

## Immortal 481

### Chapter 481: Lady Saint

The wind cultivator was a middle-aged woman. Her appearance was exceedingly ordinary, but compared to that reincarnation of the Tyrannosaurus Rex that was her lightning-wielding counterpart, she could even be considered pretty.

She held a fan in her hand. With the slightest of movements, the surrounding air would start to ripple outwards, merging together to form little tornadoes. These tornadoes didn't rush straight at Zu An, which would have made it easy for him to avoid them.

This was what led to Zu An's mistake. By the time he reacted, he had already been affected by the Wind Domain.

Because of the slowing effects of this field, his Sunflower Phantasm grew sluggish, and the golden abacus beads— looking like maggots that chewed through flesh and bone—flew towards him again.

Even though Zu An quickly brandished the Tai'e Sword to protect himself, there was no way for him to block all of them.

The beads struck him all across his body, releasing muffled thuds whenever they made contact with his body.

The metal cultivator smiled as he saw his attacks land. He had deliberately avoided his opponent's vital areas this time, precisely because his orders were to capture Zu An alive. Despite this, the power contained in those beads was enough to completely strip a fifth rank cultivator of any ability to move.

According to their intelligence, Zu An's cultivation was around the fifth rank.

However, as he looked on, his eyes suddenly widened. Not only did Zu An not fall, he even managed to peel the beads off of his body.

"Ow, that really hurts!" Zu An weighed them in his hands. They really were made of gold! This dude has way too much money.

He didn't waste a second, and stored them into his Brilliant Glass Bead. He wondered how much these gold beads would sell for.

The metal cultivator was stunned. He was about to order his abacus to continue its attack, but he discovered in shock that he had lost his connection to half of the beads.

He quickly called back the remaining beads. Huge chunks were missing from the glittering golden abacus.

Where did they go? The metal cultivator wanted to cry. This metal abacus was his prized weapon! He had spent a long time preparing the materials and forging it, but it had somehow mysteriously become like this.

He glowered at Zu An. "Is this your doing?"

You have successfully trolled Solitary Metal for 233 Rage points!

Zu An flashed a shy smile. “You guys hurt me so badly! I’ve suffered so much, both physically and mentally. Isn’t it reasonable to ask for some compensation?”

The metal cultivator almost fainted from anger. To hell with your compensation! Did you even suffer a single bruise from me?

You have successfully trolled Solitary Metal for 999 Rage points!

He was also incredibly shocked. He could still recall the feeling of those beads hitting Zu An’s body. It felt entirely different from the usual sensation of striking against flesh—instead, it felt more like striking a wall. How was his body so sturdy?

While he was staring blankly, the ice cultivator had already made his move.

Zu An finally caught sight of the ice cultivator. He was a tall, skinny man wrapped in a snow-white cloak, with a white cap on his head. He was the perfect image of a creep.

He dashed up to Zu An, and let out a breath in his direction.

A visible blast of cold air swept over. Zu An knew that it would spell disaster if he allowed it to touch him.

His movement was still being restricted by the Wind Domain, so Zu An used Grandgale instead. He teleported a distance away, breaking free from the tornado formation.

As he vanished, the ice cultivator’s cold breath landed where he had just been, and the area was immediately blanketed in a sheet of ice.

At her distant position, the wind cultivator was stunned. Her Wind Domain had trapped many powerful cultivators in the past. Of course, some had broken free, but they were always cultivators whose cultivation levels were much higher than her own!

Trapping cultivators around the fourth or fifth rank should have been a piece of cake, let alone someone like Zu An.

While she was staring blankly, Zu An cursed at the ice cultivator. “Hey, creep! Did you brush your damned teeth this morning? Your breath stinks! How does your wife stand you...?”

The ice cultivator did not appreciate Zu An’s words at all.

You have successfully trolled Solitary Ice for 712 Rage points!

“I’ll kill you!”

The ice cultivator was furious. He spread his hands, and countless ice arrows materialized behind him.

Qiu Honglei’s expression turned to horror. She quickly cried out, “Go easy on him!”

Unfortunately, the infuriated ice cultivator paid her no heed. The ice arrows shot straight towards Zu An.

“Hmph, your movement technique might be formidable, but my attack covers every angle! Let’s see how you get away from this!”

That wasn’t all. He had chosen to launch his frost arrows along a very specific path, at the instant when Zu An and Pei Mianman just happened to be lined up.

If Zu An evaded, Pei Mianman would likely bear the full brunt of his attack.

Zu An quickly realized this as well. Facing this cone of attacks was truly troublesome. He couldn’t evade it, and even if he could, he couldn’t choose to do so.

To be honest, the one thing he was lacking was a way of dealing with such area-of-effect attacks. He instinctively wanted to take out the dragon’s corpse, because there was no way these ice arrows could penetrate the scales of a dragon.

However, given the dragon elder that had shown up earlier, he knew that he could end up being targeted by the dragon race if word of this got out.

Moreover, his spatial artifact would be exposed as well. He could tell from the reactions of those who had seen it that such a spatial artifact was on par with the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. There were already enough people after his life—he really didn’t need that number to go up.

Just as he was at a loss as to what to do, a lamp suddenly rose into the sky, giving off a faint yellow light. Bathed in the lamp’s yellow radiance, the ice arrows seemed to grind to a halt.

A sweet fragrance wafted over. Qiu Honglei was already at Zu An’s side, pulling him away.

Behind him, Pei Mianman realized what was going on, and evaded as well.

Only when they had vacated the area did the ice arrows seem to return to normal. They showered down in a large area.

Zu An was speechless. No matter how strong his body was, those ice arrows would’ve probably still have turned him into a hedgehog!

“Lady Saint!” The ice cultivator immediately panicked when he saw Qiu Honglei help Zu An.

Qiu Honglei raised her hand, stopping him from continuing. She then turned to look at Zu An. “Are you all right?”

The other members of the Solitary Eight were about to rush over, but when they saw the saint of their sect next to Zu An, they couldn’t bring themselves to attack.

Breathing in her fragrance seemed to refresh Zu An’s mind immediately. “How could I not be, now that you’ve come to save me? But aren’t you scared that I might hold you hostage in such a situation?”

Qiu Honglei smiled. “Will you really?”

He was so close to her perfect face right now. her delicate skin, those vivid eyes... It was enough to make any man go crazy.

She really is a bloody fox demon! “I’ve always been someone who knows his benefactors from his adversaries. You saved me earlier—how can I repay your kindness with aggression?”

Qiu Honglei smiled. “It seems like I wasn’t wrong when I realized I saw something in you.”

Zu An looked at that lantern in her hand. “Your magic weapon is pretty good. What kind of weapon is it?”

It was as if time had stopped in that instant. This lantern really was quite special.

“That’s a secret. I remember you used to say something like ‘a secret makes a woman a woman.’” Qiu Honglei winked in a playful manner.

Zu An was stunned. He hadn’t expected this woman to be so quick-witted, and even articulate Vermouth’s catchphrase.[1]

Pei Mianman’s dissatisfied voice interrupted this moment. “The one called Zu, are you done yet? We’re out here facing death, but you’re busy flirting with a girl?”

Zu An’s face scrunched up in displeasure.

Qiu Honglei smiled. “It seems someone’s jealous. Let’s get back to the main matter at hand, then.”

Her expression grew serious. “You should surrender.”

## **Chapter 482: The Deal**

“Surrender?” Zu An snorted. “That word doesn’t exist in my dictionary.”

Qiu Honglei wasn’t upset by this, but continued, “Don’t be in such a hurry to refuse. Take a look at the situation for yourself. Even if we keep fighting, there’s no way you can defeat us. Then again, say you reveal all your trump cards and somehow manage to escape on your own, there’s no way the rest of them will be able to do the same.”

Zu An clearly saw the danger that the rest of his group was in. The members of the Solitary Eight were all at the peak of the sixth rank, and some of them had even reached the seventh rank.

Pei Mianman was only at the sixth rank, while Zheng Dan was at the peak of fifth rank. They had been wounded in the previous battles as well, which made it difficult for them to continue fighting these higher-ranked experts.

If not for Pei Mianman’s extraordinary flames, the two of them would have been captured a long time ago.

Even so, they were in a very tight spot.

As for the Sang family, they were in an even worse state. They were just barely holding on, thanks to the seriously-wounded Sang Hong. When it came to Sang Qian and Sang Qien, their actual fighting strengths were considerably weaker than both Pei Mianman’s and Zheng Dan’s.

When it came to him, he knew that he was barely holding on against the metal, wind, and ice cultivators, let alone finding a chance to retaliate.

Sigh, if I had known that this was going to happen, I would have asked Yun Yuqing to stay a little longer. The situation would be much easier to deal with if she were still here.

However, he quickly dispelled this thought. After all, there were just too many people pursuing him. Yun Yuqing had already saved him once.—was he supposed to rely on her to save him for the rest of his life?

Noticing his silence, Qiu Honglei continued, “You don’t need to be too worried about surrendering either. We won’t harm you. You should be able to tell from what had gone on earlier that all of them were holding back.”

Zu An snorted. “Isn’t it just because they want me to hand over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to your sect master?”

Qiu Honglei smiled. “I won’t refute that. Then again, everyone in the world is looking for you right now, not just our sect master. However, our holy sect is different from the other powers. The other powers will surely torture you for the technique, then kill you to silence you. However, our sect master has always treasured those with talents. He wants to gather all like-minded people to his side. If you prove yourself capable, you’ll definitely have a promising future in our holy sect.”

Zu An frowned. “But I still need to offer up the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to your sect master first.”

Qiu Honglei looked at him calmly, then said, “Ah Zu, you must understand that holding onto a treasured item will only get you into trouble, unless you possess enough strength to deal with all other powers. However, you clearly do not possess the necessary level of strength right now. Our sect master can shelter you and ensure your survival. That is the best I can offer you.”

Zu An understood what she was trying to say. His current situation seemed like one of absolute despair, and that made her conditions extremely favorable. After all, his life was surely forfeit if he were captured by any other power.

If it wasn’t for his good relationship with Qiu Honglei, he would probably wind up dead even if he fell into the hands of the Devil Sect.

It didn’t seem appropriate for him to refuse such conditions.

“Thank you, Lady Qiu. Even though you did not mention it explicitly, I know just how much you’ve done for me.” Zu An clasped his fist. Unfortunately, he had his own plans, and he harbored no illusions that the sect master of the Devil Sect would actually allow him to leave.

Qiu Honglei snorted lightly. “As long as you know.” The other three girls were completely stunned by the playful tone in her voice. She seemed to realize that her behavior was a little strange as well. With a light cough, she let her smile fade. “Does that mean you agree?”

Zu An shook his head. “I’ve already become accustomed to living a free life. I really do not wish to serve under another.”

Qiu Honglei’s expression turned chilly. She turned around and gave the order to the Solitary Eight. “Kill them all!”

Her sudden icy display made everyone realize that she wasn't that endlessly-charming Immortal Abode courtesan queen, but rather the Lady Saint of the Devil Sect who murdered others without batting an eyelid.

"Understood!" The metal and ice cultivators were already gritting their teeth in anger. Now that they had been given the order they craved, they rushed forward with malicious smiles.

Zu An was just too hateful, but they couldn't do anything to him because of the sect master's orders and the lady saint's protection. However, they could vent their anger by killing his friends.

Sang Qian immediately panicked when he saw these three coming towards them. They were already in a terrible situation, and they were now being driven further along the path towards certain death.

He never expected that the goddess he used to be so fond of would be so quick to kill! It was as if he was nothing more than another commoner in her eyes. He felt hurt, disappointed, and scared. He also felt extreme anger towards Zu An.

"Zu An, this is all your fault!"

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 1024 Rage points!

Zu An couldn't be bothered to spare him another glance. He was most worried for the safety of both Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan. He instinctively tried to rush over to aid them, but he was stopped by Qiu Honglei.

"You'll have to get past me first if you want to go there." Qiu Honglei stood in his way and calmly raised her lantern.

Zu An's head began to ache. Qiu Honglei was an extremely mysterious person, and her cultivation was around the fifth rank, perhaps almost reaching the sixth rank. There was her mysterious lantern as well. Getting past her would be no easy task.

He knew that Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan were both injured. He didn't dare hesitate any longer. He immediately said, "Fine, I agree. I'll go with you, but let them go."

"That's more like it." A smile cut through Qiu Honglei's frosty expression. It seemed to melt through all the iciness in an instant.

Whatever small amount of anger Zu An had felt also vanished in smoke when he saw the beautiful, smiling woman in front of him. Sigh, I guess I'm still a sucker for appearances.

Qiu Honglei turned around and gave the order for the Solitary Eight to let Pei Mianman and the others go. However, the lightning cultivator frowned and said, "Lady Saint, these people will reveal information on Zu An and the whereabouts of our sect if we let them go. This will cause more trouble for us."

The ice cultivator was quick to agree. "Indeed! If we don't silence them, there will soon be countless cultivators coming after our holy sect!"

The other members of the Solitary Eight nodded their heads one after another. None of them agreed with letting these people go. After all, they were the ones with the advantage right now. There was no reason to let them go.

Qiu Honglei was troubled as well. She knew that eliminating these witnesses was the sensible choice. However, from an emotional standpoint, she had just promised Zu An not to do so, and those two girls looked important to him as well. If she really killed them, it might cause irreparable damage to her relationship with Zu An.

Zu An immediately placed a blade against his own neck when he saw her hesitation. "If you all dare touch them, I will kill myself immediately. Let's see how you explain things to your sect master then!"

"Ah Zu!" Both Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan panicked when they saw this. Unfortunately, the lightning cultivator stopped them from rushing over to him.

Qiu Honglei wanted to stop him, but Zu An quickly backed away. "Don't try to take my sword. Even if I can't defeat you, I still have the ability to choose death on my own."

"I refuse to believe that the brat will end his own life," the ice cultivator said.

"Shut up!" Qiu Honglei glared at him. Even though she knew Zu An well and didn't think that he would kill himself, she couldn't take such a risk. Besides, she had a good enough reason to counter any objections, so there was no need to go to such extremes.

She said in a firm voice, "Our mission is to bring Zu An back with us. Nothing else is more important. Release them!"

The Solitary Eight looked at each other in dismay. Even though they were all stronger than Qiu Honglei, she enjoyed a special status, and she was also the sect master's disciple. They couldn't afford to offend her.

They also had no desire to face the sect master's wrath if something really did happen to Zu An.

As such, even the lightning and ice cultivators, who had voiced the strongest objections, did not press the issue. They both gestured for Pei Mianman and the others to leave.

Sang Qian felt as if he had been granted a great amnesty. He took off immediately, carrying his father on his back. Sang Qien was slightly more hesitant. She turned back to look several times, but she said nothing in the end.

"Ah Zu!" Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan clearly weren't willing to see Zu An taken away by the Devil Sect. They both cried out and tried to rush over to him.

Zu An stopped them. "Stay away. You guys can't save me, even if you stay behind and give up your own lives. Don't let my sacrifice be meaningless."

Seeing that they were about to say something further, he sent them a voice transmission via ki. "You silly lasses, can't you run off first, find some help, and then rescue me later?"

## **Chapter 483: Outwit**

The two girls were stunned when they heard what he said. They subconsciously exchanged looks, then said, "Okay. Ah Zu, please take care of yourself."

Pei Mianman deliberately locked eyes with Qiu Honglei. "Miss Qiu, you'd better take care of him. I will definitely kill you if something happens to him."

Qiu Honglei rolled her eyes. "Hmph, I don't even think you can defeat me. Stop acting so smug just because you've got a big chest."

Sang Qien, who was still nearby, couldn't help but glance at Qiu Honglei's chest. Yours isn't that small either! Why are you pretending to be jealous? Annoying... How are people like me with ordinary chests supposed to feel?

Pei Mianman snorted. "If you have the skill, then fight me one-on-one!"

Qiu Honglei gave her injuries a look and shook her head. She smiled ambiguously and said, "Forget it. You're wounded. Besides, you won't admit defeat even if I win. Also, someone might feel heartbroken if I end up hurting you somewhere."

Pei Mianman's face heated up when she saw Qiu Honglei's eyes wander about Zu An's body. She knew what condition she was currently in, and calculated that she didn't have much of a chance of beating her. She didn't press the issue further.

Zu An also used this chance to speak up. "Enough, enough. Hurry up and leave already. Get some rest and recover properly."

Pei Mianman grunted in acknowledgement, then left with Zheng Dan.

Many members of the Solitary Eight watched regretfully as the two girls left. Those two women were both excellent specimens. Letting them go really was a waste.

The Devil Sect welcomed all sorts of people, which was why they weren't exactly bound by a strict moral code, especially when it came to this issue. Given how beautiful Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan were, it was inevitable that some of the members would have impure thoughts.

Under different circumstances, they would have tried to seize those two girls in secret and enjoy themselves for a while. Unfortunately, the sect master had given them an important mission, and there were eyes everywhere, so none of them dared to take the risk.

The lightning cultivator snorted in dissatisfaction when she saw her companions' expressions. She cursed those women for being so flirtatious and feminine. To her, letting them go was a perfectly reasonable choice.

After the two girls had left, Qiu Honglei looked back at Zu An. "Please."

The lightning cultivator took out some chains to bind Zu An. Zu An frowned. "Isn't this a recruitment? Is this how your sect treats your guests?"

Qiu Honglei stopped the lightning cultivator. "Young master Zu is the sect master's guest, and he has chosen to stay behind on his own. There is no need to bind him."

The lightning cultivator frowned. "What if he tries to run?"

Qiu Honglei looked at Zu An. "I don't believe Ah Zu would cause me any trouble."



Her large eyes were so beautiful, it was inconceivable that any man could bear to hurt or disappoint her.

However, Zu An was already used to being around all sorts of beauties, so his resistance to such temptations was rather high. "That might not be so. That's why, if you don't want me to run, Lady Qiu has to watch me real closely."

"Shameful!" The lightning cultivator was furious. "The lady saint of our sect shall not be sullied by a man like you!"

You have successfully trolled Solitary Lightning for 444 Rage points!

Zu An was speechless. Just who was it that sent Qiu Honglei to the Immortal Abode? There were so many people fawning over back then. Why didn't I see you tearing that place down with your hammer?

Qiu Honglei smiled and said, "Solitary Lightning, there's no need to worry. Zu An is my friend, and he likes to joke around. There is no need to take his words seriously."

The other Solitary Eight members had thoughtful looks on their faces as they listened to their lady saint defend Zu An over and over again. Who knew how many admirers Qiu Honglei had back in the sect! Many of the higher-ups had publicly declared their intent to pursue her, yet no one had ever managed to get so close to her.

Furthermore, given her special status, even those big shots didn't dare to go too far. That was why she had always seemed like an unattainable treasure in everyone's eyes.

But now, this random brat had appeared, and seemed so close to her! If news of this got back, even if the sect master didn't choose to kill him to safeguard the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, the lady saint's endless pursuers definitely would!

Qiu Honglei said to Zu An, "Ah Zu, is this enough to make you feel at ease?"

Zu An gave her a look that was full of emotion. "Honglei, you're really too good to me! I don't know how to repay you. How about I offer you my body..."

"Ahem ahem..." Qiu Honglei knew of his special traits, and quickly cut him off. "Enough, enough, it's time to set off! Let's return to the sect as soon as possible."

Zu An chuckled and asked in passing, "Honglei, is your sect master male or female? Is there anything he is fond of? Or anything he dislikes? How many meals does he eat every day...?"

Qiu Honglei felt a growing headache. "Why are you asking about all that?"

"I don't want to accidentally piss him off and lose my head over it! If possible, I'd also like to prepare some gifts to get closer to him." Zu An said all this as if it was only right, and to be expected.

Qiu Honglei snorted and said, "Obediently handing over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra would be the best present of all."

"Of course," Zu An agreed, "but I am also hoping that your sect master is female. I've always been a ladies man, you see. If your sect master is a guy, he might feel jealous and hate me."

Qiu Honglei was momentarily speechless.

Even the Solitary Eight couldn't believe what they were hearing.

This fella's shamelessness far exceeded their expectations!

The lightning cultivator sniffed disdainfully. "Then why is it that I don't like you, and why do I get annoyed whenever I see a smooth-talker like you?"

Zu An glanced at her body, which looked like it had been forged out of iron, and took in her bulging muscles. He swallowed subconsciously before replying, "Compared to ordinary women, you are a little... different."

The lightning cultivator was furious. "What did you say?!"

You have successfully trolled Solitary Lightning for 999 Rage points!

The thing she hated most of all was being seen by men in this way.

Zu An pivoted smoothly. "I'm saying that you're a heroine among women! You're surely the idol of valiant and unrivaled heroes, not irresponsible kids like me."

"That's more like it!" The lightning cultivator said with a huff. A proud smile appeared on her face, as if she were daydreaming about her invincible and heroic sweetheart.

The others all felt their insides churning, but none of them dared to show even the smallest hint of what they thought. They were clearly well-acquainted with her fiery temper.

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When Qiu Honglei's party had left, Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan discussed how they were going to rescue Zu An.

Sang Qian wasn't far away. When he saw them, he ran over. "Are you two okay?"

Pei Mianman rolled her eyes. He was the last person she wanted to entertain right now. Meanwhile, Zheng Dan felt like he was still her husband, although in name only, and ignoring him seemed a little inappropriate. However, she wasn't really in the mood to speak to him either, especially when she recalled how he'd kept trying to harm Zu An over and over.

Sang Qian was ashamed and angry at being given the cold shoulder. Fortunately, Sang Qian arrived with her father at this moment, saving him from further embarrassment.

"Lady Pei, sister-in-law, are you two discussing how to rescue Zu An?" Sang Qian asked.

Clearly, now that they had spent so much time together, Pei Mianman's identity wasn't a secret anymore.

"Yes. Young miss Sang, I've heard that you're quite resourceful. Do you have any suggestions?" They had fought side by side earlier, so Pei Mianman had a different attitude towards Sang Qian.

"We could contact the local officials and inform King Liang. They would surely step in to seize Zu An back," Sang Qian said.

Pei Mianman shook her head. "That won't do. That would be rescuing him from a wolf's den just to throw him into a tiger's cave."

Even though Zu An had already told her that he had a plan for what to do in the capital, it was truly difficult for her to imagine what he could possibly do against the unrivaled emperor.

That was why she wasn't willing to see him fall into King Liang's hands again.

Sang Qien stayed quiet for a moment, then said, "In that case, we can only save him ourselves. I have some subordinates with me, and our original plan was to set up an ambush in a nearby inn. However, I found out that someone had sent assassins after my father, so I had to move out on my own. I had assumed that those previous arrangements would be wasted, but now, it seems like those men are in the perfect spot to rescue Zu An."

"Sis!" Sang Qian was unhappy. He was really hoping that Zu An would die. He had absolutely no desire to rescue Zu An.

Sang Hong sent him a voice transmission. "Qian'er, we are still criminals. If we can save Zu An, we can absolve ourselves of this crime. The emperor will be delighted to know what we have done, and he might even erase our crimes."

With this explanation, Sang Qian finally understood what was at stake. He replied with a grunt, but his heart was still filled with a sense of injustice.

Zheng Dan couldn't help but say, "Those fiends from the Devil Sect are all really strong. Will we be able to defeat them?"

Sang Qien smiled. "Sister-in-law, there are many matters in this world that can be taken care of without using force, but wit."

#### **Chapter 484: Are You Looking Down On Us?**

"Wit?" Zheng Dan was confused.

"Let's head to that small town first," Sang Qien said in reply. "They will have to pass by it as well. I'll explain matters along the way."

"But those Devil Sect fiends have cultivations that are higher than ours, and they left earlier as well. Will we make it in time if we leave now?" Pei Mianman was a little skeptical.

Sang Qien quickly reassured her. "Earlier on, I learned about a small path between the mountains from some local hunters in town, which is much shorter than the main path. That was the path I took to get here. If we follow this path, we should be able to reach town first."

Pei Mianman's eyes lit up. "All right, then. Let's get moving!"

They made their way through the forest. Sang Qian doggedly tried to start a conversation with Pei Mianman along the way. "Miss Pei, why must you get involved in all of this? Are you carrying out the Pei clan's will?"

Pei Mianman shook her head. "I am merely acting on my own. I do not represent the Pei clan."

"Then Miss Pei really is a paragon of righteousness!" Sang Qian said in praise. "I've heard that Miss Pei and Miss Chu are close friends, and it seems Miss Pei was really eager to help out once you heard that something had happened to Miss Chu's husband."

"You're too kind," Pei Mianman said with a gentle snort. She didn't look at all pleased. Sang Qian was clearly trying to say that Zu An was Chu Chuyan's husband, and that she should not harbor any thoughts about him.

Sang Qian's eyes couldn't help but wander towards her chest, which was gently rising and falling because of her irritation. He swallowed. This woman really is top-notch! She's so pretty even when she's angry.

"Is there anything else you need, young master Sang?" Pei Mianman was rather annoyed. His wandering eyes did not go unnoticed. If they weren't relying on Sang Qian's help to rescue Zu An, she would have snapped his head off by now.

"Miss Pei, you don't need to worry. If you find yourself in any danger later, I will surely rush to your aid." Sang Qian could feel that he was in a much better condition, now that the medicine's effects had spread through his body, and his usual arrogance returned.

Pei Mianman smiled. "Thank you, young master. Then again, young master Sang, shouldn't you be protecting your fiancée instead?"

Zheng Dan was none too pleased by this.

That dude was clearly bothering you—why do you have to start causing trouble for me?!

Sang Qian glanced at Zheng Dan and said resentfully, "I do not believe Miss Zheng needs me to worry about her."

It was obvious that he didn't like seeing his fiancée's anxious desire to save another man.

Zheng Dan smiled, but she didn't say anything. Her relationship with the Sang clan was ruined beyond repair, but she felt not a single shred of regret.

Sang Qian ran over to Pei Mianman's side to chat her up. Meanwhile, Sang Qien was completely speechless when she saw this. Is my brother stupid? His attempts at flirting are just too clumsy.

Pei Mianman finally had enough. She found Sang Qien and asked her about the plan. "Miss Sang, what did you mean when you said we were going to outwit them?"

Sang Qien was grateful for the distraction. Her big brother's clumsy display was hurting her eyes. She quickly laid out what she had in mind. "Their cultivation ranks are higher than ours, so a direct confrontation wouldn't work. That is why we need to use other methods. For example... poison."

"Poison?" Pei Mianman frowned. "Those Devil Sect cultivators are all powerful individuals, though, and regular poisons will likely be useless against them. Let alone the fact that they are all ruffians who have extensive experiences with using underhanded means. Our chances for success are slim at best."

The corners of Sang Qien's lips curved upwards, revealing a foxy smile. "That's why I've gone through quite a bit of effort to procure some 'Monarch's Loyalty'."

"'Monarch's loyalty'?" Zheng Dan, who had been listening quietly the entire time, exclaimed in surprise. "The miraculous poison that is known for being colorless and odorless, and can prevent those afflicted from using ki?"

She used to be the boss of the Whale Gang, and she possessed a fair amount of knowledge in this field.

"Indeed. With such a poison at our disposal, it doesn't matter how powerful those Devil Sect cultivators are," Sang Qien said proudly.

Pei Mianman's mood improved considerably, now that there was a hope of rescuing Zu An. "The capital is full of rumors of Miss Sang's wisdom. Indeed, it seems Miss Sang is as brilliant as expected!"

Sang Qien's face reddened. "These are small, simple tactics. They're nothing special."

Their group hurried towards the small town.

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Not long after they arrived, another carriage slowly entered the town.

"Lady Saint, let's stop here to rest and reorganize," Solitary Lightning said.

"All right. Make sure to stock up this time. We won't be making another stop. After this, we'll be heading straight back to the sect. The faster we bring him back, the fewer potential headaches we'll face," Qiu Honglei replied.

"Understood!" The other Solitary Eight members cheered. They held high positions in the sect, and they were used to leading comfortably lavish lifestyles. They had had to put up with quite a bit of discomfort during this mission, and were looking forward to some rest.

Qiu Honglei turned around to give Zu An a playful look. "Why do you keep looking at me? You've been staring at me the whole journey!"

"It's because you're pretty, of course." Zu An sighed in satisfaction. "I was quite stressed out by all that had happened, but my mood instantly improved once I had you by my side."

Qiu Honglei snorted. "You rascal, I see that your mouth is as slick as ever."

Even though that was what she said, her brows betrayed her inner delight. It really was quite strange. She was praised wherever she went, by many who had much greater literary talent than Zu An, and yet she felt nothing when they spoke.

The carriage suddenly came to a stop. Solitary Wind's voice came from outside. "Lady Saint, we've arrived at the tavern."

Qiu Honglei accompanied Zu An out of the carriage. Zu An looked at the words 'Four Seas Inn' above him, and a thoughtful look came over him. He remembered that the casino that the Sang clan and Zheng clan had run was also named 'Four Seas'. He'd even won a million taels of silver from them once.

"Is there something wrong with the name?" Qiu Honglei walked over to him and asked curiously.

"It's nothing. The name just evokes a feeling of familiarity."

Zu An chuckled and strutted inside. "Waiter, we're ready to order!"

Solitary Lightning and the others rolled their eyes. This kid really did not have a single shred of decency.

"Coming!" A waiter quickly rushed over with a towel.

Zu An was just about to order when a thought occurred to him. He turned around to look at Qiu Honglei.

"You guys are covering everything for this trip, right?"

Qiu Honglei's mouth fell open in shock.

Despite that, she still replied, "But of course. The young master is our esteemed guest, so this meal is on us."

"That's good, then." Zu An then turned to the waiter and said, "I want stewed bear paws, braised camel humps, stir-fried tiger's tails, shark's fin abalone soup..."

The Solitary Eight felt their eyelids twitch vigorously. Was this kid deliberately trying to rip them off?

Fortunately, the waiter had a troubled expression. "Our humble establishment doesn't serve such precious dishes," he said.

"You guys don't even have these dishes?" Zu An looked unhappy. "Then what do you guys have?"

The waiter, having seen Zu An's outburst earlier, didn't dare show any disrespect. He quickly replied, "We have roast lamb, roast pork, tender steak, roast chicken, stewed goose, duck in soy sauce..."

After he had gone over their entire menu, he asked with great expectation, "What does our esteemed guest wish to order?"

"What do I want to order? Are you looking down on us? Look at those fellows over there—do they look like they're broke?" Zu An pointed at the Solitary Eight. "Give us one of everything you just mentioned. If you even skip out on even a single dish, it'll only mean that you're looking down on them."

"Ah?" This waiter was stunned. He had never seen this way of ordering before.

Every single member of the Solitary Eight looked as though they had eaten a mouthful of shit. If they stopped Zu An, it would only make them look stingy, yet they couldn't suppress the anger they felt.

You have successfully trolled the Solitary Eight for 233... 233... 233...

In the end, it was Qiu Honglei who stepped in impatiently. "Enough, don't listen to him. Just give us some of your best dishes..."

Even though she said she would only order some of their best dishes, she ended up ordering quite a bit, but not so much as to be wasteful.

The waiter looked blankly at Qiu Honglei, clearly enamored by her beauty, and only snapped out of his daze after she called him a half-dozen times. He said with a reddened face, "Got it!"

Zu An chuckled. "Honglei, your charm really is unmatched! Forget about the waiter, everyone in this inn is sneaking looks in your direction."

"Stop teasing me already." Qiu Honglei rolled her eyes. She was more than accustomed to this. "Hurry up and eat so we can get moving."

Soon afterwards, the table was covered in piping hot food. The stomachs of the Solitary Eight were already rumbling with hunger. They were just about to eat when Qiu Honglei noticed a figure in the distance. She stopped her companions. "Wait!"

## **Chapter 485: An Enchanting Woman**

"What's wrong?" The Solitary Eight looked at her.

Qiu Honglei recalled the figure that had just flashed across her vision, and she grew suspicious. "Test the food."

The Solitary Eight weren't clueless newborn hatchlings, and quickly caught on. One of them took out a needle to test out the food, but the needle did not change color. It hadn't detected any poison.

Zu An was speechless at the lack of knowledge in these backwards civilizations. Silver needles only detected sulfides. The only way the silver needles would react is if the container that stored the poison wasn't air-tight, allowing some sulfides to appear in the arsenic.

Many poisons don't even contain any sulfides! A silver needle won't cut it!

"Something's not right. There is definitely something wrong with this food," Qiu Honglei said decisively.

The rest of them turned to look at Solitary Wood. Zu An was curious. Why were they looking at him?

The green-haired man—Solitary Wood—placed his little finger into the soup and licked it. He closed his eyes, as if in deep thought. A moment later, he said with an icy voice, "'Monarch's Loyalty'! I might not have been able to detect it without Lady Saint's warning!"

Zu An was stunned. So, wood element cultivators have an affinity with poisons! Thank goodness Snow didn't try to poison me back then...

"What?!" The others' expressions grew dark. Solitary Lightning was even more furious. In a flash, she seized the waiter who had served them.

The waiter drew a dagger from inside his sleeves when he realized that he had been exposed. Unfortunately, he was no match for a powerful Solitary Eight member from the Devil Sect. Solitary Lightning grabbed his throat. "Speak! Who prompted you to do this?!"

Unfortunately, she used too much strength, and he was choked to death instead.

"Trash!" Solitary Lightning tossed his corpse aside, and went after the other waiters in the inn.

They began to flee when they realized that something wasn't right. Unfortunately, there was no way they could outrun the Solitary Eight.

The fight in the inn was over almost before it had begun. Most of the waiters were killed on the spot, but the few that were captured ended their own lives by breaking the poison pills stored within their teeth.

“They’re all deathsworn soldiers!” The Solitary Eight were stunned. Whoever commanded such deathsworn soldiers was no ordinary power. “Who dares to target us?”

Qiu Honglei coldly issued an order. “Search the other areas of the in.”

Solitary Wind, Fire, and Metal headed out to search the tavern. They returned in a moment, shaking their heads. They had found nothing.

Qiu Honglei scanned her surroundings. The other guests of the inn had fled, leaving behind a huge mess. She frowned. “Forget it, there’s no sense in chasing after them. Go out and buy some food. We will prepare our own food and rest here for the night. We set out tomorrow morning.”

“What? We’re still staying here for the night?” Solitary Wind’s voice was overflowing with worry. “What if our enemies attack again?”

Qiu Honglei shook her head. “I don’t believe they have the ability to make another move. It’s already dark outside, and if we set out again, we’ll have to sleep outside. We can take advantage of this inn and get some rest.”

When the Solitary Eight dispersed, Zu An said with a frown, “Have you already figured out our attackers’ identities?”

Qiu Honglei smiled. “I should be asking you that question. It seems like they’ve gone through quite the effort to rescue you.”

“Rescue me?” Even though Zu An had his suspicions, he wasn’t certain.

“Of course it was to rescue you! Speaking of which, those two beauties seem to care about you a great deal. They haven’t given up yet. No... they shouldn’t have had the time to move so many men. It is most likely the Sang clan’s young miss who planned this,” Qiu Honglei mumbled to herself.

“How can you be so sure?” Zu An asked curiously.

“Because I saw Sang Qian just now.” Qiu Honglei smiled. If she hadn’t noticed him all of a sudden, they might have been poisoned already. ‘Monarch’s Loyalty’, huh? It seems they’re quite formidable, managing to get their hands on such a precious poison.

“Sang Qian?” Zu An frowned. Did that fellow do it on purpose? He probably revealed himself because he doesn’t want me to be saved.

His expression darkened considerably. He and Sang Qian were enemies to begin with, so he already knew that Sang Qian wanted to kill him. But if you’re going to do it, then do it openly! Why do you have to resort to despicable methods, and send so many people to their graves? This made Zu An extremely angry.

He came from a civilized world, after all. This was the first time he had seen so many people die for his sake, and he felt awful inside.



Even though these people had died at the hands of the Solitary Eight, he didn't blame them. They had their own mission to carry out, after all. This was a world where the strong preyed on the weak—it was either kill, or be killed. Each person had to rely on their own skill and ability. That was just the way it was.

However, Sang Qian was the one to blame for these deaths. Serious killing intent surged within him.

He had made up his mind. He was going to take that man's life the next time they met, no matter what. He would no longer show consideration for Sang Hong.

It took him a while to finally calm down. When he did so, he said in a low voice, "I want to ask you for a favor."

"As long as it's within my abilities, sure." Even though Qiu Honglei had noticed the sudden change in him, she didn't know what had triggered him to act in this way.

"I want to bury these men and let them rest in peace." He looked at the corpses strewn about the place. His tone was extremely sad.

Qiu Honglei felt troubled. "I didn't bring any servants along with me, and I don't believe the Solitary Eight will be willing to do that."

Zu An shook his head. "It's all right. I'll do it myself."

"Why?" Qiu Honglei was rather surprised. She didn't understand why Zu An would do this.

"Even though I don't know them personally, they died trying to save me. This is all I can do for them," Zu An said quietly.

Qiu Honglei fell silent.

She was the saint of the Devil Sect, and someone who had enjoyed a high status from as far back as she could remember. Even in the two years she'd spent in the Immortal Abode on an undercover mission, she'd had endless servants at her disposal, to order around as she saw fit. This was something that she'd never had to worry about.

She wasn't the only one in the world like this. The noble elite of this world and other powerful cultivators did not grasp the concept of human equality. Many people weren't even human in their eyes—just slaves, servants, or pawns.

That was why she hadn't understood Zu An's reaction at first. However, as she watched him dig one grave after another in the rear courtyard and then carefully bury those deathsworn soldiers, something changed within her, and she was extremely moved.

"I'm sorry," Qiu Honglei apologized. In a way, these people had died because of her.

Zu An shook his head. "They wanted to poison all of you, so it was inevitable that you would kill them. That is why I don't blame you for it. Instead, there's only one person to blame."

Qiu Honglei was an intelligent woman, and she immediately understood what he meant. "You're talking about Sang Qian, aren't you?"

Zu An didn't reply, but went about burying the corpses, his face deathly serious. Then, he found a board and began carving. "A grave for loyal men, set up by Zu An."

Qiu Honglei watched Zu An's lonesome figure. It suddenly occurred to her that she didn't actually understand this man at all.

...

Elsewhere, the Sang family members, Pei Mianman, and Zheng Dan were fleeing for their lives. They knew that there was no way they could defeat the Devil Sect now that they had been exposed.

When they were finally in the clear, Sang Qien gave Sang Qian an angry look. "Why?"

"What do you mean, why?" Sang Qian seemed to be trying too hard to look natural.

Sang Qien said, "If you hadn't shown yourself to Qiu Honglei, they would never have realized that they were being poisoned. There would have been no need for those deathsworn soldiers to sacrifice themselves! Do you know how much our Sang clan invested to nurture them?"

Sang Hong's expression was dark as well. The Sang clan wasn't as established as many of the other clans, and they didn't have as many deathsworn soldiers. These few were more or less all they had.

Sang Qian said disapprovingly, "I didn't foresee that this would happen either! How am I supposed to know that woman Qiu Honglei would be sharp enough to notice me?"

Pei Mianman was furious. "Did you do it on purpose? You've wanted to kill Zu An from the very start!"

Zheng Dan's eyes became as cold as ice, leaking out a hint of killing intent.

Sang Hong's voice also grew heavy. "Qian'er, you've really disappointed me."

I don't care if you want to kill Zu An, but did you have to do it now? You've even cost our clan so many deathsworn soldiers!

Being vicious and merciless is all well and good, but stupidity cannot be tolerated.

Sang Qian erupted in fury. "Fine, fine, fine! It's all my fault! Since all of you think that Zu An is so great, then go make him your big brother, and make him your son! I've had enough!"

He turned around and ran off. Sang Hong subconsciously took a step after him, but he let go of the idea. Instead, he stopped Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan from pursuing him as well.

Sang Qian's figure quickly vanished from sight.

He ran at full speed, getting angrier the more he ran. He stopped at the edge of a cliff and yelled out curses at Zu An, venting all of his anger and frustration.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 999... 999... 999...

Just then, he heard a bewitching female voice. "Handsome young man, I take it you know Zu An?"

**Chapter 486: Who Is the Bad One?**

Sang Qian whipped his head around. Had he been so angry that someone had approached him unnoticed while he was cursing Zu An?

However, once he laid eyes on the newcomer, he immediately exhaled in relief.

It was a middle-aged daoist nun. She was dressed in a yellow daoist robe, and held a snowy-white horsetail whisk in her hand.

It seemed wrong to call her middle-aged. Her face showed no signs of aging, yet there was no way she was a young lady. She exuded an aura of maturity that a young girl couldn't possibly emulate.

She wasn't extremely pretty, and was at least inferior to Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan, but she couldn't be considered ugly either. With her graceful posture, one might even consider her elegant.

"Honored Sister, are you speaking to me?" Sang Qian's tone grew polite as well. After all, men subconsciously tried to maintain a favorable image in front of beautiful women.

"Do you see anyone else here?" The daoist nun giggled, her laughter harboring a mysterious charm.

Sang Qian felt his heart skip a beat. Her laughter couldn't be considered dignified, yet it wasn't frivolous either—his sense of her was difficult to describe.

Perhaps he could call it an elegant charm. Her unique charm was something that young ladies did not possess. This was a new experience for him.

"Honored Sister, do you know Zu An as well?" Instead of losing his mind, Sang Qian grew more vigilant.

"I do not. However, I heard you cursing him rather loudly, so he must not be a good person," that daoist nun said.

Sang Qian felt joy ring out in his heart. After all, everyone seemed too eager to praise Zu An right now. Pei Mianman liked him, his fiancée was enamored with him... Hardest of all to accept was that his father and little sister had even spoken up for him again and again.

Sang Qian was about to go crazy. Now that he'd finally heard someone speak up for him instead, he was moved to the brink of tears.

"Honored Sister, you're absolutely right! That Zu An is utterly despicable!" Sang Qian cursed him again.

"Just what did he do to make you so upset?" That daoist nun said with an ambiguous smile. "Could it be that he has stolen your wife?"

"That's not it!" Sang Qian's face flushed entirely red. Even though Zheng Dan and Zu An seemed to share a close relationship, he didn't believe that things had progressed that far. In any case, even if something had happened between them, which man would personally admit to such a shameful thing? "He's just really annoying."

The daoist nun smiled and remarked, "If you find him that annoying, then confront him face to face. Cursing him behind his back doesn't seem like something a valiant man would do."

Sang Qian's face heated up. "Who said that I didn't? I just failed, that's all!"

To stop her from prying further, he quickly asked, "Why are you here, Honored Sister? These mountains are quite dangerous, and there are many vicious beasts roaming about. Even if you run into other humans, they're most likely to be bandits."

The daoist nun sighed. "People like me must walk our own path to gain wisdom, so we are called to roam these mountains. I've been lucky so far, and haven't run into any vicious beasts yet. As for bandits... I wonder if you are one of them?"

Sang Qian stuck his chest out and declared quickly, "Of course not! I am actually a court official in charge of apprehending criminals!"

"Oh?" A bizarre expression flashed across the daoist nun's eyes. "So you were a military officer! I apologize for my disrespect."

Sang Qian was elated to hear her praise. He suddenly found this woman much more lovely. Who cares about Zheng Dan, or Pei Mianman? Both of you can screw off!

The hormones within him began to stir. He quickly said, "Honored Sister, where are you headed? I can accompany you if you need protection."

"You, protect me?" A strange look came into her eyes again.

"Of course! You might not know it from looking at me, but I'm a sixth rank expert! Those bandits and vicious beasts are no match for me!" Sang Qian continued his boasting. He had to assure this woman that he was powerful and get on her good side.

"Sixth rank? You're so strong!" The daoist nun covered her mouth in apparent surprise.

"Actually, my dad is even stronger. He's a cultivator at the peak of eighth rank!" Sang Qian wanted to exaggerate and say that he was ninth rank, but he didn't have the confidence.

The daoist nun chuckled. "Young master, it seems you come from quite a distinguished family."

Sang Qian was extremely pleased with himself. Who knew how many distinguished daughters he had courted over the years just by relying on his outstanding clan and his own status? A daoist nun like her who was used to a simple, frugal life would be no challenge at all. "You still haven't told me where you're going. If you're traveling a long way, I can accompany you."

He had already made his decision. No matter her destination, he was going to say that it was along the way for him.

He would keep her company, and get close to her. For someone with his charm and skill, it would be a walk in the park.

As for his father and little sister, he didn't want to go back to them just to be mistreated again. At worst, he would just reunite with them in the capital.

He subconsciously looked the woman over. He could vaguely make out her graceful outline even through her loose robes.

Even though this woman wasn't as pretty as Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan, she possessed a powerful allure that made him want to ravage her.

His heart began to beat wildly as he played out various scenes in his mind.

That daoist nun seemed to sense the burning passion in his eyes. She looked him over before saying, "I am going to a small town just over there. Is it along the way, young master?"

"I was just there! You can count on me." Sang Qian's eyes lit up.

"Oh? Won't I be troubling the young master if I make you double back?" The daoist nun seemed a little embarrassed.

"It's no problem. It's not that far away." As he said this, Sang Qian suddenly remembered the members of the Devil Sect, which gave him pause. "I advise you not to go there right now. Those fiends from the Devil Sect might not have left yet."

"Fiends from the Devil Sect?" Her eyes twitched left and right. "Oh, that Zu An that you were cursing—is he there?"

Sang Qian said, "He is. He's survived for so long thanks to his good luck. But now that he's fallen into the Devil Sect's hands, he won't be alive much longer."

The daoist nun nodded. "I see. I must make haste, then."

Sang Qian was stunned. "Honored Sister, did you not hear what I just said?"

The daoist nun said with a chuckle, "I did. But you're amazing, aren't you, young master? You can protect me, right? I'm sure those fiends from the Devil Sect are not even worth mentioning."

"Of... of course!" Sang Qian laughed awkwardly. "This way, please."

...

After they had walked for a while, that daoist nun suddenly stopped. "We seem to be going in the wrong direction."

Sang Qian stared at her. Of course it's the wrong direction! Do you think I'm stupid? I finally managed to escape from the clutches of the Devil Sect—why in the world would I go back?

"I know a shortcut that's a little faster."

Fear crept into the daoist nun's voice. "Young master, please don't deceive me! This path takes us further and further away! What if we run into some nasty people?"

Sang Qian laughed and said, "I'm here to protect you, aren't I?"

That daoist nun blinked. "But what if the young master is also a bad person?"

Sang Qian's breath caught in his throat. Before he could come up with a reply, the daoist nun burst out laughing. "I'm just joking with you! Young master, how could someone like you be a bad person?"

Sang Qian laughed. "But of course, but of course!"

As they walked a little more, Sang Qian suddenly said, "I wonder... Since I am escorting you and offering my protection, how are you prepared to repay me?"

The daoist nun smiled and said, "What do you have in mind, young master?"

Seeing the playfulness in her expression, Sang Qian could no longer resist. He immediately pulled her closer to him. "I want you, of course."

That daoist nun turned pale, and she quickly pushed him away. "Young master, please do not be like this."

Sang Qian laughed out loud. "You don't need to keep up the act. I don't think you're a proper daoist nun either, since you've been teasing me this whole time. Why don't we just get straight to the point? Let's sleep together."

"As I expected, the young master is a bad person after all," she remarked.

Sang Qian only treated this as a joke, and laughed complacently. "Unfortunately, you've realized this too late."

All of a sudden, he frowned, because his little brother wasn't reacting at all. Something's not right. Given my past experience, with such a gorgeous beauty in my arms, it should be pointing right to the sky!

A strange expression suddenly appeared on the daoist nun's face. "You seem to have forgotten something, young master."

"What is it?" Sang Qian was stunned. A strange mood had fallen.

"What if I am the bad person?" The daoist nun grinned. Her alluring red lips suddenly parted into six horrifying blood-sucking mouthparts.

Sang Qian almost leapt out of his skin. He wanted to get away, but there was no way for him to do so. Those soft arms gripped him like a vise.

He watched in horror as those six terrifying mouthparts latched onto his neck. Gulp, gulp, gulp... his blood was quickly sucked away.

Sang Qian quickly felt his body go as cold as ice. A feeling of numbness spread outwards from his neck, and he slowly stopped feeling any pain.

Thankfully, his survival instincts reminded him to struggle with everything he had. Unfortunately, he was quickly growing weaker and weaker.

He discovered with alarm that his arms had begun to shrivel up at a visible rate, quickly wasting away until it was just a thin layer of skin wrapped around the bone.

Darkness devoured him.

**Chapter 487: Zhuxie Chixin**

A while later, the satisfied daoist nun tossed the mummified Sang Qian aside. Her six blood-sucking mouthparts slowly retracted, turning back into tender and glistening red lips.

It could have been lipstick staining those lips red, but it could also have been blood.

The daoist nun licked her lips with an intoxicated expression. "The blood essence of a young man tastes oh so good! But something doesn't seem quite right. Why does it feel as though he's lacking some masculine energy? That shouldn't be the case. He had such great libido, how could he be lacking...?"

She stood there in a daze for a while, confused about what happened. In the end, she still couldn't puzzle it out. "Forget it. Finding Zu An is still the most important thing."

She turned around and transformed into a flight of countless small mosquitoes. The black cloud vanished into the distance.

...

A short while later, Sang Qian's voice drifted out from close by. "Huh? The sound came from here earlier. Where did he go?"

After the father and daughter of the Sang clan had stopped Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan, they consoled them, promising that they would continue to help them rescue Zu An. Only then did their anger subside somewhat.

Sang Hong then grew worried about his son's safety. They were in the depths of the mountains, and it was very possible that he would run into someone from the Devil Sect. As such, they all hurried off in the direction Sang Qian had taken.

They had been searching around for a while when they suddenly heard a miserable scream, and immediately rushed in that direction.

Sang Hong's eyelids twitched. He grew more and more worried. "Your brother's cry was rather loud. He was clearly in great danger. If we don't find him soon, it might be too late."

Zheng Dan frowned. "Are you sure? He has a good level of cultivation. He should be able to hold his own even if he runs into someone formidable."

"I hope that's the case," Sang Hong replied, but he couldn't shake his sense of foreboding.

Sang Qian suddenly let out a scream.

"What's wrong?" Everyone rushed to where she was.

Sang Qian's face was pale. She pointed to the side. "There's... a dried up corpse over there."

"A dried up corpse?" Sang Hong's voice grew low. "There are quite a few scavengers roaming these mountain depths. It isn't strange for there to be dried up corpses around the area. Let's hurry up and find your big brother."

"Okay." Sang Qian nodded, and resumed her search.

Sang Hong walked over to where she had been standing. He had planned to give the corpse a passing look, but his entire body suddenly trembled, and his legs seemed to give way.

Zheng Dan quickly supported him. "Lord Sang, what's wrong?"

Sang Hong pointed a trembling finger at the dried up corpse. "Those... those clothes. Don't they seem rather familiar?"

Zheng Dan looked over, and her heart suddenly began to race. They seemed to be what Zu An had been wearing before! Her face turned pale.

There was nothing else on Sang Hong's mind. He knelt down and lifted up the corpse. When he saw the corpse's face, he screamed in agony. A burst of blood sprayed out from his mouth.

Even though Sang Qian had been sucked dry until only skin and bones remained, he could still vaguely make out his appearance.

Zheng Dan saw it as well. She was relieved that it wasn't Zu An, but she couldn't help but feel a touch of grief, knowing that it was Sang Qian.

They had been engaged for a while, after all, and they had many conversations before. Even though she resented the fact that he'd kept targeting Zu An, seeing him meet such a tragic end left her with a web of complicated emotions.

Sang Qian came back when she noticed that something was wrong. She too saw the corpse's face clearly and let out an anguished cry. Her face turned completely pale.

She never would've imagined that her vigorous and lively brother would end up like this!

Pei Mianman walked over. She frowned when saw Sang Qian's appearance. She had never seen such a death before.

"Who did this?!" Sang Hong said through clenched teeth. Hatred burned deep within his bones and seeped out through his eyes.

Sang Qian was his only son. There was no way he could produce another one, given his age. With Sang Qian's death, he had no more successors.

In an instant, all his efforts in this lifetime seemed utterly meaningless. Even throughout his imprisonment, he had retained his wits about him. He was confident that he would be able to bounce back.

However, no matter how many schemes he could cook up, he was still powerless when it came to bringing his son back.

The only thing that kept him going now was his desire for revenge. He had to kill the one who had killed his son.

Pei Mianman replied, "We didn't see anyone when we looked around earlier."

She was secretly grateful that she and Zheng Dan had stuck around with them this whole time. Otherwise, given their earlier hostility, Sang Hong might have come after them.



“Dad...” Sang Qien immediately walked over to support him, her eyes filled with tears. She too was heartbroken to see her brother die so miserably.

With difficulty, Sang Hong put aside his grief. His body was shaking as he knelt down by his son’s corpse and began to examine the cause of death.

In this moment, he was no longer Brightmoon City’s cunning and unpredictable governor. Instead, he was just another pitiful, grieving elder.

Sang Qien helped her father out. Her hands were trembling as they reached out to touch her brother’s corpse, although it was unclear if it was because of sorrow or anger.

The two of them examined the corpse for a while, then Sang Qien said in confusion, “Dad, I don’t see any wounds on big brother’s body.”

The tiny wounds on Sang Qian’s neck were hard to detect, since there was only a layer of skin covering his bones.

“Why aren’t there any injuries...?” Sang Hong muttered to himself. He couldn’t understand how his son had died either.

From a distance, they heard the sound of galloping horse’s hooves, growing closer. Sang Hong raised his head. Had the attackers returned?

Even Pei Mianman and Zheng Dan grew curious. They were in the wilderness—why would there be mounted men?

They looked up and were blinded by an expanse of glistening yellow light. Only when they squinted did they see that it was indeed a group of cavalry troops, and most of them were dressed in golden armor. Their expressions were solemn.

Zheng Dan sighed in awe. The Chu clan’s Red Cloak Army had seemed to her to be the elite of the elites, but the pressure that these cavalymen gave off was stronger even than that of the Red Cloak Army!

Sang Hong’s expression changed. “The Bright Tiger Army!”

“Bright Tiger?” Zheng Dan’s confusion was apparent.

Pei Mianman was shocked as well, but quickly explained, “You’re not from the capital, so you might not know about this. The Bright Tiger Army is the Son of Heaven’s personal army. They operate strictly under the emperor’s sole command.”

Zheng Dan was shocked. “Are you saying that the emperor has come personally?”

Sang Qien shook her head. “Not necessarily. Given how things are right now, how could his majesty leave the capital city? He probably sent a trusted aide.”

When these troops drew near, they could finally make out the appearances of those at the very front.

The dozen or so men at the very front had unicorns embroidered on their clothes, and wore austere metal masks. This was an image that they couldn’t be more familiar with.

## The Embroidered Envoy!

The same thought crossed their minds at the same time. More shocking was that these Embroidered Envoy wore clothes that were of different color than the ones who were escorting them previously, and seemed to be made of even better quality material. These men were surely higher ranked.

Most surprising of all, the clothes of the man at the very front were different from the others. His clothes were stained a dark red, and the designs on his garments were woven out of golden silk.

There was no mask covering his face, leaving it completely exposed.

He was a middle-aged man. His skin was completely white, as if it never saw the sun. Together with his penetrating hawk-like eyes, they made his expression seem extremely grim. He exuded a frigid, chilling aura.

“Zhuxie Chixin!” A bitter expression spread across Sang Hong’s face. He never expected that this man would appear.

Fine drops of sweat covered Pei Mianman’s brow. She said quietly to Zheng Dan, “This person is the Chief Commander of the Embroidered Envoy, Zhuxie Chixin. He is nothing like that small leader Huang Huihong. Rather, he leads all of the Embroidered Envoy. His cultivation is deep and immeasurable. He’s taken down countless nobles and officials over the years. His very appearance can even make children stop crying at night.”

The clear and gentle voice of a woman spoke. “Manman?”

Pei Mianman looked towards the group with disbelief. She saw a familiar and beautiful figure, and her reply was tinged with a hint of disbelief. “Chuyan?”

## Chapter 488: Fiend Races

This was a beautiful woman in an ice-blue colored long dress. Long hair fluttered behind her picturesque figure. Who else could this be but Chu Chuyan?

There were too many people earlier, and they were all wearing dazzling helmets, so no one noticed her.

Zheng Dan sighed inwardly when she saw her exceptional appearance. No wonder Ah Zu was willing to sacrifice himself for the Chu clan.

But thinking back, he also offered himself up to the Devil sect for his sake, and he shielded her by placing his own self at risk many times. This made her smile warmly.

Sang Qien looked at that woman in the long dress in a stupor. She heard about her beauty all the time in the capital. Sure enough, when she really did meet this person, she was a devastatingly beautiful woman! No wonder so many of those young masters chased after her, and even her big brother seemed to be quite fond of her.

When she thought of her big brother, her nose wrinkled in soreness. She almost cried again.

“Chuyan, why are you together with them?” Pei Mianman looked at her in confusion.

Chu Chuyan came down from a horse and arrived by her side. "I heard about the Chu clan's affairs from the capital, and then hurried in Brightmoon City's direction. Later on, I heard that something happened to Zu An, and I just happened to run into Commander Zhuxie, so I decided to travel with them. They have access to better information after all, so it would be easier to find Zu An."

"So that was what happened." Pei Mianman knew that Zhuxie Chixin was mysterious. If it wasn't because of Chu Chuyan's outstanding reputation in the capital, he wouldn't have given any normal person the time of day.

"What about you? What are you doing here?" Chu Chuyan blinked her eyes and asked in curiosity.

"I..." Pei Mianman was just about to reply when she felt a bit speechless. How was she supposed to reply?

"Did you come to save Zu An?" Chu Chuyan seemed to have guessed at her thoughts. She asked her with a smile.

Pei Mianman voiced her confirmation with a guilty conscience. "Aren't we good friends? You weren't in Brightmoon City when all of that happened, so how can I do nothing?"

"Manman, thank you so much." Chu Chuyan couldn't help but grab her hands and say this with a moved voice.

She really went through a roller coaster of emotions during this period, and there was no one she could even talk to. Now that she learned that her close friend was helping her all this time, she immediately felt warm inside.

"Chuyan, you're being too polite. This is what I should do." Pei Mianman felt more awkward the more she said. Am I really doing something good? Ah, what am I feeling guilty for!

The Chu clan already wrote a letter of divorce in the Chu clan, so they're not even husband and wife anymore! Pei Mianman, why are you acting like a caught mistress?

This is so annoying!

Pei Mianman felt regret as she thought these things. But it seemed a bit late to change her tone now.

The Embroidered Envoy Chief Commander on the side said at this time, "Sir Sang, did you all break out? I didn't expect a loyal and devoted man like Sir Sang to dare do something so disgraceful."

His voice was just as cold as his appearance. Everyone shivered when they heard it.

Sang Hong replied with a heavy voice, "This humble one reports to Sir Zhuxie. We did not break out, but rather that our group was attacked by a rebel army. Later on, the Dark Elves and Devil Sect attacked us. The ones who watched over us are all dead. Commander Huang Huihong undid our seals for the sake of not letting us fall into their hands."

"Huang Huihong died?" Zhuxie Chixin's eyes narrowed. It was hard to tell what he was currently feeling.

"Correct." Sang Hong coughed. Sang Qien then explained the situation in his place.

"Cash Warrior Ding Run, good, very good." Zhuxie Chixin laughed coldly. Everyone thought that he would try to get revenge for Huang Huihong, but who would've thought that he would turn to the other Embroidered Envoy and say, "Did you all hear what they said? Huang Huihong was killed so easily because he was incompetent! If you all want to live long lives, then you better cultivate hard every day. Cultivate, cultivate, and keep cultivating!"

Zheng Dan and the other girls were alarmed. This man is so callous! Could it be that all of the Embroidered Envoy are like this?

"Understood!" Those Embroidered Envoy were extremely disciplined. They didn't utter another sound after saying this word.

Zhuxie Chixin nodded in satisfaction, and then she turned to look at Pei Mianman. "You're that girl born of a concubine from the Pei clan?"

Pei Mianman felt awful inside, but she didn't show it on the surface. She could only reply, "Yes, this humble one is Pei Mianman."

"It sounds like you want to save Zu An. Are you trying to forcefully release a prisoner?" Zhuxie Chixin gave her a cold look.

Pei Mianman felt as if she was thrown into an icehouse under this gaze. She couldn't muster the slightest intention of rebelling. She felt like it was hard to even gather her thoughts to form proper sentences.

Chu Chuyan immediately spoke up from the side. "Sir Zuxie, we chose the wrong words earlier. She is my friend, so she came to protect Zu An after finding out that various powers were scheming against his majesty."

Zhuxie Chixin grunted an 'oh' and declined to comment. He shifted his gaze after a while.

Pei Mianman felt much more relaxed when she was no longer being stared at. She was shocked. There were always rumors that Zhuxie Chixin's cultivation was deep and unmeasurable, but it seemed like he was even more formidable than what the rumors stated.

Zhuxie Chixin gave Sang Qien a look. "Then what about Miss Sang? Do you have any intentions of freeing your father and brother?"

Sang Qien was now under the same pressure Pei Mianman just faced. Sang Hong quickly spoke up in her place. "The young lady heard that someone might act against us, so she came over out of worry for our safety. She definitely has no intentions of breaking out prisoners."

"Then according to what Sir Sang is saying, it seems like Miss Sang does not trust that the court can protect their own prisoners?" Zhuxie Chixin harrumphed.

Sang Qien cursed inwardly. You guys already failed, okay? But there was no way she would say that out loud. "Of course I trust the court, but I was still worried for my family. That was why I came here to take a look."

"Whatever. I won't pry further out of consideration that this was out of filial piety." Zhuxie Chixin gave Sang Hong a cold look. "Sir Sang, are you going to follow us obediently, or will you defy us?"

Sang HONG's face paled. He immediately cupped his hands and said, "I do not dare trouble the Chief Commander. I will quietly let myself be captured. However, before this, sir please help me get revenge for my son."

He understood his current situation well. He was seriously injured, and even if he was in top form, he was no match for such a powerful opponent. As such, there was no way he would have thoughts of revenge.

"Sang Qian? What happened to him?" Zhuxie Chixin was surprised. He didn't see him anywhere.

Sang Hong gave the dried up corpse on the ground a sorrowful look. "My son was harmed and died a tragic death. Unfortunately, I don't even know who the murderer is."

Zhuxie Chixin noticed the corpse in the underbrush at this time. His eyes narrowed, and then he leapt off his horse. He squatted down by the corpse and examined it. In the end, he said with a grave voice, "This was done by the Blood race."

"Blood race?" Sang Hong was stunned, but he quickly reacted. "Hasn't the Blood race already vanished for centuries after their defeat?"

Zhuxie Chixin examined the wound on his neck and said with a grave voice, "It seems like the Fiend Emperor hasn't fully resigned himself to defeat. He has begun to lust after our land once more."

The expressions of the women here were all stunned. They were talented students from their respective academies, so they were naturally aware of the related history.

In the past, when the humans fought against the foreign races, the so-called foreign races were actually the Fiend races.

In the eyes of normal people, the Demons, Elves, Dark Elves, Beastmen, and even the Dragons were all collectively known as the Fiend races.

But cultivators from distinguished clans knew that these races and the Pure Fiend race were different. The Fiend race were the most powerful, while these races all followed the Fiend Emperor.

In this world, all types of animals, plants, and other life forms had a chance of cultivating and becoming fiends. Even some non-living things, given the opportunity, could become fiends and transform into human form.

Of course, these were non-innate fiends. It was extremely difficult for them to succeed.

There were another group of natural born Fiend race who didn't need to cultivate to become fiends, and the power within their blood was enough to give birth to human formed bodies.

The Blood race was a unique branch of the Fiend races. Their primary trait was that they survived through bloodsucking. Their original forms are of all different sorts, like bats, leeches, and mosquitoes. Even the other great fiends within the Fiend races feared them.

## **Chapter 489: Win-Win**

Sang Hong was incredibly heartbroken. “There’s no bad blood between my son and the blood race—why would they kill him?”

Zhuxie Chixin replied, “Members of the blood race kill without reason. Forget about humans for a minute—even if they ran into isolated fiends, their bloodthirsty nature would drive them to kill.”

Sang Hong finally understood what had happened. It was just bad luck that his son happened to run into someone of the blood race.

“But why would someone of the blood race appear here?” Sang Qien asked while biting her red lip.

“They probably do not wish for his majesty to gain eternal life. Since the fiend emperor has made a move, I need to contact His Majesty as quickly as possible,” Zhuxie Chixin said.

Sang Hong replied, “I wish to avenge my son first before I surrender myself. I hope Lord Zhuxie can show me some leniency.”

“No,” Zhuxie Chixin replied coldly. “I am in charge of capturing you all and bringing you to justice, and I cannot allow you to leave. Besides, you are seriously injured right now, and you will be no match for the murderer even if you run into them. You’ll just be throwing your life away. Men, lock him up.”

In a moment, his hands were bound with special chains. As he felt his ki being restrained, Sang Hong knew that all hopes of revenge were gone, and sadness overwhelmed him.

“Dad!” Sang Qien saw the tears in his father’s eyes. In her heart, her father had always been a heroic figure. He was always incredibly sharp, and being around him always brought her a feeling of safety. When had she ever seen him so powerless?

Zhuxie Chixin frowned as he saw the grief in both father and daughter. “Lord Sang, there’s no need to worry. Since a monster of the fiend race has appeared, I will help you get rid of them if we encounter them.”

Gratitude welled up within Sang Hong. “Thank you, Lord Zhuxie!”

Zhuxie Chixin nodded, then ordered his men to bind Zheng Dan as well. He had clearly done his homework, and knew that she was the daughter-in-law of the Sang clan and one of the prisoners that had been detained.

Zheng Dan knew that resistance was futile in the face of so many cultivators. There was nothing for her to do but glance at Pei Mianman and Chu Chuyan. There were some things that she just couldn’t say.

Pei Mianman smiled. She knew what she was thinking, and sent her a voice transmission. “Don’t worry, we will definitely rescue Ah Zu.”

Zheng Dan sighed in relief. Her lips were trembling as she silently mouthed, “Thank you!”

Pei Mianman nodded in her direction. What the heck was up with Zu An? How the heck did he get so many girls to care about him? Even I am over here trying to appease his wife, for goodness’ sake.

After securing the two criminals, Zhuxie Chixin asked, “Where is Zu An?”

“He was captured by the lady saint of the Devil Sect and their Solitary Eight. He was in the inn of the nearby town earlier. Our earlier attempt to free him failed, so I do not know what the situation is like now,” Pei Mianman replied. To rescue Zu An, they had no choice but to rely on this group. If everything went smoothly, she would try to save Zu An during the chaos later.

“What about King Liang and Liu Yao?” Zhuxie Chixin asked.

“They were attacked by a rebel army led by Lu Sanyuan,” replied Sang Qien. “They ordered the Embroidered Envoy to escape with Zu An and the other prisoners. I do not know where they are now.”

“Hmph, just a bunch of incompetent fools.” Zhuxie Chixin snorted. He was clearly extremely unsatisfied with this development.

The others were shocked. One was the emperor’s uncle, while the other was the empress’ uncle, yet he had dismissed them both so bluntly. It was clear just how much confidence he had in himself.

Zhuxie Chixin hesitated after learning about what had gone down in the small town. Should he rush over, or should he try to make contact with King Liang and the other troops first?

Those fellows from the Devil Sect had most likely already left. They would require more manpower for their search, so regrouping with King Liang was the safer option.

Pei Mianman recognized why he was hesitating, so she suggested, “It’ll create too big of a disturbance if all of us showed up in town. We don’t want to startle them. I’ll head over to scout out the situation first.”

Chu Chuyan chimed in as well. “Indeed. How about I go with her first? That way, we’ll be able to gather more intelligence.”

Zhuxie Chixin nodded and said, “Fine. Of course, if you free Zu An and flee on your own, the Chu clan and Pei clan will be charged with crimes. Don’t say I didn’t warn you both.”

Chu Chuyan and Pei Mianman exchanged glances. They saw the worry in each other’s eyes, but agreed anyway. “Fine!”

Together, the two of them made haste towards the small town. One was elegant and graceful, and the other possessed a fiery charm that was very rarely seen. They moved off together, their movements synchronized in a display of perfection that left even the well-trained Bright Tiger Army and the Embroidered Envoy in a daze.

Zhuxie Chixin snorted loudly to snap his subordinates out of their daze, and then said to Sang Hong and his daughter, “Tell me everything that happened along the way, especially the details about how those embroidered envoys died.”

...

Soon enough, night fell. In the heart of the small town, inside the Four Seas Inn, the Solitary Eight had purchased everything they needed for the journey. After dinner, they returned to their rooms to rest.

Qiu Honglei went to Zu An’s room. The other members of Solitary Eight were not disapproving, because they knew that she was going to try and fish out the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra from him.

But they had also heard about the rumors that Zu An was a playboy. They were worried that this pervert would do something disrespectful to their lady saint, so one of the Solitary Eight stood guard on the roof.

Solitary Ice volunteered for this position. The previous fight against Zu An had left him with a sour taste in his mouth, and he questioned Qiu Honglei's attitude towards Zu An as well. There was no way he would allow the two of them to engage in anything suspicious.

He lay down on the roof with his legs crossed, straining his ears to listen in on what was going on inside the room.

Zu An said with an embarrassed smile when he saw Qiu Honglei come in, "You guys really are enthusiastic about entertaining your guests. Not only did you guys treat me to food and entertainment earlier, you've even sent your lady saint to accompany me for the night. Outstanding!"

Solitary Ice gritted his teeth in anger.

You have successfully trolled Solitary Ice for 358 Rage points!

Screw this guy! I'm going to tell this to everyone who is pursuing our lady saint once we return to the sect. They'll tear him apart once they find out how this man has harassed their goddess!

Qiu Honglei rolled her eyes. "I really don't know whether to praise you or scold you. How can you be so carefree as to joke around given the situation you're in right now?"

What is with this guy? He was so serious earlier on when he was burying those deathsworn soldiers, yet now he's joking around again.

"You can choose to face each day with a smile, or live in grief every day. If that's the case, wouldn't it be better to choose to live each day joyfully?" Zu An shrugged his shoulders and replied nonchalantly.

A strange look appeared on Qiu Honglei's face. She sighed and said, "You are the most optimistic person I have ever met."

Zu An felt a bit embarrassed. "I'm honestly not as great as you make me out to be. But you're protecting me, and you're the lady saint of your sect, which means you're ranked rather highly. Why would I be scared while under your protection?"

Qiu Honglei shook her head. "My status in the sect isn't as high as you think. This is still a world where strength is everything. I am still too young, and my cultivation is merely at the sixth rank. The sect has far too many powerful cultivators, and many of them do not even treat me as a big deal. The only reason they treat me with any respect is because of my relationship with my master.

"That is why the only way you can secure your position in the sect is by offering your Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to my master."

Zu An snorted. "If I hand it over, the only thing that is guaranteed is my quick death."

Qiu Honglei explained herself. "I know what you are worried about, which is why I've thought of a mutually beneficial way out for everyone concerned. It's this: you can become the master's disciple as well. That way, no one would dare to do anything, and no one will claim that the sect master forcefully



seized the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra from you either. You will be safe, and you'll have a new identity. Your advancement through the sect will be much faster as well."

Zu An knew that she was being genuine and sincere, given how detailed her plan was. She wasn't like the others, who were buttering him up just so he would hand over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to them. However, even though he was moved, he still had no intentions of joining the Devil Sect. As such, he said with a laugh, "Your sect master must be a pervert."

"What?" Qiu Honglei was stunned. "Why would you suddenly say something like that?"

Zu An replied, "Why else would he take such a gorgeous woman like you as his disciple?"

Qiu Honglei's face turned completely red. "What are you saying? My master is a woman!"

#### **Chapter 490: Surprise**

You have successfully trolled Qiu Honglei for 233 Rage points!

It was obvious that she respected her master greatly, and was upset with Zu An's crass depiction of her master.

"What? A woman?" Zu An immediately became much more interested.

I'm awake now!

"How old is your master? Is she pretty? Has she ever married before?..." Zu An bombarded her with an unending series of questions.

Qiu Honglei's mouth fell open.

She was both furious and humiliated. "You! How dare you have such thoughts about my master?!"

You have successfully trolled Qiu Honglei for 100 Rage points!

"What do you mean?" Zu An obviously wouldn't admit to it. "Aren't you the one inviting me to join your sect, and yet you can't even tell me such basic information? How can your offer be considered sincere?"

Qiu Honglei was just about to faint. This man kept running circles around her! However, his words made some sense as well. Zu An was going to learn about these things sooner or later anyway, so she might as well tell them to him first, as an expression of her sincerity. As such, she said, "I don't know exactly how old my master is. From looks alone, she could be my older sister, but I'm pretty sure she's much older.

"Master's appearance... Of course she's extremely beautiful, but not many people have seen her true appearance. Whether or not you will have that opportunity will depend on your luck.

"As for marriage, as far as I know, my master has never married before. She has always remained single. However, she seems to always be thinking about someone."

...

Zu An sighed after he heard her description. "I suddenly have the urge to meet your master now, especially after hearing everything you said. Even so, your master is still a pervert."

Qiu Honglei frowned. "Why would you say that again?"

You have successfully trolled Qiu Honglei for 135 Rage points!

Zu An laughed. "Men aren't the only ones who can be perverts. Why else would she take in a charming, handsome, confident man like me as her disciple?"

Qiu Honglei was momentarily speechless.

Meanwhile, on the roof, Solitary Ice sneered. Heh, I guess I was too worried. Given this brat's nature, he'll meet a tragic end even without me lifting a finger!

Qiu Honglei quickly said, "There's something I must warn you about. You absolutely cannot let your mouth run in front of my master. Master is extremely strict. She condemns those who violate the sect's rules to execution. If you offend her, I won't be able to save you."

Zu An laughed, not seeming to care one whit. He said, "Don't worry. She might be like that to others, but there's no way she'll treat me like that."

Qiu Honglei just stared.

She didn't even know what to say anymore. Why did he seem in such great need of a good ass-whooping today?

"Oh, right. How are you related to that Lu Sanyuan fellow? I thought that he was your sect master at first," Zu An asked curiously.

Qiu Honglei replied, "He is the sect master's junior, as well as my martial uncle."

Solitary Ice shook his head. The lady saint really was telling this man everything! Just what did this guy do to make her behave in this fashion?

Hmph, women are all unreliable. They're usually so cool and elegant, but they go crazy the instant they meet a man they like.

I'm going to report this to the sect master once we get back for sure. This woman is going to be the end of us one day!

He had to tell his brothers back at the sect to stop their bootlicking as well. The girl of your dreams already has a man. No matter how many more licks you give, you'll get absolutely nothing in return.

The two inside continued to chat, oblivious to him and his thoughts.

Zu An sighed. "What is your sect really called? Why do the people of this world call your sect the Devil Sect? Do you guys have anything to do with the demon race?"

He couldn't help but think of Yun Yuqing. If they were related, then they might just all get along.

Qiu Honglei shook her head. "We have nothing to do with the demon race. We call ourselves the Holy Sect, but the people of this world do not understand our philosophy. They often use the name Devil Sect to slander us."

Zu An gave a surprised exclamation. "Then what is your philosophy?"

Qiu Honglei explained, "Throughout successive generations, the imperial court has harbored the belief that cultivation is reserved for the rare few who have the talent for it. Once a person becomes a cultivator, they can completely alter their fate and enjoy the glory and splendor offered by the world. However, because the powerful noble clans usually inter-marry, their children will always have a higher chance of having a talent for cultivation. If this persists, the chances that anyone of common descent would develop a talent for cultivation will continue to dwindle..."

"The sect master believes that all humans are equal, and that cultivation shouldn't be something enjoyed by the select few—rather, everyone should be granted that right. This is what she has continued to proclaim, and she has never stopped researching ways to allow ordinary people to cultivate. However, the mainstream practitioners within the world of cultivation refuse to accept this, so they view it as an evil and blasphemous path." As she spoke, Qiu Honglei grew more and more fired up, until she was filled with righteous indignation.

Zu An clicked his tongue in amazement. "I didn't expect your master to have such a wonderful belief."

Qiu Honglei was stunned. She didn't expect him to agree with these beliefs. She grabbed his hand joyfully. "Is that really how you feel? You aren't saying it on purpose just to make me happy, are you?"

Zu An's tone grew strange. "It really is a noble way of thinking. Why would I lie about that?"

"My master will definitely like you!" Qiu Honglei was so happy that she began bouncing up and down like a little child.

Zu An was stunned. He had never seen Qiu Honglei like this before. After all, she always walked around exuding a devastatingly beautiful aura, as though every single man was dancing within the palm of her hand.

Only now did he really get the sense that she was just a young teenage woman.

Qiu Honglei suddenly noticed his gaze. "What are you looking at?" she said awkwardly, her face turning slightly red.

"I've never seen you so happy before," Zu An said with a sigh.

"But of course! It's rare to meet someone who can sympathize with our beliefs! In the past, everyone immediately avoided us after hearing what we had to say. Even if they did say something positive, it was usually because of my appearance, and they would usually say these things just to please me." A field of stars seemed to dance within Qiu Honglei's eyes, flickering with a beautiful radiance.

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch," Zu An said, dousing her enthusiasm. "Even though this is a noble ideal, you're going against the common belief. There's no way this can end well."

After all, they were just kidding themselves. Why did all those cultivators work so hard? It was clearly in pursuit of glory and splendor, power and authority! How could they possibly allow anyone in the world to cultivate?

Leaving aside the major clans for a moment, not even ordinary cultivators would agree to such a view. They work so hard to turn their lives around through cultivation, and just as they are about to form their own distinguished clan, you turn around and announce that everyone in the world can cultivate now? It'll feel like a slap to the face!

Qiu Honglei's smile slowly faded. "I know how difficult this is as well. However, even with that knowledge, we will still forge a path forward. That is the depth of our conviction."

Her eyes sparkled, and Zu An couldn't help but feel a great sense of admiration.

Meanwhile, on the rooftop, Solitary Ice sneered. Which one of those who joined their Holy Sect wasn't full of such idealistic thoughts in the beginning? Unfortunately, ideals alone were worthless. It was common knowledge that the most glorious path in this world was to increase one's strength, grow rich and enjoy life's pleasures! As for the rest of it, that was for the sect master to worry about.

Our lady saint seems to be quite an intelligent person, so why does she sound like she's being serious?

Could it be that girls with large chests are all...

A snow-white horsetail whisk suddenly wrapped around his neck. He was given a sudden fright, and instinctively tried to resist, but the horsetail seemed somehow alive. It sank its strands into his neck, and the blood within his body was quickly siphoned away through these very strands.

The snow-white whisk became bright red. Solitary Ice struggled frantically, but his body swiftly grew weaker. He didn't even have the strength to sound an alarm, let alone put up a struggle.

He saw the flesh on his arm wither away at a visible rate, until only a layer of skin left.

A sudden horror crept into his soul, but his consciousness had already sunk into darkness.

A brief moment later, a seductive daoist nun appeared on the roof. She put away the horsetail whisk. The color gradually drained out of the whisk, entering her body through the handle.

"The taste of blood is truly scrumptious." The daoist nun had an intoxicated look on her face. She looked downwards, a dangerous glint flickering within her eyes. "It seems like I've caught a big fish this time."