

Immortal 51

Chapter 51: What Strengths Do I Have?

"I've already been stalled by Yuan Wendong and the others for too long. It's going to be afternoon classes soon, so I'll be heading back first," said Chu Huanzhao.

There was hardly anyone left in the canteen. She casually wiped her mouth and stood.

"What class are you in?" Zu An asked out of curiosity.

"I..." Oddly enough, Chu Huanzhao began to fidget uncomfortably. Her voice also became a little weaker. "I'm from the Black class.

"Laugh if you want to. My older sister was a prodigy in the Sky class, reputed to be the strongest amongst the students, whereas I'm nowhere near in comparison to her. I have been mocked many times in the past, so I can't be bothered with it anymore."

Unexpectedly, Zu An patted her shoulders gently. "You must have had a hard time, huh? You don't need to worry anymore, I'm here to lower the bar. I'm from the Yellow class, remember?"

He still remembered how everyone seemed to harbor ill will toward him when he'd first arrived in this world. This lass was the only one who stood up for him when everyone in the ancestral hall was trying to get him punished. Seeing how downcast this matter had left her, he couldn't bring himself to make a jab at her.

Chu Huanzhao was taken aback by his remark. She stared at him deeply for a moment before muttering softly, "Thank you."

Zu An continued, "Everyone has their own strengths. Perhaps your strength just doesn't lie in cultivation."

Chu Huanzhao felt her eyes misting over as she looked at him, touched by his words. "What do you think my strength is, then?"

Zu An was left speechless by her question.

I was just comforting you. I didn't expect you to take it for real!

Nevertheless, staring into Chu Huanzhao's expectant eyes, there was no way he could bring himself to say that she had no strengths at all, right?

However, the two of them had only known each other for a short period of time, and no matter how much Zu An racked his brain, he couldn't seem to say what her strengths were. It took him a long while before he finally squeezed out an answer. "Your legs... are long?"

As ridiculous as it might sound, it was actually an honest thought. Even now, he could still remember that pair of slim and perfectly proportionate legs dangling loosely while she was seated on a table that night. Those were a sweet pair of legs that could easily walk into the heart of any man.

It seemed the saying was true: those who were smaller in the chest were more than compensated for by their legs.

Of course, that was possibly the worst answer he could have given Chu Huanzhao. “Pui, you pervert!” she spat, then fled from him with her face bright red.

Zu An stared at her departing back, his face all scrunched up.

What’s the point of just scolding me like this? Where are your Rage points? Why didn’t I receive anything at all? This is unfair!

Wei Suo walked over and fawned all over him. “Boss, I find myself more and more in awe with you. I reckon you are the only one in the academy who can make the tomboyish Second Miss Chu show such embarrassment.”

“Of course. Who do you think you are talking to?” Zu An replied cockily. “Ah right, what classes do we have in the afternoon?”

He had been thinking of escaping from the academy once he was done with lunch, but he’d unexpectedly received a huge wave of Rage points in his confrontation earlier. That had changed his mind about the academy, and he started to feel that things were not that bad here after all.

“I think it’s an etiquette and music class,” replied Wei Suo.

“Etiquette and music?” Zu An’s eyes lit up.

He’d noticed a common pattern from elementary school up to university—the Music Department always had the most beautiful female teacher. Be it their refined disposition or their graceful profile, it was hard to find even a single flaw in them. Now that he was in a world filled with ki, the music teachers had to be even more beautiful.

Zu An had never looked forward to a class that much before. He bounded back to the classroom, and ran into the fatty Man Yu chatting loudly with his sidekicks. Their group quickly fell silent as they noticed Zu An’s presence.

They had no choice but to lie low for the time being. They were no match for Zu An, and their backing wasn’t as strong as his either. In fact, Ye Chenliang was probably still being savaged by Lu De in the schoolyard at this very moment.

That Baldhead was really a sadist. Anyone who got caught by him would experience suffering that they would never forget.

Of course, Zu An couldn’t give a damn about them. His eyes were glued to the doorway of the classroom as he waited excitedly for the beautiful teacher who would soon walk in.

Finally, in walked a trembling old man. Zu An saw all of his dreams shatter right before his eyes.

Where are the promised refined disposition and graceful profile? At the very least, I should get a female teacher, right? Why in the world did I get an old man?!

The old man cleared his throat noisily. "Open your textbooks, we shall be starting a new chapter today—Rules of Propriety.[1]

"Values and morals are meaningless if not based on propriety. Reforming the society and improving the culture will be for naught if propriety is absent. Distinguishing between right and wrong will be impossible if propriety is not put in place.

"A liege and his subject, a father and his son; how could these ties be established if propriety is not upheld? A teacher and a student; how can a conducive relationship for the inheritance of knowledge be constructed if there's a lack of propriety to dictate the relationship? A military commander and his soldiers; how should authority be maintained if propriety is neglected? Rites to worship the deities and the deceased; how could sincerity be conveyed if rituals were to lack propriety?

"Thus, men should learn respect, humility, and concession to uphold propriety. Parrots are capable of speech, yet mere birds they are. Apes are capable of speech, yet mere beasts they are. If humans lack propriety, even if they are capable of speech, what is there to differentiate them from mere beasts? It's the lack of propriety that fathers and sons share a woman.

"Thus we have sages who determine propriety and educate the people. It's the existence of propriety that humans know to set themselves apart from beasts..."

...

Save me!

Zu An was drowning in utter despair. Not only was the promised beautiful music teacher non-existent, but he even had to go through the torture of listening to the old man's chanting. This was even worse than being in prison!

He stared out the window and wondered if he could escape from this classroom if he were to use Grandgale's ability. However, considering how Wei Suo had mentioned that the teachers in the academy were all experts, he felt that the likelihood of that was very low.

Either way, that vile Baldhead, Lu De, was probably still in the schoolyard. If he were to escape right now, he could just fall right into that evil man's grasp.

Finally, it was simply not worth revealing his trump card in public over such a minor reason.

With all that reasoning out of the way, Zu An could only dispel any thought of escape.

That being said, there was no way he was going to pay attention to these lessons. It was not as if these sermons would help him in life anyway even if he understood them.

So, he decided to secretly do his own personal work in class, just like how he secretly played mobile games under his desk in his previous life. He summoned the Keyboard, then turned warily toward Wei Suo and asked, "Do you see anything here?"

Wei Suo was bewildered by Zu An's abrupt question, and he replied without thinking, "I see your hairsome face."

"It's handsome, not hairsome."

Black streaks covered Zu An's face. I know that he has buck teeth, but he really needs to work on his pronunciation.

At least that confirmed no one could see his keyboard. He sighed internally in relief.

Let me see how many Rage points I have. Hm?

Zu An rubbed his eyes in disbelief. He actually had 57,454 Rage points in total! That was more than the grand total of all he had earned prior to today!

He quickly recalled what he had done for the day. He had earned quite a bit earlier in the morning at the academy gates, as well as bits and pieces over the course of the morning. Of course, the bulk of it had come from the main event earlier in the afternoon with Ye Chenliang, Yuan Wendong and the others. The crowd had simply been too kind, enthusiastically offering him their Rage points over and over.

This newly-gathered data compelled Zu An to rethink his strategy. No matter how he tried to squeeze an individual dry, the amount of Rage points he could earn from just a single person was just too limited. It would be much wiser for him to spread his net out and earn it from a crowd instead. That would be far more efficient.

Yeap, it looks like I should focus more on AOE skills in the future. The more butthurt people there are, the better it would be for me.

After deciding on his new plan, Zu An moved on to look at the Keyboard's lottery. It quickly dawned on him that he wasn't in a good position to do his usual hand-washing ritual.

Forget it, I'll just compromise a little.

Zu An wanted to forsake the hassle and simply press the 'Enter' key to get the drawing over and done with. However, his trembling hands simply wouldn't heed his orders.

No! I can't skip any step at all. Even if I don't wash my face, the least I should do is to wash my hands so as to cleanse my luck!

So, he spat in his hands and rubbed them together vigorously before finally hitting the enter button at ease.

The light marker swiftly flashed across the keyboard before finally stopping on the '4' key. Ki Fruit!

Zu An was delighted.

It looks like washing my hands is really important. I actually got it in a single shot!

Meanwhile, his deskmate, Wei Suo, watched as he spat saliva onto his own hands and froze. He shifted his chair discreetly away from Zu An, wanting to put some distance between them.

I know that my boss is a master moocher, but I didn't think that he would have such horrid hygiene practices. I wonder if my Chu Chuyan and the others know that he does such stuff.

Zu An was oblivious to how bizarre his current actions seemed in the eyes of others. He was much too focused on the lottery.

Thanks for playing!

Thanks for playing!

Thanks for playing!

Shit, yet another wave of 'Thanks for playing'!

...

Oh, another Ki Fruit.

...

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

Zu An drew the lottery over a hundred times, and the light marker finally landed on a key that was different from before—the '1' key. It was Faith in Brother Spring!

Zu An heaved a sigh of relief. This was what he had really wanted to draw. The last time he got injured, he used Divine Physician Ji's medicine, but the rate of recovery had been less than satisfactory. Were he to find himself in a dire situation, there was no way his enemy would wait for him to heal up before continuing their assault!

With Faith in Brother Spring around, he would at least have another trump card in hand. The ability to instantly restore himself back to full health was almost the same as having an additional life.

Zu An continued drawing the lottery, hoping to get something different. After all, the products from the Keyboard tended to be high quality. It seemed, however, that fate had abandoned him. The only results he got were 'Thanks for playing' and more Ki Fruits.

Damn it, I can't believe that my luck is this bad!

He spat another mouthful of saliva on his own hands and rubbed them thoroughly between his fingers and even into his fingernails before resuming the drawing once more. With over 57,400 Rage points this time around, he could draw a total of 574 times.

Wei Suo, who was looking on, swallowed hard. He wondered if his boss was out of his mind.

No, I shouldn't harbor such thoughts. Boss is the man known as the master moocher! How can I dare evaluate him using common logic? Could this be his secret to how he managed to court so many beautiful women? I must learn from his example!

So, Wei Suo also spat in his hand and began rubbing his saliva all over his own hands. He couldn't resist the urge to raise his hands up and smell them, and the stench was so powerful that it nearly knocked him out.

All this was lost on Zu An, who was engrossed in his lottery drawing. Finally, he grinned in excitement. The light marker had landed on a different key this time around—the '9' key!

Fortune Pill!

Artifact Effect: Maximizes your luck to the greatest degree for two hours. Any event or trial that is luck dependent will end in an outcome favorable to you.

Zu An's eyes lit up. This was exactly the item he needed right now! With this, wouldn't he be able to draw something useful from the lottery every single time?

It was as if the Keyboard had read his mind. A small disclaimer suddenly appeared at the bottom of the screen. Note: The Fortune Pill doesn't work on the keyboard's lottery system.

Shit!

Zu An nearly smashed the Keyboard on the spot. The Keyboard had undeniably brought him many conveniences, but the sheer frustration he went through while using it was no less real.

If he couldn't use the Fortune Pill for the lottery, what use did he have for it? He was in the real world right now! It was not as if he was playing a game where luck could improve the equipment drop rates when he killed mobs.

Instead of a luck booster, I would rather get something that improved my looks.

Hmm... then again, my looks don't need any improvement.

Chapter 52: Loan Sharks

Zu An finished spending all of his Rage points on the lottery, but failed to get anything new. It was all either 'Thanks for playing' or Ki Fruits.

In the end, his loot consisted of fifty-five Ki Fruits, a bottle of Faith in Brother Spring, and a Fortune Pill. With the additional data, he could reliably state the probability of a Ki Fruit appearing as roughly one in ten. It would appear that his luck had not been great previously.

With no more Rage points to spend, he secretly swallowed all of the Ki Fruits one after another and watched as the first formation inside his muscles slowly filled up with golden specks. By the time he ate the fifty-fifth Ki Fruit, his first formation was already full, and some golden specks had appeared in his second formation too.

"It looks like it really obeys the Fibonacci sequence," Zu An muttered to himself.

Based on the Fibonacci sequence, the previous number was 34, which meant that the current number should be 55. The results matched his hypothesis.

The additional bunch of golden specks in his second formation was actually the additional ki he had accrued from accidentally crashing into the wall while testing out Grandgale.

According to the rules of the Fibonacci sequence, and accounting for the probability of drawing Ki Fruits, he would need at least 89,000 Rage points in order to clear the second formation. This was really a huge pain to deal with.

Why is it that other cultivators have it easy while I have to struggle so hard to raise my cultivation through every step?

However, looking from another perspective, the other cultivators had to work through a mountain of cultivation resources and also study day in and day out before they finally reached their current levels. It seemed he had no grounds to complain.

The day's events had given him a rough grasp of the hierarchy inside Brightmoon Academy. Those who had reached the fifth rank were considered true prodigies, even at a national level. Only a few of them fit into this category, and so far, the only ones he knew about were his wife, Pei Mianman, and that Yuan Wendong he'd met earlier.

Just below them were those who had reached the fourth rank. They were also fairly respected in the academy, and there weren't many of them around either. Most of them had decent talent and considerable background.

The students in the Earth class and Black class were mostly at the third rank, though some were still below that rank.

As for the Yellow class, who boasted the greatest number of students of the entire academy, merely being at the second rank was more than enough for one to become the class bully.

Judging by this standard, Zu An was, at his current level, an average student in the academy. Realizing this made him feel much better about himself.

He had ended up spending the whole boring afternoon class entertaining himself by drawing the lottery. As soon as the class was over, a horde of students charged out of the classroom toward the academy's gates, eager to leave that hellhole as soon as possible.

Clearly, he wasn't the only one who found the class sheer torture.

Wei Suo was no exception. "Boss, see you tomorrow~" he threw over his shoulder as he dashed off. Within moments, he had vanished from view.

This familiar scene reminded Zu An of his previous life, where the final school bell of the day would invariably trigger a stampede of students. To be honest, he was starting to miss it a little.

Zu An slowly packed up his stuff, relishing the changes in his body after his most recent breakthrough. Right now, he should wield the strength equivalent to 143 adult men. Such strength should be sufficient to knock out an elephant from his previous world in one hit.

Even at the third rank, he was already this strong. He couldn't help but wonder just how terrifying those at the eighth rank, ninth rank, or even the Masters would be.

This world is really too frightening. If a weak man were to date a strong female cultivator, he might just end up getting accidentally crushed while they are getting hot and steamy with one another. If this were to happen, he would probably suffer from low self-esteem even after being reborn into another life.

"Brother-in-law, brother-in-law~"

Raising his head, Zu An saw Chu Huanzhao waving toward him excitedly from outside the classroom. Her animated gestures made her seem more like a tomboyish girl, which was a refreshing change from her usual overly-masculine attitude.

Zu An eyed her warily. “What’s wrong?”

“What do you mean ‘what’s wrong’? We’re heading home! What else could we possibly be doing?” Chu Huanzhao immediately snapped back. “What’s with your attitude? I specially came all the way down here to find you as soon as class ended!”

“Ah, so we’re going home.” Zu An exhaled deeply in relief. He’d honestly thought that this lass had come up with another darned idea to torture him.

“I wasted a trip here yesterday because you didn’t come to class,” Chu Huanzhao grumbled. “Luckily I got my hands on you today. I have already given my mother a guarantee that I would keep an eye on you.”

Zu An was intrigued. “Didn’t your mother send Hong Xingying here for that exact reason? Where is he? I still have a score to settle with him.”

Chu Huanzhao scrunched her nose a little as she replied, “It seems he’s decided to take residence in the academy. He’s probably frightened of getting punished once he returns to the Chu Estate, so he’s seeking refuge here.”

“The academy provides lodging too?” Zu An was surprised. This was yet another similarity between Brightmoon Academy and the schools in his previous life.

“Of course,” Chu Huanzhao replied. “The Brightmoon Academy is the best academy in this region, so many students travel all the way to Brightmoon City from the nearby municipalities to enroll here. Those who live in Brightmoon City can afford to return home every day, but those from abroad don’t have that kind of luxury, and so the academy prepared lodging specifically for them. You see that building over there? Those are the dormitories.”

Chu Huanzhao pointed to the west, and he tracked her finger with his gaze. He could vaguely make out a few buildings scattered within the forest a fair distance away.

“I see,” Zu An replied, lost in thought. It might be a good idea to specially take a trip to the school dormitories one of these days. He could make a killing there, farming for Rage points.

His thoughts were interrupted by a sudden influx of Rage points. While each contribution was small, the total amount was still substantial due to the sheer quantity of them.

“What’s going on?”

Zu An scanned the area, and registered hostile gazes from many of those around them. He quickly realized what they must be seeing. Him, walking alongside Chu Huanzhao down a pathway sheltered by trees—it looked oddly picturesque.

Huh, what’s with this place evoking the atmosphere of childhood lovers?

His feelings surprised him, but he quickly shook his head to clear it. He tossed out some of the more inappropriate thoughts he was harboring, and decided to focus on earning Rage points instead.

“Sister-in-law, hold my arm,” Zu An said as he offered his left hand to Chu Huanzhao.

Chu Huanzhao gave him a puzzled look. "Why?"

"We're a family. Doesn't linking hands with one another perfectly display the harmony of our family?" Zu An replied seriously.

Chu Huanzhao grew furious. "Do you take me for an idiot? You're trying to take advantage of me!" she yelled angrily as she drew the Wailing Whip and flicked it toward him.

"Holy shit! If you don't want to hold my arm, so be it. There's no need to resort to violence!" Zu An retorted in a fluster as he dodged her whip.

Doggedly, Chu Huanzhao continued to chase him, clearly not intending to let the matter drop so easily. "I'll kill you, you pervert!"

Those watching erupted in jubilant delight. It seemed that true justice still existed in this world.

Hah, this is what boy toys like you deserve! It ain't that easy to win the favor of those rich women!

The chase ensued all the way to the entrance of the academy before Chu Huanzhao relented. It was not because she had found her conscience once more, but because Baldhead Lu De happened to be standing right there. His very presence created a palpable tension in the air, and those in the area feared even to speak loudly.

Even the brash Chu Huanzhao was no exception.

She stuck her tongue out at Zu An before tucking away her whip. Grabbing his sleeves, she pulled him out of the academy behind her. "Hmph! Let's see if you dare to run your mouth again in the future. I'll settle the score with you once we get home!"

Lu De scanned the crowd with sharp, hawk-like eyes, on the hunt for potential troublemakers to confront before they committed their mischief. As his eyes fell upon the duo holding on to one another, he gave a sudden jerk.

What's going on with the Chu clan? Are they really planning on having the two sisters share a husband?

While such a thing wasn't unheard of in this world, it usually only happened if the man in question was overwhelmingly outstanding. Zu An, however, was a notorious wastrel in Brightmoon City, so how could he be worthy of such an arrangement?

Even the Second Miss of the Chu clan alone, though less eligible than her illustrious older sister, was so far out of Zu An's league. How he could ever hope to live up to the pair of them together was a mystery.

Oblivious to Lu De's considering stare, Zu An walked out of the academy and found Cheng Shouping waving excitedly toward him. "Young master, young master~"

"You have been waiting here for me all day long?" Zu An felt his heart warm. Cheng Shouping had barely slept a wink the night before in order to copy the family rules for him, yet he had still chosen to wait patiently at the academy's entrance for him today. What loyalty!

"No no, I went back to get some sleep first before coming back here. I'm flattered by your concern, young master," Cheng Shouping replied with a bright smile. "Hm? Young miss, you're here too?"

"Mm," Chu Huanzhao acknowledged him with a perfunctory grunt. Her own servant, who had been waiting outside for her, quickly led a stallion over for her. While Zu An was a poor judge of horseflesh, this stallion still looked like a fine specimen to his untrained eyes.

The Chu clan really doesn't horse around.

"Hm? Where's your horse?" Chu Huanzhao looked around in confusion.

That question left Zu An in an awkward spot, and Cheng Shouping answered her in his stead. "The young master and I walked here this morning."

Chu Huanzhao's frown deepened. "Why didn't the servants in the estate assign a horse to you?"

Isn't the reason blindingly obvious, even to you? Cheng Shouping retorted in his mind. Despite this, he was a little surprised to see that the young master was on fairly good terms with the Second Miss.

Chu Huanzhao pondered for a moment. She passed the reins of her stallion back to her servant and told Zu An, "I'll walk with you. It just so happens that I want to stretch my limbs a little."

"Actually, I don't mind sharing a ride with you," replied Zu An.

Cheng Shouping's face immediately drained of color. The Second Miss was known for her legendary temper. It seemed Zu An was going to suffer the agony of the Wailing Whip for his brazen comment.

"Beat it!" Unexpectedly, Chu Huanzhao berated him but showed no further sign of anger.

Cheng Shouping blinked his eyes rapidly. Am I dreaming? Why does it feel like something is amiss here?

A mocking voice cut through the air. "Hoh, you're finally out."

Zu An looked toward the source of the voice. A man with a scar on his face was leaning against a tree, looking at them. Who else could it be but Plum Blossom Thirteen?

"Has no one told you that your smile is a little crooked?"

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 178 Rage points!

Plum Blossom Thirteen's smile froze in place. He spat coldly, "Hah, a sharp tongue is all you have! I'm here to remind you that another day has passed, and it's almost time for you to repay your debt. If you can't fork out the money by then, I'll be chopping both of your hands off."

"You owe him money?" Chu Huanzhao stared at Zu An, her eyes wide with shock.

Zu An nodded. Yet again he berated that dead fellow who had gotten him into this huge mess.

Chu Huanzhao retrieved her money purse. "How much does he owe you? I'll repay his debt."

Plum Blossom Thirteen was astonished. Is this wastrel doing so well that even this pretty lass is taking the initiative to repay his debt?

To her, he replied, "He owes me one thousand silver taels."

Chu Huanzhao gasped. She placed her purse back into her robe and slowly took a step back. "Pretend as though I hadn't said a thing at all."

Zu An eyed Chu Huanzhao in disdain. This lass keeps trying to show off, but in the end, she never has the money to back up her bragging. It was the same back at the cafeteria, too.

Chapter 53: Framing

Seemingly sensing Zu An's look of disdain, Chu Huanzhao's face reddened. She exclaimed in frustration, "Why in the world did you borrow so much money from him?!"

You have successfully trolled Chu Huanzhao for 241 Rage points!

Plum Blossom Thirteen let go of the breath he was holding. He'd been worried for a moment there that the girl was really going to pay off Zu An's debt. His goal here was not money but Zu An's life, after all!

"We visited a gambling den a while back to try our luck, and he ended up losing more than what he'd had."

It was best to expose Zu An's true colors to this beautiful lass to make her think twice about repaying his debt in a moment of hot-bloodedness. Come to think of it, this lass does look quite familiar to me.

"Zu An, you son of a bitch! You actually went to gamble? Don't you know that that's a huge taboo in our Chu clan? Just last year, one of my cousins visited a casino and ended up getting his legs broken!" Chu Huanzhao lashed out furiously.

You have successfully trolled Chu Huanzhao for 333 Rage points!

Plum Blossom Thirteen's heart skipped a beat as recognition finally struck him. This beautiful lass before him was none other than the Second Miss of the Chu clan! This is weird... I thought that the wastrel Zu An isn't welcome in the Chu clan, but that doesn't seem to be the case here.

Zu An felt a throbbing between his temples. Plum Blossom Thirteen haunting his every step was annoying beyond belief. "Stop following me around like a vengeful spirit. I'll pay you back what I owe you, alright?"

As he spoke, he reached into a pouch in his robe and said, "I have seven ki stones. This stuff can't be bought out there in the market, so they should be at least worth eight hundred silver taels. I have another hundred silver taels here too..."

Cheng Shouping's eyes popped. He was certain that the young master had been broke just this morning. How did he come by all this money just by spending a few hours in the academy?

Despite putting together everything of value that he had, Zu An was still a little short of the amount he needed. That left him in an awkward position. Fortunately, Chu Huanzhao fished out a ki stone of her own and tossed it over to Plum Blossom Thirteen.

"I have one more here. Keep the change as a tip. Now beat it!"

Plum Blossom Thirteen opened up the pouch Zu An had passed to him, a doubtful look on his face. He frowned in confusion as he verified the contents were, indeed, ki stones. "How did you get so many of them?"

"How is that any of your business? Hurry up and hand over my promissory note," Zu An demanded, hand outstretched.

"That won't do. What if you stole these ki stones in the academy? We don't accept stolen goods," Plum Blossom Thirteen was starting to get flustered. His true purpose was to take this fellow's life, but things were starting to go awry. How was he to know that Zu An would stumble upon the means to repay the debt?

"I'm good looking, so people gave it to me of their own accord. If you don't believe me, you can enter the academy yourself and ask around," Zu An's tone dripped with disdain. "You keep on finding excuses to avoid returning the promissory note to me; just what intentions are you harboring? Huanzhao, let's head back and tell our father about it. The Plum Blossom Sect is really trying to climb over our heads."

Plum Blossom Thirteen sweated in utter distress. Typical drafted sons-in-law were usually embarrassed to admit their own identity, since it was considered shameful to marry into the bride's family. Yet, Zu An had no qualms with identifying himself as a fellow member of the Chu clan, and the way he addressed Chu Zhongtian as 'father' was so ironically natural.

Shameless!

That being said, the last thing he wanted was for the Brightmoon Duke to get involved in this matter. He could get away with it if Zu An still owed them money, but he had just cleared his debt. By doggedly clinging onto this matter, even a fool would be able to tell that they harbored malicious intentions.

"Enough, enough! I'll return you your promissory note. Happy?"

Plum Blossom Thirteen took out the note and handed it to Zu An. He had brought it as insurance, in case Zu An made a scene by accusing him of causing trouble in the vicinity of the academy. It would have made the perfect prop to silence any spectators with. How was he to know that it would come back to bite him?

Zu An took the note and examined it closely. It was indeed the one with his thumbprint. "Speaking of which, didn't you mention that you have made copies? Take them out as well."

"I said that to pressure you. How can something like a promissory note be copied that easily? Besides, a copy carries no legal power at all," replied Plum Blossom Thirteen grudgingly.

Zu An passed the debt note over to Chu Huanzhao for a second opinion. After confirming that Plum Blossom Thirteen wasn't lying, he quickly tore the debt note into pieces before rubbing it between his both hands, reducing it into dust.

For someone who wielded the strength of 143 grown men, crushing a piece of paper into dust was a piece of cake.

Despite the outcome, he still wasn't satisfied. He thought of the dramatic black flames wielded by Pei Mianman. With a simple snap of her finger, the problem would have automatically resolved itself. He, on the other hand, still needed to squeeze the paper with all his might like a fool.

"Since your debt has been erased, I'll be leaving now." Plum Blossom Thirteen had to inform his sect leader that the plan to deal with Zu An through his debt had not succeeded.

“Wait, don’t go!” Zu An suddenly exclaimed. There was still time for a twist. Before Plum Blossom Thirteen could make sense of the situation, Zu An yelled at the top of his lungs, “Help me! Save me! The Plum Blossom Sect is trying to rob me here!”

Plum Blossom Thirteen stared at Zu An as if he had lost his mind. What is this scoundrel up to?

He did not have to wait long for the answer to arrive.

A slight breeze brushed across them, heralding the sudden appearance of a middle-aged man with a bald spot. He gazed down at the three of them, his face dark.

“What’s happening here?”

The new arrival was none other than the discipline master Lu De. He had been diligently patrolling the area, and had rushed over as soon as he’d heard the commotion.

Zu An had banked on Lu De being around, which was why he’d intentionally shouted. He was thankful for the discipline master’s swift intervention. Without hesitation, he launched into his sob story.

“Teacher, this man stole the ki stones we received from the academy!”

Plum Blossom Thirteen nearly spurted blood. He waved his hands frantically in denial. “You’re lying! I didn’t take your stuff!”

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 666 Rage points!

“Teacher, if you don’t believe me, you can check his pouch! The ki stones he stole from us were distributed by the academy, so there’s an index number inscribed on every single one of them.”

In order to prevent corruption within the various academies, the royal court had a strict quota as to the amount of cultivation resources each student was entitled to. This was enforced by inscribing an index number on each of the ki stones so that they could be traced if anything were to occur.

In order to avoid trouble when dealing with such ki stones on the black market, both parties would sign an agreement to certify that it was a fair trade. If not, they would at least make sure to erase the index numbers on the ki stones. However, Plum Blossom Thirteen wasn’t familiar with the ki stone market, and he had been too preoccupied with getting back his sect master to report his failure, so he’d ended up getting careless.

“Bastard, you scammed me!”

Plum Blossom Thirteen finally caught on to what was going on. No wonder that fellow had been so forthright in handing his money over to him. As it turned out, he had devious plans in mind!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 777 Rage points!

You aren’t as dull-witted as I thought. Zu An was tempted to say it out loud to earn another wave of Rage points, but Lu De was standing right there. Instead, he played the part of a wronged victim and cried, “Are you saying that I’m lying? How awful! I’m lucky that there’s an eyewitness here who saw everything that happened earlier! He can testify for me!”

He grabbed Cheng Shouping’s arm and pulled him forward, “Am I right?”

Feeling the immense force on his arm, Cheng Shouping immediately volunteered, "Indeed, this fellow stole our young master's ki stone! Uwaa, young master, why do you lead such a tough life? You get bullied no matter where you go!"

Cheng Shouping's convincing act surprised Zu An. He'd been worried that Cheng Shouping would let him down at this critical moment, but it seemed this fellow was a born actor!

I shall give him an extra chicken drumstick for dinner!

"Of course he's going to speak up for you; he's your servant!" Plum Blossom Thirteen cried out anxiously. This master-servant pair is the true embodiment of shamelessness!

A frown creased Lu De's forehead. Instead of questioning Cheng Shouping further, he turned to Chu Huanzhao and asked, "Chu Second Miss, is that really the case?"

Lu De could still address Chu Huanzhao by name in the academy, but now that they were outside the academy walls, he had to show some respect to the Brightmoon Duke.

"That's right! Not only did this Plum Blossom-something steal his ki stone, but he also stole mine as well! Teacher, if you don't believe my words, you can check his pouch. One of the ki stones in there should have my index number..." Chu Huanzhao used her sharp words to further fan the flames. Her beautiful appearance was much more efficient at evoking pity than Zu An's. No man could resist the desire to stand up for a damsel in distress.

A couple of students who had just gotten off classes overheard Chu Huanzhao's declaration. A strong urge came over them, and they almost dashed forward to tear the vile criminal, Plum Blossom Thirteen, into shreds.

Zu An's jaw nearly fell onto the floor. Fearing the worst, he had prepared a long, passionate monologue to convince Lu De. However, his partners turned out to be much more reliable than he'd given them credit for.

As Chu Huanzhao pitifully complained to Lu De about how she was bullied, Zu An thought that he saw a pair of devil's horns flicker above her head. He sternly reminded himself that no matter who he offended in the future, he could never, ever offend this young lady.

Plum Blossom Thirteen could feel his head throbbing. The pressure was so great, he feared he would suffer a hemorrhage.

Despite this Second Miss Chu's innocent appearance, she's able to lie so smoothly without batting an eyelid! Aren't ladies of noble clans supposed to be upright and dignified?!

My godfather was right! Nobles are all downright shameless scum who have no qualms engaging in deception!

Plum Blossom Thirteen felt a shiver run down his spine as Lu De turned his menacing gaze on him. "It's not like that..." he stammered weakly.

Before he could explain anything, Lu De had already cut him off. "There's no need for words here. The truth will come out once we check your pouch."

Plum Blossom Thirteen still had plenty to say, but a ruler as heavy as a mountain landed between his shoulder blades, pressing him down and squeezing the air out of his lungs. He struggled to even breathe, and explaining himself was out of the question.

This sudden development alarmed him. Of the Thirteen Guardians of the Plum Blossom Sect, he was the strongest. He was the sect's sharpest knife when it came to fights in the underworld, and rarely had he ever failed a mission. And yet, this bald man had rendered him completely powerless with a simple ruler.

No wonder the sect master had warned him strictly not to mess with those in the academy.

But I didn't do anything at all!

Plum Blossom Thirteen had done a lot of bad things in his lifetime, and he was fully prepared to face any enemies who tried to get back at him. Yet, this was the one time where the situation left him so frustrated. It was all that scoundrel's fault!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 888 Rage points!

Zu An noticed that Plum Blossom Thirteen was glaring at him furiously. He responded with an embarrassed smile, which brought another offering of Rage points.

Lu De examined the eight ki stones in the pouch carefully, then angrily cast them aside. His cold gaze fell on Plum Blossom Thirteen. "These ki stones are from our academy, and the index numbers indicate that they have only been issued earlier today. What do you have to say for yourself?"

The ruler pressing down on him finally lifted a little, giving Plum Blossom Thirteen a chance to catch his breath and explain himself. "I was wronged! The two of them gave the ki stones to me on their own accord! Zu An owed me a thousand silver taels from gambling, and they were using the ki stones to offset the debt!"

Zu An retorted with a cold sneer, "Don't you think you should at least try harder when searching for an excuse? All of Brightmoon City knows that the Chu clan punishes their clan members harshly for gambling! Just last year, a fellow got his legs crushed by the Brightmoon Duke for fooling around in a casino. How would I, as a drafted son-in-law, dare to dabble in gambling, let alone incur a debt of a thousand silver taels? No matter how brazen I am, I would never do something like that!"

"Indeed! Who doesn't know that our Chu clan is extremely strict on clan members gambling?" Chu Huanzhao placed her hands on her waist as she agreed sassily. "At least do your homework first before coming up with a lie!"

"Bloody hell!" Plum Blossom Thirteen nearly suffered a stroke right there and then. This shameless, adulterous couple!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

Chapter 54: Try Shouting All You Want, Let's See If They'll Agree With It

Lu De's brow furrowed even deeper. His gut told him that something was amiss.

“Taking a thousand steps back, even if I did owe you money from gambling, where’s the promissory note then? Why don’t you bring it out and show everyone?” challenged Zu An.

Plum Blossom Thirteen shouted back in agitation, “I’ve already given you the promissory note!”

Zu An raised his hands up high and said innocently, “Teacher, so as to prove my innocence, I ask you to search my body to see if I have the note he speaks of!”

“You tore it up earlier!” Plum Blossom Thirteen finally understood why Zu An had done that. From the very start, he was already scheming to do him in!

Zu An sighed helplessly before answering, “Even if I tore it up, there should still be traces of it around, right?”

“You crushed it so thoroughly that it turned to dust and scattered with the wind earlier!” Plum Blossom Thirteen insisted.

Zu An shook his head. “Aren’t you trying a little too hard? Who in Brightmoon City doesn’t know that I’m notoriously useless? If I did have the power to crush a piece of paper to dust, would I have been assigned to the Yellow class in the first place?”

“But he really...” Plum Blossom Thirteen felt a chill run down his spine. He turned anxiously to Lu De, but the discipline master gave him no chance to explain.

“Enough!” Lu De roared furiously. “I don’t care what misdeeds your Plum Blossom Sect gets up to out there, but I won’t stand for you bullying our students! Today, I’ll break two of your legs. Go back and tell Mei Chaofeng, if his subordinates dare to mess with the academy once more, I will show no mercy.”

Lu De flicked his sleeves, and the ruler flew straight for Plum Blossom Thirteen’s knee joints. There were two resounding ‘thwacks’, and the assassin fell over with a yelp of agony.

From the unnatural angle at which Plum Blossom Thirteen’s legs were bent, Zu An could tell that he had suffered a complete fracture in both legs. He gasped in astonishment. He had heard from Wei Suo just how painful Lu De’s ruler could be, but judging from Plum Blossom Thirteen’s current state, it was apparent that Lu De had been going easy on the students he disciplined.

Even more shocking was how Lu De had used his ruler. He had not been holding on to it at all—the ruler had struck Plum Blossom Thirteen’s legs all on its own before flying back into Lu De’s hand.

That thing is an artifact! Zu An reminded himself never to fall into Lu De’s hands, lest he suffered the same fate!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 567 Rage points!

As he groaned on the ground, Plum Blossom Thirteen shot a venomous glare at Zu An.

This was natural human behavior. Plum Blossom Thirteen dared not blame Lu De, who was far stronger than him, so he could only vent his emotions on the weaker Zu An instead.

He swore to himself that he would snap off that scoundrel's four limbs—no, five limbs!—once he recovered from his injuries. Then, he would slice him up slowly, piece by piece, and toss them all into Wolf Valley!

Lu De passed the ki stones back to Zu An. "Take care of them well. You're too weak at the moment, so it's even more important for you to learn how to conceal your own wealth."

Zu An nodded his head vigorously and replied, "You're right, teacher. Unfortunately, that fellow also stole my money as well. If you could help me get those back too..." He trailed off with a sheepish chuckle.

This fellow sure is trouble, Lu De thought to himself. However, since Zu An was indeed a student of the academy, he waved a hand toward Plum Blossom Thirteen. With a beckoning gesture, the money purse flew from Plum Blossom Thirteen's waist and landed softly in his hand.

"How much money did he take from you?" asked Lu De.

Zu An took the entire money pouch and said, "This is all mine. Thank you, teacher, thank you."

Lu De's frown grew so deep his eyebrows almost touched. Although he was suspicious of Zu An's claim, he was well aware that Plum Blossom Thirteen's hands weren't clean, and he probably came by his money through underhanded means. With that in mind, he decided to let it slide, and allowed Zu An to do as he pleased.

Plum Blossom Thirteen didn't see it the same way. "Those tael are mine!" he cried indignantly.

You only gave me a hundred silver tael earlier on! The remaining eight hundred are all that I've managed to painstakingly save up over the last few years!

Plum Blossom Thirteen hadn't expected Zu An to be so shameless as to stoop to petty thievery! He never trusted anyone but himself, so he always carried his money around with him no matter where he went. Who could have thought that his many years of savings would be stolen from him just like that?

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

"You're saying that this is your money?" Zu An leisurely dangled the money pouch in front of the stricken Plum Blossom Thirteen. "Try calling for them then. Let's see if they'll respond to your call?"

That was the final blow.

Unable to take it anymore, Plum Blossom Thirteen felt his heart convulse, and fresh blood spurted out from his mouth.

What the hell! Who in the world is the antagonist here?

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

Lu De shot a glance toward Plum Blossom Thirteen and Zu An, but chose not to interfere. He waved a hand toward the gathered crowd. "All right, show's over. Stop loitering around and go home!"

Zu An waved Plum Blossom Thirteen goodbye and left with Chu Huanzhao and the others.

“Just you wait, Zu scoundrel! Our Plum Blossom Sect will never let you off that easily!” The echoes of Plum Blossom Thirteen’s vile curses could be heard even from a distance away.

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

Zu An shook his head. This wasn’t the first time the Plum Blossom Sect had tried to deal with him, and it was naive to think that he would be able to survive every single assassination attempt of theirs. He would have to find a way to deal with them soon.

They had made it a short distance when Cheng Shouping couldn’t hold himself back any further. He ran up to Zu An with a fawning smile. “Young master! My respect for you flourishes like the relentless tides of a river...”

“Flourishes? Pui!” Zu An shoved Cheng Shouping’s head aside. He fished out a silver ingot from Plum Blossom Thirteen’s money pouch and threw it at Cheng Shouping. “Here, your reward. You did well earlier.”

“Thanks, young master~” Cheng Shouping fondled the silver ingot delightfully.

“Where’s mine?” Chu Huanzhao demanded, stretching out her fair hands towards him. They were as smooth as jade.

Zu An also tossed a silver ingot to her, but this only made Chu Huanzhao arch her eyebrows. “So little? Are you trying to wave away a beggar?”

The smile on Cheng Shouping’s face froze instantly. He felt like he had just been offended.

Zu An massaged his temples. “How much do you want then?”

“At least half of it!” Chu Huanzhao exclaimed excitedly. She had never felt such a strong feeling of accomplishment before. While she often got her way in the Chu Estate, it never felt satisfying since no one dared to stand in the way of the Second Miss.

“Half of it? This is daylight robbery!” Zu An exclaimed in horror.

“Hmph! If I hadn’t backed you up there, do you think that Baldhead would have believed you so easily?” Chu Huanzhao stuck her small chest out proudly. “I put the reputation of our Chu clan on the line in order to help you! Don’t you think that that was at least worth half of the loot?”

“The highest I can go is a third,” Zu An replied sharply. He grabbed a few banknotes and shoved them over to her.

This seemed to satisfy Chu Huanzhao. She counted the few notes she had in her hands again and again, an excited gleam in her eyes.

Zu An eyed her in disdain. “Say, do you really need to act like this? No matter what, you’re still the Second Miss of the Chu clan! Do you need to get so excited over just a few hundred silver taels?”

“This is different. This is money that I didn’t receive from my parents; money that I earned with my own hands. Isn’t that a cause for celebration?” Chu Huanzhao replied with a sweet smile.

Does this lass have some kind of misunderstanding as to what 'earning money' means? If her parents were to learn that I have led her astray, wouldn't they skin me alive?!

Just thinking about that tigress Qin Wanru was more than enough to make Zu An shudder in fear. He grabbed hold of Chu Huanzhao's arm and told her gravely, "Make sure not to speak a word of this matter to your parents."

Chu Huanzhao blinked her eyes in confusion. "Why? This is the first time I'm earning money; they would be happy about it!"

"Errr..." Zu An pondered for a moment, then approached the matter from another perspective. "From what you know of them, do you think that they'd allow you to continue earning money through such a method?"

"Hmmm. Well, I guess that makes sense too. Fine, I won't tell them." Chu Huanzhao carefully slotted the banknotes into her robe before patting Zu An's shoulders. "Make sure to call me the next time you encounter a good deal like this!"

Zu An was amused. Isn't this lass a born tyrant?

Once they arrived at the Chu Estate, the two of them parted ways. After all, their residences were not located in the same direction.

Zu An returned to his little house and pulled Cheng Shouping over to one side. "Lil' Pingping, do you know how much it costs to buy a small residence in the city?"

Not only was he tired of the disdain he continually received in the Chu Estate, there was also someone in the Chu clan who was out to kill him. Getting his own place of residence would make life much more comfortable, not to mention safer.

He would have suffered it if he didn't have a choice, but now that he had hundreds of silver taels and seven ki stones that he could trade for money, he could be considered a 'thousand-aire'.

Back in his previous world, countless men dreamt constantly of traveling back to the ancient era to live an easy and decadent life, surrounded by gorgeous wives and beautiful maids... And now that he was in this world, he finally had a chance to fulfill his dreams!

In his current state, 'gorgeous wives' was probably a pipe dream, but at the very least, he could aim for 'beautiful maids', right?

Cheng Shouping's face fell instantly. His voice was that of a heartbroken suitor. "Young master, are you going to abandon me?"

"Cut that out! Stop portraying me as a heartless man trying to dump you!" Zu An snapped angrily. "I just want to get a small residence so that I'll have somewhere to retreat to when things aren't going well. If you wish to continue following me then, you're more than welcome to. Also, do you know how much beautiful maids cost?"

The mention of 'beautiful maids' immediately sparked a gleam in Cheng Shouping's eyes. He immediately began analyzing the costs for the young master. "Well, a small residence costs around several hundred silver taels, though some of the more rundown ones can probably be acquired at a

hundred silver taels. As for beautiful maids though, they can get pretty pricey. Over at the market, their prices range from tens of silver taels to over a thousand silver taels.”

Zu An felt relieved that the housing prices here weren’t as ridiculous as in his previous world. His thousand silver taels was around 180,000 RMB, which was only enough for him to buy a toilet in the city.

“There’s such a huge price difference amongst the different maids?” Zu An was surprised. “How is it that some of them cost over a thousand silver taels?”

“I heard that those are skilled in the four arts, be it zither, chess, calligraphy, or painting. On top of that, they are also as beautiful as fairies from heaven...”

Before Cheng Shouping could finish his description, Zu An waved a hand impatiently. “Enough enough, I’m not planning to open a brothel here. Why would I need such multi-talented maids? We’ll just look for some more decent-looking ones with a gentle disposition. The other skills aren’t important.”

Cheng Shouping nodded quietly, but harbored very different thoughts on the inside. If you can’t afford it, just say so. There’s no need to insist that you don’t need them.

Chapter 55: You Can’t Shirk Off Responsibility Just Because You Have Put On Clothes!

“Remember not to mention this matter to anyone in the estate,” Zu An reminded him sternly.

Cheng Shouping thumped his own chest. “Young master, have you forgotten my name? I am the man who keeps secrets like a cork on a bottle, Cheng Shouping!”

Somehow, his confident assurances only stoked Zu An’s unease. He felt like he had just made a terrible mistake.

“I’ll leave you to look into the matter. I’m feeling a bit tired right now, so I think I’ll rest for a while. Ah right, get me a bucket of water to wash my face first.” Zu An dismissed Cheng Shouping with a wave of his hand.

His plan was to wash his hands and face, then use the Rage points he had just earned from Plum Blossom Thirteen to draw the lottery. For now, his future looked very bright.

“Looks like you’re in a good mood,” an old, hoarse voice rasped in his ear.

Zu An leaped up in shock. He spun around and saw Old Mi standing behind him. With his heart still pounding, he yelled, “Why do you always walk around without making any sound? You’ll really scare me to death one of these days!”

Old Mi ignored Zu An’s remark and posed a question of his own. “You didn’t play truant today, right?”

“You’d already warned me beforehand, so how would I dare?” Looking deeply into the eyes that were hidden by layers of skin folds, Zu An felt subconsciously that he would have suffered the same fate as Plum Blossom Thirteen had he dared to play truant today.

“That’s good.” Old Mi laughed eerily. “Did you meet Wei Hongde?”

Old Mi's smile caused Zu An to break out in goosebumps all over.

"Not yet." Old Mi's forehead began to crease further in a frown, which prompted Zu An to add quickly, "However, I managed to become friends with his younger brother."

"He has a younger brother?" Old Mi was confused.

"Yes, his name is Wei Suo..." Zu An briefly explained the situation.

"I didn't think that he would have another son. Heh, it looks like he's living quite a good life, hm?" Old Mi muttered under his breath.

Zu An was stunned for a moment. "What did you say?"

"Nothing." Old Mi shook his head. He tossed a pouch of silver taels to Zu An and said, "Take this money. Treat those two brothers to a meal and hang out with them more. I need you to get closer to them."

Zu An probed a little. "May I know why? Can you let me in on whatever it is too so that I can prepare myself beforehand?"

Another chillingly eerie smile split Old Mi's face in two. "You'll know in due time." With that, he began to totter away.

Zu An was left puzzled. You can't be trying to get me to steal some kind of secret treasure in the royal treasury, are you?

He quickly counted the money in the pouch he had just received from Old Mi. There were a hundred silver taels in total. He wondered how an old farmer inside the Chu Estate had managed to save up so much money.

With a deep sigh, Zu An decided to let the matter rest. He turned his attention to the Keyboard and checked his Rage points. After his spending spree that afternoon, he'd been left with 54 Rage points, but his balance had risen back up to 8,305.

It was just a short encounter, but Plum Blossom Thirteen had single handedly provided him with more than eight thousand Rage points!

Despite this outcome, Zu An was dissatisfied. Once again, the result had proven that it was much more efficient to farm using AOE skills rather than single target skills. He could only hope that more enemies like Plum Blossom Thirteen would appear.

He proceeded with his ritual of washing his hands and face with practiced movements, then turned his attention to the lottery. However, just as he was about to start, a servant rushed in. "Young master, Master and Madam are calling you over right now!"

Zu An widened his eyes in shock. It can't be that they already know about me leading Chu Huanzhao astray, can it?

With a growing feeling of unease, he followed the servant around the estate. The servant led him from corridor to corridor, navigating an incredibly complicated route. Zu An grew suspicious that the servant was leading him into some sort of trap.

It was only when the two of them finally arrived before a hall with plenty of maids standing at the doorway that he finally heaved a sigh of relief. With so many people around, I doubt that my enemies would try to pull anything.

His eyes fell on one particular lass with a slender waist and a delicate ponytail, dressed in a green robe. He was a little alarmed by her appearance, but he maintained a brilliant smile on his face as he walked over and said, "Oh? It has only been a few days since we last met, Snow, but your waist has gotten even slimmer. Are you not eating well outside? Aw. Come, I'll help you massage it a little."

As he spoke, his hands darted forth to encircle her waist.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 256 Rage points!

Zu An was surprised. He didn't know that Snow wasn't her real name. It was quite rare for maids to have a proper surname and name these days, and even rarer to possess such an eloquent one. It seems she has quite the mysterious background.

Even though he managed to infuriate Snow before, he hadn't awakened the Rage system back then. This was the first time he was seeing her true name.

The young lass easily dodged his hands. She glared at him frostily. "It has been a few days, but you're still as detestable as ever."

Zu An's face immediately turned grim. "You're going a little overboard. Whatever the case, we did spend a night with one another. Are you going to shirk your responsibilities now that you've got your clothes back on?"

"You!!!" Snow's face flushed red right away.

The trauma she'd suffered by having her pure, maidenly body ravaged by this dirty scoundrel's lecherous gaze would never go away.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 999 Rage points!

"Are you angry? Hit me then. Hit me then~" Zu An taunted like a little rascal. Back when she had kicked him into the pond, he wasn't a cultivator yet, so he wasn't able to discern her level of strength. It was high time for him to check her out.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 999 Rage points!

Snow's rage was so strong that she was feeling faint. She never thought that such a shameless person could exist in the world. She seriously considered throwing propriety out the window and pummeling the man before her.

"Stop messing around and come in!" Chu Chuyan's unique cold, melodious voice sounded from the hall.

Snow took a deep breath as she forced herself to calm down. Her voice was as chilly as her name.

"Master and Madam are waiting for you inside. You should get going."

Zu An shook his head in regret. He smoothed out his clothes and strode into the hall.

Chu Zhongtian, Qin Wanru, Chu Chuyan and Chu Huanzhao were seated at a round table filled with all sorts of exquisite dishes. Chu Huanzhao shot him a glance in silent warning.

This lass is still quite loyal after all. Looks like I didn't dote on her for nothing.

"Zu An, how audacious of you to seduce a maid of the estate in our presence. What do you take Chuyan for? What do you take our Chu clan for?" Qin Wanru bellowed, her face a dark cloud of anger.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 447 Rage points!

Her anger was fully justified. She was already dissatisfied with having her precious daughter marry such a wastrel, and yet, he still went around seducing the maidservants of the estate. This was preposterous!

"I didn't seduce her!" Zu An cried out as though wronged.

Qin Wanru snorted. "You still want to argue your way through this? Do you think that our ears are for decoration?"

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 522 Rage points!

Beside her, Chu Zhongtian coughed softly and explained, "Zu An, you might not be aware because you aren't a cultivator, but this bit of distance isn't a problem for us. We can hear everything happening outside loud and clear."

Zu An was touched by how good-hearted Chu Zhongtian was. "Father-in-law, I really am not lying. That's because Snow is already my woman."

A ripple of shock passed through everyone present. Even Chu Chuyan—who had been leisurely watching the drama unfold as if she had nothing to do with it—choked on her tea. She hurriedly took out her handkerchief and dabbed at the corners of her mouth.

Chu Zhongtian stared at Zu An in disbelief, although there seemed to be the slightest tinge of respect mixed in with his shock.

Qin Wanru's mouth fell agape, as if her mind had somehow short-circuited.

Chu Huanzhao had been in the midst of sneaking some food into her mouth when Zu An made his pronouncement, and she secretly snuck him a thumbs up. Her brother-in-law really was quite the formidable figure. No wonder Plum Blossom Thirteen had gotten done in so badly.

"Zu An, how dare you spout such nonsense?!" Snow stood behind him, her face livid.

Just as Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru could hear what was going on outside, Snow had pricked up her ears to follow the conversation going on inside.

The moment she heard Zu An claim that she was his woman, she nearly lost her mind.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 999 Rage points!

BAM!

Qin Wanru slammed her palm onto the table. "Where have your manners gone? Get out!"

Snow looked at Qin Wanru indignantly, and she attempted to protest weakly, “Madam, I...”

Chu Chuyan interjected quietly, “Snow, you should leave the room for now.”

Left with no choice, Snow backed out of the room. She didn’t forget to glare viciously at Zu An as she left.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 400 Rage points!

Watching the drama unfold, Zu An chuckled on the inside as he praised himself for his sharp wits. A single sentence from him was all it had taken to earn this huge sum of Rage points.

As soon as Snow left the room, Qin Wanru’s gaze turned so severe, she looked ready to strangle someone. “Zu An, you had better tell us what’s going on here. Do you know that we reserve the right to sentence a drafted son-in-law like yourself to death for seducing a maid in the estate?”

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 587 Rage points!

In his mind, Zu An lamented the lack of basic human rights that plagued all drafted sons-in-law. Sighing softly, he took his time to explain himself. “I didn’t seduce Snow; Chuyan gave her to me. She personally ordered Snow to accompany me in bed.”

Qin Wanru frowned upon hearing those words. She turned to her daughter and asked, “Chuyan, is that true?”

What’s wrong with my daughter? Did she really send a woman to bed her own husband? I thought that I’d set a good example for her to follow. All these years, have I ever allowed any woman to approach your father?

Chu Chuyan’s face flushed red. She shot a furious glare at Zu An before answering, “Mother, I did say such words. However, it was intended to be no more than a joke. You need not listen to his nonsense.”

“Is that true?” Qin Wanru asked doubtfully.

“Of course!”

Chu Chuyan shot a glance at Zu An and said, “Hurry up and take your seat. You should watch what you say in the future. If not, you wouldn’t even know who you have offended.”

Zu An lodged his protest immediately. “That won’t do! I’m relying on my mouth for a living!”

How was he supposed to earn Rage points if he didn’t run his mouth off?

Chu Huanzhao laughed uproariously. “Didn’t you say that you made a living off of your face?”

Zu An betrayed hardly any embarrassment. “I’m going down both routes. It’s always better to diversify your talents so as to remain competitive in the market.”

“Enough! Stop spouting all that nonsense and eat!”

For some reason, the friendly chatter between Zu An and her second daughter annoyed Qin Wanru.

Zu An slipped into his seat and took a discreet look at Chu Chuyan. Honestly, this woman did treat him fairly well. Despite what had just happened, she still didn't reveal his impotence. That piece of information would have effectively dispelled any doubts that Qin Wanru harbored about the relationship between him and Snow.

"What are you looking at me for?" Chu Chuyan asked nonchalantly, without turning to look at Zu An. She idly picked up a piece of vegetable.

"You're beautiful. I've read books in which women are described as being 'so beautiful that one couldn't resist feasting on her looks'. To be frank, I was quite skeptical about such a possibility, but I'm starting to see it for myself," replied Zu An with a smile.

His wife's side profile was truly perfect in every sense. Her smooth and delicate skin looked so inviting; it was such a pity that he couldn't give her a kiss.

Chu Chuyan was a little surprised by his words. "It looks like you're feeling much more optimistic than before."

Zu An knew that she was referring to his impotence. He'd kicked up a huge fuss about it the last time. "I was still brooding over it earlier, but all of my frustrations seem to vanish in the face of your beauty."

Chapter 56: A Lower-Tier Steed

A furious blush consumed Chu Chuyan's cheeks. Countless people had praised her beauty over the years, but most of them did it in an indirect manner. This was the first time someone had so directly and passionately complimented her, and it left her a little self-conscious.

Meanwhile, Qin Wanru's frown only deepened. This fellow sure has a slippery tongue. The more I look at him, the more hateful he becomes.

Chu Zhongtian coughed lightly. "It's impolite to speak at the dining table," he reminded Zu An.

Zu An decided to rein himself in for now, and the five of them continued their meal in silence. It didn't take long for them to finish up, and the servants quickly entered with saltwater for them to gargle their mouths with while they whisked away the plates and utensils.

Zu An was puzzled at this new development. Food was usually sent to his room, but today, he had been called over to the main table to eat together with the rest of the family. Was this a sign that he was starting to be accepted by them?

While he was pondering this, Chu Zhongtian suddenly spoke up. "Chuyan, how was your trip to Luling?"

Zu An was taken aback. Were they going to talk business in his presence? Had they truly stopped viewing him as an outsider?

"I investigated the matter, and it appears the goods were intercepted by the Blackwind Stockade. I swept the area with my men, but it was as if they had vanished from the face of the world. I couldn't find a single trace of them," replied Chu Chuyan.

The Blackwind Stockade? Zu An fell into deep thought.

Two days ago, when he met Yu Yanluo in a mountain valley outside the city, he had also stumbled across a group of people who identified themselves as bandits from the Blackwind Stockade. Just thinking of this matter really infuriated him. Yu Yanluo had simply left him empty promises, then performed a vanishing act. Truly, the more beautiful a woman, the more scheming she was.

Chu Zhongtian sighed deeply. "That's the unique trait of the Blackwind Stockade. They are always able to sense danger and flee beforehand. As soon as we dispatch an army, they hike deep into the Hidden Dragon Mountain to seek refuge. We can't possibly dispatch an army to escort our goods every single time. This is really a tough nut to crack."

He paused for a brief moment. "I heard that the Blackwind Stockade assaulted the Yu clan's convoy a while ago, and quite a few of their men lost their lives. We could work together with the Yu clan to deal with this poisonous tumor."

Qin Wanru snorted. "I think you're just interested in Yu Yanluo, aren't you?" she said coolly. "The Yu clan already has enough problems to deal with. How could she possibly spare the attention to help us deal with the Blackwind Stockade?"

Chu Zhongtian's face immediately reddened. He pulled his wife's sleeves and said, "It's not what you're thinking. Besides, the kids are still around..."

Qin Wanru turned her head away, coldly ignoring her husband.

A knowing smile graced Zu An's lips. It seemed like his father-in-law had courted Yu Yanluo in his younger years. Well, he could relate to that. She was indeed unbelievably beautiful.

Chu Chuyan broke the awkward atmosphere by clearing her throat, and she continued her report. "Our arms business is currently suffering. The pollution of the spirit creek means that our clan has lost our greatest advantage when it comes to weapon-crafting. In addition, the Yuan clan has found a fairly formidable runemaster to enchant their items. The weapons they forge now are not so far below ours in quality, and they're cheaper too. They have already eaten into quite a bit of our market share. At this rate, even the foundations of our business might be shaken."

Zu An processed the information he had just heard. He remembered the slight bluish glow he'd seen coming from a formation inscribed on Yu Yanluo's carriage—that was probably the work of a runemaster. Runemasters were probably capable of adding functions to items, so naturally, weapons that were inscribed with runes tended to be more powerful than ordinary ones.

If only that darned academy stopped preaching propriety and started teaching more practical knowledge, I wouldn't have been so bored out of my mind.

In truth, Zu An had misunderstood the Brightmoon Academy. It was deemed to be the best academy within the nearby municipalities for good reason, and the teachers working there were the cream of the crop. The only reason he was learning about propriety and other such drivel was because he was in the Yellow class.

Those in the Yellow class had barely any cultivation talent anyway, so it was meaningless for them to learn much about subjects related to cultivation. As such, they only had one or two lessons each week that touched upon general knowledge relating to cultivation.

On the other hand, the other classes, especially the Sky class, were focused mainly on cultivation and had fewer lessons on other minor subjects.

Qin Wanru frowned at her daughter's report. "How in the world did the Yuan clan manage to hire a runemaster? When did they find such connections?"

"They don't have them, but the neighboring Wu clan does. The patriarch of the Wu clan is a duke as well, and they have been interested in snatching up our Chu clan's market share for quite some time now. I've done my own digging, and it seems the Wu clan is secretly backing the Yuan clan in this matter. Otherwise, the Yuan clan wouldn't have dared to challenge us openly," replied Chu Chuyan.

"Indeed! That Yuan fellow was really arrogant at school today. He said that he would teach my brother-in-law a lesson during the Clans Tournament!" Chu Huanzhao had had no place in the conversation thus far, but now that a familiar name had finally popped up, she immediately leaped at the opportunity to make her presence known.

Qin Wanru flew into a rage. "The Yuan clan has gone too far! Even a servant or a dog of our Chu clan shouldn't face such oppression from them!" She slammed her palm onto the table. "Let's go! We'll head over to the Yuan Estate to reason with them!"

Zu An sent Qin Wanru a venomous look, not bothering to hide the fact that he'd taken offence at her statement.

"My wife, please calm yourself. Sang Hong has already been appointed as the governor, and without a doubt, he's looking for a reason to crack down on us." Chu Zhongtian quickly stood up to restrain his wife. "We all need to calm down and take things slowly, or else we might just worsen our plight."

Zu An's eyebrows shot up. Despite the Chu clan's glamorous exterior, it seemed they were surrounded by threats.

Chu Zhongtian stroked his wife's back to calm her down. As he did so, he turned to Zu An. "Zu An, Yuan Wendong must have made things difficult for you. Are you all right?"

Before Zu An could respond, Chu Huanzhao butted in, "It wasn't just Yuan Wendong. Even Hong Xingying wanted to deal with my brother-in-law too! He's supposed to be a subordinate of our Chu clan, but that damned two-faced scoundrel chose to side with outsiders instead!"

Zu An was touched by how Chu Huanzhao was speaking up for him. At the very least, she doted on him more than his own wife did.

Chu Zhongtian frowned. "Hong Xingying?"

Qin Wanru spoke up. "I know that child. He has a huge ego, and he was really fond of your older sister previously. Naturally, he doesn't carry any goodwill toward Zu An. As you know, young people tend to find it hard to rein in their emotions."

Chu Huanzhao wasn't willing to let the matter go. "But he..."

“All right,” Qin Wanru waved her into silence. “That child is a diligent one, and his father has been loyal to us for many decades. Don’t bring up such minor matters in the future. It’ll only harden their hearts against us.”

Chu Huanzhao’s cheeks puffed up in indignation. You’re afraid of hardening the hearts of Hong Xingying and his father, but what about my brother-in-law?

Zu An, on the other hand, wasn’t particularly fazed. He could understand how a useless drafted son-in-law like him stood below Butler Hong and his son. Cheng Shouping had told him before that Qin Wanru was interested in having Chu Chuyan marry Hong Xingying, and the woman herself seemed to have shown her hand.

He snuck a glance at Chu Chuyan, but her face betrayed no particular emotion. It didn’t seem like she had any interest in Hong Xingying.

Chu Chuyan changed the topic. “I’m more concerned about the Clans Tournament that’s going to be held half a month from now. Everything else can wait.”

Qin Wanru frowned. “Haven’t we won every single tournament thus far? As long as you’re around, who in the Yuan clan could possibly be a match for you?”

Chu Zhongtian shook his head and chimed in, “The Yuan clan are no pushovers. They share the same title as the Chu clan as one of the Four Merchant Powerhouses. It’s only because they lack a noble position that they have not dared offend us, so most of the tournaments we’ve had thus far were mainly just for show. However, now that they have the Wu clan to back them, we can expect them to go all out. In fact, I suspect that the Wu clan might secretly dispatch their own cultivators to participate.”

He paused, then turned to Zu An with a face full of conflict. “Furthermore, with Zu An participating as well, we’ve already lost the first round.”

Zu An was utterly dumbstruck. I was just watching from the sidelines. How in the world did I get sucked in as well?

“Ah, I’m not a cultivator in the first place. Do I need to fight in the Clans Tournament too?”

“According to the rules of the Clans Tournament, every single offspring of the clan must participate. Since you’re the son-in-law of our Chu clan, there’s no way that the Wu clan and Yuan clan will allow you to sit out. Moreover, the governor will most likely step in and denounce any move on our part to shield you from participation. In fact, the main reason why we called you here today is to give up a heads-up so that you can prepare yourself for it,” said Chu Zhongtian.

Chu Huanzhao grew anxious at her father’s words. “Just earlier today, Yuan Wendong proudly declared that he was going to cripple my brother-in-law! If we send him in as well, wouldn’t that be the same as sending him to his death?”

“That works out just fine,” Chu Chuyan answered.

Zu An’s heart skipped a beat. Even if you aren’t pleased with me, surely you shouldn’t resort to such means to kill your own husband, right?

Chu Huanzhao shared his horror. She stared at Chu Chuyan in disbelief and murmured, “Sister, you...”

Seeing their expressions, Chu Zhongtian hurriedly cut in. "Let your older sister finish. She wouldn't say such words for no reason."

Chu Chuyan took her time to lay out her points. "The most outstanding offspring of the Yuan clan is no other than Yuan Wendong. I heard that he'd recently made a breakthrough to the fifth rank. I don't fear him, but we don't have anyone else in the clan who is a match for him, and the Yuan clan wouldn't be so foolish as to send him against me. In other words, Yuan Wendong is bound to win a single round since no one else will be able to deal with him.

"If so, rather than waste any of our other experts on him, it would be much better to send Zu An to face him. This way, there's still a chance for the others to win their battles."

Zu An grasped the point she was making. To have the weakest face the strongest so as to conserve their forces; it was basically the 'Tian Ji Racing Horse' strategy.... Pui, what am I saying? I'm not the weakest horse here!

Chu Huanzhao was still troubled by this plan. "Isn't it still very dangerous for my brother-in-law?"

Qin Wanru's forehead creased slightly. Isn't my second daughter a little too concerned about that wastrel today?

"Don't worry, I'll arrange for their match to be the very last. If we manage to achieve an overwhelming advantage by then, the final match would be rendered meaningless. If so, we can simply call it off."

Chu Huanzhao blinked her eyes as she considered her sister's statement. "What if the victor hasn't been decided by then?"

Chu Chuyan hesitated, then hurriedly shook her head. "Don't worry, it can't possibly be that coincidental."

Stop planting flags here! You'll jinx it! Zu An retorted in his mind.

He sighed softly and offered his own take on the situation. "It doesn't matter if the victor hasn't been decided by then. As you know, the stars of the show usually make their appearances at the very end. I'll make sure to pull off a glorious comeback for the Chu clan if it comes down to that."

It had only taken him a couple of days to transform from an utterly inept human being to a third rank cultivator. With half a month still to go, he should still be able to raise his cultivation by a fair bit. Even if he couldn't reach the fifth rank, he still possessed the items and other cheats from the Keyboard. With a good strategy, he should still stand a fair chance of winning.

Zu An's assurances only brought a furrow to Qin Wanru's forehead. "Zu An, since Yan'er has already chosen you, I shan't pursue your past anymore. However, can you at least kick your habit of bragging? A man can be weak, but he must possess good virtue. Yuan Wendong has already reached the fifth rank, which means that he can already control the elements. Yet, you still want to fight against him and win? Hah!"

After saying those words, Qin Wanru got to her feet, shook out her sleeves, and left the hall.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 763 Rage points!

Zu An shrugged leisurely, not bothering with any further explanation.

Qin Wanru seemed deeply prejudiced against him. It was a common saying that mothers-in-law tended to grow on their sons-in-law, but why did it seem like his relationship with Qin Wanru was deteriorating sharply?

Chapter 57: Putting on Airs

Chu Zhongtian also rose to his feet. "Zu An, I understand your desire to stand up for the Chu clan. You have good intentions in mind, but... Aah, you shouldn't think too much about this matter. Don't worry, we'll settle the Clans Tournament."

With that, he too turned and left. Judging by his hurried footsteps, he seemed to be chasing after his wife.

My father-in-law is really the typical example of a henpecked husband, but he's indeed a good person at heart. He does treat me well even though I'm a wastrel. I just wonder if he's actually a sly, old fox who puts on a kind face...

Chu Huanzhao skipped over to Zu An's side to talk to him, but was interrupted by Chu Zhongtian's voice, echoing from outside the hall. "Zhao'er, your mother is looking for you!"

"Oh~" the excitement in Chu Huanzhao's face collapsed like a house of cards. She waved Zu An a helpless goodbye before dragging her feet out reluctantly.

"You're on good terms with Huanzhao?" Chu Chuyan's voice contained a hint of surprise.

Zu An smiled cockily. "I'm quite a likable person after all."

Chu Chuyan's mouth worked silently, but she could find no suitable response.

She stared at him for a moment longer, then turned to take her leave. "Right, I should give you a reminder. A man shouldn't make promises that he isn't able to fulfill."

Zu An felt disconsolate. There was not a single person here who was willing to trust him. He sure led quite the tragic life.

He suddenly remembered an important matter and rushed out to catch up to Chu Chuyan. "Honey, honey~"

Chu Chuyan whipped around and yelled, "Shut up! I told you not to call me that!"

"You only told me not to call me your wife." Chu Chuyan's eyebrows had climbed almost to her hairline, and she looked on the verge of exploding at any moment. Seeing this, Zu An quickly changed what he was about to say. "Then, should I call you Yan'er instead?"

Chu Chuyan was caught off-guard by that, and fell silent.

It sounds weird hearing him call me the same way my father and mother call me. But if I don't allow him to call me that, he might just keep calling me honey or darling!

"If you still have any sense of shame, you should stop buzzing around the young miss' side like a fly!" Snow leaped forward and interposed herself between the two of them. Her disdainful gaze slowly lowered toward his crotch.

"Why do you interfere when I speak to my wife?" Zu An rolled her eyes. "You have already displayed your bare self to me, yet you still prance around me all day long. Just which of us is the shameless one here?"

"You!" Snow's face immediately turned as red as an apple. That incident was the greatest blemish in her life, yet this fellow still dared to raise it! Her anger flew through the roof in an instant, and she was a second away from drawing her sword and decapitating the hateful man standing before her.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 999 Rage points!

"Enough, the two of you should stop messing around." Chu Chuyan worried that Zu An would be sliced to pieces if she didn't intervene. "So, what did you call me for?"

Zu An shot a glance at Snow and swiftly estimated the length of her sword. He took a few steps back to keep himself out of her range, then turned to Chu Chuyan and said, "There's someone who's out for your hubby's life. Are you going to get involved?"

Snow's heart skipped a beat, and her trepidation significantly lessened her rage. She stared at Zu An uncertainly, her mind racing.

Chu Chuyan noticed that Zu An had stopped calling her 'honey', but had chosen to address himself as her hubby instead. "Who's out for your life?"

Zu An snuck a glance at Snow and took in her worried expression before unveiling the mystery. "The Plum Blossom Sect."

"The Plum Blossom Sect?" Chu Chuyan was surprised. "How did you get involved with them?"

Zu An shrugged helplessly. "I don't know either. Someone who's as handsome and charming as me usually avoids having any enemies, but those from the Plum Blossom Sect keep making attempts on my life. Remember that time I was struck by lightning? That was the handiwork of Plum Blossom Twelve."

"Are you certain about it?" Chu Chuyan's usual composure was clouded over with astonishment.

Zu An nodded. "Would I lie to my own wife?"

Snow was quick to retort, "Go to the streets and ask around; the lies you have spouted are more than enough to be made into a whole novel. Lying to your own wife..." A glare from Chu Chuyan prompted Snow to quickly correct herself. "... Lying to the young miss doesn't pose any challenge to you at all!"

Zu An stared at Snow intently. "Say, why do you keep trying to get in my way every single time? Are you trying to use this sort of lowly method to attract my attention?"

"I..." Snow choked and nearly fainted on the spot. "Young miss, don't stop me. I must slaughter this darned scoundrel today!"

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 725 Rage points!

Zu An immediately bolted behind Chu Chuyan, seeking cover from Snow, who relentlessly pursued him with her sword in hand. The two of them ran circles around Chu Chuyan, Snow unable to catch up, Zu An failing to shake his dogged pursuer.

“Yan’er, aren’t you going to stop her? She’s trying to kill your hubby!” Zu An cried out in desperation as he dodged Snow’s attacks.

Chu Chuyan shot a cold look at Zu An. “If you dare touch my body with those hands of yours once more, I’ll be the one to slaughter you instead.”

Zu An sheepishly released his hold on her. While he was dodging Snow’s attacks, he had taken the opportunity to feel out Chu Chuyan physically. He hadn’t expected Chu Chuyan to see through his intentions so quickly.

From his brief encounter, though, his wife’s body felt surprisingly cold. It was almost like holding on to an ice sculpture.

“You said that Plum Blossom Twelve was the one who caused you to get struck by lightning, but do you have any evidence?” Chu Chuyan asked.

“He confessed to it himself.” Chu Chuyan seemed to have no intention of stopping Snow. Zu An began to worry that she was using Snow to get rid of him permanently this time around.

“Where’s he?”

“He’s dead. He got eaten by wolves.”

Chu Chuyan was speechless.

Snow snorted. “You don’t even have any evidence on hand. How can you expect the young miss to believe your words?”

Chu Chuyan finally stopped Snow from pursuing Zu An, then said, “Snow is right. Even though the Plum Blossom Sect has done many vile deeds over the years, they are well-connected, making them hard to deal with. Without concrete evidence, there’s nothing much we can do to them.”

“Young miss, I think that fellow is just spouting nonsense! Why would the Plum Blossom Sect target him, and risk offending our Chu clan?” Snow’s chest rose and fell rhythmically as she panted for air. Surprisingly, Zu An’s stamina was much better than she had imagined.

Chu Chuyan nodded slightly in agreement with Snow. If they were to confront the Plum Blossom Sect right now, the sect would claim that there was no evidence to incriminate them, and that would be the end of it.

Zu An regretted having killed Plum Blossom Twelve so quickly. He should have gotten the latter to write a statement or something. Of course, the circumstances back then were dire, and he hadn’t had the luxury of thinking so far ahead.

“Even if I don’t have any evidence on Plum Blossom Twelve, I had a run in with Plum Blossom Thirteen earlier in the day at the gates of the academy. He threatened to sever my limbs and slice me up piece by

piece until I was finally dead. There were plenty of witnesses, so I couldn't possibly have falsified that, right?"

A moocher should solve problems through his mooching ways.

Zu An looked down on those who could have easily resolved their problems through their connections, but insisted on solving them with their own strength instead, as if that made them superior. Weren't connections part of a person's strength as well?

"Why would Plum Blossom Thirteen suddenly threaten you at the academy? It seems to me they must be holding some kind of leverage over you!" Snow grabbed Chu Chuyan's arm as she sneered at Zu An.

Zu An looked at Snow with an unreadable smile. "I just realized that you have been speaking up for the Plum Blossom Sect for quite a while now. It can't be that you have some ties with them, do you?"

Snow jerked in shock. She glanced at Chu Chuyan subconsciously, and denied his accusation vehemently. "How could I possibly be related to the Plum Blossom Sect? I just can't stand people like you spreading lies and falsehoods everywhere!"

"Many people witnessed the incident today. If you don't believe me, you can call the Second Miss over to verify the matter. She witnessed the matter with her own eyes. Is the Chu clan really going to take this insult lying down?" Zu An exclaimed indignantly.

Chu Chuyan was really impressed by how Zu An had readily included himself as a family member of the Chu clan. He'd invoked the clan name without the slightest awkwardness.

She pondered for a moment before responding to his challenge. "Dealing with the Plum Blossom Sect isn't that simple. So far, we still haven't managed to find out which power is backing them. Besides, even though my father is a duke, he isn't an official of the royal court. He would be overstressing his boundaries if he attempts to take things into his own hands. So, there's very little we can do against a threat from them."

Zu An clicked his tongue in annoyance. "You can't deal with a mere underworld organization despite being a ducal clan. Even I feel ashamed for you!"

Chu Chuyan stared at him, speechless.

Snow put her hands on her hip and berated him loudly. "Aren't you getting ahead of yourself? Do you even know anything about court politics at all? Don't you know that those who are in high positions are often treading on thin ice? Stop spouting all of this nonsense if you don't know anything at all!"

Zu An shot her a condescending glance. "Yes yes, you know everything. But what a pity it is that you're just a maid."

A vein popped out from Snow's temple. She turned big, needy eyes toward Chu Chuyan. "Young miss, please, I really want to beat him up!"

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 367 Rage points!

Chu Chuyan chuckled softly. "I understand how you feel, but you have to show some respect to him. He's the son-in-law of the Chu clan after all. The way you two keep bickering with one another, you look almost like an old couple."

Snow jolted in horror, and she cried out indignantly, "What do you mean, an old couple! Young miss, you shouldn't crack such jokes!"

Ignoring Snow, Zu An turned to Chu Chuyan and said, "Forget it, I knew that the Chu clan can't be relied on. I have my own way of dealing with this matter, but I need you to back me up."

The Plum Blossom Sect had already sent Plum Blossom Twelve and Plum Blossom Thirteen after his life. There was no way Zu An would swallow his grudge and forgive them. Besides, they would never let him off the hook just because he was willing to forgive them. Since it had already come down to this, the best thing to do was to seize the initiative and destroy the Plum Blossom Sect first.

Chu Chuyan frowned. "Back you up?"

"I'm asking you to support me," Zu An explained. "I'll be making a trip to the Plum Blossom Sect later on. I don't need you to do anything; you just have to ensure my safety."

Snow sniffed coldly. "Aren't you just using our young miss' name to do as you please?"

Zu An paid no heed to Snow's mockery. "I could possibly do it on my own. I'm just worried that I'd screw with the Plum Blossom Sect too hard that they'd end up resorting to desperate measures."

"You, screw the Plum Blossom Sect too hard? What a joke!" Snow laughed derisively, not bothering to hide her contempt..

Chu Chuyan, however, nodded in agreement. "Very well, I shall accompany you. However, I'll first make things clear that I'm following you in my capacity as an individual. You won't have the backing of the Chu clan for this matter."

"I don't need it."

The boulder weighing down Zu An's heart was finally released. With Chu Chuyan around, he wouldn't have to worry for his own life anymore.

"What are you up to?" Snow asked with a deep frown.

Zu An's confident look had sparked her curiosity.

"It won't be fun if I tell you beforehand." Zu An wagged her finger at her before turning toward Chu Chuyan with an inviting gesture. "Yan'er, this way."

A slight knit formed between Chu Chuyan's brows. She was clearly uncomfortable with the way he was addressing her. However, considering how the shameless Zu An might come up with even worse ways to address her, she decided to let it slide.

Chapter 58: She's Lusting After My Body

Chu Chuyan had planned to order the servants to prepare a carriage, but Zu An stopped her. In his mind, a moonlit stroll was just what they needed to nurture their feelings for one another. It wouldn't be as romantic on a carriage, especially since the journey would be awfully short.

Chu Chuyan didn't insist on the carriage, so the two of them walked out onto the streets together.

It didn't take long for them to draw the attention of the passers-by, though it was mostly due to Chu Chuyan. A woman with an appearance and disposition like hers was always the center of attention no matter where she went.

Snow, with her adorable face accentuated by her little ponytail, captured her fair share of admiring glances as well.

As for Zu An, he was more or less just a sidekick meant to highlight the two beauties. Of course, the man himself vehemently disagreed with that opinion. He was sure his handsome features and roguish charm would catch the eye of any woman present.

"Look, look! That's the First Miss of the Chu clan!"

"Oh my, she's really as beautiful as a fairy!"

"That maid standing next to her looks sweet too. She is much more beautiful than most young misses from other prominent clans!"

"Of course! How can someone subpar be worthy of serving Miss Chu?"

"Oh? How would you justify that toad standing by her side then?"

"Ah, that fellow must be the notoriously useless drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan. Just look at his oily face! It's obvious that he's no good."

"Miss Chu is pretty, but I must say that she doesn't have an eye for people."

"Are you saying that the son-in-law chosen by the Chu clan is no match for you?"

"Huh? Even I would beat that fellow with ease!"

...

Zu An was offended by the jarring comments coming from the onlookers.

You're the toad, your whole family are toads!

In order to further disgust those badmouthing him, he stuck closer to Chu Chuyan, giving the appearance that they were very intimate with one another.

As expected, his move was rewarded by a tidal wave of Rage points.

Hahahahaha! Envy me more! I hope all of you die of envy!

Zu An's heart blossomed with happiness. Wealth and a beautiful wife were meant to be flaunted. He would be letting down all of his haters if he failed to put his excellent resources to use to earn some additional Rage points!

“Did you bring me out on a walk just to satisfy your shallow pride?” Chu Chuyan saw through Zu An’s intentions right away, and regretted her choice to walk with him. How was she to know that he’d had such plans in mind?

Zu An smiled back at her. “Of course not. I’m just trying to nurture our feelings for one another.”

Chu Chuyan resisted the urge to roll her eyes.

Behind them, Snow cleared her throat noisily. “What kind of feelings could possibly be nurtured between you and our young miss? Stop putting yourself on a pedestal!”

Zu An had grown accustomed to Snow’s poisonous tongue. He let her remarks slide right off, and rebuked her mercilessly, “Your masters are speaking over here. Servants should know when to excuse themselves.”

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 300 Rage points!

“You!!!” Snow pointed a finger at Zu An furiously. You are really forcing me to use my trump card, huh? “I guess heaven gave you a big mouth to compensate for what you lack below.”

She made a big show of staring pitifully at his crotch.

Surprisingly, Zu An was unfazed. “Regardless of whether I’m lacking or not, it doesn’t change the fact that I’m the first man who saw and touched your body.”

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 999 Rage points!

Snow couldn’t fathom how this man could be so thick-skinned. Even while he was talking about her body, he wasn’t the least bit embarrassed.

Chu Chuyan’s patience snapped. “Enough! Don’t the two of you find it embarrassing, talking about such matters on the street?”

In unison, the two of them turned their faces away from each other and sniffed dismissively.

Their synchronised movements left Chu Chuyan with the ridiculous thought that these two were in fact the real couple, and she was no more than a third wheel.

She quickly evicted the thought from her mind. “Speaking of which, I heard that you killed dozens of Assrip Wolves?”

Zu An was surprised to hear that. “Where did you hear that from?”

“Huanzhao told me about it. She was so triumphant that it almost looked like she was boasting about something incredible.”

Recalling the excited look on her younger sister’s face, Chu Chuyan’s lips curled up into a brilliant smile, the first crack of spring revealing itself after an eternal winter. All of the men watching her at that very moment fell into a daze.

“Of course. Your hubby is no longer the same person as he used to be. I’ll let you know that I’m quite a formidable figure now!” Zu An replied with a proud expression that was practically screaming to be fed with more and more praise.

Snow burst into laughter. This fellow just can’t stop his bragging, huh?

Chu Chuyan, on the other hand, dismissed Zu An’s words. She was all too familiar with his proclivity toward boasting. Ji Xiaoxi had probably come up with a white lie to save him from the quandary he was in. Most likely, those Assrip Wolves had already been knocked out by Ji Xiaoxi’s poison before the two of them moved in for the kill.

“Since we’re on this topic, how did you get acquainted with Pei Mianman?”

This was the greatest mystery she had yet to solve. Pei Mianman was not the sort to offer her help to this sort of fellow.

“Naturally, she was charmed by my looks. She fell in love with me at first sight and lusted after my body!” Zu An couldn’t possibly mention their encounter in Chu Chuyan’s chambers, so he simply came up with something on the spot.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 99 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Passerby A for 99 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Passerby B for 99 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Passerby C for 99 Rage points!

...

Snow and some other passers-by muttered curses under their breath at his brazen pronouncement.

Chu Chuyan was also rendered speechless by Zu An’s shamelessness. She was more inclined to believe that Pei Mianman had helped him out of respect for their friendship. However, even with that explanation, there was still one more matter that didn’t make sense.

“I heard that, during the confrontation at the academy, you mentioned some night that the two of you had in common. What happened?”

Zu An hesitated. “I’m afraid that you won’t believe me.”

Chu Chuyan replied calmly, “How would you know that if you don’t give it a try?”

Hearing that, Zu An sighed deeply and said, “That night, we were tightly entwined together, and were rolling all over the floor. She doesn’t want others to know about that.”

Chu Chuyan’s expression turned frosty in an instant. “I really don’t like how you spout lies one after another so easily. Does it hurt you to speak the truth for once? It’s one thing for you to run your mouth in front of me, but if Pei Mianman were to hear those words, you can be sure that she’d kill you in a heartbeat.”

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 99 Rage points!

After berating him soundly, Chu Chuyan walked ahead, a winter storm brewing on her face. Seeing that her young miss had lost her temper, Snow quickly rushed forward to grab Chu Chuyan's arm, then turned around to direct a triumphant smile at Zu An.

Zu An could only sigh deeply to himself. I told you that you wouldn't believe it. Just what is wrong with this world? Everyone takes my lies at face value, only to doubt all of the truths I reveal!

That aside, it sure was difficult to earn his wife's Rage points. Despite hinting at an extramarital affair, she only deigned to give him ninety-nine Rage points. What a scrooge! Perhaps she had really been born as a glacier.

Lost in thought, Zu An failed to notice that the two women had already gotten far ahead of him. He rushed to catch up with them.

It took a while before Chu Chuyan's expression finally softened. She hesitated, then asked, "Are you not having a good time at the Chu Estate?"

Her question surprised Zu An. "Why would you ask that?"

"I heard that you're planning to buy a residence outside," Chu Chuyan answered.

Zu An felt something snap.

That damned bastard Cheng Shouping! He promised me to keep it a secret, but he still ended up rambling all about it to the entire world! I was still feeling guilty for forgetting to bring him out together with me, especially since I did promise to help him get together with Snow.

But now? Eat shit, you twat!

"Nah, I'm just a little interested in the property market," Zu An replied sheepishly. He needed her help for what was going to happen later, and it wouldn't do for him to anger her now.

Chu Chuyan replied with a nod, then fell silent once more. Just like that, the group of three trudged down the streets with nary a word between them.

With nothing to occupy him, Zu An looked around and noticed that many of the passers-by taking second and even third glances at Chu Chuyan, some of their gazes lingering on even after she had passed by. Yet more signs that his wife's graceful figure and beautiful appearance were almost universally attractive.

Finally, the three of them arrived at the entrance of a resplendent-looking business. Zu An turned to Chu Chuyan and said, "We're here."

There was a constant flow of traffic in and out of the front entrance, a testimony to how well the business was doing.

Chu Chuyan glanced at the plaque above the entrance, on which the words 'Silverhook Casino' were elegantly carved, and her face darkened a little. "You brought me to a gambling den?"

Zu An nodded. "Indeed."

He had heard out that the Plum Blossom Sect was the largest underworld organization in Brightmoon City. Their sources of income included protection fees from the nearby stores, as well as high-interest loans, but their most lucrative business was none other than their casino.

Money was the foundation of all organizations, and most conflicts stemmed from disagreements over money. Since the Chu clan was unable to utilize its authority to resolve his problem, he planned to wage an economic war against the Plum Blossom Sect by ruining their key source of income. That would cripple the Plum Blossom Sect.

However, such a course of action risked severe backlash from the Plum Blossom Sect. If he went too far, they might be left with nothing to lose. In their desperation, it was very likely that they would make an outright attempt on his life. Chu Chuyan was here to act as insurance in that scenario.

Given Chu Chuyan's rank five cultivation and her identity as the First Miss of the Chu clan, the Plum Blossom Sect wouldn't dare to act too recklessly.

It was true that the Chu clan's hands were tied on many matters, but any attempt to harm one of their family members would bring down the wrath of the clan's military might. By that point, even if this matter were to be brought before the royal court, the Chu clan would have nothing to fear.

Of course, all of Zu An's planning would be for naught if Chu Chuyan refused to cooperate with him. Her face had darkened even further. "Don't you know that our Chu clan strictly forbids its clan members from engaging in gambling?"

"Does it? Why?" Zu An feigned ignorance.

That the Chu clan even had such a rule baffled him. While he knew some noble clans that were very firm on their discipline, none had ever gone to the extent of forbidding gambling outright.

Chu Chuyan answered him calmly. "Our Chu clan had a patriarch who was obsessed with gambling, and nearly gambled the clan's fortunes away. It took many generations of wise leadership and diligence before the Chu clan finally built itself back up. Despite that, our businesses and our fief are still less than half of what they used to be. If not for that one misstep, the Chu clan would have been the only dominant power in Brightmoon City."

Zu An nodded in understanding. The four major noble clans in Brightmoon City consisted of the Chu clan, the Zheng clan, the Yuan clan, and the Wang clan. The Zheng clan dealt in salt, silk, and potteries; the Yuan clan specialized in the arms trade; the Wang clan had taverns and was mostly involved in food industries.

While none of them held as high of a noble position as the Chu clan, each of them was comparable in terms of fortune.

The Yu clan's base of operations wasn't in Brightmoon City, and so they were not taken into account.

From Chu Chuyan's explanation, Zu An finally understood that many of the industries that were now taken up by the other clans used to be monopolized by the Chu clan. The history of the Chu clan was quite illustrious after all.

“So, the Chu clan inscribed it into their family rules that no offspring of the Chu clan is allowed to gamble. While you aren’t strictly considered an offspring of the Chu clan, you’re still my husband in name. Needless to say, you need to abide by this rule as well.”

A husband in name is still a husband; do you need to emphasize on ‘in name’ that much? Zu An retorted silently.

That being said, he had predicted this situation beforehand, and had prepared a response. “That’s all well and good, but I’m not here to gamble. I was forced into a corner, and I have no choice but to retaliate in order to protect myself. I believe that the Chu clan doesn’t have a family rule that forbids us from fighting back when an enemy has us surrounded, right?”

Chapter 59: Gambler’s Fallacy

“Retaliation?” Chu Chuyan was stunned. “Are you calling gambling a form of retaliation?”

“Indeed,” Zu An replied matter-of-factly. “With all the influence it wields, it would be an easy feat for the Chu clan to deal with a mere underworld organization, or so I thought. It turns out it was all for show. Since your hands are tied, I can only help myself, then.”

“What do you intend to do?” Chu Chuyan asked.

“I’ll win all of their money, of course!” Zu An said earnestly.

Snow sneered. “In the end, isn’t that still gambling?”

“It’s only called gambling if there’s risk involved. If we win all the time, it’s called ‘withdrawing money’. The old patriarchs of the Chu clan forbade its clan members from gambling to ensure that later generations did not repeat their ancestors’ mistakes. They never anticipated one of their descendants marrying a Gambling God like me, who can win every single bet he makes. If they did, they would surely give their wholehearted approval!”

Chu Chuyan scoffed callously. “There’s no gambler in this world who makes a bet thinking that he would lose his money. Just look at how many people have lost their fortunes from gambling!”

Zu An took out a money pouch from his robe and said, “Don’t worry, I won’t be using the Chu clan’s money. I got this from Plum Blossom Thirteen earlier today. Even if I lose, I would just be returning these possessions back to their owner. What do you think about it?”

Chu Chuyan didn’t respond immediately. She seemed to be seriously considering what he’d said. Zu An stared at her for a moment before giving one last push. “Since you have chosen to marry me, you should believe in me a little.”

Those words seemed to strike a chord in Chu Chuyan’s heart. She had the strangest sensation that there was something different about this Zu An, compared to how he was before. Hm? Why would I have such a ridiculous feeling?

Snow interrupted her thoughts, tiptoeing to whisper into Chu Chuyan’s ears. “Young miss, I think that fellow is determined to enter the casino and gamble. Even if you refuse him now, he’ll only come by

alone later on. Why don't you let him use up his money under your watch, so that he'll drop whatever thoughts he has about buying a house and acquiring a couple of beautiful maids outside?"

Chu Chuyan nodded in agreement. Snow's suggestion was an insightful one. If Zu An were to use his money to buy a house outside and fill it with pretty maids, what would become of the Chu clan's reputation?

No wonder they said that men mustn't be spoilt with money.

"Fine, I'll allow it this once. However, I expect you to leave with me once you spend all of your money. If not, I won't hesitate to resort to force," Chu Chuyan said calmly.

Zu An blushed in embarrassment as he gave her a level look. "You don't need to resort to force. You can do whatever you want to do with me; I won't resist at all."

Chu Chuyan sniffed in response. This fellow always fools around like this.

Just as they were about to enter the casino, Snow suddenly clutched her stomach and gave a loud cry. Chu Chuyan turned to her with concern. "What's wrong?"

Snow, her cheeks red, walked over to Chu Chuyan's side and whispered softly to her. After which, Chu Chuyan nodded in response and instructed her, "Go ahead. Come back and look for us once you're done."

"Alright. Thank you, young miss."

Watching as Snow hurried off, Zu An turned to Chu Chuyan and asked, "What's wrong with her?"

Chu Chuyan glared at him impatiently. "It's a matter for women only. Don't even try to pry into it."

"Alright alright, I won't pry into it," Zu An replied with a leisurely smile. He could pretty much guess it, even if Chu Chuyan wouldn't explain it out loud.

The two of them entered the casino, and soon became the center of attention, drawing the gazes of everyone inside. Chu Chuyan's outstanding appearance made it impossible to be discreet. Her flawless face, graceful silhouette, and impeccable disposition stood in stark contrast to the crude bustle in the casino.

The men who frequented the casinos tended to be boorish, and Chu Chuyan's beautiful appearance fanned the flames of their lust. Some of them even began directing catcalls at her.

However, there were many who clearly recognized who she was, and swiftly put an end to their companions' foolishness.

"Are you tired of living? That's the First Miss of the Chu clan!"

"Woah, she's so pretty! Who's that cocky fellow standing beside her, then?"

"He must be the husband of the Chu First Miss, that wastrel son-in-law."

"He does look pretty average to me. How did he ever win her fancy?"

"I wonder too. He looks pretty ordinary, although just a little more handsome, and with more delicate features. That kind of man can't be relied on! If I have to say, masculine men like me are the best!"

"Goddamnit! That lucky son of a bitch!"

...

Zu An was roundly detested by all those in the casino, but he was more than happy to accept their offerings of Rage points. Going on frequent walks in public with his wife seemed a sound strategy. With it, he would never have to worry about a lack of Rage points.

If Chu Chuyan had been privy to his current thoughts, she would have worn through her kindness and patience, and pummeled him until his cheeks were swollen like a pig's.

"Chu First Miss, what brings you here today?"

The manager of the casino was Plum Blossom Seven. As soon as he'd received news of Chu First Miss' arrival, he had rushed out to welcome her, a professional businessman's smile masking his uneasiness at her presence.

Is she here to deal with the Plum Blossom Sect? I've already sent my men to inform the sect master about it, but heaven knows whether he'll make it in time or not.

He knew that he didn't have the means to deal with a rank five cultivator. Moreover, she was the First Miss of the Chu clan as well, which meant that he had to be careful not to insult her. This was a problem far beyond his means to deal with!

Chu Chuyan was clearly unused to such a rowdy and crude atmosphere. She used a hand to fan away the smoke lingering in front of her. "You need not pay any heed to me. I'm accompanying him today."

It was only then that Plum Blossom Seven noticed Zu An. Then again, who would have bothered with a perfectly ordinary man when there was such a gorgeous woman standing before them?

"Oh, so it's young master Zu! May I know what business you have with us today?"

Plum Blossom Seven kept his fake smile plastered on his face as he silently cursed Zu An. This fellow was known to be a wastrel who was inept in both academics and martial arts, and had only succeeded in life because of his looks.

In the past, this sort of man would have been beneath his notice, but right now, he actually had to force a smile and speak politely to him. Damn it, I want to mooch off a woman too!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 200 Rage points!

Having received Plum Blossom Seven's offering, Zu An's lips curved upwards. "Are you cursing me in your mind right now?"

Plum Blossom Seven's heart skipped a beat, and he beat out a hasty denial. "No no, of course not. You're the young master of the Chu clan. How would I dare do something so disrespectful to you?"

There was no missing Plum Blossom Seven's implication that, if not for his status, Zu An would have been treated as worse than trash.

Plum Blossom Seven noticed Zu An's gaze wandering around the casino, and tried to probe his intentions. "Young master Zu, may I know what brings you here today?"

"What other reason would I be here for other than to gamble? Do you think that I would come here to eat?" Zu An replied impatiently.

Plum Blossom Seven clicked his tongue quietly. You're only putting on a smug act because you're faring well now. Would you have dared to talk to me in such a manner in the past, huh?

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 300 Rage points!

Wait a moment, he's here to gamble?

Realization suddenly struck Plum Blossom Seven, and he turned to look at Chu Chuyan in disbelief. Am I hearing things? A member of the Chu clan is here to gamble, and he even brought Chu First Miss with him?

Chu Chuyan remarked nonchalantly, "Like I said, I'm only here to accompany him. You need not look at me."

Plum Blossom Seven quickly turned back to Zu An. "You said that you're here to gamble?"

"Are you that deaf that I need to repeat myself again?" Zu An looked at Plum Blossom Seven in disdain. "Why? Don't you welcome me here?"

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 99 Rage points!

Plum Blossom Seven's instinctive rage was quickly replaced by frenzied joy. "Of course not! We welcome you with open arms! Come, invite young master Zu to the VIP room!"

He knew that the sect master had tasked Plum Blossom Thirteen to deal with Zu An, but not only had he ended up losing the promissory note, he'd even gotten his legs fractured. However, since the one responsible was none other than Lu De from Brightmoon Academy, the sect couldn't exact vengeance.

Similarly, Zu An was the young master of the Chu clan and a student of Brightmoon Academy. Without suitable justification, the Plum Blossom Sect couldn't afford to lay hands on him. They'd been at a loss as to what to do, yet at a moment like this, this fellow had walked right through their door!

You're here to gamble? Hah! You must not know what kind of place this casino is! Even if your family is loaded, we're still able to make you lose everything within a single night!

Everyone knew that Chu clan forbade its clan members from gambling, and Brightmoon Academy had their own rules against it as well. While Plum Blossom Seven had no idea what the Chu First Miss was doing here, their casino had plenty of tricks up to ensure that Zu An incurred an overwhelming debt.

By then, they just had to announce it all over town, and it would be all over for Zu An. Without the protection of the Chu clan and the academy, the Plum Blossom Sect would be able to do as they pleased to him!

Nay, Brother Thirteen would probably want Zu An all to himself.

He wouldn't have sent his men to inform the sect master, if only he'd known beforehand that their appearance here was nothing major. It would have been much better to wait for Zu An to be drowning in debt before reporting his accomplishments to the sect master.

Zu An raised his hand to forestall Plum Blossom Seven. "There's no need for the VIP room. I enjoy the bustle out here." His plan needed plenty of people around as witnesses. The cold and empty VIP room simply wouldn't do.

Meanwhile, at the main headquarters of the Plum Blossom Sect, a gathering of sect members stood respectfully before a green-robed woman.

"Miss Qiao, what brings you here today?"

If Zu An had been there, he would have surely recognized the green-robed woman as none other than Snow.

A woman hid frantically in a corner, holding up pieces of clothing to cover her naked body. Snow glanced at her and remarked coldly, "There should be a limit to just how lustful you are. You keep her by your side despite having killed her husband; aren't you afraid of vengeance?"

That woman was the wife of Tan Wei, who had met his end at the hands of Plum Blossom Twelve.

Mei Chaofeng burst into hearty laughter. "You're thinking too much, Miss Qiao. I have already conquered both her body and her heart!"

The woman lowered her head further, seemingly embarrassed at Mei Chaofeng's words.

Snow's forehead furrowed in disgust. "I'm here to inform you that Zu An is at Silverhook Casino right now."

Mei Chaofeng was stunned. "What's he doing at the casino?"

"Your brain must have been dulled from lust." Snow's expression was disdainful. "He's at the casino to gamble, of course."

Her insult stoked Mei Chaofeng's wrath. If not for the fact that the young master favors you and gave you the Anyang Token, I would have surely toyed with you until your legs wouldn't close!

His face remained a calm mask. "That Zu An is nothing more than a fool. He lost a thousand silver taels to us the last time around, and yet he still hasn't learned from his lesson?"

Snow gave a slight shake of her head. "You shouldn't get careless. Based on what I've heard, it seems like he's pretty confident this time around. He said that he's here not to gamble but to withdraw money."

"Hahahaha!" Mei Chaofeng's laughter was so great that even the tiles on the roof shook. "Just what kind of place does he take our Silverhook Casino to be? No matter how much money he has, I have the means to make him lose it all!"

Snow, however, was unimpressed by how lightly he was taking this matter.

"It's still best for you to be careful. He seems different than before. I can't put my finger on it, but since he dared to boast before Chu Chuyan, I reckon that he has some plan in mind."

Mei Chaofeng shook his head.

"Miss Qiao, you're only saying all of this because you're unfamiliar with how the casino works. Those who have lost big in the casino tend to suffer from what we call the Gambler's Fallacy. They believe that, having lost so much money, their luck will somehow turn around if they keep playing. However, all of them eventually end up losing everything they have, including their wives!"

Chapter 60: Just Who is the Antagonist Here?

"In any case, you ought to be careful." Snow was reassured by Mei Chaofeng's explanation. "Do you want to head to the casino to take a look at yourself?"

"There's no need for that." Mei Chaofeng took a huge swig of wine. "Plum Blossom Seven might be weak, but he's been able to rise to such a high position because of his gambling skills. No one has managed to best him in the past decade. In fact, he hasn't had to take a personal hand in the business for a long time. His bunch of trained underlings are able to hold the fort all on their own. With him at the Silverhook Casino, nothing can go wrong. Stay here and wait patiently for the good news!"

...

Meanwhile, at the casino, Plum Blossom Seven bowed slightly toward Zu An. "Young master Zu, may I know what you wish to play?"

Plum Blossom Seven was disgusted with how subservient he had to act, but he knew that his sacrifice would soon pay off. Once this fellow lost all of his money, he would pay back the humiliation he'd suffered a hundredfold.

"Which game is the most dependent on luck?" Zu An took a look around as he asked. The reason why he dared come to this casino to 'withdraw money' was, of course, not because he was some kind of Gambling God. Rather, he had a trusty tool known as the Fortune Pill in his grasp.

Some of the rewards given out by the keyboard were questionable, but if used appropriately, they could be incredibly formidable. Zu An had experienced this firsthand.

Take the Fortune Pill for example. He'd initially planned to use it on the lottery, but the disclaimer provided by the Keyboard put that plan to rest. He'd been at a loss as to how to best use it, and that had left him feeling upset for a long while.

Only with the appearance of Plum Blossom Thirteen did an idea pop into his mind. While skill had great influence over the outcome of a gamble, the most important factor of all was none other than luck. In the face of absolute luck, even the greatest of gambling skill was powerless.

Of course, this was built on the assumption that no one was cheating. Otherwise, even the luckiest person in the world would be scammed of all of his money.

For that reason, he had to bring Chu Chuyan along with him. It was not just out of consideration of his own safety, but to also ensure that the dealers in the casino didn't cheat.

Chu Chuyan was a fifth rank cultivator. While she hardly knew anything about gambling, it was unlikely that the dealers could pull off any tricks without her sharp eyes noticing.

"The game that's most dependent on luck is no other than the Dices Trove!" Plum Blossom Seven replied with a chuckle.

While dice appear to be dependent on luck at first glance, our dealers are skilled enough to roll any numbers we want to. Let's see how you lose all of your money here!

"What's Dices Trove?" Zu An asked.

"It's just guessing whether the number is 'big' or 'small'," Plum Blossom Seven replied, surprised at the question.

"Then just say that it's 'Big and Small'. Why do you need to find such a pointless name for it?" Zu An said with a scornful look.

This time around, Plum Blossom Seven kept his cool.

Heh, it looks like you don't even know about dice at all. It's no wonder why you lost a thousand silver taels the last time around. This time, I'll make sure you lose at least 10,000 silver taels; no, tens of thousands of silver taels! With that, I shall officially retire from business!

"Hahaha, Zu An! You sure know how to court your own doom!" Arrogant laughter boomed from the entrance to the casino.

Zu An turned, and was greeted by the sight of Plum Blossom Thirteen being pushed in on a wheelchair. His eyes were red, like those of a madman.

Plum Blossom Seven was alarmed by Plum Blossom Thirteen's sudden arrival. This fellow! Can't he hold it in a little? We should rope this scoundrel in first before doing anything. What do we do if he chickens out and runs away?

Zu An, on the other hand, seemed delighted to see Plum Blossom Thirteen. "You should rest at home if you're injured. If you keep moving about, you might just end up breaking your arms too."

Plum Blossom Thirteen clenched his jaws so tightly, his gums were in danger of injury. "You scoundrel! Now that the teachers of the academy aren't around to protect you anymore, let's see how you'll fare! Men, smash that brat's arms and legs!"

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 798 Rage points!

"Yes, boss!"

Given Plum Blossom Thirteen's high standing in the Plum Blossom Sect, it was only natural that he would have plenty of subordinates serving under him.

As soon as those brutes began charging at Zu An, he ducked behind Chu Chuyan and exclaimed fearfully, "Honey, you see, you see! Those fellows dare to act so arrogantly even in your presence! This should be enough to show that I'm not lying to you, right?"

Chu Chuyan bristled at how Zu An had addressed her, but it didn't feel appropriate to correct him with so many onlookers. She vented her rage at Plum Blossom Thirteen instead. "What did you say earlier?"

A chilling aura instantly blanketed the area, and the bustling casino fell eerily silent. Many of the gamblers found themselves shivering inexplicably.

Plum Blossom Thirteen almost fell out of his wheelchair. He rushed here as soon as he'd heard that Zu An was in the casino, but he didn't know Chu Chuyan had accompanied him. No matter how brazen he was, he would never have messed around in her presence.

That was a fifth rank expert right there! With the exception of the the sect master, even the whole Plum Blossom Sect combined wouldn't be a match for her!

The tension was so thick it was hard to breathe. Plum Blossom Seven immediately stepped forward to mediate. "Miss Chu, it's a misunderstanding! Brother Thirteen was hurt earlier today, so it can't be helped that he's a little on edge. He's definitely got the wrong person here."

"Got the wrong person?" Chu Chuyan sneered coldly. She turned to Zu An and asked, "How do you want to deal with him?"

Zu An was a little surprised by that question. Chu Chuyan was usually very cold towards him around the estate, so he hadn't expected her to show him such respect outside.

Beaming at the current situation, he pointed at Plum Blossom Thirteen. "Since that fellow wanted to break my limbs, let's return the favor and break his."

"Very well."

A white blur streaked forward before anyone could react, and Plum Blossom Thirteen cried out in pain. He toppled out of his wheelchair, and his groans continued loudly as he lay on the floor, his limbs bent at odd angles. Clearly, his arms and legs had been broken. Blood leaked out through the bandages around his knees.

Chu Chuyan calmly returned to Zu An's side, resuming her frosty demeanor. A chorus of horrified gasps were heard around the casino.

Underneath her beautiful and graceful appearance, she's actually such a vicious individual?

Those who had catcalled earlier swallowed in fear, and surreptitiously took several steps backward to blend into the crowd.

Zu An gave Chu Chuyan a thumbs-up. As expected of my wife. Straightforward and vicious—ah no, I mean straightforward and elegant.

Chu Chuyan turned to Zu An and said nonchalantly, "Don't think too much into it. I'm not doing this for you. I'm doing this to uphold the honor of the Chu clan."

She had doubted Zu An's story, but Plum Blossom Thirteen's arrogant attitude had settled them. Even if Zu An had exaggerated the situation, his version of events was likely not too far off from the truth.

The Plum Blossom Sect was indeed planning to end his life!

While the Chu clan steered clear of politics so as to not rouse the suspicions of the royal court, it was not one to respond meekly to direct attacks. The fact that Plum Blossom Thirteen had dared to utter such threats toward a member of the Chu clan in her presence was clear provocation.

If I hadn't made a move, everyone would have seen that our Chu clan are pushovers!

"It's all the same! We're all from the Chu clan after all!" Zu An remarked gleefully.

Chu Chuyan rolled her eyes. This fellow's skin is really as thick as the city walls!

Zu An sensed a good chance to reap Rage points. He ran up to Plum Blossom Thirteen and gazed down on him from above. "What did I say earlier? Since your legs are injured, you should have stayed at home obediently to recuperate. If you insisted on staying out, you might just injure your arms. Still, you chose to ignore my advice and did as you pleased. Hah! You must be regretting your foolishness right now!"

Plum Blossom Thirteen roared at him furiously, "Zu An, stop hiding behind others and fight me one-on-one!"

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

"Hah! Unlike the powerless hoodlum that you are, I have connections and backing to rely on. Do you know how precious my body is, now? A lowlife like you isn't worth dirtying my hands over! Besides, why don't you get with the times? Who still plays one-on-one these days?"

Holy shit! This level of shamelessness is insane!

The crowd grew disgruntled. You're also a lowlife just a few days ago, but now, you're really taking yourself to be a noble, huh?

You have successfully trolled Passerby A for 66 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Passerby B for 66 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Passerby C for 66 Rage points!

...

Even Chu Chuyan, looking on impassively, felt an urge to stifle Zu An's horrible mouth.

Plum Blossom Thirteen finally reached the limit of his patience and bellowed, "Precious? You must be joking! You are just a mooch!"

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 999 Rage points!

"So what if I am? If you're that capable, why don't you find a rich, beautiful, and powerful wife like mine then?" Zu An said as he leisurely wrapped his arms around Chu Chuyan's shoulders.

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 666 Rage points!

At this point, Plum Blossom Thirteen couldn't tell whether he was angry at Zu An's shamelessness, or at the fact that he had been unable to find a wife like Chu Chuyan.

Zu An's gleeful boasting had riled up the crowd as well, and a huge serving of Rage points was served up to him on a platter.

Not going to the VIP room now seemed an inspired decision. Without a crowd to watch the show, how could he earn so many Rage points?

Chu Chuyan tilted her body slightly, shaking off Zu An's arms. Her face was dark. She whispered harshly, "Shut up! You're really embarrassing me!"

This level of unfettered shamelessness had far surpassed her comprehension.

At this, Zu An walked back over to Plum Blossom Thirteen. "Look, now you've angered my wife. Fine, I'll fight you one-on-one then!"

There were question marks in Plum Blossom Thirteen's eyes.

What? You're the one who angered her in the first place! Why are you pinning the blame on me?

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 666 Rage points!

Wait a moment, did you say one-on-one?

Before he could react, the sole of a boot smashed right into his face, causing his nose to bleed profusely.

Zu An sighed deeply as he lamented, "You cried desperately for me to fight you one-on-one, and yet, you turned out to be so weak that you can't even handle a single blow from me? Why must you put yourself through such misery?"

Son of a bitch! You only accept my challenge after breaking all my limbs, huh?!

Countless times, Plum Blossom Thirteen had imagined how he would pummel Zu An until shit came spilling out of his guts, once there was no one to back him up. Yet, when it seemed his opportunity had finally arrived, he had ended up on the wrong end of a beating instead.

Being humiliated by a wastrel! The sheer frustration and anger that welled up within him knocked him out cold.

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Thirteen for 1024 Rage points!

Zu An was a little surprised. This was the first time that his Rage points earned in a single troll had exceeded 1000. Could this be the true upper limit of a person's rage, or was this amount of rage just too difficult to generate?

He prepared to smash his foot into Plum Blossom Thirteen again, but Plum Blossom Seven and the others had recovered from their daze, and rushed forward to stop him.

"He has already passed out. Please let him go."

The words felt awkward to Plum Blossom Seven. Their Plum Blossom Sect were specialists in bullying others, and these were the words usually spoken by weaklings trying to play the hero. He had never imagined that he would be put in such a position one day.

This truly is...

For the first time in his life, Plum Blossom Seven found himself doubting whether he was really a bad guy!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 666 Rage points!