

Immortal 451

Chapter 451: Return of the Divine Skill

The assassin's grasp of timing was extremely precise. Yun Yuqing was in a critical stage, where her mind and body were both completely joined with Zu An. Her head went blank in that instant. Even though she could sense the approaching danger, her entire body was trembling in that instant, and she was effectively unable to respond.

The assassin was also aware that she was the biggest threat, which was why he had targeted her back. The power behind his sword thrust was enough to skewer both of them.

With her back to the assassin, Yun Yuqing was completely powerless. Zu An, however, saw everything with perfect clarity.

He immediately switched positions with her, using his back to block the assassin's sword.

Splurt!

The blade pierced straight through his body, and even the tip of the blade emerged through his chest to stab Yun Yuqing.

Her snow white face was instantly splattered with blood, although it was unclear if it belonged to Zu An or her.

The assassin was shocked. Zu An's constitution far exceeded his expectations! He had planned to skewer them both, yet his thrust had only been enough to penetrate Zu An's body.

Yun Yuqing finally managed to react to what was happening, and she thrust a palm ferociously towards the attacker's body.

Her level of cultivation seemed to take the assassin by surprise. He quickly leapt backwards to evade this lethal strike.

Yun Yuqing reached out her hand, and her clothes, which had been lying beside her, draped themselves around her again. The brief exchange was already enough to make her shake uncontrollably. She could only cling on to Zu An tightly, gritting her teeth and praying that she wouldn't unwittingly let out any embarrassing sounds.

The assassin didn't follow up his attack. He understood how strong Madam Wu was from that previous exchange, and he didn't dare act carelessly.

He took in her snowy legs and slender arms, which remained exposed because of the hurried manner in which she'd re-dressed herself. The beautiful scene that he'd witnessed a moment ago reappeared in his head. Even though the assassin had only been able to see the back of her, since the two had been wrapped around each other, the image was enough to get his blood pumping.

"A dark elf! Who sent you?" Yun Yuqing had noted the assassin's features and recognized what race he was. She was staring coldly at him, but because she was clinging tightly to Zu An and hadn't yet recovered from whatever they were doing beforehand, her voice came out a little weird.

The assassin ignored her question. Instead, his voice became mocking. "The entire world praises Madam Wu for being as beautiful as a goddess, and for being pure and noble. It seems as though you truly are beautiful as a goddess, but as for pure and noble..."

He paused deliberately, his eyes sweeping across the two of them. He clicked his tongue. "Tsk, tsk, tsk, you truly are noble in public, but a slut in private. Then again, I can't really blame you. That fellow's body is quite hard, and even my sword almost failed to pierce through him. This probably holds true for the other parts of him as well. No wonder Madam was in such a trance!"

"Shameless!" Yun Yuqing erupted in fury. She instinctively got up to attack him, but her body trembled as soon as she moved. Her brows locked tightly together, and she sat back down.

The assassin seized this opening at once. He left an afterimage where he was standing, and his body quickly faded away. They could no longer see him. However, his unscrupulous laughter echoed through the room. "Hahaha, doing this sort of thing behind your husband's back... Am I the shameless one, or are you?!"

He was clearly provoking her with these words, trying to make an opening for himself.

Unfortunately, Yun Yuqing wasn't the slightest bit affected. After all, she wasn't going behind her husband's back—it was he who had forced her to do it. That was why she didn't feel the least bit apologetic.

The room suddenly erupted in a purple haze, and a giant pair of beautiful eyes appeared in midair. Although he had turned invisible a second ago, the dark elf now had nowhere to escape to when confronted with this world of purple. He cried out in horror. "Demonic Eye!"

He reacted as quickly as he could. He immediately closed his eyes, but he was still too late. He was caught by the Demonic Eye's effects, and he froze.

A streak of purple light flew straight at him. All of his fine hairs stood on end as he sensed the threat of death.

There was no point in holding back any further. A mass of black shadows spread outward from his body, and he managed to rid himself of the Demonic Eye's control at the last possible second. He dodged away immediately to avoid being struck in any vital areas.

However, he still wasn't able to completely avoid the attack. His body was struck by that streak of purple light, which blasted open a bloody hole where it hit him.

He was horrified. Although Madam Wu seemed delicate and weak, she was far stronger than he had imagined. He didn't dare stay here any longer. He summoned a black, mirror-like path next to him and jumped in.

Even though his assassination had failed, he knew about Madam Wu's huge scandal, as well as the fact that she was of the demon race. These were both explosive pieces of information that would bring countless benefits to those backing him.

Yun Yuqing knew this as well. There was no way she could allow this to happen, which was why she had gone straight for the kill.

However, she never expected him to evade her sure-kill strike. That dark elf already escaped into the darkness. The reason why dark elves were so good at assassination was largely because of this secret technique. They could come and go without leaving any traces.

Most of his body had already entered the portal. There was no way to stop him now.

Her face went deathly pale when she thought about how this dark elf was going to spread the word regarding everything that he'd seen today. That would most likely seal her doom.

That dark elf turned to look at her. Yun Yuqing's appearance had clearly left too deep of an impression on him. Just thinking about her half-nude figure was enough to make his heart pound again. He wanted to sneak in a final look, knowing that he might never get the chance to ever again.

Suddenly, he heard a dissatisfied voice. "Whatcha lookin' at?!"

He knew that he shouldn't stop, that he shouldn't be wasting even a single second, but an irresistible urge welled up within him. He felt as though he absolutely had to reply, or else his entire existence would collapse.

As such, he turned around and said, "I'm looking at you, shithead!"

Yun Yuqing never expected him to be distracted in this instant. She didn't give him a second chance. With a flick of her fingers, she shot a streak of purple light straight towards his forehead.

The light left the dark elf's eyes instantly. He was already a corpse by the time his body hit the ground. The dark path that he'd summoned to travel through also gradually dissipated.

Yun Yuqing finally let go of the breath she was holding. "Madam, what happened?" The voice of a maid came quietly from outside.

The disturbance in the room had clearly startled them.

Even though a slew of things had happened, all of it had taken place rather quickly, which was why those maids were only reacting now.

"Everything is fine. Do not come in." Yun Yuqing realized that she was still in Zu An's embrace. Her face went red, and then she asked, "Has the situation changed in the banquet hall?"

"No. We set up a formation that cut off the ki fluctuations here. They shouldn't be able to notice anything," the maid replied.

"Good. Continue standing guard outside. Do not let anyone in." Yun Yuqing ordered.

"Understood!" The maid's quick footsteps slowly faded away.

Yun Yuqing finally looked at Zu An. She lowered her head to look at his chest, which was continuously dripping blood. She had a complicated expression on her face. "Why did you save me?"

Zu An looked at her with a smile. "I couldn't just watch while a woman in my embrace died in front of me, could I?"

But you didn't have to stop that sword with your own body...

She didn't say these words out loud, but gently moved her fingers across the wound on his chest. "Does it hurt?"

"It didn't hurt that much, to be honest. But now that you're asking, I think it's starting to hurt a little," Zu An said with a laugh.

"You're so annoying!" Yun Yuqing's voice was no longer as cold as before. Instead, there was a hint of playfulness in it.

Chapter 452: A Twist

She frowned, and a faint purple light appeared on the tip of her finger. The wound on Zu An's chest began to heal at a visible rate.

Zu An was shocked. "What sorcery is this?!"

Yun Yuqing smiled. "You already know that I'm a member of the demon race. What is there to be so surprised about?"

Zu An let out a helpless laugh. "That was quite a refreshing explanation. Then again, if your demon race possesses the Demonic Eye skill and even these treatment techniques, how in the world did you guys end up losing to the humans?"

Yun Yuqing sighed. "Even though our different races all had various incredible abilities, you humans possess an incredible potential for learning. Moreover, your reproductive prowess is also astonishing. As the war of attrition raged on, your human race grew stronger and stronger, and we found ourselves unable to achieve victory... can we not discuss this right now?"

Zu An saw the grief in her eyes, and sensed as well that talking about these things had really spoiled the mood.

"What's with your body?" Yun Yuqing asked curiously. "You seem as hard as someone of the dragon race."

Zu An said, "Huh? I'm surprised you even know such things about the dragon race!"

Yun Yuqing was momentarily stunned, then her face became completely red. "That's not what I'm talking about! That dark elf was trying to kill both of us, yet he only just managed to stab his sword through your body. Even as I'm healing you, I can feel the incredible toughness of your body. There's no way an ordinary person could compare to you!"

"I don't know either. Maybe I'm just super talented? Hahaha..." Zu An laughed it off. He obviously wasn't about to tell her about the Primordial Origin Sutra. The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra alone had already drawn the interest of so many people. Who knew how crazy it would get if they knew that he possessed the Primordial Origin Sutra as well.

"Isn't it obvious that it's because of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra? Why bother hiding it?" She rolled her eyes at him and tried to get up. Unexpectedly, his large hand pressed her back down.

Her entire body trembled. "What... what are you doing?"

"I should be the one asking you that question. Why are you suddenly getting up?" Zu An asked in confusion.

Yun Yuqing bit her lip. "I need to deal with that corpse first, obviously! I don't feel comfortable with him being there."

That wasn't all. If she didn't clean up this place properly, the Embroidered Envoy, King Liang, and the rest of them would surely notice something amiss.

"So that's it. I thought you were going to leave, and felt a little reluctant to let you." Zu An laughed in embarrassment.

Yun Yuqing's heart skipped a beat. She walked over to the dark elf without replying. She reached out with a wave of her hand. Purple light scattered across his body, and then his corpse disappeared. She frowned when she saw the blood. Taking out a porcelain bottle, she poured its contents onto the floor, and the blood stains were cleaned up as well.

Zu An sighed in amazement. This woman really was beautiful! She even managed to clean up the mess in such a graceful manner. The scene was made even more captivating because she wasn't even properly dressed. The sight of her loose skirt and sleeves billowing in the night wind was breathtaking.

"What are you looking at?" Yun Yuqing turned around. She noticed that he was staring at her, and immediately became uncomfortable.

This person was a mere prisoner, while she was the glorious wife of a king, whose cultivation was far above his as well. However, when the two of them were together, she always felt as though he had the upper hand.

Zu An stood up and walked towards her. "You really are stunning."

The corners of Yun Yuqing's lips curved upwards when she sensed his sincere praise, and her heart fluttered with joy. As he walked closer, however, she began to feel an intimidating pressure that made her subconsciously back away.

Before she could, she was pulled towards him by a pair of large hands.

"We've taken care of everything else. Let's continue where we left off," Zu An whispered into her ear.

His tone was firm, leaving no room for her opinion. Just like that, she was whisked away again.

Chaos swirled within Yun Yuqing's mind. This man was completely different from King Wu! King Wu was normally gentle and reserved, yet this man was direct and forceful!

For some reason, the masculine scent filling her nostrils was not the least bit offensive to her. On the contrary, she felt a giddy anticipation.

However, she was still a shy and reserved lady at heart, which prompted her to resist him instinctively. "I... I have to treat your wound first."

"You can just do what you were doing earlier. It won't interfere at all." Zu An carried her back without letting her explain any further.

Yun Yuqing's mouth fell open slightly, her heart pounding out a steady beat. She could only continuously console herself that all of this was for the sake of completing her mission.

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After a while, Zu An noticed that his wound had already healed completely. He reached out a hand to hold onto hers. "Thank you Madam for the treatment."

"I should be the one thanking you for saving my life." A complicated set of emotions were running through Yun Yuqing's heart. This was the first time she had seen a man risk his life for her.

After all, given Zu An's cultivation, that dark elf's sword should have caused half of his body to explode, yet he still took the blow for her without any hesitation.

She didn't know how to face the man in front of her. Before, given her infatuation with her husband, she would have trusted in him to protect her as well. After the events of the past few days, however, she knew that the most important thing to her husband was still himself. He most likely wouldn't have stepped in front of the sword for her.

Zu An carefully examined the beauty, who was just inches away from him. Her soft, red lips seemed to draw him in. He could no longer hold himself back, and pressed his lips towards hers.

Yun Yuqing instinctively backed away when she sensed his movements.

However, Zu An didn't give up this time. He continued to move towards her. He could already sense that she was no longer rejecting him as forcefully as before.

In the end, their lips made contact.

Yun Yuqing really was well and truly frightened. She struggled frantically, trying desperately to push away the man in front of her with her hands.

Unfortunately, he seemed indifferent to her efforts.

After a while, her arms seemed to grow weaker and weaker. Eventually, her fingers interlaced with his, and she began to return his affection.

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A long while later, Zu An kept his arms wrapped around this particular beauty as she trembled uncontrollably. “Does Madam want to cultivate the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra for herself?”

“No...” Yun Yuqing replied instinctively.

“That’s good then.” Zu An laughed. “Let me give you the chant, then.”

Yun Yuqing sat up straight. Her pitch-black hair cascaded down her back like a waterfall, enhancing the radiance of her fair skin even more. “This is your life-saving skill. Are you really going to give it to me this easily?”

She finally realized that she had forgotten to sense the other party’s ki flow during the entire experience earlier.

However, she could tell that, even if she had tried to sense it, there was no way she would be able to figure it all out. The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra was truly miraculous, and entirely different from other ordinary techniques.

“I’m already about to die anyway. Since Madam has been kind enough to share her warmth with me, how can I not hold up my end of the bargain?” Zu An laughed. He proceeded to give her the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra’s chant.

Of course, he hadn’t lost his head over sex, and had obviously modified the chant. She was clearly doing this for King Wu’s sake—how could he let that ambitious fellow get his way?

After reciting it for her, he left her with a stark warning. “Madam, don’t bother learning this technique yourself. It isn’t suitable for women.”

Chapter 453: I'll Do it for You

“Not suitable for women?” Yun Yuqing was stunned when she heard this. “How could such a technique exist?”

The world was vast, and she did indeed know of several techniques that weren’t suitable for women. Similarly, there were some techniques that weren’t suitable for men to cultivate. However, the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra was famous! It was just too strange for a technique that could grant eternal life to have such a prerequisite.

“I’m really saying this for your own good. You should give up on cultivating this technique. I wouldn’t have bothered to tell you this if we weren’t so close.” Zu An wrapped his arm around her soft waist. There was a gentle smile on his face.

Yun Yuqing bit her lip. “Are you giving me a fake chant again?” she said in annoyance. She wasn’t stupid, and reacted quickly.

“Of course not. I promise that every single word is real,” Zu An said, a serious expression on his face.

Even though every word he'd uttered was real, the most important parts of the chant were missing, and the order of the lines had been rearranged. This altered chant would bring about entirely different effects.

Big sis empress had personally helped him modify it this way. After all, her fate was tied to his now, so there was no way she would wash her hands of his current predicament.

Zu An had gone over his plan with her, and Mi Li worked out this altered version of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra chant. After all, if his goal was to blindside an earth immortal rank like the emperor, a random set of chants wouldn't cut it.

Yun Yuqing was about eighty percent convinced, especially since he had given such a confident vow. She could tell that the chant she had just obtained was indeed incredibly profound, and that it was on an entirely different level compared to the first one. There was no way Zu An could come up with something like this on his own, given his current level of cultivation.

Her heart softened, and she looked at Zu An with a complicated expression. "I thought you were extremely shrewd, but I never expected you to hand over the chants to your most important technique so easily. Don't you understand that I could kill you right now with just a single thought?"

Her hands were wrapped firmly around this man's muscular back, and a faint gleam of cold light had formed on her slender fingers. Just a quick jab from her would be enough to kill this man who had taken her chastity. No one would ever know what she had done, and everything would return to how it was before. She would continue to remain the noble and pure Madam of North Order City.

Zu An didn't seem to care one bit. "Madam, if you really were someone who routinely used her beauty to extract intelligence from men, I would never have told you the truth. However, given how terrible your acting was, I know that you've never done this sort of thing before. Since I am going to die anyway, dying at the hands of such a beauty isn't such a terrible fate. However, can Madam promise me one thing before I pass on?"

"What is it?" Yun Yuqing was extremely curious. She wondered what he would request for at such a time.

Zu An looked calmly into her eyes. "Promise me that you won't do something so stupid in the future. No matter who tries to force you into it, you should never agree. A goddess like yourself should never let herself be defiled in such a manner for the benefit of such pigs."

Yun Yuqing looked at him, startled. In that instant, she felt as if her heartstrings had been firmly tugged. This mission had filled her with grief and indignation, and she had even felt a little suicidal later on. Now that she'd heard what he'd said, it was as if a ray of sunlight had shone down into the darkness of her heart, and she resolved not to abandon herself to despair.

Zu An smiled when he saw her looking at him. "What are you looking at me for? You won't be able to help falling in love with me if you keep looking at my handsome face."

"Pah! Shameless!" Yun Yuqing scoffed as she blushed profusely. Despite her words, her heart was pounding fiercely.

A moment passed, and she said quietly, "Thank you."

Zu An sighed. The women of this world really were simple and honest! The one who enjoyed it the most was clearly me—why is she thanking me instead?

Yun Yuqing hesitated, and then she said, “How about I try to help you escape?”

Zu An shook his head. “There’s no need for that. I’ll just end up dragging you down with me instead, as well as your clansmen.”

His plan was still to face the emperor himself and settle this issue. If he ran now, he would find his hands full just trying to evade all the different powers that were sure to be after him. Take the dark elf assassin, for example—he could never have escaped from him if he had encountered him in the wilderness.

Yun Yuqing understood this as well. And she quickly grew quiet.

A while later, her beautiful red lips parted again. “I know that there’s no way to save you from your current situation, but there is something that I could do for you.”

Zu An froze. “What is it?”

Yun Yuqing’s face turned red, and a hint of shyness flickered between her brows. She circled her arms around his neck and said into his ear with a gentle voice, “I can... I can give you a child.”

Zu An was left utterly speechless.

He was absolutely stunned. He never expected that she would suddenly say this! After all, she was the wife of a glorious king! In terms of status, they were worlds apart!

Her previous display of affection could be explained by her need to acquire Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. Now, though, this woman was actually willing to give birth to his child? That was completely different! Had she really fallen for him?

It really was hard to imagine that a woman from the demon race, especially one who commanded such a high status in the human world, and who had such vast experience and knowledge, would fall for him so quickly.

“Is there something wrong with my ears?” Zu An said in disbelief.

Yun Yuqing said nothing, and gently embraced him instead. She answered him with her passion and warmth.

“Wouldn’t King Wu go crazy if he learned of this?” Zu An’s mouth had become terribly dry all of a sudden.

“You don’t have to worry about him,” Yun Yuqing scoffed. It would be accurate to say that she had been forced to accept this task in the beginning, when she thought that she was giving birth to this child for King Wu’s sake. Now, however, she had already completely accepted it. She wasn’t doing this for King Wu, though. Rather she was willing to do this for the man who had been willing to die for her, and who truly cared for her.

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A while later, she felt his body begin to twitch. Yun Yuqing looked at him with misty, unfocused eyes full of incredible warmth. "You don't need to hold back..." she whispered.

With a roar, Zu An let go of the last of his restraint. He pulled her to him tightly, as though trying to squeeze her into his own body.

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After what seemed like eternity, Zu An brought his gaze towards the blushing beauty in front of him. He couldn't help but say, "I am a human, while you are a demon. Do you think our child will be a human or a demon?"

Yun Yuqing scoffed. "Pah! Can you choose a better description? Demons and humans aren't so different in terms of appearance. Is there even a need to differentiate between them?"

Zu An laughed. "You're right. It doesn't matter if the child looks more like me or like you, because that child will be attractive either way."

Yun Yuqing laughed along helplessly. This guy! He always has so much confidence, regardless of the situation.

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Some more time passed, and a maid knocked on the door. "Madam, it's almost daybreak."

This was their code, informing her that King Liang and the others were about to return.

Yun Yuqing drew herself up off the bed lazily, revealing her beautiful curves. She put on her clothes, then gave him a reluctant look. She sighed. "I don't know if we will ever meet again."

Even though this was what she said, she knew that there was no way the emperor would allow Zu An to live after he reached the capital.

Zu An's reply was wholly unexpected. "How can I afford to die, knowing a beauty like Yuqing is worrying about me? Have no fear, we will definitely meet again."

A smile spread across Yun Yuqing's heartbroken face. "I really hope that is true."

She put that snow white fox coat around her again. When she walked out of the room, she was once again the noble and pure Madam.

Soon after she had left with her maids, a sharp sound rang out. The Imperial Guards in the courtyard returned to normal, as if nothing had happened.

After King Wu had seen King Liang and Liu Yao off, he rushed to the study. As he made his way there, his emotions were difficult to fathom, pain and excitement mixed in with an urgent expectation for the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra.

When he returned to the study, he saw his wife sitting upright in front of the table as she usually did, beautiful and composed. Her face was slightly redder than usual, but other than that, there wasn't really anything different about her.

He swallowed with difficulty, then asked inquisitively, “Yuqing, did you succeed?”

Chapter 454: A Good Lesson

Yun Yuqing tossed him a booklet. “This is what you wanted,” she said coldly.

King Wu took it and immediately began to examine it. He could tell that it was incredibly profound and mysterious after reading just a few lines. However, he couldn’t shake all of his worries. “That fellow gave it to you that easily? Did he agree to our proposals?”

“What do you think?” Yun Yuqing said nonchalantly.

King Wu felt his heart skip a beat. “Could it be that you really...”

“Wasn’t that what you were hoping for?” Tears glistened within Yun Yuqing’s gem-like eyes as she reminisced about the past affection they’d shared. Everyone had called them a perfect couple, and many times, even she herself had felt that it was true. However, the things that had happened over the past two days made all of it seem like a mirage.

King Wu’s heart was broken by wife’s expression. His wife had really done it with another man... and he was the one who had incited it. His mind was overwhelmed by emotions. He reached out an arm to hold his wife. “Yuqing, I’ve wronged you.”

“Don’t touch me!” Yun Yuqing backed away. She looked at him as though she was looking at a stranger.

King Wu was at a loss as to how to console her. A heavy silence fell across the room.

Despite this, he still remembered the most important part. “Is this Phoenix Nirvana Sutra real or fake? Did you verify it?”

“Of course I did.” Yun Yuqing recalled the strangeness within Zu An’s body, and how she couldn’t sense any ki flow within him. However, she didn’t plan on telling her husband about that.

King Wu immediately felt as if his heart had been cut out of his chest. There was only one way his wife could have confirmed this. At the same time, he felt a mysterious sense of relief. “This secret manual is surely very complicated. Did you confirm every part of it?”

This matter was too important, and he had to take any and all precautions. It would be a real joke if he ended up cultivating a fake version.

“Of course. I had all night to confirm it.” Yun Yuqing’s face flushed red as she recalled everything that had happened. She looked at her husband, resentment burning in her eyes. “What? Do you want me to tell you all the details bit by bit? Should I explain to you just how another man toyed with your wife?”

“All night!?” King Wu almost fell over. He initially believed that the two of them had spent most of that time negotiating. However, from his wife’s tone, it seemed the truth was completely different.

Was that Zu An still human?

He felt his throat go dry when he thought about how his wife had been tormented for an entire night. To be honest, he really did want to hear the details, but there was no way he could say it out loud. He had enjoyed his lofty status for many years, and he was way too proud to be able to admit to something so shameful. He could only say with a bitter laugh, "No... no need. That should be enough to get you pregnant, at least, which will take care of that other issue."

Yun Yuqing rubbed her belly subconsciously, a gentle expression flashing across her face.

Her expression did not escape King Wu's notice. His voice couldn't help but grow cold. "You didn't fall in love with that guy or anything, did you?"

"Fall in love with him?" Yun Yuqing was at a loss for words. Could she really fall in love with someone else so quickly? Then again, that fellow really did have a peculiar sort of charm...

She shook her head, tossing all of these thoughts out of her head. "I do not know if I ended up falling for him, but he is surely more of a man than you."

She meant to say that he, an outsider, had shown enough pity to tell her not to do such stupid things in the future, yet her husband was the one who had forced her to sleep with another man in the first place.

She turned around to leave after saying this. She was physically and emotionally exhausted. All she wanted was to get some well-deserved rest.

However, those words meant something else entirely to King Wu's ears. He thought that she was mocking him for not being able to get it up.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for 999... 999... 999...

As he watched his wife's silhouette disappear, hatred appeared in King Wu's eyes.

When Yun Yuqing had left, he immediately called over his trusted aides, Sun Buqi and Cheng Hong. "Help me make the arrangements to kill Zu An."

He already had the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, so there was no need to keep him alive anymore. It was enough for him to be the only one with eternal life; there was no need for there to be another, and he definitely didn't want his all-powerful father to live forever either.

Something else was driving him to order the kill. Even though Yun Yuqing had tried her best to hide it, he could vaguely make out the hickeys that were all over her slender neck, just beneath the fox coat. It was obvious just how intense that session had been.

There was even a trace of gentleness in his wife's tone, as though she had already developed some level of affection for that guy. That made him incredibly jealous. He could tolerate another man entering Yun Yuqing's body, but he could not tolerate the same man entering her heart.

Sun Buqi and Cheng Hong were both shocked. They immediately offered their counsel. "My king, please think it over! Killing Zu An is the same as incurring his majesty's wrath! We would never survive something like that!"

King Wu snorted. "Of course I'm not foolish enough to do it myself. Find a way to contact the Lu Sanyuan Rebel Army in Gan Mountain. Tell them about the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, and give them the Imperial Guard's itinerary and whatever other intelligence they might need. They will surely attempt to attack their convoy."

"The Lu Sanyuan Rebel Army?" Cheng Hong's expression paled slightly. "They have always been a huge problem for the imperial court. Wouldn't contacting them be a huge risk?"

Once the Zhou Dynasty had unified the world under its rule and defeated the foreign races, an age of peace had been introduced. However, the empire itself wasn't without its own internal battles. Rebellions sprung up from time to time due to oppression and other such injustices. Among them, the Lu Sanyuan Rebel Army of Lushui Commandery was the largest rebel army. The armies sent out by the imperial court to suppress them had already suffered several crushing defeats. This army was a threat to all levels of society.

Sun Buqi offered his advice in much the same way. "Indeed, my king! This is just too great of a risk for us to take! If we are found out, the consequences will be too great!"

King Wu's expression was grim. "No one else can handle King Liang's Imperial Guard, apart from the Lu Sanyuan Rebel Army."

He had planned to get rid of Zu An from the very start. The way his wife was acting only further hardened his resolve.

"As for the issue the two of you are worried about, it's not that big of a problem. The two of you can just pretend to be from King Qi's faction when you contact them. Everyone knows that my uncle is the one who most fervently wishes that my father, the emperor, would not obtain eternal life."

King Wu's smile carried a slight chill. He had two main rivals blocking his ascent to the imperial throne. The first was King Qi, and the second was the crown prince. The crown prince was so weak that he hardly deserved consideration. The one he feared the most was still his revered uncle.

Sun Buqi's eyes lit up. "As expected, my king is wise and brilliant! I will try to find a way."

After the two of them had taken their leave, King Wu went looking for his wife in fiery rage. Unexpectedly, she wouldn't even let him into her room. "I'm tired. Please go back on your own."

King Wu's expression flickered darkly. However, he really had let her down today, and he didn't dare to offend her any further. He could only return to his room, grabbing a random maid along the way.

His head was swimming with various imaginary scenes, and he felt as though his body was in a much better state today.

Several minutes later, the maid smoothed out her clothes and left.

Then, he opened up the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra and began to cultivate. He had paid such a huge price for this, so he definitely had to cultivate this technique properly.

Soon afterwards, the sky brightened. King Liang and Liu Yao had enjoyed themselves for an entire night, so they slept all the way until noon.

Once preparations had been made, they bade King Wu farewell. King Wu didn't keep them this time, and escorted them out of the manor.

Along the way, King Liang let out a sigh. "Madam's complexion seemed a little pale two days ago, but she seems much better today. It's important to take care of yourself."

He had no idea that his words had entirely different meanings to those who were listening. King Wu turned around and glared at Zu An, who was nearby. He clenched his fists within his sleeves so tightly that even his fingernails were about to dig into his skin.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for 666... 666.. 666...

Zu An was given a huge fright when he saw the string of Rage points coming in. However, he reacted quickly. He probably knew that Yun Yuqing had paid him a visit the night before. Maybe he had even told her to.

Sigh, there are some real bastards in this world...

Actually, I wouldn't mind meeting more of them. I'll teach them all a good lesson!

Chapter 455: Joining Forces

Zu An couldn't help but glance over at Yun Yuqing. When he saw that she was also secretly looking at him, he smiled and winked at her.

Yun Yuqing blushed and turned her head away.

Her body and mind were both exhausted. To be honest, she hadn't wanted to come out at all, but when she thought about how this might be the last time she would be able to see Zu An, she still ended up coming out for some strange reason.

Their exchange didn't escape King Wu's notice, and his rage only continued to grow.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for 1024 Rage points!

However, there was no way for him to make a move with everyone else around him. He could only pretend that nothing had happened, and continued to chat with King Liang, Liu Yao, and the others.

The two finally parted ways after they left the city.

As Zu An's carriage passed by her, Yun Yuqing sent him voice transmission. "Take care of yourself."

Zu An laughed when he sensed the grief of separation coloring her voice. "North Order City is a good place. Not only is the scenery beautiful, so are the people. I will definitely come back in the future! Haha."

Yun Yuqing's face turned red. She knew that he'd said this for her to hear, as a reminder to her of their agreement. However, she didn't believe there was any chance that Zu An would survive this journey.

Everyone around them found this really strange. You're only passing through as a prisoner—what fond memories could you have possibly made in this place?

Only King Wu understood the meaning behind what he'd said. His handsome face immediately grew twisted. The killing intent within him grew stronger and stronger.

You have successfully trolled King Wu for 444 Rage points!

Huang Huihong closed the door to Zu An's carriage in annoyance. "Shut your mouth. You're already a prisoner. How could you possibly return?"

The people around them roared with laughter, mocking Zu An for overestimating himself.

Zu An didn't really mind. You goons have no idea how much I enjoyed myself here!

"Is there something going on between you and the Madam?" Zheng Dan's fingers wrote on the table. She was right beside Zu An, and had noticed their exchange.

Zu An smiled. He also began writing on the table. "Of course. She was no match for my handsome face, and completely fell for my charm."

Zheng Dan rolled her eyes.

Like hell I'll believe you! Madam Wu commands such a high status that she's basically an immortal goddess. Why would she care about you?

She might have had some doubts if they'd stayed longer, but their stay in the manor had only lasted for two days. They were locked in that courtyard the entire time as well, and didn't even see Madam Wu's face. How could there possibly be anything going on between them?

She slowly exhaled when she thought of this. She was clearly overthinking things.

Sang Hong was also incredibly puzzled. He felt as though he had forgotten something, yet he just couldn't figure out what it was.

Sang Qian was the only one who stared at the distant woman in the white fox coat as they departed. He sighed. How could there be such a perfect woman in this world? He was incredibly envious of King Wu.

...

With each person having their own thoughts, the party headed north, and arrived at a small town. The sky was already darkening, so King Liang gave the order to stop at this town.

This town was quite small, with only a single inn. King Liang's subordinates quickly reserved the entire inn. Of course, most of the Imperial Guards had to be stationed outside the town.

Because of the scarcity of rooms, Zu An obviously couldn't have his own room. He had to share a room with Sang Hong and Sang Qian.

Inside the room, Sang Qian was pissed. Just looking at Zu An made his face go red with anger.

Zu An noticed that Sang Qian seemed about to throw himself at him, and said rather unhappily, "Aren't you being rather ungrateful?"

"Me, ungrateful?" Sang Qian was so angry that he burst out laughing. He had no idea where this fellow found the nerve to say something like this. What in the world did he have to be grateful for?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 666 Rage points!

“Putting aside how I saved you before, let’s talk about right now. If it wasn’t for me, you two would still be stuck in that prison carriage. Would you have even had a chance to stay in a room in the inn, especially when the space is so limited?” Zu An punctuated his statement with a snort.

Sang Qian’s breath caught. This fellow wasn’t wrong.

By rights, all of them should have been left inside their prison carriages. However, Zu An always complained that he might forget some parts of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra if he was uncomfortable. He pushed all of this responsibility onto the rest of the party, claiming that they would let such a thing happen only because they didn’t want the emperor to obtain eternal life.

King Liang and these other old foxes didn’t dare to take that sort of risk. Besides, giving up a room wasn’t that big of a deal.

That was why they had given him a room to stay in whenever they could. Of course, they also figured that it wouldn’t look good for them if news got around that these powerful masters were being manipulated by a scoundrel, so King Liang decided that he might as well put the other criminals in rooms as well. After all, Sang Hong and the others had previously been officials of the court, and they did not want to give those imperial censors anything to criticize.

In other places, there had been enough rooms to go around, but this inn was small, so the three of them were crammed into the same room.

“That’s more like it. As people, we should learn when to be grateful, and when to take our revenge. Otherwise, I might just become so annoyed that I have no choice but to move in next door with Miss Zheng. I wonder what you’ll do then?” Zu An snorted again.

Zheng Dan was a woman, so there was no way she would be thrown together with the other men.

Because Sang Hong still hadn’t been officially convicted, King Liang, Liu Yao, and the others were still worried about how some things might look.

“You are going too far!” Sang Qian was about to go mad. He roared and charged straight at him.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 999 Rage points!

Since his ki was sealed, his movements were roughly as quick as an ordinary person’s, and Zu An easily avoided him.

As he dodged about, he began to yell, “Help! Save me! I want to change rooms!”

“What are you making a racket for?!” Huang Huihong came in and gave them all a furious glare. “If you keep making noise, I’ll throw all of you outside.”

Zu An chuckled. “I’m not the one who is trying to kick up a fuss. This guy, however, thinks of me as his enemy! He wants to kill me whenever he sees me, so I don’t feel safe here! Please put me in young miss Zheng’s room instead! The two of us are close, so I don’t think she’ll mind.”

“What the hell?” Sang Qian suddenly realized that he had unwittingly fallen for another of Zu An’s tricks.

Just as he was about to panic, Huang Huihong glared at Zu An. "You want me to put you in with her? Keep dreaming!"

Zu An was less than impressed by his response.

Does this guy have something against me too? All I did was look at your goddess a few extra times. Is there a need for you to make things so difficult for me?

Just then, a soldier rushed over. "Commander Huang, the respected king has something he wishes to discuss with you."

Huang Huihong nodded. He issued the two of them another warning. "If you two start some more trouble, I'll have no choice but to be discourteous. Lord Sang, please say something as well. It'll look bad for everyone here if I have to make you sleep outside."

Sang Hong nodded. "Don't worry, I will hold Qian'er back."

Huang Huihong gave Zu An a final look. "The same goes for you."

Zu An shrugged his shoulders indifferently.

Huang Huihong left quickly. Zu An began to devise how he was going to farm more Rage points from Sang Qian.

However, Sang Hong spoke up. "My little friend Zu, we aren't enemies. We might even end up fighting on the same side in the future. Why is there a need for all this internal strife?"

"Fight on the same side?" Zu An was rather confused.

Sang Hong looked into the night sky. He said quietly, "There are many people who want you dead, and there are quite a few who want us dead as well. Once the situation gets messy, we might have to join forces."

Zu An curled his lips in a sneer. "And here I thought you had something else to say. I thought I heard you say that there were quite a few people out to get you, but everyone who has shown up so far has been after me! Please stop trying to raise your value."

Sang Hong didn't seem to mind him at all. "It's not like that's a good thing, so I don't see it as raising my value. As for those who want to kill us, given the timing, they should be here tonight."

Sang Qian was still furious, but he couldn't help but feel shocked when he heard what his father said. He couldn't be bothered to pursue any further argument with Zu An.

Zu An frowned. From the looks of things, it seemed as though Sang Hong had detected something.

At that moment, the door opened, and a member of the service staff brought in a wooden case. "Dinner for your distinguished selves."

As he spoke, he placed a plate of food in front of each of the three individuals. Even though the food wasn't anything to write home about, it seemed decent.

Sang Qian's stomach had begun rumbling with hunger a long while ago. However, just as he was about to eat, Sang Hong stopped him. He looked at his father in confusion.

Sang Hong laughed. "Look, Zu An isn't in any hurry to eat yet. Why are you in such a rush?"

Zu An chuckled. "Respect for our elders is a traditional virtue of our Zhou Dynasty. Elders should obviously eat first."

Chapter 456: Little Sis

Sang Qian was completely confused. What the heck were these two talking about? "If you don't want to eat, then don't eat. I'm bloody starving."

Sang Hong gave his son a furious look. "Even Zu An can tell, why can't you? Are you inferior to him in this area as well?"

Sang Qian was stunned, and at the same time, extremely unhappy. His father had kept on praising Zu An all this while, almost as if he was his son instead. He was totally fed up with this. "Dad, if you like him so much, he can be your son!"

Sang Hong took a deep breath to steady himself.

He really was about to lose it because of his son. He had no choice but to explain, "Use that damned brain of yours for once! How could a small-time chef from a tiny, remote town like this possibly cook such decent food? Not only that, the Embroidered Envoy always inspects our food before it is given to us. Why would a member of the staff be allowed to approach us?"

"Huh?" Sang Qian gave a sudden start. He tossed away the bowl in his hands immediately.

The food on the plate fell onto the floor without incident, but when the bowl of soup scattered across the ground, waves of bubbles appeared across the surface of the spilled liquid. There was clearly poison inside.

"What the hell is this carbonated shit...?" Zu An cursed. He also poured his soup on the floor. Sure enough, bubbles emerged as well. He frowned. These attackers had no sense of honor! They planned to kill everyone! Were they here for him, or for Sang Hong and Sang Qian?

His question soon received an answer. The service staff sneered. "Since you don't wish to die with dignity, then let me help you out!"

He produced a dagger from the food case and rushed straight at Sang Hong and Sang Qian.

This thrust was exceedingly swift. In an instant, a strong killing intent filled the room, locking onto the father and son of the Sang clan.

Sang Qian's face drained of all color, and he began to panic. If his cultivation wasn't sealed, he would never have been scared of this person. Right now, however, he was even weaker than an ordinary person. It was too easy for his attacker to kill him.

In contrast, Sang Hong remained icy calm. After all, he was a powerful eighth rank cultivator. Even though he couldn't use his cultivation, his extraordinary sight still remained.

He threw the tray of poisoned food towards the service staff. With the staff member's line of sight blocked by the flying food, he picked up the chopsticks and stabbed them towards the staff member's neck.

The staff member clutched at his neck, but his carotid artery had already been punctured. Blood gushed out continuously. He was in complete disbelief. He didn't expect this old man to kill him instead! After all, Sang Hong's cultivation was currently sealed, so he should have been no different from an ordinary old man.

Zu An gulped. A tiger without teeth was still a tiger! His grasp of timing was just too precise, and he'd killed his enemy as if it had been no big deal. Considering how much he had provoked Sang Qian along the way, if Sang Hong decided to come after him, he might not be able to do a thing.

Sang Hong was also gasping for breath. With his cultivation sealed, that attack had clearly used up all of his strength.

At that instant, the window was broken open, and several people barged in, all of them dressed as inn workers. However, the blades in their hands were all pointed at Sang Hong and Sang Qian.

Sang Qian was a powerful cultivator in his own right. Once the initial shock had faded, he reacted quickly. Even though his cultivation was sealed and he wasn't able to defeat these opponents, he could still use the various things inside the room to survive, even if it was a desperate struggle.

He had no attention left to spare for his father.

Sang Hong's previous attack had drained him of most of his strength. He rolled across the ground as his attacker's blade thrust towards him, just barely managing to escape. However, a second blade was already descending.

His strength was spent, and he couldn't gather any more in time. There was no way to evade this fatal blade. All he could do was to sigh inwardly. To think that someone like him, who had lived such a domineering life, was actually going to die like this...

A sharp crack rang out. The assassin froze momentarily, and his blade deviated just a hair. He instinctively covered his head and looked behind him.

Zu An raised both of his hands. "Would you believe me if I said that I didn't do it on purpose?"

That attacker was furious. He was just about to swing his blade at Zu An, but Sang Hong had already recovered. He picked up a fragment of the shattered bowl from the ground and brought it across the attacker's neck in a clean motion.

The attacker clutched at his neck and stumbled backwards. He collapsed.

"Thanks!" Sang Hong gasped for breath as he nodded towards Zu An in gratitude.

"It wasn't a big deal." Zu An was stunned. Although this guy looked like an old man, his attacks were so swift and precise! He didn't give his opponent any room to react. It was no wonder that even the Chu clan, a clan that had prospered for a thousand years, had almost been brought down by him.

He had interfered for two reasons. Firstly, Sang Hong had given him a chance to escape before by stopping King Liang. This could be considered repayment for that favor. The second reason was precisely because of what Sang Hong had said earlier about cooperation. It suddenly struck him that he was headed to the capital, a place that he knew nothing about. There wasn't a single person there he could rely on, and he didn't have even the most basic intelligence about what he would face. This made planning anything extremely difficult.

If he could secure Sang Hong's help, that would solve many of his problems. Getting on this old man's good side wasn't a terrible idea.

However, he had no time to think about this right now. The attackers had been mortified by the scene. The leader shouted, "Finish them quickly!"

They began to move more quickly, their attacks growing more vicious than before. One of them even rushed at Zu An, although whether it was because they wanted to kill him or just to stop him from causing any more trouble was unclear.

Zu An wasn't about to gamble with his life. He ran immediately. Even though he didn't have Sang Hong's brilliant sight, he still had his Sunflower Phantasm. He couldn't use his ki to augment it, but it was better than nothing.

Sang Qian was finally struck by a blade. He had been evading all this time, and although it had been a series of close calls, he hadn't been wounded until now.

"What happened to the guards outside?" Zu An was horrified. Even though not much time had passed, there was so much noise in the room, and there was no way those outside wouldn't be able to hear anything. What the heck was going on?

At the same time, something else seemed off. Even though these attackers were fierce, and every blow of theirs was potentially lethal, they did not have high levels of cultivation. This was the only reason why Zu An and the rest were still alive even though their own cultivations were sealed.

None of this added up!

He noticed that Sang Hong's situation had deteriorated significantly. He had suffered multiple cuts on his body, and it seemed as though he was on the brink of death.

A flicker of light caught Zu An's eyes. When he was still hesitating, a slim figure suddenly rushed in. There came the clear sound of a blade being drawn. A flexible sword thrust out like a silver dragon, and the entire room was illuminated by a streak of silver light. It was so blinding that almost everyone couldn't open their eyes.

Zu An squinted, and could vaguely make out a figure moving through the room, as fast as lightning, the flexible sword in their hand slicing across the necks of their attackers. The silver light quickly faded, and the attackers collapsed one after another.

He finally made out this individual's appearance. This person was dressed as a servant, and wore a worn leather cap. However, the rough clothing couldn't conceal her graceful figure. Together with her curved brows, small mouth, and fair skin, this was clearly a woman dressed as a man.

He had seen too many examples of this in the dramas of his previous world. He didn't expect the cross-dressing women of this world to be so careless as well.

With all that figured out, he walked over to her. "Thank you, great hero, for saving our lives. Unfortunately, I don't have anything precious on me. How about I give you a hug to express my gratitude?"

As he spoke, Zu An reached his arm towards her shoulder. However, his hand froze in midair, because her sword was already pressing against his body. "Why are you such a rascal?" She asked with a frown.

Her voice was clear and sharp. It sounded pleasant, even when it was angry.

Sang Qian was immediately overjoyed when he saw her. He cried out, "Little sis, kill that guy!"

Zu An felt his mind short-circuit momentarily. Little sis?

The young lady turned towards Sang Qian. "What did he do?"

"This fellow bullied your sister-in-law!" Even though Sang Qian hadn't seen anything, he was still driven mad from the simple fact that they had shared a carriage.

"Then he does deserve death!" The young lady's face turned cold, and she thrust her sword out.

Chapter 457: A Private Discussion

Frightened, Zu An quickly dodged backwards. "Don't listen to your brother's nonsense! I am his benefactor! Other girls show sincere devotion towards their benefactors; why are you trying to stab me with your sword?"

"You are a pervert after all!" The young lady's pretty face went completely red. She tugged at her belt with her free hand, drawing a cold and vicious flexible sword out of its scabbard, which she thrust straight at him.

Zu An had a mocking look on his face. Your waist is tiny! If you keep a flexible sword there, aren't you scared that you'll accidentally cut yourself in half?

Jokes aside, the sight of her gleaming sword slashing through a group of assassins in mere seconds was still fresh in his memory, and he didn't dare act carelessly. In a panic, he used his Sunflower Phantasm to dodge to one side as he yelled, "Old man Sang! I'm going to start cursing if you don't keep a leash on your kids!"

Sang Hong had a strange expression on his face. He had deliberately done nothing just now, amused to find out how this was going to play out. This fellow had kept bullying Qian'er all this while, so it wasn't that bad to see him suffer a little.

However, when he saw that Zu An's life really might be in danger, he released a light cough. "Qien'er, stop!"[1]

The young lady immediately sheathed her flexible sword when she heard him, and returned to his side.

Sang Hong nodded. His daughter really was much more obedient than his son.

Zu An crawled to his feet again and brushed the dirt off his body. "Qien'er! The young miss had a wonderful name. It sounds way better than your brother's."

Sang Qien rolled her eyes. This fellow really was shameless! Only my family calls me Qien'er. Why are you calling me that...?

Sang Qian was furious. Their names were phonetically similar, just that one of them was male, and the other was female. What do you mean, one sounds bad and one sounds good?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 666 Rage points!

Sang Hong was somewhat at a loss as to what to say as well. But he still introduced Zu An to his daughter. "This is Zu An. he saved your father and your older brother's lives. You should know about the rest."

Sang Qien nodded. She had looked into the details before making her way here, so she obviously knew about Zu An. What was going on between him and her sister-in-law, though?

Of course, she was always a careful person, and she wasn't going to do something so stupid as to ask that question now. She greeted Zu An instead. "Thank you, young master. Please forgive me for offending you just now."

"It's no big deal." Zu An laughed, then gave Sang Qian a look. "You should learn a little from her. Your little sister is far more polite than you."

Sang Qian was furious. "You little bastard, are you trying to start a fight?"

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 798 Rage points!

Sang Hong quickly interrupted the two of them to prevent another quarrel. "By the way, Qien'er, why are you here?"

Sang Qien gave Zu An a look. She pulled her father and older brother to the side, and then she said in a hushed voice, "Those influential figures in the capital were quite worked up when they discovered that the account book was fake. Father, you've offended too many people in the past, so many people in the capital do not wish to see you return alive. That's why I brought some men with me to protect the two of you."

Sang Qian's mouth fell open, his eyes wide with shock. He had to admire his father's foresight. He had predicted this situation right from the start!

Sang Hong's voice was heavy. "What are His Majesty's intentions?"

Sang Qien shook her head. "His Majesty didn't give a definitive response regarding this matter, which is likely a form of tacit agreement. That is why those clans are acting so brazenly. It truly is a pity. Father,

you have always remained loyal and devoted to His Majesty, and you've willingly fought alone all this time. Yet in the end, despite offending so many influential figures for his sake he has cast you aside and abandoned you. This emperor has wronged you."

"Speak cautiously!" Sang Hong's expression remained nonchalant. "As an emperor, this is what he must do. Your father already knew what he was getting himself into when he made this choice all those years ago, so there's no point in pointing fingers. Moreover, His Majesty is only doing this as a way of appeasing those furious influential figures. As long as we can reach the capital city safely, I'm sure we'll survive this ordeal."

Sang Qien said, "How could it be that easy? As far as I know, many clans wish for your deaths. Take this attack in the inn, for example. If I hadn't infiltrated this inn, you all might have..."

"Why did they only send these weaklings after us?" Sang Qian asked, puzzled.

Even though their attacks seemed fierce, they weren't really all that strong.

Sang Qien said, "It was most likely to escape the Embroidered Envoy's detection. They cannot bribe everyone, after all. If the workers in an ordinary small town inn had strong ki fluctuations, it would definitely draw suspicion."

Sang Hong rebuked him gently as well. "Qian'er, you shouldn't talk such a big game without being able to back it up. Even though they didn't have high levels of cultivation, we would be corpses right now without Zu An's help and your sister's timely appearance."

Sang Qian grunted in acknowledgement even though he didn't agree. He hated being seen as inferior to his younger sister, and his father even seemed to think of him as inferior to Zu An.

Zu An felt as though he had to say something. "You guys are having such a sweet family reunion over there. But what about my feelings?"

Sang Hong smiled and said, "My apologies."

"You don't have to be that polite to me," Zu An replied. "There is something I'm curious about, though. Why is it that the guards outside haven't done anything even though there was so much noise in here?"

Sang Hong replied, "I believe those who wish to kill us have some sort of relationship with King Liang or Liu Yao, and are leveraging this relationship to create this opportunity for assassination. Bribing the members of the Embroidered Envoy is impossible, so they were likely transferred away. If I am not mistaken, then they should be back soon. Qien'er, you should hurry up and leave, or else you won't be able to get away later."

Sang Qien nodded. Her lips moved slightly, clearly talking through voice transmission. Then, she said, "Father, take care of yourself. I will watch your surroundings for you along the way." She smashed open a window and disappeared into the darkness.

Huang Huihong came back with some men soon after she left. When he saw the mess, and the corpses littering the ground, his expression darkened considerably.

King Liang and Liu Yao rushed over as well, once they received the news. They had equally shocked expressions. "How could something like this happen? What about the guards outside?"

Very quickly, someone came back with the answer. “They’re not breathing. They were probably poisoned by blow darts.”

Huang Huihong’s eyes narrowed, and he gave King Liang a cold look. “Respected king, can you tell me what is going on?”

Two of his own Embroidered Envoy were among the casualties. He and his subordinates had been transferred away, but he had deliberately left behind two of his men. He hadn’t expected there to be a problem, given the presence of so many Imperial Guard soldiers keeping watch. Yet, he had returned only to be confronted by this gruesome sight.

King Liang was confused. “What do you mean?”

“It was your subordinate who called us over to discuss our itinerary going forward,” Huang Huihong said, his voice full of unspoken meaning.

King Liang sniffed. “Commander Huang, please be considerate when you speak. When did I send anyone to summon you? I have been patrolling the surroundings all this time, and that is something many people can testify to. Something has happened in your own absence—how can you cast the blame on me?”

Liu Yao acted as a mediator. “Come on, we are all on the same side here. This is something none of us want to see! Right now, our top priority should be making sure that we haven’t overlooked anything else, instead of being in such a hurry to point fingers at each other.”

Huang Huihong’s sharp eyes scanned the whole area, but he didn’t find the one who had passed on the message to him. He didn’t think he would see them again in the future either.

Even though he knew that it was one of King Liang’s subordinates that had called him over, but without any proof, he could only swallow this in silence.

Sang Hong watched everything play out, a faint smile tugging at the corners of his lips.

Huang Huihong personally interrogated the three of them to find out the details of what just happened.

They hid nothing, apart from Sang Qian’s appearance.

When all of them had left, Sang Hong nodded gratefully towards Zu An. “Thanks.”

Zu An smiled. “I have been born with a great deal of goodwill towards women. Naturally, I wouldn’t want her to be hunted down.”

Sang Qian snorted angrily. “You aren’t allowed to go after my sister! Whatever is in your mind, I’m sure it’s just wishful thinking anyway. My younger sister is beautiful and smart. She has turned down many suitors in the capital who were far better than you.”

Zu An’s expression was a little strange. “I didn’t really have any thoughts about her earlier, but after hearing you say all of this, I’m becoming more and more interested. Wouldn’t I gain a huge sense of achievement if I obtained your sister?”

“You!” Sang Qian roared in fury.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 515 Rage points!

Sang Hong couldn't help but shake his head. These two really were naturally incompatible.

However, this wasn't his focus right now. He had just noticed Huang Huihong walk in, and he took this chance to say, "Commander Huang, I have something I wish to discuss with you in private."

Chapter 458: Swapping Identities

Huang Huihong frowned, but he still brought Sang Hong to a private room. "What did Lord Sang wish to talk to me about?"

His tone wasn't all that great. Losing two of his subordinates had clearly put him in a foul mood.

Sang Hong didn't mind this. He said calmly, "Someone within our escorting troop colluded with those attackers."

Huang Huihong sneered. "That's obvious. Does Lord Sang have any proof to offer?"

Sang Hong shook his head. "They are all old foxes from the political circles. Why would they leave behind anything that could be used against them?"

Huang Huihong seemed a little upset. "Then what's the point of telling me this now?"

Sang Hong said, "Even though I am currently a prisoner, this humble one has always remained loyal and devoted to His Majesty. I believe that, right now, the only one who is purely loyal to His Majesty in this contingent is Commander Huang."

Huang Huihong frowned. "Lord Sang, what are you really trying to say?"

Sang Hong said, "Zu An is extremely important to His Majesty, but there are spies within this contingent of troops. I do not believe that Commander Huang can safely escort him to the capital."

Huang Huihong became quiet. To be honest, he was beginning to have these doubts as well. Their Embroidered Envoy wouldn't have any trouble fending off head on attacks using the imperial edict. However, their enemies had been playing dirty, and there were individuals within the larger contingent who were colluding with the enemy. He felt an immense sense of powerlessness in the face of all this.

"Does Lord Sang have any suggestions, then?" Huang Huihong suddenly recalled that Sang Hong was always full of stratagems. He thus humbly asked him for advice.

Sang Hong said, "Let's employ some misdirection. My son is similar in age to Zu An. Have them change clothes and swap identities. This way, if the enemy comes for Zu An and somehow succeeds, they will only end up capturing my son."

Huang Huihong was stunned. "Wouldn't that put your son in danger?"

Sang Hong replied, "I have always remained absolutely loyal to His Majesty. Since I know how much he cares about Zu An now, I will willingly share in his worries. Of course, I wish to use this as a way to

personally atone for my crimes, by offering some contributions of my own. Once we arrive in the capital and the emperor learns of what I did, he might treat me more leniently.”

Huang Huihong had doubted him initially, but the second half of his explanation was enough to satisfy him fully. “Lord Sang is faithful to our nation after all. Please do not worry. I will surely report your contributions to His Majesty when we reach the capital.”

Zu An’s safety was the one thing that worried him the most. He couldn’t care less if Sang Qian lived or died. Of course, if they were to reach the capital safely, lending the Sang clan a helping hand was definitely a possibility.

“Thank you, Commander Huang.” Sang Hong smiled. Clearly, he wasn’t offering this strategy in the hopes of obtaining the emperor’s consideration, or anything like that. He understood just how cold the emperor was. He had already been cast aside, and nothing else would change the emperor’s mind.

The most important thing was to reach the capital safely. Sang Hong was less concerned about his own safety, and more concerned about the safety of his own son. After all, he only had a single son. Given his current age, he wouldn’t be able to produce another heir if Sang Qian died.

His bright daughter had been able to guess his intentions, which was why she had given him this suggestion before leaving.

Both father and daughter knew that there were too many in the capital who wanted to kill them. Even though Sang Qian was going to protect them from the shadows, she wasn’t confident that she could guarantee their absolute safety on this long journey.

Similarly, many people were after Zu An, but they all coveted his Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, which meant that they wouldn’t kill him on sight. This would guarantee that Sang Qian would live if he were captured while posing as Zu An, and would also buy Sang Qian enough time to provide aid.

The next morning, when Zu An learned that he was going to swap identities with Sang Qian, he flatly refused.

Instead of bending, Huang Huihong said with a snort, “That’s not up to you. Make them exchange their clothes.”

When he heard that they were going to swap clothes, Zu An rolled his eyes, but did not argue further.

Sang Qian had already received his father’s instructions, and he naturally had no objections.

When he saw Zu An admiring his groom’s clothes, he sneered. Keep acting smug. You’ll end up dying without even knowing what happened!

The assassination attempt from the day before still weighed heavily on his nerves. His sister had mentioned that there were many assassins after him and his father, so he was obviously overjoyed to take Zu An’s place. That way, not only would he have the Imperial Guard’s protection, he could even be with Zheng Dan. Wasn’t this a win-win situation?

...

Their convoy made the final preparations to set out. Zheng Dan was shocked when she saw Zu An in groom's clothes. "You... why are you..."

Zu An chuckled. "My wife, how can you not recognize your husband?"

He immediately moved forward to hug her. Zheng Dan's face turned red. They were in public right now! She didn't know what was going on, so she subconsciously took a step back.

Beside him, Sang Qian panicked. He immediately rushed forward to stop him. "What are you doing?"

Zu An pointed at his clothes. "Are you blind? These are the groom's clothes. Isn't it a perfect match for the bride's clothes? Since we've already exchanged identities, we have to play the part."

Sang Qian was extremely flustered. "Then why didn't you let Zheng Dan accompany me before this?"

Zu An had a helpless look on his face. "It's your fault for being so useless."

He turned to Huang Huihong. "I roughly know the reason why we are swapping identities. However, our attackers aren't stupid either. It's hard to imagine why a groom wouldn't be with his bride. They would immediately see through it."

Huang Huihong secretly agreed with him. What this fellow said made some sense. After all, not all the interested powers knew that Zu An had been the one accompanying Zheng Dan so far. The attackers they sent might subconsciously assume that the one closer to the bride was the groom, Sang Qian. Things would become troublesome if that happened.

Zu An's safety was the most important thing to him. That was why he didn't dare to take any risks. With that in mind, he said to Zheng Dan, "You and Zu An will move into Sang Hong's prison carriage. Sang Qian, you are going inside that carriage in front."

Sang Qian was dumbstruck. Even after all of this, he still couldn't be with Zheng Dan?

However, he remembered that his father would be there to stop Zu An from doing anything improper, and he let go of the breath he had been holding. He could just about accept such an arrangement.

These new arrangements were hidden from King Liang and Liu Yao. Ever since the incident from the previous day, Huang Huihong had taken charge of escorting Zu An and the Sang clan members, and he did not allow any imperial guards to approach.

Sang Qian went inside the carriage, disappearing from view. Meanwhile, some makeup was applied to Zu An. Together with the bloodstains, it was hard to tell them apart without looking carefully.

It was announced to the others that Sang Qian had been seriously injured in the attack the night before, and was being taken care of by Zheng Dan.

Once all these preparations were complete, the carriages moved off.

After what had happened last night, King Liang and Liu Yao both deliberately stayed a little further away from the two carriages. As such, they didn't notice that the people within the carriages had been swapped.

King Liang even said jokingly to Liu Yao, "Zu An seems quieter than usual today."

Liu Yao laughed. "I reckon he was scared by the attack last night. Him being well-behaved makes this trip much more enjoyable."

"Indeed, indeed." King Liang laughed. "If I had known that this was going to be the case, I would've sent some people to give him a good scare much earlier on. Bastards like him just don't listen when you're being nice."

Meanwhile, in the prison carriage, Zu An took the opportunity to secretly hold Zheng Dan's hand as she nestled against him to 'apply medicine'. As he did so, he looked at Sang Hong. "Lord Sang, that was hardly an honest move."

Sang Hong knew that this scheme wouldn't get past him, but he offered no excuses. "Even though the chance of you losing your life is higher, the chances of being kidnapped is also substantially reduced. This situation is not entirely without its benefits."

Zu An snorted. "You consider this beneficial for me?"

"Didn't you agree to it as well?" Sang Hong laughed. "I was wondering why a smart kid like you would choose the route of guaranteed death, but I am now certain that you have your own plans, which hinges on you arriving at the capital safely."

Zu An put his guard up immediately. He couldn't underestimate this old man! He had gotten so close to the truth with such a small amount of information! Of course, there was no way he would admit to it. "Please don't treat me like a little fox just because you're an old fox. I don't think that much. I'm just happy for each day that I continue to live."

Sang Hong only chuckled at what Zu An said.

Their convoy continued on peacefully. All was calm until suddenly, one day, the earth beneath them began to tremble, and giant black billows appeared in the distance, swiftly closing in on them.

Chapter 459: Underground Ambush

King Liang and Liu Yao were swiftly informed of this, and they quickly went forward to take a look. As they squinted suspiciously in the direction of the billowing black waves, their expressions flickered. "It's the rebel army! Prepare for battle!"

They had no idea why they would run into the rebel army here. This place wasn't that far away from Lushui Commandery, but it definitely couldn't be considered close either, with several other commanderies in between. Why did this rebel army suddenly appear here?

Were the guards of all the other commanderies blind?!

Liu Yao's first instinct was to retreat, but the commanders under him disagreed strongly. "General, you cannot withdraw now! The rebel army is closing in on us, and they have a large contingent of cavalry. We won't be able to escape even if we try to run now. Instead, our formation will collapse, and we'll be easily hunted down and killed!"

“Indeed, we might as well face them head on! Even though this rebel army is large, their individual strength cannot compare to those of our elite imperial guards. We just need to hold out until news of this reaches the nearby commanderies and they send in reinforcements. We might even be able to earn substantial merit from this!”

The Imperial Guard was made up of the empire’s strongest elites. There was no lack of experienced soldiers, and they immediately worked to dissuade Liu Yao.

Liu Yao was at his wits end as well. He quickly solicited the advice of King Liang, who was next to him. “Respected king, what do you think we should do?”

King Liang was a master level cultivator, after all, so he was more composed. “Get into formation and face the enemy!”

“Get into formation! Get into formation!” Liu Yao finally snapped out of his daze and began to holler out orders.

The Imperial Guard rushed out in front of the carriages and covered wagons. Raising their shields, they pointed their spears towards the incoming rebel army.

King Liang flew into midair. Two spheres of light quickly coalesced in front of him, and he hurled them straight down into the rebel army.

Boom!

Two loud explosions erupted. Men and horses were thrown up into the air. However, the rebel army was legion, and this small setback did little to disrupt their forward momentum.

King Liang quickly condensed two more spheres of light and hurled them downwards again. He kept up his barrage, throwing sphere after sphere.

The rebel army finally began to dissolve into chaos, not just because of the formidable power of those spheres of light, but also because the continuous explosions had begun to disrupt their formations. The soldiers in the back ranks were so focused on their forward charge that they could not avoid running into the men and horses that had been thrown to the ground ahead of them. Rank after rank of the rebel army crumbled.

Zu An was completely stupefied. King Liang was like a bomber aircraft all on his own! An air force could do whatever they wanted against mere ground troops.

A thin transparent barrier appeared above the rebel army. They had their own formation technique as well! Even though it wasn’t as sturdy as the Red Cloak Army’s barrier, they had their advantage of numbers, and they barely managed to handle King Liang’s bombardment.

Liu Yao snorted when he saw this. He drew his own blade and rushed forward to help. A forty meter long blade of ki crashed down onto the rebel army’s barrier. Together with the force of King Liang’s bombardment, the rebel army’s barrier immediately grew unstable.

At that moment, someone burst forth from the rebel army and flew into the sky.

He smashed apart King Liang's ki blade with his fist, and intercepted King Liang's attacks at the same time.

The two sides exchanged blows, then backed away.

"Renegade Lu Sanyuan, I didn't expect you to come personally!" King Liang's expression was rather ugly. Even though both of them had backed up quite a bit and they seemed evenly matched, his opponent had neutralized Liu Yao's attack before fending off King Liang's own fist. His opponent's strength was clearly above his own.

"Lu Sanyuan?" Zu An froze when he heard this unfamiliar name, clearly confused.

Sang Hong offered an explanation. "He is the leader of the rebel army in Lushui Commandery. The imperial court sent out armies several times to take him down, but every attempt has ended in defeat. Now that I am seeing him with my own eyes, I can tell that his cultivation truly is tremendous. No wonder the imperial court's efforts all came to naught."

Zu An vaguely recalled hearing about this person before in Brightmoon City. They had portrayed him as a flesh-eating demon king in human form, yet the one flying in midair was a middle-aged man with refined features. Together with his graceful long hair, he looked more like a reclusive expert who paid no heed to worldly affairs, instead of some rebel army leader.

"So, it seems that there's nothing special about the renowned King Liang. I will spare your life if you agree to bow down and serve me. Otherwise, this day next year will be the anniversary of your death." Lu Sanyuan stood in midair with his hands behind him, his entire being exuding a feeling of contempt.

King Liang could not afford to lose any prestige in front of everyone. He braced himself and roared, "Hmph! In my opinion, today is the day you will be beheaded!"

"Preposterous!" Lu Sanyuan's expression turned cold. He flew towards King Liang like a roc spreading its wings. The clouds behind him seemed to change color, and a black fog began to roil behind him, taking the form of a giant, devilish face.

King Liang's expression flickered. His hands spread outwards, and a translucent barrier surrounded him like an eggshell.

The two of them crashed into each other, and King Liang was quickly swallowed up by the black fog.

Liu Yao tried his best to get away, but was swallowed up by the roiling blackness as well. Lu Sanyuan clearly didn't want him to assist his troops in the battle against the rebel army below.

The three of them tangled in the air in a fierce back-and-forth. Even though King Liang and Liu Yao were working together, Lu Sanyuan didn't seem to be at a disadvantage at all. On the contrary, he was the one on the offensive.

Black fog shrouded the sky, the figures of King Liang and Liu Yao only peeking out from time to time. They seemed like two small boats caught in a surging, stormy sea, tiny craft that might capsize at any time.

Zu An couldn't help but ask Huang Huihong, "Why aren't you guys helping them? That imperial edict thing you brought out last time seemed pretty kickass. Summon that again and beat up this Lu Sanyuan!"

Huang Huihong didn't move a muscle. "King Liang and the Guard General are enough to hold him off."

Zu An sighed. "Are you betraying your teammates?" he said.

Huang Huihong chose not to reply.

Instead, he gave a dismissive sniff and pointedly ignored Zu An.

The rebel army had already reached them. The Imperial Guard's defensive formation took a huge toll on the rebel army's vanguard. Large numbers of corpses hung from their spears.

However, the numbers of the rebel army seemed limitless, and each of them looked as though they had been injected with some sort of stimulants. Their eyes were completely bloodshot, and they yelled and screamed as they trampled over the corpses of their comrades.

It didn't take long for both sides to become thoroughly enmeshed together. The Imperial Guard tried to maintain their formations in small groups, but they were unable to hold back the endless torrent of rebel army soldiers. With Liu Yao occupied, the battle quickly descended into a disorganized mass of one-on-one battles without any unified command.

Huang Huihong thrashed at the nearby rebel army soldiers with his Soul-reaping Chains. He and the other Embroidered Guard served as the last defensive line, surrounding Zu An and the other prisoners.

Not many rebel army soldiers were able to get near them, however, because they were at the very center of the formation.

Even so, Huang Huihong had a rather ugly expression on his face. He could sense that the rebel army was about to mount a large-scale charge sooner or later.

"Commander, what should we do?" One of his Embroidered Envoy soldiers asked in panic.

Huang Huihong scanned the battlefield, then said in a low voice, "Let's withdraw to a safer place first."

Zu An couldn't help but blurt out, "Doesn't this count as deserting?"

"Shut your mouth!" Huang Huihong said with an angry huff. "My first priority is to escort all of you safely to the capital. That's all."

Sang Hong spoke up as well. "Commander Huang, why don't you undo our seals? I am a court official, and I can offer some little assistance against the rebel army. I have family members in the capital, so you don't need to worry that I would use this chance to escape."

"Indeed, Lord Sang is an eighth ranked cultivator, after all. He will surely be able to affect the tide of battle," a different embroidered envoy said to Huang Huihong. Clearly, the current situation had left them all a little jittery.

"Absolutely not!" Huang Huihong rejected this proposal immediately. He wasn't about to take any unnecessary risks. "We're leaving!"

With that, he led the two carriages off in a different direction. They would be safe as long as they could reach the closest commandery. Troops would be transferred to assist them as well.

A detachment from the rebel army broke off and immediately gave chase. However, some of the Imperial Guard cut them off. The Imperial Guard clearly understood their mission as well. If something happened to Zu An and the others, there was no way for them to escape death even if they somehow managed to make it through this battle safely.

Huang Huihong's group used this chance to flee into the nearby forest.

Seeing that they had left the battlefield behind, all of them released a sigh of relief. Right at that moment, however, several sharp swords suddenly thrust out from the ground, hacking at the lower half of the embroidered envoys' bodies with incredible precision.

Chapter 460: Dragon Soulspeak

Their party quickly withdrew from the battlefield. As they entered the nearby forest, all of their pursuers disappeared.

There was a collective sigh of relief. Zu An was still confused, and questioned Sang Hong. "Can't the Imperial Envoy act in the emperor's stead? Why don't they summon the imperial edict? Why go through all this nonsense, and end up fleeing for their lives like this?"

The sight of the imperial edict hovering over Brightmoon City was still fresh in his memory. There were three thousand Red Cloak Army elites there! In terms of combat strength, they weren't much weaker than the rebel army.

Sang Hong replied, "The Embroidered Envoy rarely takes matters into their own hands, let alone repeatedly. I'm guessing that using the imperial edict is not that convenient. A huge price surely has to be paid each time they do so.

"Besides, the Embroidered Envoy exists to help the emperor. If the emperor needs to interfere personally every time, wouldn't there be little point in their existence? That's probably why they won't casually use the imperial edict unless they have to."

His analysis was enough for Zu An to form a rough understanding. The imperial edict was like a nuclear weapon. It was used more for intimidation, and couldn't be used repeatedly.

Huang Huihong said with a snort, "Lord Sang, I advise you not to make random guesses—"

Several longswords suddenly thrust out from below. They pierced through the bellies of horses and penetrated even further upwards, threatening the embroidered envoys that rode them.

These attackers had impeccable timing. They had waited for the embroidered envoys to be distracted by Sang Hong's words, and launched their attack at the perfect time.

Despite being unprepared, the embroidered envoys were well trained, and they all leapt off their horses to evade the attack. Even so, two of the embroidered envoys moved too late, and were impaled together with their horses.

Zu An gasped when he saw this, and subconsciously covered his rear. That's gotta sting...

However, those embroidered envoys who had leapt clear of their horses were not spared either. Several glimmering black streaks flew through the air towards them.

Zu An's eyes narrowed. He couldn't be more familiar with these glimmering black streaks! He had almost been killed by one of these things in North Order City.

Was it the rebel army who wanted me dead?

The embroidered envoys began to brandish their Soul-reaping Chains in midair to deflect the incoming arrows. Unfortunately, dark elves only made their move when they knew their attacks were guaranteed to succeed.

They had drawn their bows in preparation and waited patiently, seizing the opportunity to strike just as the embroidered envoys leapt into the air to avoid the underground ambush.

In that one moment, most of the Embroidered Envoy was helpless and unable to dodge.

Wretched screams echoed through the air. The chests of two more embroidered envoys erupted in fountains of blood, and they instantly lost their lives to these black arrows.

The rest somehow managed to avoid killing blows, but all of them were injured.

Huang Huihong quickly gathered his comrades around him and surrounded the carriages. His expression was extremely awful.

Only ten Embroidered Envoy members had set out on this mission. Two of them had died mysteriously during the attack at the inn, and four more had lost their lives in this ambush. Including himself, there were only four Embroidered Envoy members left.

The enemy slowly revealed themselves. Several Dark Elves leapt out from underground, while a few hopped down from some distant trees, all closing in on the prison carriage.

Zu An gave them a rough count. There were eight dark elves, five men and three women. They were all dressed entirely in black, and their faces were veiled. Their eyes were different from those of humans, being entirely red in color.

With a sigh, Sang Hong said, "It seems that the legends are true—dark elves truly excel in the art of assassination. They wiped out close to half of the Embroidered Envoy in a single ambush. We're in quite a bit of trouble today."

Even though Huang Huihong's expression was overcast, he did not seem worried. He looked coldly at the incoming dark elves. "Who incited all of you to do this? Are all of you unaware that targeting captured criminals is an offense punishable by execution up to the ninth generation?"

"The ninth generation?" One of the dark elves snorted coldly. "Even our homeland was destroyed by you humans. How could we still have nine generations?"

Judging by the hatred burning in the other party's eyes, Huang Huihong knew that there was no way to avoid conflict. He quietly weighed their fighting strength. The enemy had the advantage, in terms of both absolute numbers and average cultivation level.

He spoke again, his voice dark and threatening. "All of you should understand that we act in His Majesty's stead. Once we summon the imperial edict, all of you will perish."

He didn't want to use the imperial edict unless absolutely necessary. Sang Hong's analysis had been more or less accurate.

"Imperial edict?" The dark elves laughed in contempt. They didn't seem to treat this as a big deal at all.

Huang Huihong was startled. He couldn't shake the feeling that something was amiss. Without any further hesitation, he knelt towards the east in prayer, his hands spread respectfully in front of him. "Enemies stand before this humble subject's path. Your majesty, please bestow upon us..."

Zu An felt his excitement grow. He could finally witness the imperial edict's overwhelming power again. He really wanted to see this destructive weapon used on someone other than those he cared about.

Unexpectedly, an aged voice suddenly rang out.

"Rise!"

Huang Huihong, who was kneeling on the ground, stood up involuntarily when he heard this voice, interrupting the summoning ceremony of the imperial edict.

The other Embroidered Envoy members stared at him in confusion. They couldn't understand why he would get up so suddenly.

Huang Huihong was confused as well. He turned his head to look.

An elder slowly walked out of the deep forest, a walking stick in his hand. He was so unsteady that it looked like he might fall over at any time.

However, after seeing Old Mi and Wei Dan in action, Zu An didn't dare underestimate these frail-looking elders. They were all incredibly vicious. They probably faked their appearance to lower their enemies' guard.

A pair of horns seemed to grow on the sides of the elder's head, just above his ears. They bore little resemblance to the horns of any herbivores he knew, but they weren't large. They looked just like ornaments, yet they possessed a form of mysterious power.

Huang Huihong's expression grew worried. He knelt down on the ground to start the ceremony again. This time, however, he moved and spoke much more quickly.

There may have been some pretentiousness in his manner before, but his eyes were now filled with imminent panic.

The elder pointed the dragon-head staff in his hands at Huang Huihong. "Silence!"

Huang Huihong's voice cut off immediately. His mouth was still open, but he couldn't utter a sound no matter how he tried.

“Holy shit. What the heck is going on?” Zu An could not believe what he was seeing.

“That old man is probably a member of the elder dragon race,” Sang Hong explained.

“Dragon race?” Zu An looked again at that old man’s frail body. He doesn’t look like one at all! Do you think I don’t know what dragons look like?

The crimson dragon in Hidden Dragon Mountain was still very much in his mind.

As if sensing his doubt, Sang Hong replied, “A regular dragon needs to cultivate to an extremely high level before they can take human form. On top of that, they face a tremendous risk in doing so. However, that isn’t the case for members of the elder dragon race. Almost all of them can transform into human form.”

Zu An finally understood. Now he knew why those horns on that elder’s head looked so familiar.

Zheng Dan had a question of her own. “Why did Commander Huang fall silent, then?”

Sang Hong gave the old elder dragon a look. “That is one of the innate abilities of the elder dragon race—Soulspeak.”

“Soulspeak?” Zu An seemed to recall Shang Liuyu mentioning this during one of her classes in the academy. This secret technique of the dragon race—Soulspeak—was something envied by all of the other races.

With just simple words, they could turn what they spoke into reality. In a sense, when they spoke, magic would follow.

Zu An was also incredibly envious. Shouldn’t this ability to speak magic into existence belong to all keyboard warriors? Why don’t I have this ability?

Sang Hong gave Zu An a complicated look. “I didn’t expect the dragon race to become involved as well. It seems like you’re pretty popular.”

Zu An felt quite afraid as well. Didn’t everyone say that the emperor was the most powerful cultivator? Why were his subordinates getting beaten up one after the other?!