat out a mouthful of blood. However, he showed no sign of panic, but flashed a faint smile instead. "Respectfully, I have no idea what you are talking about. Everyone here knows that our Sang clan has a grudge against that kid. He even had the nerve to interfere with my son's wedding. Why would I ever help him escape?"

All the guests present nodded along. They clearly agreed with his words. None of them believed that Sang Hong would step in to save Zu An.

King Liang's expression darkened. "Then why did you stand in my way if you didn't intend to aid his escape?"

Sang Hong replied nonchalantly, "Ah, about that... I gained some sudden insights from watching the fight, and before I knew it, I had rushed out. I didn't expect King Liang to take flight as well, and I just happened to find myself in your way. I really must apologize for that."

Sudden insights were extremely rare and precious for cultivators, and they were often accompanied by a loss of control. This was a plausible explanation for his sudden move.

Of course, King Liang knew that he was merely spouting nonsense. Unfortunately, his explanation was somewhat passable, and would not cause much of a stir even if he reported it to the emperor.

"You really are a wily old fox!" King Liang cursed. He finally got a taste of what both Zu An and Sang Hong had inflicted on each other earlier.

Sang Qian sent his father a voice transmission via ki. "Dad, why did you save that brat Zu An?!"

Sang Hong's words might have been enough to placate the crowd, but he was still left unsatisfied. He absolutely hated Zu An, so there was no way he would accept such an answer.

Sang Hong sighed and replied, "Qian'er, our Sang clan is truly in trouble this time. If my suspicions are correct, we've already been abandoned by the emperor. We will most likely be executed after we are brought back to the capital city."

"What?!" Sang Qian couldn't believe his ears. Even though they were being detained right now, it was considered usual for members of the court to rise and fall in status. Since his father had always found favor with the emperor, he believed that they were only being brought back to the capital as a public form of humiliation. How did it get to the point where they would be facing execution?

Sang Hong continued, "It's hard to say what will happen, but I still have hope that things do not reach that point."

“What does any of that have to do with you saving Zu An?” Sang Qian was still brooding over this matter.

Sang Hong looked in the direction Zu An had fled. “Because he is a variable, and one that might very well save our lives.”

Sang Qian could not believe what he was hearing.

He was completely stupefied. He just couldn’t keep up with his father’s train of thought.

Sang Hong didn’t offer any further explanation, but looked at Zheng Dan instead. How did he fail to pick up on the fact that something was going on between the two of them? What was supposed to be a honey trap had probably resulted in real feelings developing.

He didn’t tell his son these things. His son would most likely fly into a rage, which wouldn’t help their current situation at all, but make things worse instead.

A variable, a variable... I need a variable right now. We’re surely dead otherwise...

King Liang waved his hand. Several embroidered envoys walked over to them and restrained them with Soul-reaping Chains.

The two of them felt as if all of their ki had been sealed up. They became no different from ordinary people.

“Capture the bride as well.” King Liang glanced at Zheng Dan. Leaving aside the fact that she was Sang Hong’s daughter-in-law for a moment, her astonishing beauty alone guaranteed that there would be great uses for her back at the capital.

Zheng Dan bit her lip when she saw the embroidered envoys walking towards her. However, with all the Zheng clan members around her, she had no choice but to accept her fate.

King Liang returned to his horse. “Keep them in prison for now. The rest of you, follow me to the Chu clan!”

He had come with two important missions from the emperor. The first was to bring the father and son of the Sang clan back to the capital city, while the second was to capture Zu An.

Comparatively speaking, the emperor seemed to care much more about the capture of Zu An, even sending the Embroidered Envoy to help with this mission. However, he had actually let his target escape from him, despite being a powerful master rank cultivator! If he didn’t capture Zu An, not only would his reputation be terribly tarnished, the emperor might punish him severely as well.

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Meanwhile, Zu An was running for his life. He had also witnessed Sang Hong stepping in to stop King Liang, which made absolutely no sense to him.

However, he couldn’t be bothered to think about this right now. He had to quickly figure out what the hell he was going to do about his current situation.

He was ninety-nine percent sure that the emperor already knew about the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. A technique that had a chance of granting eternal life was just far too tempting.

The thought depressed him greatly. He might have yet been able to do something if he'd offended someone else, but it was the emperor himself who was gunning for his life! This was an emperor who had unified an empire and grasped firmly onto the reins of power of an entire dynasty! He was even the publicly-acknowledged number one expert!

He wasn't so naïve as to believe that the emperor would let him go if he handed over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra manual. This was the most powerful man in this world! Would someone like that be willing to share eternal life with someone else?

His first reaction was to throw in his lot with King Qi. After all, the two factions were at odds, and he had big Manman to serve as an intermediary. However, he quickly rejected these thoughts.

With the strength King Qi possessed, he would quickly find out what the emperor was searching for.

King Qi will surely want to obtain eternal life as well.

There were way too many stories where the protagonist got into trouble after they stumbled upon something too precious. The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra was something that every cultivator desired.

Where else could he turn to?

Zu An felt more than a little lost. Even though this world was so large, it seemed there was nowhere for him to go.

His hand reached for a mirror. He wanted to call Chu Chuyan. Just hearing her voice would be nice right now. However, when he picked it up, he saw that it was cracked.

It had probably been broken by the Soul-reaping Chains of the Embroidered Envoy in the earlier fight.

It was already too late for regret. If he'd known that this was going to happen, he would have stored it inside his Brilliant Glass Bead.

He tried to call out to Chu Chuyan, but the broken mirror did not respond at all. Clearly, it was already completely broken.

Was this to be his fate?

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Elsewhere, King Liang arrived at the Chu Estate with his men, having rushed all the way.

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru came out to greet him when they received news of his arrival. "Why has the respected king returned so quickly?"

King Liang had paid a visit to the Chu clan earlier to grant them their freedom, before heading to the Sang Estate.

Following that, Chu Zhongtian and his wife had moved on to settle the final formalities with the Imperial Guard and Liu Yao, as well as comforting the startled members of their clan.

King Liang sneered. "Why do the two of you still bother to ask a question that you already know the answer to? Your Red Cloak Army soldiers considered defying the imperial edict and attacking us! They should have returned already, and informed you of what had happened."

Chu Zhongtian's expression grew troubled. He said with a serious voice, "We have indeed heard a little about what happened, but it is still hard for us to believe it. Could there have been some sort of misunderstanding? How could Zu An have had any interactions with the emperor, let alone have stolen something from him?"

King Liang snorted. He pointed at the embroidered envoys and said, "Brightmoon Duke, don't tell me you do not know who they are! His majesty has even dispatched the Embroidered Envoy. How could there be a mistake? As for exactly what he stole, that is a secret of the imperial family. Forgive me for not being able to reveal what it is."

Chu Zhongtian's expression flickered several times. He was clearly still wondering just how Zu An ended up provoking the emperor.

However, Qin Wanru, standing at his side, had had enough. "This is absolutely absurd! All sorts of despicable methods have been employed against our Chu clan, and now that all of them have failed, you resort to such a laughable reason to attack the son-in-law of our Chu clan? Do you think our Chu clan is a doormat?!"

King Liang's face grew dark. "What are you trying to say? Is Madam Chu planning to rebel?"

"Don't try to threaten me with this talk of rebellion. Didn't the emperor seize control over this world through a rebellion?" Qin Wanru began to gesticulate with her hands, a clear sign of her anger.

"Everything has to be done in accordance with reason! Since you refuse to be reasonable, you can't blame us for flipping tables! Let's see how you explain things to the rest of the world then! Where is the Red Cloak Army?"

"Here, Madam!" Countless Red Cloak Army soldiers rushed out from their hidden locations and surrounded King Qi's men.

## **Chapter 422: The Power of a Master Rank**

Even though there were countless Red Cloak Army soldiers streaming out, only the sound of orderly footsteps could be heard. There was no unnecessary noise. All of the soldiers stared at King Liang and his men with cold and unwavering eyes.

King Liang's expression flickered slightly. With his sharp eyes, he could tell that this was a powerful army that had experienced many battles. The Zhou Dynasty had enjoyed many years of peace, so he had no idea how Brightmoon Duke still managed to maintain such a well-trained force.

He did not let his admiration cloud his mind. He reacted quickly as well, and said with a cold voice, "What's this? Do you all want to rebel as well? Are you going to murder the members of the Embroidered Envoy?"

“Don’t try to scare us with these threats!” Qin Wanru said angrily. “When our Chu clan was established a thousand years ago, we embraced the principle of never giving up. Ah Zu is the son-in-law of our Chu clan. How can we let you take him away for such a laughable reason?”

King Liang looked at Chu Zhongtian, who had remained silent. “Brightmoon Duke, do you share these intentions?”

Chu Zhongtian replied with a smile. “Indeed. Our Chu clan does not like to provoke trouble, but we will not tolerate others bullying us.”

Qin Wanru glanced at her husband. He was usually kind and gentle, and she had been a little worried that he would back down. To her pleasant surprise, he had chosen to stand resolutely by her side as well!

Chu Zhongtian’s face had become completely overcast. Clearly, this reason seemed utterly absurd to him as well. This, together with the mistreatment and humiliation he’d experienced while being locked up, was enough to make anyone furious, let alone a proud duke like himself.

If he didn’t take this chance to properly demonstrate the Chu clan’s power, wouldn’t these moths continue to fly at them one after another?

“Excellent! You all are really quite something!” King Liang laughed out loud, but his expression instantly grew frosty. “If this had been a decade or so ago, I might still have felt some apprehension. But now, you are seriously injured, and your cultivation has suffered drastically. You are only at the eighth rank now! You don’t have any right to speak like that in front of me!”

Chu Zhongtian said with a cold laugh, “The Chu clan has never stressed individual strength, but rather the unity of will. Whether or not I have the right to speak is something that you can put to the test yourself.”

“You don’t even believe in your own lies! What an absolute joke!” King Liang sneered.

The Imperial Guard General Liu Yao made his way quickly to King Liang’s side. “Respected king, please be careful. This Red Cloak Army is quite difficult to deal with.”

His own experience earlier had clearly left him with a lingering sense of fear.

“It seems I really do have to test you all out personally!” Despite King Liang’s brash words, he still charged straight at Chu Zhongtian. It was clear that he wasn’t willing to pit his own Imperial Guard against the Red Cloak Army.

There were two reasons for this. Firstly, he hadn’t brought many men with him, so they would still be far outnumbered by the Red Cloak Army, even if he added Liu Yao’s contingent of imperial guards.

Secondly, things could easily get out of hand if the two armies clashed. If that happened, it would become impossible for him to deny that a large-scale battle had occurred, no matter what story he ran with.

Even though the Chu clan was already doomed, the major powers in other regions would surely have much to complain about. He would be completely helpless when faced with the punishment meted out by the imperial censors.

That was why he had no choice but to act on his own. That way, he could choose when to fight and when to stop whenever he wanted to. It would be up to him to decide what he wanted to do.

Of course, the best result would be for him to take down their leader immediately. Taking down Chu Zhongtian would solve all of his problems.

He sneered when he saw Chu Zhongtian strike out with a palm. This man's cultivation was roughly the same as Sang Hong's, and Sang Hong had been severely injured so easily. Now, it was Chu Zhongtian's turn to suffer the same fate.

Their palms met, and he was instantly surprised. His opponent had used much less force than he'd expected, as if he wasn't trying to meet him head on.

Meanwhile, Chu Zhongtian used the recoil from this palm strike to help him withdraw quickly. In an instant, he had retreated into the protective umbrella of the Red Cloak Army.

His many years of battle experience had made him vigilant against sudden attacks. He had clearly made preparations beforehand.

King Liang was annoyed by the ease at which his plan had been thwarted. He chased after Chu Zhongtian, hoping to seize him before he established a safe footing within the Red Cloak Army's formation.

But the soldiers of the Red Cloak Army were all well trained. They were ready for his charge. Countless arrows were fired in his direction, each trailing a faint blue light.

Sensing the terrifying force behind those roaring arrows, he quickly lost confidence in his headlong attack. His hands moved slowly in a circular manner in front of him, and a translucent sphere surrounded him.

Waves rippled along the surface of this translucent sphere wherever an arrow struck, but none of the arrows could pierce through that thin sphere.

More and more arrows stuck to the surface of that sphere. King Liang roared, sending the arrows flying back towards the Red Cloak Army.

Chu Zhongtian was standing within the Red Cloak Army's formation. His expression flickered, and he immediately called out an order. "Raise your shields!"

The soldiers of the Red Cloak Army raised their shields one after another. Blue-colored projections of shields began to appear above them one after another, combining to form a single large barrier.

The arrows that had been fired back at them were all blocked.

Liu Yao sneered. This was exactly how he had been defeated before! No matter how strong you are, they'll disperse your strength and soak it right up.

The human mind really was a curious thing. If he hadn't lost earlier, he would have undoubtedly wished for King Liang to obtain an overwhelming victory. However, since he'd suffered defeat not that long ago, he found himself hoping that King Liang would lose as well. The worse his defeat, the better.

There was no love lost between King Liang and the Liu clan, and Liu Yao did not mind seeing King Liang suffer a little.

Despite this, King Liang appeared unfazed. He floated into midair, his arms extended out. His palms rose slowly, as if they were each supporting something heavy.

A translucent, rotating sphere appeared in each of his palms. They spun extremely slowly when they first appeared, but quickly accelerated, growing to about the same size as a shot put ball.

Then, he flung these two balls at the Red Cloak Army's formation.

The translucent spheres smashed into the light blue barrier. There was a tremendous explosion, and a blast wave rippled outwards. The barrier trembled, the blue radiance flickering. Many of the soldiers coughed out blood, having suffered internal injuries from this attack.

Liu Yao felt the sneer wiped from his face. The Red Cloak Army had absorbed his full-powered attack like it was nothing earlier. Was the difference between King Liang and himself that great?

Fresh soldiers quickly took the places of the injured shield-bearers, giving them time to recuperate. The blue barrier in the sky stabilized again.

Surprise flashed across King Liang's eyes. Two more translucent spheres were flung downwards.

A huge noise echoed across the surroundings. The blue barrier trembled again, but remained intact.

"Let's see how much more you can take!" King Liang was also starting to get annoyed. He condensed the translucent spheres again.

He was truly worthy of being a master rank expert. He no longer flung out his attacks recklessly, but flew around as he launched them, probing for any openings that he could exploit.

Even though armies were strong, they had their weaknesses as well. After all, a formation wasn't as flexible as an individual. In addition, the greater the number of soldiers, the harder it was for them to maintain a tight cooperation, and the easier it was to find exploitable openings.

A disciplined army like the Red Cloak Army was already considered a first rate army, by the standards of this world. However, even they would begin to falter when continuously hit from different angles.

He didn't need to fashion many chances. A single opening was enough for a true expert.

He flitted about in the air, bombarding the Red Cloak Army from different angles, trying to work an opening for himself.

His movements were so swift that he left afterimages everywhere. It looked as though he was everywhere at the same time, simultaneously attacking the Red Cloak Army from all different angles.

The Red Cloak Army defended frantically. Right now, they were like a skiff cast adrift in a roaring sea. Even though they had somehow managed to survive the continuous bombardments so far, every single one of them knew that this sea would devour them sooner or later.

"So this is the power of a master rank cultivator?" The disturbance at the Chu Estate had drawn a substantial crowd. Their faces all paled as they witnessed this scene.

At that precise moment, Chu Zhongtian's voice drifted upwards. "Bring out the war banner! Start the war drums!"

### **Chapter 423: The Chu Clan's Might**

The Red Cloak Army quickly cleared a space within their formation, and a group of soldiers pushed out a cart. A large drum had been erected on the back of the cart.

With a tap of her toes, Qin Wanru appeared on top of the cart. She picked up the thick mallets and pounded on the drum.

**\*Boom! Boom! Boom!\***

Drumbeats rang out one after another, and each reverberation seemed to reach right into the depths of the soul. It made each soldier feel as if his blood was boiling.

Liu Yao and the others observers could see ripples visibly spreading out from the drum, traveling outwards across the surrounding soldiers of the Red Cloak Army. Those same soldiers let out a ferocious roar. Their auras seemed to have doubled in strength!

Liu Yao was dumbstruck. Even though his position as general of the Imperial Guard had been offered to him because of his status as the empress' uncle, he had still gained a lot of experience from his time serving in this position.

During the war between humans and the beast races, the beastmen's war songs had made a deep impression on the humans. This led to an explosion of research into war drums and other war instruments that could be used by humans to boost morale and fighting strength.

However, these war instruments could only be made by runemasters, using specialized techniques.

Only the most elite troops in the entire empire would possess something like this. How could an ordinary clan possibly hope to obtain such a war instrument?

The true might of the Chu clan's thousand years of history was now on full display. It was no wonder why so many factions were fighting to win them over to their side.

At that moment, another change took place within the formation. Chu Zhongtian moved his arms in front of him, and a ring of triangular banners floated into midair.

He pointed straight ahead and said, "Go!"

These flags flew out and inserted themselves in various locations within the formation, and the Red Cloak Army moved in tandem to rearrange itself. A shimmering blue light spread out to cover the bodies of the soldiers clustered around these flags.

The barrier that had grown weak under the constant barrage of attacks brightened immediately, and waves of blue light continuously flowed along the mysterious patterns on its surface.

Meanwhile, several projections of flags appeared in midair as well. King Liang's expression flickered. He tried to jump away from these flags, but no matter how fast he was, there was always another flag blocking his path.

"What is this...?" All the spectators were horrified at King Liang's inability to escape. He was trapped within the formation of flags, roaring furiously.

They had successfully trapped a master rank cultivator! How did the Chu clan possess this much power?

The various powers in Brightmoon City were suddenly reminded of the terrifying legends surrounding the Chu clan from hundreds of years ago. The Chu clan had hidden their strength and lived in harmony for all these years, which had made them all forget how formidable they had been in the past.

Liu Yao was delighted by this scene. Thank heavens I was defeated quickly! If not, I might have been screwed over by these strange flags!

A low rumble began to echo around the battlefield. The formation split into two, creating a space in the middle. Several dozen Red Cloak Army soldiers slowly pushed out a massive siege crossbow.

From the looks of this crossbow, it seemed more accurate to call it a cannon. The power of this massive crossbow was surely enough to blast through a city wall.

This siege crossbow slowly tilted upwards. The tip of the bolt flickered with a deep, cold radiance, while the shaft was decorated with swirling runes. This was definitely the work of an excellent runemaster.

King Liang immediately felt his goosebumps rise when he saw the crossbow taking aim at him. A sudden wave of danger came over him, one which he had never experienced before. He knew for certain that he would suffer grievous injury if he was struck by it, and might even lose his life.

He desperately wanted to break out, but the strange flags stopped him at every attempt. There really was nowhere for him to run.

Left with no other option, he raised his arms and brought them in front of his chest. A massive translucent sphere began to condense in front of him. He intended to meet the attack head on.

At that moment, a voice cried out, "Gentlemen, stand down!"

A group of riders were galloping towards them. The one in the lead was City Lord Xie Yi.

Next to him was Xie Daoyun. Anxiety was written all across her usually gentle and refined face. She seemed to be looking for someone, but she didn't find who she was looking for.

She had immediately sought out her father after leaving the Sang Estate, but never expected that she would bump into her father halfway. He had already been rushing towards the Chu Estate.

Regardless of whether it was out of concern for the safety of Brightmoon City or because he was part of King Qi's faction, Xie Yi didn't wish to see anything happen to the Chu clan.

Unfortunately, both sides were already on the verge of tearing each other apart. Why would they listen to his words?

Alarmed, Xie Yi implored Liu Yao, "General Liu, please stop them! This is getting out of hand!"

Liu Yao smiled. "Don't worry, King Liang is a master rank expert. Surely he has full control over this situation. I don't think it's right for us to interfere."

Xie Yi stared at him in disbelief.

I'm not only worried about King Liang, there's the Chu clan to think about as well!

King Liang cursed when he heard what Liu Yao said. Control over the situation? Do you want to give this a try yourself? I guarantee that there won't even be a speck of you left over.

He truly regretted his choice. He had been overconfident, having lived in luxury and extravagance for too long. He had little battle experience, apart from showing up on battlefields where the day had already been won. He had really underestimated the Chu clan's strength.

Of course, it wasn't really all his fault. If he had been facing a different three-thousand strong army, his strength would surely be enough to defeat them.

He knew that neither he nor Chu Zhongtian were willing to back away at this point. If one of them chose to back down, but the other did not, the one who backed down would surely perish.

A different, cold voice cut through the tension. "Are you trying to massacre all of Brightmoon City's citizens?!"

"Principal Jiang has arrived!"

All eyes turned towards the source of that voice. A tall, slender figure stood at the very top of a large tree. The branches at the top of the tree were terribly thin, yet she seemed perfectly balanced. Her figure swayed in rhythm with the tree.

This sight drew countless gasps of admiration. Even Liu Yao felt a little ashamed. He could fly for a short time, but standing gracefully on such a thin branch required precise control over one's own strength.

Even at such a young age, this woman was already so outstanding. Her prospects were limitless!

He couldn't help but stare at this woman. He had been drawn by her cultivation at first, but his eyes soon widened even further. Her black stockings had captured all of his attention.

He wasn't the only one struck dumb. Even Xie Yi rubbed his nose in embarrassment, afraid that a sudden nosebleed would ruin all his many years of accumulated prestige.

Xie Daoyun shoved her dad roughly when she saw it. "Dad!" she said in annoyance.

Xie Yi finally snapped out of his daze and smiled awkwardly.

Jiang Luofu didn't seem to mind at all. She examined the current situation with a frown on her face.

She quickly realized how tense the current situation was. There was no way a few words from a casual bystander could defuse this.

As such, she removed a jade hairpin from her hair, and she flicked her finger towards the formation of flags.

A huge rift appeared in the air the instant that the jade hairpin made contact with the formation, creating an opening.

Jiang Luofu rushed forward. As soon as she passed through it, that rift disappeared with a flash. A corner of her clothing did not pass through in time, and was sliced off neatly, as if by an invisible blade..

She glanced behind her briefly, then rushed to the center of the battlefield. "I am Jiang Luofu, Principal of Brightmoon Academy. Please cease this battle immediately! Regardless of who wins this battle, it would be the civilians who will ultimately suffer."

The Chu clan had always maintained a good relationship with Brightmoon Academy. Chu Zhongtian frowned at her interference, but he still pulled back the flags and ordered the siege crossbow to stand down.

King Liang sighed in relief when he saw this. That sphere in his hands slowly shrunk as well.

The academy was under the Ministry of Ceremonies, and their people were everywhere. No one would choose to idly offend the academy.

King Liang slowly fell into deep thought. From what he knew, the principal of Brightmoon Academy was only around the eighth rank. And yet, she had revealed an astonishing level of strength.

She had even broken into the formation! Even he had been powerless against those flags earlier. Is that hairpin of hers some astonishing treasure?

#### **Chapter 424: Act In the Emperor's Stead**

King Liang stared at the jade hairpin, wondering just what kind of history it had. His gaze slowly shifted to her body, and his eyes grew wide. What long legs!

Unfortunately, he was already of advanced age. If he had run into her when he was younger, he would surely have had his fun with her, even if he had to abuse his authority and cultivation to do so.

The tension finally drained out of Jiang Luofu when she saw that both sides had stood down. There was a master rank cultivator on one side, while on the other, there was the three thousand-strong Red Cloak Army commanded by Brightmoon Duke. Neither side was a power she could face.

Jiang Luofu greeted Chu Zhongtian. "Brightmoon Duke, why did you suddenly mobilize such a large army?"

Chu Zhongtian snorted. "Principal Jiang can ask him for the answer."

King Liang descended from midair. When he heard this, he said with a cold smile, "The Chu clan is harboring a criminal, and even tried to kill me. Brightmoon Duke truly is daring."

Qin Wanru slammed the war drum heavily in anger. "We should've killed you after all! Even being forced to live with a bad reputation would've been worth it!"

King Liang's expression flickered, and he stepped backwards quickly.

Jiang Luofu said hurriedly, "I've heard a few things about the reason for King Liang's visit as well. I cannot blame the Chu clan for finding your demands hard to accept. Even I find them difficult to accept. Zu An has lived his entire life in Brightmoon City. How could he have possibly stolen something belonging to the emperor?"

Xie Yi also chimed in. "Indeed, I believe that this has to be a misunderstanding as well."

King Liang's eyelids twitched. Even Xie Yi had chosen to speak. The Chu clan, the academy, and the City Lord; these were Brightmoon City's three greatest powers! The three of them standing together on the same side made the situation difficult to navigate.

He could only say, "To be honest, even I don't know what Zu An has stolen from the emperor."

Both the Master and Madam of the Chu clan stared at him, speechless, as did Jiang Luofu and Xie Yi.

Even Liu Yao couldn't believe what he'd heard.

What the hell were you boasting about then? Was it all just a bluff?

Sensing their rage, King Liang quickly said, "Even though I don't know what exactly it is that he has stolen from the emperor, this matter is truly genuine. After all, the emperor personally entrusted me with this task."

The rest of them frowned when they heard him say this. There was no reason for King Liang to lie about this matter, but there was no way they could let this matter go either!

At that moment, King Liang seemed to recall something. He pointed at the ten embroidered envoys and said, "You can ask them if you want the details. They were sent by the emperor to capture Zu An."

The Chu clan thus turned to the ten embroidered envoys who were standing like statues.

"The Embroidered Envoy..." Chu Zhongtian and the others clearly recognized them as well, and their expressions twisted in displeasure.

Sensing everyone's attention focused on them, the embroidered envoy at the front said coldly, "The item Zu An has stolen is strictly confidential. The Chu clan must hand him over. If you do not, you will be provoking His Majesty."

"Provoking His Majesty?" Chu Zhongtian laughed bleakly. "The emperor clearly wants the Chu clan gone. What is the point of maintaining such pretenses?"

Panicking, Xie Yi immediately warned him, "Brother Chu, please speak cautiously!"

Chu Zhongtian snorted. "We've already been pushed this far. Why should I still bother to tread lightly?!"

He obviously didn't believe that Zu An had stolen anything belonging to the emperor. He assumed that this was just another excuse that the emperor had cooked up to deal with the Chu clan.

The embroidered envoy's eyes narrowed. "Is Brightmoon Duke really going to defy the imperial edict?"

"Defy the imperial edict?" Chu Zhongtian laughed. "Our Chu clan has never said we will do that. Feel free to search for Zu An yourselves."

Even though he was angry, he wasn't stupid. At the very least, he wouldn't say anything that would lead to the immediate destruction of the Chu clan.

That embroidered envoy waved his hands when he heard this. He walked towards the Chu Estate with the other envoys.

The Red Cloak Army remained in place, showing no intention of moving.

Xie Xi gave an inward sigh. Chu Zhongtian always behaved like an upright and rule-abiding person, but he was actually quite cunning. He'd clearly said that he would comply, yet his actions were hardly in line with his statement.

The embroidered envoys halted. "Do you think that this is enough to stop us?"

Chu Zhongtian said with a smile, "I've heard of the Embroidered Envoy's reputation. How could our Chu clan dare to have such thoughts?"

Even though this was what he said, he still showed no intention of moving aside.

His meaning was obvious. Not even a master rank cultivator can enter. What can the few of you do? I advise you to back down.

To be honest, he was a little confused himself. Everyone in this world seemed to worship the Embroidered Envoy, yet these envoys before him were all around the fifth or sixth rank. They didn't match up to his expectations at all.

Then again, he'd never heard of anyone being able to escape when pursued by the Embroidered Envoy. What was up with that?

Could it be that the imperial court was so powerful that no one dared to resist?

The Master and Madam of the Chu clan were not the only ones wondering about this. Almost everyone else shared their doubts. All eyes were on the ten embroidered envoys, all waiting to see what they were going to do.

The ten members of the Embroidered Envoy suddenly knelt towards the east. The one in the lead respectfully reached out in front of him. "Your subjects have enemies that stand in our path. Your majesty, please send us an imperial edict to subdue them!"

Everyone present was shocked. The emperor was in the capital city, and they were so far away. How could the emperor possibly hear what he was saying? Were they using something like sound transmission stones?

Even if they managed to contact his majesty, what was the use? A distant river would never be the solution to a current drought!

However, the expressions of a few of the more powerful figures present began to flicker. They began to have suspicions about what was going on.

Chu Zhongtian gave an involuntary shudder as he looked towards the horizon. The clouds, which had been drifting aimlessly just a moment ago, were now gathering together. A boundless power slowly began to saturate the area. All of Brightmoon City's citizens trembled in fear.

In Divine Physician Ji's shop, within a room completely covered by curtains, Ji Dengtu was currently under his covers. One hand was holding a book, while the other hand was doing who knew what. Suddenly, he felt a terrifying pressure. His entire body trembled, and he immediately went flaccid. He tossed the book aside and cursed violently. "Damn it all! I was almost there already, but you just had to go and scare this old man! Screw you! I probably won't be able to get it up for another three months... Fucking dogshit emperor, if not for the fact that I could never beat you in a fight, I would pay you a visit right this instant!"

After cursing for a while, he fell into deep thought. That brat has really gotten himself into quite the mess this time.

Shang Liuyu was fiddling with her harp in Brightmoon Academy. She looked in the direction of the Chu clan, a pensive expression on her face.

Zu An was currently hiding in one of the Plum Blossom Sect's properties. He too looked out the window with a look of horror. This pressure made him instinctively shake in fear. Forget about facing it head on—it would be impressive if he could even stand up straight. He felt a powerful urge to kneel. Just as he was on the verge of collapse, he suddenly heard a startled voice.

"What terrifying pressure! Brat, did you provoke someone you shouldn't have provoked?"

Zu An was almost moved to tears when he heard this voice. "Big sis empress! Please embrace and comfort me!"

Mi Li reached out a hand to stop him from hugging her. "Are you trying to take advantage of me as soon as we meet?"

Despite saying this, all her attention was focused outside the window. Even Zu An was looking in that direction.

The clouds above the Chu Estate slowly took the form of an indistinct figure, that of a middle-aged man with a crown on his head.

This figure, formed from the clouds, slowly opened his mouth. An indistinct yet oppressive voice resounded throughout all of Brightmoon City. "Granted!"

A massive, bright-yellow imperial edict seemingly appeared out of thin air. It slowly unfolded, taking up almost half the sky. However, it was completely blank.

An embroidered envoy rose and intoned, "His majesty, who has accepted the mandate of heaven, has given the imperial order: The Chu clan has three days to hand over their son-in-law Zu An, or else they will be treated as traitors. All members of the clan and their relatives will be executed!"

Whenever a word was spoken, a trace of golden light would flicker across the imperial edict, and the word that was spoken would appear. When the envoy had finished his recitation, the words he had spoken had been reproduced exactly on the floating imperial edict.

Finally, the imperial edict covered the sky in golden light, which scattered and fell upon the barrier formed by the Red Cloak Army. The instant it made contact with this barrier that not even Liu Yao or King Liang had been able to breach, the barrier melted like snow before a blazing sun, and vanished without a trace.

The three thousand men of the Red Cloak Army all coughed out blood, kneeling under the powerful pressure.

Chu Zhongtian also vomited a mouthful of blood, and his entire figure seemed to wilt.

King Liang, Liu Yao, and all of the others knelt down and said in praise, "Long live his majesty!"

The Imperial Guard also cried out in worship. Eventually, everyone in Brightmoon City was kneeling down in fear and shouting, their voices full of emotion.

"Long live his majesty!"

The emperor was the world's number one expert. In the hearts of common people, he was seen as an unparalleled existence. Almost all of them were crying out sincerely.

Meanwhile, in a prison carriage, Sang Hong said to his son, "Qian'er, didn't you ask me what it meant to act in the emperor's stead? This is precisely it!"

At the same time, he couldn't shake his confusion. Just what was it that made His Majesty disregard the court's regulations and choose to use brute force to subdue the Chu clan?

## **Chapter 425: The Hat of Forgiveness**

An emperor wasn't an ordinary person, after all. In many instances, he could not act on his own interests.

With his strength, he was considered the number one cultivator in the world. This, paired with the authority that he wielded as emperor, should have made it easy for him to eliminate the Chu clan and claim their salt and iron resources for himself. However, he still chose to dispatch Sang Hong, who tried to employ all sorts of schemes to cause the Chu clan to collapse from the inside. The emperor needed the other clans to antagonize the Chu clan precisely because he required a justifiable reason.

Such a reason would be enough to convince the masses of his cause, even though the intelligent people within the court would still realize what was going on. These were the conventional rules of the court.

Without this, everyone would begin to question his actions. Once that happened, then the very foundation of his dynasty would be shaken.

Even if you're strong enough to overwhelm anyone, what would happen to your posterity? What about the future of the nation?

That was why Sang Hong was extremely confused. From what he knew about the emperor, he didn't think that His Majesty would be so rash as to do something so unwise, and incur the criticism of the people. He would never have bothered to send him here otherwise.

He could only think of one reason for this, which was that Zu An was extremely important to the emperor. His importance not only exceeded the Chu clan's, it even exceeded anything else he could possibly imagine. That alone could make His Majesty lose his composure like this.

"Just what did that kid steal from the emperor?" He had treated King Liang's accusation with disdain at first, but he was starting to become more and more convinced that this was the truth.

Sang Qian was completely stunned. He finally understood why his father was so scared of the Embroidered Envoy even though they were only at the fifth or sixth rank.

However, he quickly realized what this meant. He said excitedly, "Isn't this a good thing for us? Now that the emperor is focused on Zu An, he might not punish us as severely, right?"

Sang Hong said with a bitter smile, "If only it were that simple... After all, the one who wants us dead isn't the emperor..."

Sang Qian was dumbfounded. He immediately asked his father what he meant, but Sang Hong didn't reply. His face was a mask of worry, his mind deep in thought. Not only would it be pointless to tell his son, it might even cause his mind to break down.

In a different prison carriage, Zheng Dan overheard their conversation. Her ten fingers gripped the bars tightly, her face riddled with worry. "Ah Zu..."

...

Zu An's face had drained of all color. The contents of that imperial edict had been seen by everyone in the entire city, and he was no exception.

He felt completely powerless before the might that the emperor had displayed. Even the most elaborate of schemes were practically useless in the face of such a massive difference in strength. He didn't see any way out of this situation at all.

Mi Li couldn't help but say with a sigh, "I really don't know what to say. Why are you so good at bringing disaster on yourself? You've managed to get on the bad side of so many powerful individuals."

She thought about her soul contract with him. Just how many times had they wound up in such a situation?

This kid's strength was clearly not that high, yet he somehow always ended up facing enemies that were so much stronger than him.

"Big sis empress, can you defeat the emperor?" Zu An asked, praying for a miracle.

Mi Li rolled her eyes. "Why are you asking if I can beat an enemy that you yourself provoked?"

Zu An said, "Aren't we in the same boat here? If I die, you'll be screwed as well!"

"I might have had a chance if I was at my peak. But now? Forget it. Tough luck! Just accept your death peacefully," Mi Li replied in a huff.

Zu An stared at her, speechless.

Sis, can you please not be so direct...?

Mi Li was curious about something else. "You weren't even this scared when you faced me back then. Was it because I was too pretty, and so you didn't find me scary enough?"

"Big sis empress, it looks like your skin has grown much thicker after hanging around me so much." Zu An couldn't resist mocking her. How could this be considered a similar situation? He had the Heiress' Ball of Delights back then, and he couldn't have cared less about how high her cultivation was. What the heck was he supposed to do against the emperor of the Zhou Dynasty?!

Mi Li wasn't interested in finding out his answer anyway. "To be honest, there's no reason for you to be so worried. Just pick a mountain to hide in. The world is so big, and they might not even be able to find you. Once you finish cultivating your Phoenix Nirvana Sutra and Primordial Origin Sutra, there will come a day when you wouldn't need to be afraid of the emperor anymore."

Zu An's eyes lit up. "How long will that take?"

Mi Li looked at him. "With your aptitude and my guidance, you'll be done within eight hundred years. Hell, if you are fast, even five hundred years would probably be enough."

Zu An was less than comforted by this.

Putting aside the question of whether or not he could even live for that long, what sort of meaningless life would he lead if he hid in a damned mountain for a few centuries?

Mi Li yawned and stretched her body lazily. "I'm tired, so I'm going to sleep. Take care!"

With that, she vanished.

Zu An had to admit that everything this woman did was beautiful. However, why was this big sis so irresponsible? Was she really going to leave just like that?

Couldn't you at least console my terrified heart?

Even if you can't beat the emperor, I'll gladly take an affectionate hug...

He put aside his jokes. He had to figure something out on his own.

A thought popped into his mind. He took out the Keyboard system and saw that he was sitting on a total of 77,589 Rage points.

Fuck it, I'll just bet it all!

Zu An found a wash basin to wash his face. From within his Brilliant Glass Bead, he fished out some candles and incense, then took out offerings of a cow's head, a lamb's head, a pig's head... He always felt as though his prayers alone weren't solemn enough, so he'd hoarded a bunch of stuff when he got the chance to. The Brilliant Glass Bead had so much space anyway, and there was no need to worry about anything inside it going bad.

After bustling about for a while, his offering table was finally ready.

Zu An prayed, and then began to draw the lottery.

Thanks for playing... Thanks for playing... Ki Fruit... Thanks for playing... Ki Fruit...

Zu An clenched his fists when he saw these messages.

At his current level, Ki Fruits were pretty much the same as those useless consolatory 'Thanks for playing' messages. He needed way too many of them to move up each level.

His eyes suddenly brightened. The flickering light meter had come to a stop above the 'M' key.

A hat appeared on the screen. This hat didn't look all that special. It was not that different from an ordinary one. The only thing strange about it was its color.

It was entirely green!

It was even a shimmering green, as if it was somehow scared that others wouldn't notice it. Green light swirled across its surface, slowly converging on a single, sparkling point.

Zu An was stunned. What was this thing? Why did he feel like it was the same as the one he'd given Sang Qian earlier?

Then again, he knew that rewards granted by the Keyboard were all special in their own way.

He quickly read the description.

Congratulations on winning the 'Hat of Forgiveness'!

Hat of Forgiveness

Introduction: Spring has arrived, and all things are coming alive! What should be green has finally started to turn green! If you want to get by, then you need a bit of green on your head. What will you do when you find out the cruel truth? You obviously have to forgive him/her!"

Description for use: Single use. If you make the target wear this hat, then they will forgive you, no matter what kind of mistake you have made."

Zu An just stared at the screen.

He almost sprayed saliva everywhere. How could something as nonsensical as this appear? He began to wonder what sort of weird taste the Keyboard's creator had.

His head was beginning to ache. If he ever made someone wear such a hat, he couldn't care less if they forgave him or not. Wasn't this thing kind of useless?

Wait, what if I...

While he was deep in thought, a quiet voice suddenly spoke into his ear. "So this is your trump card..."

Zu An jumped up in fright. He turned around and saw Mi Li sitting on his offering table, her legs casually swinging in the air.

"Big sis empress, didn't you say you were going to sleep?" Zu An asked immediately.

A mysterious smile spread across Mi Li's face. "You shouldn't trust a woman so easily, especially one as pretty as me."

## Chapter 426: Show Me Your Sincerity

Zu An smiled in embarrassment. "What are you saying, big sis empress? I don't understand at all."

Mi Li gave him a hard look. "When we were in the dungeon, I knew that something wasn't quite right. With your crappy cultivation, I should have been able to kill you with a sneeze. However, I just couldn't kill you no matter what I did."

"Even though the willpower you displayed back then astounded me, it would be way too easy if you could survive in this world on willpower alone."

"That was why I was always curious as to what you relied on. It seems as though this is the 'system' you speak of. The Hat of Forgiveness? This thing is definitely strange."

Zu An was shocked. "You can see all this?"

Mi Li smiled ambiguously. "When did I say that I couldn't?"

"Previously, you..." Zu An subconsciously began to speak, but he quickly caught himself.

"I just told you, the prettier the girl, the better they are at lying," Mi Li said with a smile. "That medicine you used to save Madam Chu was quite amazing. She was in critical condition, but it brought her back immediately. Not even the court necromancers of the past could have concocted such medicine. Now, this Hat of Forgiveness thing, it really seems like quite an amazing magic artifact, if the description doesn't lie."

Zu An's expression flickered several times. Countless thoughts flashed past his mind. It seems this woman had harbored suspicions about me for quite some time. She'd already seen all the nonsense that I go through while drawing the lottery, but she's kept quiet about it all this time because she had yet to fully understand it. Now that she has a better idea, she's decided to lay her cards on the table.

"Come on, you don't have to be that nervous, okay? Our lives are already tied together. Why would I harm you?" Mi Li noticed how distraught he had become, and rushed to console him.

"You just told me that pretty women love to lie. How do I know if the life-and-death pact that we made was real or fake? What if you have a way to undo the restrictions? I'll find myself being screwed over before I even know it!" Zu An snorted angrily.

"You learn pretty fast, kid." Mi Li favored him with a proud smile. "But big sis didn't lie to you about that."

"I don't believe you." Zu An's eyes shifted to her dress. "You've already caught me with my pants down. How about you take off your clothes to show your sincerity?"

You're already a soul, why do you bother wearing clothes? It's just like taking off your pants just to fart...

Mi Li's eyes almost popped out of her face.

In a flash, the squeals of a pig being slaughtered filled the room. "Big sis empress! Please, I can explain! Let's talk it out! I was just kidding!"

“Ahhh!! Please, you can hit me anywhere, but don’t hit my face! I depend on this face of mine to survive!”

...

It took a long time for the room to become quiet again. Mi Li wiped off the blood from her fingertips, a dangerous smile playing across her lips. “Let this big sis teach you an important principle today! Don’t play dead when you shouldn’t.”

Zu An was lying paralyzed on the ground, his face completely swollen and his nose leaking blood. “I couldn’t figure out how to make you prove what you said was true, so I cracked a joke instead. Why do you have to be so violent?”

Mi Li snorted. “I was already extremely lenient. If someone had dared to say something like that in front of me back when I was empress, I would’ve executed their family down to the third generation!”

Zu An’s throat went dry. Why are all these women around me so bloody fierce?

Mi Li laughed and said, “Besides, I’m not just beating you up, okay? I’m helping you cultivate! Who asked you to pick up this Phoenix Nirvana Sutra that requires you to get beaten up?”

Zu An chuckled.

“Alright, enough of that. Let’s talk business.” Mi Li put away her smile. “Even the strongest of oaths can be unreliable. In the end, it all boils down to the interests of both parties, as well as the strength of both sides.

“Even though you’re weak, you do have transcendent level aptitude, and possess multiple secret techniques. You have this system as your trump card as well, so there is great hope for you to achieve immortality. You know, the stronger the man, and the more trump cards he has, the more attractive he is. I find that I’m beginning to like you more and more.” Mi Li smiled. “That is why you don’t have to worry about me harming you.”

Zu An was full of bitterness. “I thought that we’d gotten this close because we’ve hung around each other so much. It turns out you only like me because of these things! It was all strictly business for you!”

Mi Li scoffed. “Tsk, what else did you think it was? Do you really think an empress like me would give an immature brat like you the time of day?”

Zu An was clearly unhappy. “Are you sure that I’m not mature enough?”

Mi Li suddenly remembered the scene in the dungeon, where she had taken over Chu Chuyan’s body. Her face flushed red, and she quickly changed the topic. “Ahem ahem... let’s talk more about this trump card of yours. You called it a ‘system’, right? Why do you call it something so strange?”

“What else would I call it?” Zu An sniffed in annoyance. Having his trump cards exposed this way made him feel extremely uncomfortable.

Mi Li’s expression remained serious. “Based on my observations, this... system should be an extremely powerful magic weapon. Even though its power is inferior to some treasures I know of, its creativity is

absolutely superior. You need to understand that destruction will always be much simpler than creation, so from a certain perspective, your magic weapon is even more precious.”

“Magic weapon?” Zu An was stunned. He’d spent way too much time reading web novels in his past life. It was always difficult for the protagonists to explain their cheats, so he didn’t think too much about his Keyboard system, and hadn’t tried to pry into its origins at all.

“Of course it’s a magic weapon!” Mi Li said. “It might have even been forged by history’s most powerful and talented rune master. His understanding of spatial laws and energy conversion, as well as his natural creativity, far surpasses any other exceptional expert that I’ve ever encountered.”

“Energy conversion?” Zu An was still mired in confusion. Why was this beginning to sound like the study of physics from his past world?

“Indeed.” Mi Li grew ever more excited, her voice full of admiration. “Regular magic weapons need ki stones to provide energy, while magic weapons that are more rare can absorb the natural ki around them to operate on their own. However, magic treasures aren’t people, so the rate at which they can absorb natural ki is limited. However, your system is different. Not only can it replenish itself through natural ki, it can even absorb soul force as an energy source.”

“Soul force?” Zu An was about to lose his mind. What the heck was this now?

“As the name implies, it’s the power of the soul,” Mi Li explained. “Normal souls will release soul force when they become agitated. When you constantly provoke others and turn their agitation into Rage points, it is actually a collection of soul power.”

Zu An’s eyes had begun to glaze over. However, after listening to her explanation, many of the questions and doubts in his mind began to dissolve. He couldn’t help but stare at her. “Big sis empress, are you a reincarnated physics professor or something?”

“What the heck is that?” Mi Li frowned. “I used to be an empress who unified the world, and I’ve read all sorts of ancient texts! How can my knowledge and experience compare to someone like you, a frog trapped at the bottom of a well?”

Zu An cursed her in his heart. You think you’re that great? Do you know how many Hollywood movies I’ve watched in my previous world, and how many Japanese works of art—all full of limitless passion—I’ve enjoyed? Do you see me bragging all day to you about them?

However, the expression on his face remained sincere. “This ‘soul force’ can be harnessed?”

“Of course it can,” said Mi Li. “The universe is so vast and great. There are many more paths of cultivation besides just relying on natural ki. There are many energies in this world that can be used for cultivation. For example, your Primordial Origin Sutra uses primordial ki.

“In addition, according to my years of research, natural ki is most likely not made up of a single form of energy. It should be considered a collective term that encompasses many types of energies. I know many races who harness the same natural ki, but their cultivation methods, as well as the results of their cultivation, are entirely different from those of the human race. Even the human race has many different schools of thought with regards to cultivation... Unfortunately, I was unable to distinguish the different types of energy that natural ki consists of.”

Zu An suddenly realized what she was talking about. The study of physics in his past world had resulted in the discovery of the four fundamental forces in the universe: the strong nuclear force, the weak nuclear force, the electromagnetic force, and the gravitational force. Different forces led to different results.

However, the universe was incomprehensibly vast. These might not be the only types of force. For example, the natural ki and primordial ki in this world, as well as the soul force that was just mentioned, should exist as well. It was just that the humans on Earth had yet to be able to sense them.

## **Chapter 427: No Way Out**

Mi Li mistook his silence for discouragement. Her tone softened, and she said, "Don't worry. With your magic weapon, the secret manuals that others could only ever yearn for, and your transcendent aptitude, you don't need to feel too bothered about this current situation."

Zu An gave her a look of surprise. "Big sis empress, I didn't expect your voice to sound so pleasant when you're being nice. I almost thought you were a different person."

Mi Li just couldn't understand what was up with him.

"Do you actually want me to always be strict on you? What's wrong with you?"

Zu An chuckled and said, "Not at all, not at all. Of course I prefer it when you're being nice. But you can't be too nice, or else you'll lose the sex appeal that comes from being a powerful empress."

"Piss off!" Mi Li was momentarily speechless. She had no idea how to reply to that, so she quickly disappeared and went back to sleep.

"I really have no idea if she's actually sleeping or not..." Zu An muttered as he looked out the window in the direction of the Chu Estate, a pensive expression on his face.

...

Liu Yao was busy searching the estate with his Imperial Guard.

The Chu clan's Master, Madam, and the Red Cloak Army had been suppressed by the imperial edict, so they could no longer stop the search.

Jiang Luofu frowned. She had come to act as a mediator, but the emperor's personal interference made any further persuasion meaningless. The only thing she could do now was to see if she could do anything to save them from extinction.

As for Zu An, she could only wish him the best.

She had no idea how in the world this kid had offended the emperor. He actually managed to instigate such a huge disaster!

I wonder if His Majesty will pardon his crimes if his transcendent aptitude is reported. After all, such legendary aptitude is just too rare.

Then again, envy was an inextricable part of human nature. If the emperor found out how great his potential was, it might only further strengthen his resolve to get rid of him.

She found herself in a dilemma. She had always been a decisive person, so this was a rare feeling.

King Liang stepped forward. "So, everyone believes me now, right? Principal Jiang, City Lord Xie, do you two have any more opinions to share?"

Jiang Luofu frowned, but didn't say anything.

Xie Yi immediately smiled apologetically. "None at all! We will let King Liang take charge of everything."

Are you kidding me? An imperial edict had appeared, and the fear they'd felt from that immensely powerful pressure that had accompanied it still lingered. Even now, he was questioning his decision to side with King Qi.

However, with things already the way they were, there was no way for him to switch patrons at this point. Fortunately, the emperor's days were already numbered. His only job at this point was to send a report to King Qi as quickly as possible, so he could make plans ahead of time.

Xie Daoyun bit her lip. She knew her father had no choice but to act the way he did. This truly wasn't something that could be decided by their Xie clan.

She could only hope that Zu An would be able to get away safely.

By this time, Liu Yao had come out, having finished the search of the Chu Estate. He shook his head. "He's not here."

King Liang looked at the Master and Madam of the Chu clan. "I believe Brightmoon Duke has heard the imperial edict as well. If you do not hand Zu An over, the entire Chu clan will follow that kid into the grave."

He felt incredibly happy to see the people who had placed him in such a sorry state earlier end up looking so distraught.

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru exchanged glances. Their faces were extremely pale.

Qin Wanru couldn't help but say, "You all saw for yourselves that Ah Zu isn't here. How are we supposed to hand over someone that we aren't even sheltering?"

King Liang said coldly, "That's for you to worry about. It's none of my business. Who was the one who decided to take in Zu An as their son-in-law?"

He stationed the Imperial Guard around the Chu Estate and decided to get some rest. It was much better to lie down in a warm place, away from this frigid atmosphere.

That's right, Isn't the Immortal Abode in Brightmoon City? I've heard that it was quite excellent. Qiu Honglei is there, and she has quite the reputation. I should take a look and experience her for myself.

However, it felt odd to suggest this on his own initiative. Why are these Brightmoon Officials so slow? Shouldn't they be the ones taking the initiative to make me feel welcome?

As if sensing his dissatisfaction, Xie Yi rushed over with a smile and said, “King Liang, General, the two of you have come all the way to Brightmoon City. Please, let this humble one help you experience the local flavors of Brightmoon City.”

King Liang immediately felt pleased, but he feigned a troubled look. He stroked his beard and said, “Surely that’s too much to ask. I wouldn’t dream of troubling Lord Xie.”

“Not at all, not at all. Respectfully, this humble one also wishes to hear more about the capital city from both you and General Liu!” Xie Yi said with a smile.

Liu Yao laughed heartily. “I will guide Lord Xie around the capital in the future if there is a chance! Haha.”

Xie Daoyun was slightly disappointed by her father’s fawning attitude. She preferred to distance herself from such behavior, but she didn’t feel any real contempt for her father.

As the child of an official, she knew that entertaining guests was an important part of his duties. She was busy burying herself in poetry and the arts, while her younger brother ran around chasing girls, so her father was the one who had to shoulder everything alone.

When everyone had left, Xie Daoyun walked over to console the husband and wife duo of the Chu clan. “Brightmoon Duke, Madam Chu, are you two all right? Should I call Divine Physician Ji?”

Chu Zhongtian shook his head. “These are just minor injuries.” He thought about the bleak future facing the Chu clan, and sighed deeply.

“Uncle, please do not feel too worried,” Xie Daoyun said. “Surely there’s a way to solve this problem.”

Despite her own words, she herself could see no way out for them.

Qin Wanru said, “Thank you Miss Xie, for your help earlier.”

She obviously realized that it had been Xie Daoyun who had brought her father here, and she also heard about how she had helped Ah Zu enter the city. However, even though she was grateful, she couldn’t help but find this a little odd. When did the two of them develop such a cordial relationship?

Their Ah Zu didn’t have many other skills, but his way with women was truly top notch. She might have been worried if they weren’t currently in a crisis, but right now, the more of these female friends he had, the better. They could aid him, at least, and if there was some princess or someone like that among them, then that would be even better. Maybe that would help him come out of this conflict with the emperor unscathed.

Huh? Wait a second. The emperor keeps saying that Ah Zu stole something of his. Don’t tell me it’s his daughter...

“Madam is too kind.” Xie Daoyun was worried about Zu An’s next steps. She clearly wasn’t in the mood to chat, so she bade her farewells and left with a heavy heart.

Jiang Luofu also walked over to them and said quietly, “Ah Zu left your second daughter in the academy’s staff residences. Given the current situation, I will keep her there for now. The two of you need not worry. Even if something does happen, I will ensure her safety.”

Her unspoken words were clear. If the Chu clan really was eradicated, she would continue to protect Chu Huanzhao.

Gratitude shone in the eyes of both Chu Zhongtian and his wife. "Thank you, principal!"

Even the emperor had gotten involved. With matters the way they were, there was not much room for hope. The fact that she was willing to preserve some of their bloodline was already a huge favor.

Qin Wanru asked, "By the way, is Ah Zu in the academy?"

Jiang Luofu shook her head. "No one knows where he is right now."

Qin Wanru sighed. "That's good. If Principal Jiang runs into him, please help me pass on a message. He absolutely must not come back! They've already set up an inescapable net."

Even though King Liang and Liu Ya had left, those ten embroidered envoys remained, and the Imperial Guard was still present. The Chu clan had lost all power to resist them.

"Also, tell him to look for Chuyan, and rescue her... her younger brother. They should find a place to lay low and live incognito. Do not let Chuyan seek revenge."

From her tone, it sounded as if she were already passing on her last words. Jiang Luofu frowned, but in the end she still nodded in acknowledgment. "I will."

During the next three days, the Chu clan held meetings around the clock, trying to find a way out. However, every option was rejected. This situation was just too grim.

Suddenly, an elder with a walking stick cursed, "It's all Zu An's fault! He is the source of this whole catastrophe!"

With him taking the lead, more and more people began to curse Zu An.

#### **Chapter 428: A Loophole**

The ones speaking were all elders of the Chu clan. Even though they weren't very skilled themselves, they occupied stations of great seniority without having any duties towards the Chu clan.

"I concur! The clan has not experienced a moment of peace ever since Zu An joined!"

"The clan master's decision to bring him into the clan was too negligent."

Qin Wanru frowned, clearly unhappy with the way everyone was criticizing Zu An. She got up and shouted, "Our Chu clan would have already been destroyed if it hadn't been for Zu An. You all have no right to complain!"

Someone grumbled, "Aren't we still going to be destroyed all the same? We should have just let Chu Second Master succeed in his takeover. He is also a part of the Chu clan, after all."

Qin Wanru was furious. "What did you say?!"

Chu Yuepo, of the third branch, rushed out at this time to serve as a mediator. "We are all here for the Chu clan's sake! We should be thinking about how to deal with the current predicament, and not stoke any further internal friction!"

Qin Wanru sat down with an angry huff. Unfortunately, no one could come up with any good ideas, even after a lengthy discussion.

While they were all in despair, Chu Yuepo stood up and said, "I've actually thought of a way out. I just don't know if I should share it with everyone."

"Why are you still playing around with suspense?" Chu Zhongtian said impatiently. "Hurry up and say it."

"I am worried that I will anger Master and Madam," Chu Yuepo said hesitantly.

The others immediately became impatient as well. "Third Master, when did you become so wishy-washy?"

Qin Wanru snorted as well. "Why would we get angry if it will really help our Chu clan?"

Thus encouraged, Chu Yuepo finally said, "I noticed a loophole within the imperial edict. We can..."

Qin Wanru shot to her feet immediately. "No way! I will not agree to that!"

Chu Zhongtian chimed in as well. "Indeed. Ah Zu has contributed greatly to our Chu clan. How can we treat him like this?"

Chu Yuepo sighed. "I know that this seems slightly unreasonable, but our Chu clan is on the verge of collapse! Master and Madam, as the leaders of this clan, you must not act so emotionally!"

The others began to voice their agreement as well. Chu Zhongtian's expression flickered several times. In the end, he raised his hand to stop the discussions. "I will not allow it. The founding principle of our Chu clan's Red Cloak Army clearly states that we will not abandon anyone. If we do something like this, then even our men will turn their backs on us. This will tarnish the centuries of prestige that our Chu clan has accumulated. In such a state, the Chu clan will not survive for long."

"Dear..." Qin Wanru was extremely moved. Back then, she had fallen in love with him precisely because of how upright he was. She hadn't expected him to still be the same person, even after so many years.

The rest of the members looked at each other in dismay. Seeing the seriousness of his tone, they were at a loss as to how to persuade him.

Chu Yuepo was once again the one who reacted quickest. He immediately said, "Master and Madam, you've misunderstood me! Although it seems as though we are abandoning Zu An on the surface, we are actually saving him!"

Chu Zhongtian frowned. "What do you mean?"

Chu Yuepo explained, "Master, please think about it. Why did they insist on this three-day deadline even though they didn't find Zu An in the estate?"

"This..." Chu Zhongtian trailed off into silence. Qin Wanru began to ponder this as well.

Chu Yuepo continued, "Clearly, even though it seems as if they are forcing us to hand over Zu An, they are actually trying to force Zu An to come out of hiding. They are using us to threaten him into making a move!"

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were stunned. They weren't dullards, but they had just been too preoccupied with all the chaos swirling around them. Now that it has been brought up, they quickly realized that this was indeed the case.

The two of them entered a quick discussion, and Qin Wanru was the first one to address the rest of them. "Fine, we will do as you have suggested!"

...

Three days passed quickly. The various powers of Brightmoon City all gathered near the Chu Estate to see how the situation would play out.

Even the common people rushed over, drawn by the commotion. Even though the Chu clan enjoyed a good reputation, most ordinary folk were quick to rejoice when calamity fell upon those richer and more powerful than them. None bothered to look into the reasons behind it all, although, given their abilities, there was little chance that they would be able to figure out the truth.

Zu An put on one of the masks he'd taken from Chen Xuan and blended into the crowd.

Not long after, King Liang and Liu Yao led a group of intimidating subordinates into the Chu Estate. Behind them came several men carrying a table with an incense holder.

King Liang cleared his throat, and then he said, "This stick of incense has almost finished burning. The three-day deadline is almost up, yet you all still haven't handed Zu An over! Are you asking for your clan to be eradicated?"

Even though he didn't deliberately raise his voice, his master rank cultivation ensured that every single person could still hear what he said.

He had been in a bad mood the past few days. He'd gone to visit the Immortal Abode with lofty expectations for their courtesan queen, Qiu Honglei, only to find that the beauty had already left.

The other girls were still high-quality, but not being able to meet this long-admired beauty still left him feeling frustrated and annoyed.

Even though he was of advanced age, he still had hands and a mouth. It wouldn't prevent him from having some fun.

Chu Zhongtian paid him no attention. He stood on a high platform and declared loudly, "The drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan did not cherish our daughter after marrying her. Instead, he constantly played around with women outside. He even had close relations with women from brothels, and wanted to take in a courtesan queen from the Immortal Abode as a concubine! This triggered a huge uproar in the estate. He has completely neglected his duties as a husband! Furthermore, his morality and conduct is questionable. That is why, after discussing it as a clan, we have written out the articles of annulment of his marriage to our daughter. Henceforth, he is no longer a member of the Chu clan. From now on, he shares no relationship with our Chu clan!"

A huge commotion broke out right after his announcement. The common people were much more interested in Zu An's affair with the Immortal Abode's courtesan queen.

Quite a few people already knew about what had gone on between Qiu Honglei and Zu An in the Immortal Abode. They never expected it to go so far that even a marriage had been considered, and it was even more surprising that Qiu Honglei had been the one to take the initiative to visit the Chu Estate.

Tsk tsk tsk, this fella really was too greedy! Even though he already had the goddess of the Chu clan, he still wasn't satisfied! He'd actually gone after Qiu Honglei as well!

They had all been upset before, but as time had gone on and similar stories kept emerging, they had begun to grow numb. They began to wonder what special attributes he possessed that made so many outstanding women fall for him.

King Liang's eyelids twitched. The last thing he'd expected was for the girl that he'd been yearning for to have already thrown herself at Zu An!

A random bumpkin dares to steal her from me, a king? Absolutely preposterous!

You have successfully trolled King Liang for 999 Rage points!

Zu An frowned when he saw the incoming Rage points. How did he end up provoking this man?

He pushed the matter aside for the moment, and stared at Chu Zhongtian in a daze.

He never expected to hear this, especially after taking the huge risk of coming here. If they'd been in a different situation, he might have joked around and whined about how much he'd done for the Chu Clan, and how much he'd bled for the Chu clan, but he just couldn't bring himself to get into the mood at all.

From the moment he'd crossed over to this world, he had always stayed in the Chu Estate. Even though many people there had treated him quite badly, there was still Chuyan and Huanzhao. Chu Zhongtian and Madam Chu treated him quite well as well. He'd begun to gradually treat the Chu clan as his real home.

He'd come back this time precisely for the sake of the Chu clan. How could he have predicted this result?

Right at this time, a gentle voice sounded next to his ear. "Ah Zu, don't show yourself. They are trying to bait you into coming out."

Zu An was stunned. He tried to trace the source of the sound, and noticed Qin Wanru looking in his direction.

He was stunned, but quickly realized what was going on. This mask was the same one that he'd worn the last time the two of them had gone out on their adventure. No wonder she recognized him!

He felt a surge of warmth. So this was the reason behind the annulment.

King Liang was furious. "What a joke! Is this the game you guys are going to play? Do you think we're all stupid?"

Chu Zhongtian said in a composed and unhurried manner, "If I may speak, respected king. If I am not mistaken, the emperor's imperial edict stated that we needed to hand over our son-in-law, Zu An. It did not say to hand over the individual called Zu An. Since Zu An is no longer our son-in-law, we should not be bound by the imperial edict anymore."

Everyone was stunned by this last statement. Even Xie Yi couldn't help but stare at him. Was this still the same rigid and honest person that he'd known all this while?

Chu Zhongtian continued, "Respectfully, I must trouble you to help us find that man. He has been quite the annoyance to our Chu clan as well! We've done nothing but treat him well, yet not only did he deceive our first daughter, he even tried to go after our second daughter. Huanzhao is still so young! He is truly a scoundrel."

Zu An felt the urge to bury his face in his palm.

### **Chapter 429: Saved From Absolute Death**

Zu An was absolutely devastated. He knew that Chu Zhongtian was saying this to give weight to his argument, but this sounded so wrong!

He was really close to Huanzhao, and he was sure that his father-in-law had noticed too. He just didn't talk about it.

The crowd erupted in a massive commotion. Zu An's 'romantic adventures' were already widely known throughout the city, but after the initial shock, everyone had slowly grown numb to the news. However, this new drama involving both sisters suddenly had them all worked up again. He'd actually achieved this fantasy that countless men could only dream of!

"Have you seen Chu Second Miss before? I have! She's already quite lovely. Who knows, she might grow up to be even prettier than her older sister!"

"That brat Zu An got his hands on both of the Chu sisters at once! His luck with women is crazy!"

"That's not even all of it. I heard that he even has something going on with Madam Chu... This might be the real reason why Brightmoon Duke is kicking him out..."

The buzz of gossip instantly set the crowd afire, and the place became extremely lively.

Chu Zhongtian's eyelids twitched. Given his cultivation, how could he not hear what they were saying? He never expected his acting to result in this sort of misunderstanding!

However, there was no way he could explain the truth to them either. Was he supposed to insist that Zu An had done nothing of that sort with his wife? Who the hell would believe that? They would instead take it as an indirect confession, which would make things even worse!

He felt incredibly wronged.

Qin Wanru's face was completely red as well. She hadn't expected such a reaction from the crowd either. She shot Zu An an unhappy look.

Meanwhile, Zu An was beaming with joy from all the Rage points he was getting, all of them kindly donated by the jealous and envious crowd.

Please keep the good stuff coming!

King Liang and Liu Yao quickly had the Embroidered Envoy bring out the imperial edict. They found that it was exactly as the Chu clan claimed, containing the wording 'son-in-law, Zu An'. They both looked at the leader of the Embroidered Envoy in annoyance.

The leader felt utterly ashamed. After all, he had been the one who had dictated the imperial edict. How could he have expected this sort of loophole?

In the end, it was King Liang, the old fox of the court, who reacted quickly. He immediately criticized Chu Zhongtian viciously. "You dare play your word games with the imperial edict? You are making a fool out of your sovereign! Your vile heart must be punished!"

"King Liang, I do not dare to receive such a great title," Chu Zhongtian replied sarcastically. "We have responded most loyally to His Majesty's imperial edict. How can this be considered making a fool out of him?"

Jiang Luofu, who had remained silent all this while, also spoke up. "I agree with what Brightmoon Duke says. Many people have heard what he said as well. Since Zu An is no longer the son-in-law of the Chu clan, I find it rather unacceptable for you to trouble the Chu clan any further."

Seeing Principal Jiang take the lead, Xie Yi didn't want to let slip this chance to express his goodwill to the Chu clan either. "This humble official also thinks that interrogating the Chu clan further would be a bit much. How about I have my bailiffs cooperate with the search for Zu An instead?"

"Lord Xie needs not do that." How could King Liang be blind to his true thoughts? Send bailiffs to arrest Zu An? Who knew where Zu An had run off to by now! How the heck were they supposed to catch him? Besides, not even the Embroidered Envoy could apprehend him before. What the heck were his bailiffs going to do? Catch him my ass!

He roundly ignored Xie Yi, and began to discuss their next plan of action with Liu Yao and the leader of the Embroidered Envoy, Huang Huihong.

Liu Yao chuckled. "Since the emperor sent the distinguished King Liang to deal with this matter, it's only natural that I pledge to fully obey whatever it is your order of me."

King Liang cursed him in his heart. This old fox's words sounded nice, but all he was doing was to push all responsibility of this matter onto him. This dogshit bastard doesn't even have a shred of a conscience after all the whoring... ahem ahem, after the camaraderie we shared in the Immortal Abode.

King Liang had no choice but to look to Huang Huihong. "What does Commander Huang think?"

Huang Huihong said in a serious tone, "The only thing I care about is capturing Zu An and bringing him back. This was the absolute goal that the emperor entrusted to me. Respectfully, if we do not do so, not only our Embroidered Envoy, but even you will not be able to escape punishment."

King Liang's face was as dark as a storm cloud. His inner landscape was in utter turmoil.

A while later, he finally made a decision. He walked up to the Chu Estate again and declared in a loud voice, "Since Zu An is no longer the son-in-law of the Chu clan, I cannot execute the entire clan according to the imperial edict. However, based on the Chu clan's actions, I suspect them of trying to deceive the emperor and shelter Zu An. The emperor will be the one to make the final decision on how to deal with them.

"Men, arrest everyone in the Chu clan! We will escort all of them back to the capital!"

As someone within the emperor's faction, he clearly understood that the emperor wanted to use this chance to seize the Chu clan's assets. Arresting the entire Chu clan would pave the way for this nicely.

This way, even if he wasn't able to capture Zu An, he could still lessen his punishment through other merits.

"What?!" Everyone in the Chu clan panicked when they heard this. Many of them even secretly gripped their weapons.

Xie Yi coughed and said, "Respected king, isn't this a little inappropriate? Forcibly detaining a duke's clan in the capital city will cause huge upheaval both inside and outside Brightmoon City!"

King Liang said coldly, "I will take all responsibility for the consequences!"

He then looked at the members of the Chu clan. "What? Are you planning to resist? Do you want the Embroidered Envoy to bring out another imperial edict? I fear that, in your current condition, we might not even need an imperial edict. General Liu and I can handle all of you on our own!"

He intentionally looked at Xie Yi and Jiang Luofu as he said this. These words were clearly meant for the two of them as well.

Sure enough, Xie Yi and Jiang Luofu both frowned, but kept their silence.

It was one thing if it was just King Liang and Liu Yao, but the Embroidered Envoy could act in place of the Son of Heaven. If they summoned another imperial edict, no one would be able to offer the slightest resistance.

With the order given, the Imperial Guard moved in to arrest the members of the Chu clan. Wails and howls sounded within the Chu Estate. Wives cried for their husbands, children cried for their parents, and parents cried for their children...

"Clan Master?" The others looked towards Chu Zhongtian. Clearly, they needed him to make an immediate decision for the clan.

Chu Zhongtian's expression flickered several times. He looked at his wife and saw the encouragement and trust in her eyes. He took a deep breath, then slowly said, "The ancestors of the Chu clan established this clan through martial glory. The Chu clan's disciples have always died in battle! Never have there ever been any successors who surrendered and allowed themselves to be slaughtered. Instead of being treated as prisoners in the capital city, suffering humiliation and slander, we would rather fight an honorable battle to the death! Men of the Chu clan, raise your blades if you are willing to stand and fight with me!"

“Fight! Fight! Fight!” Everyone in the Chu clan drew their weapons. It was obvious that none of them wanted to be brought back to the capital as criminals.

King Liang was furious. “Are you all trying to resist?!”

As soon as the words left his mouth, all the spears and blades of the Imperial Guard were pointed towards the Chu clan.

“Ah!!!” The surrounding common people all panicked when they saw that a battle was about to break out. They had come with their melon seeds to watch a good show, not to lose their lives.

Xie Yi’s entire head was drenched in sweat. He wiped his forehead while advising both sides, “Everyone, please calm down! Brightmoon Duke, King Liang, please do not be so hasty! Principal Jiang, say something, please!”

Jiang Luofu opened her mouth, but she didn’t say anything in the end. She knew what fate awaited the Chu clan once they were escorted to the capital. She really couldn’t bring herself to dissuade them from doing what they wanted to do.

However, those on the side of the Chu clan were already severely wounded. If battle ensued, they would have practically no chance of victory.

Just as the tension was about to erupt into open conflict, a voice suddenly cried out. “Wait!”

Leaving aside King Liang and his men for the moment, Jiang Luofu and the whole Chu clan all trembled as they turned towards the source of the sound.

Zu An had already removed his mask a long time ago. He slowly walked out of the crowd. “I’m the one you all want to capture. Why are you bothering these others?!”

“Ah Zu!” Qin Wanru was equal parts furious and anxious when she saw him step out. What was the point in him stepping out right now?

He should have just gone to find Chu Chuyan and rescue Huanzhao, and taken them into hiding with him.

Zu An flashed the Master and Madam of the Chu clan an apologetic smile. “Since you guys have already kicked me out of the Chu clan, you can’t blame me for not treating you with respect.”

He didn’t want to burden the Chu clan either. That was why it was best to cut all ties now.

He then looked towards King Liang and the others. “I’m the one you all want, right? Come at me, then.”

King Liang chuckled. “I didn’t expect you to have a backbone, brat! Not bad, not bad!”

The reason he had treated the Chu clan like this was mainly to force Zu An into showing himself. Since he’d already achieved his objective, there was no need to trouble the Chu clan any further.

After all, clashing with the Chu clan head on would surely lead to severe bloodshed. It was hard to predict the consequences of something like that.

“Ah Zu, rather than throwing away your life, why don’t you just fight with us?” Chu Zhongtian knew that Zu An could’ve easily escaped before. The only reason he had shown up was because of the Chu clan. How could someone like him be willing to let Zu An sacrifice his life for them?

Zu An smiled. “I have nothing to do with the Chu clan anymore, so there is no need for Brightmoon Duke to go through the trouble. Besides, I’m not planning on going to my death. The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra is still with me. There is no way the emperor will kill me before he gets his hands on it.”

### **Chapter 430: I’ll Ride With Her**

“Phoenix Nirvana Sutra!” There was a huge uproar from the crowd. Those who were running away stopped in their tracks.

“What is the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra?” Many hadn’t heard about this technique before, and asked their companions in puzzlement.

“It’s a miraculous secret manual that supposedly only exists in legend! It is rumored to be able to grant eternal life! Far too many have sought out this manual in hopes of obtaining eternal life, but no one has ever found it. Who knew Zu An would have it!” There was no lack of individuals from major clans in Brightmoon City, which was why news about the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra had spread quickly.

One thing held true since ancient times. No matter how great one’s cultivation was, and no matter how much longer one’s cultivation extended one’s lifespan, it was still impossible to escape the cold and deathly grasp of time.

How powerful was the current emperor? He was absolutely unrivaled. However, everyone knew that he was already approaching his limit, and might pass away at any time.

A sudden sparkle shone in Xie Yi’s eyes, and he lowered his head to hide his expression. No wonder the emperor made such a huge fuss over this... He was even willing to wipe out the Chu clan to capture Zu An! This explains it all. I must report this to King Qi as soon as possible.

King Qi had been able to contend with the emperor all these years because the emperor was approaching his limit. That was the reason for King Qi’s patience. Time was on their side!

However, if the emperor gained eternal life, what hopes would their faction have left?

Who would be stupid enough to go against an unrivaled expert who didn’t age?

Xie Yi’s expression grew uglier by the second, as he pondered the severe consequences. A single mistake, and King Qi’s entire faction would crumble into nothing.

Jiang Luofu looked at Zu An in shock. This brat still has so many secrets on him?

Transcendent aptitude was already shocking enough. Yet, he somehow also possessed the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra?

Even she was beginning to feel muddle-headed from the temptation. If the two of them weren’t so close, she might have tried to steal it.

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru exchanged glances. The same shock and alarm was mirrored in the other's eyes. They hadn't fully understood why the emperor would keep acting against them, regardless of the rules. They thought that capturing Zu An was just an excuse. They now knew that, compared to Zu An's value, the Chu clan was actually of lesser importance.

Given the Chu clan's history, they had also heard about the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra before. They never expected that Zu An would be the one carrying it.

Everyone thought that Zu An had gotten lucky and rose in status by joining the Chu clan. Now, it was hard to say which of them was more significant.

Leaving the two of them aside, even King Liang and Liu Yao were incredibly shocked. Even though they were in charge of capturing Zu An, they weren't privy to the exact situation. Being left in the dark with regards to the emperor's motivations had rankled them a little, but it was clear as day as to what was happening now.

The commander of the Embroidered Envoy immediately erupted in fury. "Absolutely shameful! Why are you deluding the people with your lies? There is no Phoenix Nirvana Sutra in this world!"

You have successfully trolled Huang Huihong for 444 Rage points!

It might've been better if he had kept his mouth shut. Speaking in such an agitated manner only made everyone believe that he had a guilty conscience. They all looked at Zu An with hungry expressions. All of them wanted to seize him for themselves.

Chu Zhongtian, that man of impeccable integrity, was actually so crafty! Everyone believed that the Chu clan had married their goddess of a daughter off to a good-for-nothing kid from the streets, but their true goal was to obtain the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra!

I would marry my daughter off for that too if I could!

Zu An gulped when he saw the sea of greedy expressions. He wouldn't have minded at all if it had been a group of cute girls, but being stared at by a bunch of grandpas in such a creepy manner was rather horrifying.

He cleared his throat and said to the Embroidered Envoy, "Sure, sure, sure. If you guys say I don't have it, then I don't have it. Since I don't, can I leave?"

Huang Huihong's breath caught. "Of course not! We need to bring you back for interrogation!"

Zu An shrugged his shoulders. He didn't say anything else, but the surrounding crowd hissed in displeasure. They were clearly mocking the commander of the Embroidered Envoy for being two-faced.

Huang Huihong was furious. He immediately gestured for his companions to surround Zu An. "Capture him! We let you get away last time because we were careless, but we definitely won't make the same mistake again."

You have successfully trolled Huang Huihong for 583 Rage points!

In all his years of service, his targets would always greet the Embroidered Envoy with bowed heads, and show absolute respect when they were captured. Occasionally, one or two would resist, but they would quickly be detained, and their eyes would be filled with fear the entire time.

However, not only did this Zu An not fear them, it was they who were afraid that he might pull some trick.

Zu An shook his head. "Don't worry, I won't run this time. I'll go along with you guys to see the emperor."

Everyone was shocked when they heard this.

Huang Huihong's face darkened. "What game are you playing?"

He might have believed him if he were someone else, but this kid didn't seem like the sort of person who would do this!

Zu An smiled. "What's wrong? I'm standing right here. Could it be that the glorious Embroidered Envoy doesn't even dare to capture me?"

Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru both sent him urgent ki transmissions. "Ah Zu, what are you doing? Use this chance to get away! We'll help you distract them!"

But Zu An shook his head. "There's no need. I don't want to trouble you all. Besides, I have my own plans. You two don't need to worry about me."

Jiang Luofu also sent him a ki transmission. "You damned brat, I have no idea what the heck you're planning, but there is absolutely no escape if you are brought back to the capital! The emperor will not tolerate another man achieving eternal life!"

Zu An replied with a smile, "Thank you gorgeous principal for worrying about me. But take a good look at me! Do I look like an idiot who is about to throw my life away?"

Jiang Luofu snorted. "I'll admit that you're not dumb, but that doesn't mean they are. I don't know what kind of plan you've cooked up, but even the best plans are meaningless in the face of absolute strength. All schemes are futile before the emperor's cultivation."

"That might not be the case." Zu An thought about his plan, and a strange expression spread across his face. How the heck am I gonna get the emperor to wear this green hat, though?

Jiang Luofu was stunned by his confident demeanor. She had met her share of confident men in her life, but their confidence was built on their cultivation and backgrounds, which hardly made it praiseworthy. An absolute weakling like Zu An remaining so calm and confident in such a situation was definitely far more rare.

The Embroidered Envoy surrounded him and cast their Soul-reaping Chains around Zu An. They showed visible relief when he did not resist.

Even if he wanted to resist, it was too late now. Those who were bound by the Soul-reaping Chains would find all of their ki restrained. No matter how powerful one's cultivation was, they would be rendered no different from ordinary people.

Zu An frowned. He too could sense that his ki flow had been instantly cut. When he lowered his head, he noticed that the surfaces of the chains were covered in runes. These runes were exquisite, and faint blue light flowed across them from time to time. They formed a sealing formation that restricted all of the ki within his body.

Fortunately, he could still use Grandgale, Blue Mallard, and Hunderdwarble. That immediately gave him a little more confidence.

Xie Yi walked over at this time. "My lords, since you have already completed your mission, why not stay in Brightmoon City for a few more days? This humble official wishes to share more of our city's hospitality."

King Liang said immediately, "Thank you City Lord Xie for your good intentions, but we still have official business to take care of that cannot be delayed. We need to set out immediately."

What kind of joke was this? Zu An just exposed to the world that he carried the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra with him! Who knew how many sharks would be drawn to him after smelling blood. How could they afford to waste any time at all?

Moreover, this Xie Yi was part of King Qi's faction as well. What he was planning was beyond obvious. There was no way King Liang would let him have his way.

He issued an order immediately, without waiting for a response. "Bring the Sang clan with us. We are returning to the capital immediately!"

The prison carriages of the father and son duo of the Sang clan, as well as Zheng Dan's, were brought up. Zheng Dan was still dressed in her wedding clothes, still as stunning as before, although a listless, sorrowful expression covered her face. To her, the future was grim and bleak.

Zu An, bound entirely in chains, wandered across her vision, and she was so shocked that she sat up at once. She wrapped her fingers around the bars of the prison carriage. Her eyes seemed full of questions, almost as though they were asking why he was here.

Zu An gave her a smile. Unfortunately, his ki was sealed up, so the two of them couldn't send each other voice transmissions.

King Liang gave another order. "Find another prison carriage! I want a special one, one that the criminal absolutely cannot escape from."

His subordinates were rather troubled. "There's no time. We are trying to leave as soon as possible. Brightmoon City's prison carriages aren't sturdy enough, and we don't have time to make new ones."

King Liang was furious. "You all couldn't even take care of something that simple? What do I keep you fools around for?"

Those individuals clearly felt the sting of injustice. You aren't even giving us enough time to prepare! Do you expect us to summon one out of thin air for you?

Zu An laughed and said, "There's really no need for all the trouble. This prison carriage seems pretty spacious. I'll just ride with her."

He pointed at Zheng Dan.