

Immortal 531

Chapter 531: The Unexpected Beginning of a Trial

While the two of them were resting and recovering, Pei Mianman sent Zu An a voice transmission. “Ah Zu, you have to be careful later on. We cannot trust this Ya Zhang character.”

“Indeed.” Zu An nodded. “There might be some hidden traps on that owl statue. But we’ll talk about this more after we recover.”

“All right.” Pei Mianman had no objections. She began to focus all her attention on her recovery.

Zu An regulated his breathing while asking Mi Li, “Big sis empress, do you think there’s anything wrong with that owl statue?”

Mi Li’s soul body appeared, but of course, only Zu An, who was bound to her, could see her. “I checked it out earlier and didn’t see any hidden mechanisms. If it really is as Ya Zhang says, that no one has ever passed the trial, then there’s no need to set up any traps. Those who enter will die anyway.”

Zu An saw her expression and grew curious. “Since it’s already so dangerous, why aren’t you stopping me from entering?”

“Why do I need to stop you?” Mi Li looked at him in confusion. “The greater the risk, the greater the return. Now that we know that there are bountiful rewards waiting at the end of the trial, I’d have to be mad to stop you.”

Zu An was left speechless for a moment. “But Ya Zhang said that many others with cultivation levels far above ours failed to pass the trial,” he finally managed.

Although cultivation was only one aspect of a person, more often than not, cultivation also represented an individual’s ability, aptitude, and luck. Putting aside age and opportunities, those with higher cultivation usually possessed more intelligence and wisdom. If so many geniuses had failed before, what hope would they have of success?

Mi Li frowned when she heard what he said. “Preposterous! Cultivators should be unyielding, and be willing to challenge all odds! If you’re always so scared that you’re about to sh*t your pants all the time, what’s the point of cultivating at all?!”

Zu An became gloomy. “It’s not like I’m scared of dying... I just don’t want to bring you down with me too. Our souls are bound together, so if I die, you’ll die too. Fifth rank cultivators like me are a dime a dozen—if I die, then so be it, but you’re a powerful expert. It’ll be too much of a pity if you end up dying because of me.”

Mi Li was stunned by his words, and her expression immediately softened. “So you were worried about me. Don’t worry, I believe in you. Only if you become stronger will I have a greater chance of reforging my body in the future.”

Zu An wanted to cry. Telling him that she believed in him didn’t make him feel better at all. He didn’t even have any confidence in himself to begin with.

As if she could sense his uncertainty, Mi Li continued, "Do you think I only said that as mere consolation? I really do believe in you, because I've seen what you are capable of. You have endless miraculous skills at your disposal, and you're a crafty person yourself. I refuse to believe that the Shang monarch's trial can defeat someone who managed to conquer Ying Zheng's three formations. If you managed to survive even that, what's there to worry about with a trial like this?"

Zu An was stunned. You're actually right... Ying Zheng was none other than one of history's most powerful emperors! He was the one who unified all of China, establishing traditions that lasted thousands of years. To a certain degree, he was like the emperor of emperors.

Even though the Shang Dynasty was powerful, it was still inferior to the Qin Dynasty. Their monarchs and the talents they possessed would never be able to match up to those of the First Emperor. Since he'd even faced off against this First Emperor, what else did he have to be afraid of?

Mi Li's voice softened further. "Besides, even if you really did fail the trial, at worst, I'll just die with you. I don't even think it's that big of a deal, so what are you getting worried for?"

Zu An finally regained his usual confident and easygoing manner. "When you put it like that, it sounds as though we're meeting death together in the name of love. I didn't think that you cared so much for me, big sis empress."

Mi Li rolled her eyes. "Save your smooth talk for your big-boobed sis over there. It's useless on me."

Zu An looked exasperated. "Manman has a name, you know? Why do you keep calling her that?"

Mi Li gave Pei Mianman a sidelong glance. Her gaze hovered over her chest, and she mumbled, "Who asked her to have such big boobs."

Zu An could only shake his head.

After this brief period of rest, the two of them were more or less prepared. Even though they hadn't completely recovered, they were about ninety percent there. Further rest would be meaningless, as they could feel their ki beginning to disappear at a faster rate. If they waited around any longer, they might truly begin to assimilate into the surrounding dungeon.

Zu An had a question for Ya Zhang. "Does the soul alone enter the trial, or does the body enter as well?"

"To be honest, I do not know too much about what the trial is all about," Ya Zhang replied in a low voice. "However, this is a question I can answer. It is your soul that enters, because the previous men and women who undertook this trial remained next to the owl statue even after their trial had begun."

Zu An's expression changed. "Doesn't that mean that you can kill us once we begin the trial?"

He was fully aware that Ya Zhang was only treating them well right now because of the threat of his primordial ki. After all, this dried-up corpse had wanted to kill him before.

"You do not need to worry about that," replied Ya Zhang. Once the trial begins, a formation will protect you. The owl statue that the empress left behind will grant you protection from any external force, and this protection will only disappear after the trial ends.

“Furthermore, I will have completed my task once you start the trial, and I will return to my coffin and sleep. After all, this trial might go on for a long time. I do not have the patience to wait for it to reach its conclusion.”

Zu An figured as much. There was no way the Shang monarch would set up something like this just to kill someone.

Despite this, he didn’t dare to trust Ya Zhang completely. As he wrestled with this conflict, Mi Li’s voice came from beside him. “Don’t worry, I’ll take care of things on this end. Even if that protective formation doesn’t exist, that dried-up corpse general won’t be able to hurt you.”

Zu An was overjoyed. Mi Li would never say something that she wasn’t able to accomplish. “There’s nothing I need to worry about, then. Oh, you have to protect Manman too.”

He remembered her poor attitude towards Pei Mianman the entire time, and was belatedly worried that she might not do anything to protect her. It would be too late for regrets then.

Mi Li did not take his implications well.

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for 22... 22... 22...

“Do I really seem like such a malicious person to you?” Mi Li asked with a frosty stare.

“It’s not maliciousness, but killing decisively,” replied Zu An. “That’s something people of your status would probably do.”

Mi Li sniffed disdainfully. “Killing decisively doesn’t mean acting stupidly. This trial clearly requires the both of you in order to succeed. If I let your big-boobed sis die without doing anything, wouldn’t I be harming you as well? That’s the same as harming myself.”

Zu An let himself relax. What Mi Li said made a lot of sense. “Sorry, big sis empress. I was too small-minded, and judged you unfairly.”

Mi Li turned her away, not bothering with him any further.

“I’ll leave it to you, then,” said Zu An as he smiled awkwardly. With that, he and Pei Mianman went to the owl statue.

Pei Mianman wasn’t stupid, and let him know of her own worries through ki transmission. She too was afraid that Ya Zhang might try something.

“Don’t worry, I’ve already taken care of that,” Zu An reassured her.

Pei Mianman set aside her worries. Ever since she’d met Zu An, she had known him to be reliable when dealing with important matters. Since he said so, she was sure that they would face no problems.

She didn’t know why she trusted this man so much. Her past self would have thought that she’d gone crazy.

Zu An held her hand to prevent something unexpected from happening later on. Then, they put their hands on the owl’s wings as Ya Zhang instructed. They sent their ki and their minds inside.

The owl statue suddenly erupted in a burst of golden light. All of the patterns adorning its body lit up, making it incredibly dazzling to look at.

Before the two of them could tell what exactly had happened, they felt as if they were being pulled into a giant whirlpool. Then, they lost consciousness.

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A while later, Zu An woke up in a groggy state. He found himself lying on a luxurious ivory bed. There was even a mist-like muslin veil around it.

He sat up, and all of the covers fell off of his body. He discovered with shock that he was stark naked.

Before he could process what was happening, a charming feminine moan came from beside him.

Chapter 532: What Exactly is Being Tested?

Zu An turned around and saw a young lady lying next to him. He couldn't see her face clearly because of the long back hair falling across her face in waves. However, when he got up and the sheets fell off his body, it left a rather large expanse of snow white skin exposed.

Even though he only caught a glimpse, he could already imagine her seductive figure. Her skin was glowing, and absolutely captivating. Zu An immediately felt his body grow stiff.

"Something's not right with this opening!"

Zu An swallowed, and began to ponder hard.

According to Ya Zhang's description, no one had ever passed this trial before. That meant that this trial was probably extremely dangerous, yet the environment he found himself in was ridiculously extravagant, and did not seem dangerous at all.

Was the greatest danger of this trial the woman beside him?

Setting a honey trap against me? Oh man, this is super effective...

Wait, where's Big Manman?

This sudden thought made his expression warp. He looked all around him, but aside from the young lady next to him, there wasn't another person in sight.

Wait, these spectacular waves look somewhat familiar.

The young lady next to him moaned in a charming fashion. She was about to wake up.

The sound came out of her so naturally, like a cool breeze blowing between the mountains, the song of an oriole, and even a hint of sultry seduction. It was enough to make any man's heart go wild.

Zu An's entire body went rigid. He felt as if he was about to explode. However, there was something else that he was considering: How was he supposed to explain the current situation to her?

This is just like the beginning of a damn soap opera! Wait, no... a soap opera wouldn't dare let the actors really go this far.

The young lady gradually woke up. She sat up subconsciously, and seemed just about to look around her.

But she suddenly sensed the chill on her chest, and swiftly realized that she wasn't covered at all.

She screamed in alarm and covered her chest, but there was no way her dainty fingers were enough to cover those majestic peaks.

Zu An felt his nose grow terribly hot. It felt as though blood might gush out at any time.

By now, though, he had already recognized who she was. He laughed and said, "You know, in this sort of situation, the first thing you should cover is your face."

The young lady realized that a man was beside her, and was just about to go crazy when she recognized his familiar and playful voice. She was overcome with surprise and joy. "Ah Zu?"

Zu An smiled. "Big Manman, it's me~"

He wanted to exchange a warm gaze with her, but his eyes were sucked downwards, as though drawn by a magnet.

Pei Mianman noticed his gaze moving, and her devastatingly charming face flushed completely red. Her beautiful peach-blossom eyes were shrouded with a watery mist.

"Do you like them?" Her voice sounded even more lovely than usual.

"I do..." Zu An nodded subconsciously, but quickly realized what he'd said and frantically tried to explain himself. "Um... I wasn't looking on purpose! When I woke up, we were already like this..."

He knew that the women of this world cared a lot about their chastity. Even though Pei Mianman was usually flirtatious and charming, he knew that it was just a front. She was actually still a maiden. Now that a man had seen all of her, she might be furious and ashamed.

Before he could finish blurting out an excuse, a soft finger pressed against his lips. "You dummy, what are you getting so nervous about? Do you see me accusing you?"

"Huh?" Zu An blinked. His mind couldn't process what was happening.

Pei Mianman slowly leaned into him. She pressed her cheek against his chest, and she said with a gentle voice, "I was about to go mad when I woke up and realized that I was naked, with a man beside me. I was just about to kill him when I realized that it was you."

"So what if it's me?" Zu An felt his heart racing as he took in her beautiful fragrance, and he subconsciously wrapped his arm around her shoulder.

The feel of her bare skin under his hand made him feel as though he was in heaven.

Pei Mianman pursed her lips, then tilted her head up to look at him. "If it's you, then I'm okay with it."

“Manman...” Zu An felt his entire body go rock solid when he heard her affectionate words, and even the softest parts deep within him were touched as well.

Pei Mianman smiled sweetly when she saw his astonished expression. “You dummy, we already established our relationship outside. What’s up with that look?”

Zu An chuckled and said. “This blessing came so abruptly that I didn’t have time to react.”

Pei Mianman snorted. “You woke up first. Why didn’t you wake me up as well? I was given a fright for nothing.”

Zu An stared at her and mumbled, “Your face was covered by your hair, and I really didn’t recognize you with your clothes off...”

Pei Mianman was speechless.

Both ashamed and furious, she hit him with a playful punch.

Zu An fought back just as playfully. As their bodies pressed against each other, the both of them began to heat up.

In the end, Zu An grabbed her hands, and Pei Mianman also stopped moving. Her large, misty eyes stared straight at him, full of tenderness and affection. There was no mistaking her intent.

Staring at her soft, red lips, Zu An could no longer hold himself back. He slowly moved closer.

Pei Mianman’s entire body went rigid when she sensed him coming nearer to her. However, she relaxed just as quickly, and stayed where she was. She slowly closed her eyes.

Pei Mianman’s entire body trembled when she sensed his lips. It was as if electricity was flowing through her entire body. Her arms moved subconsciously to envelop him.

Sweethearts who have just established their relationship were all like this, fully immersed and affectionate as they shared their kiss.

After what seemed like forever, their lips finally parted. Pei Mianman’s cheeks were rosy, and her voice grew gentler and more lovely. “Your sword is pressing against me.”

Zu An’s face went red. He didn’t know how to explain himself.

But Pei Mianman was also quick to react to what was happening. Both of them were naked in the same bed. How could he possibly have a sword with him?

She lifted a corner of the covers to take a look, and her peach-blossom eyes immediately grew even more misty.

Zu An was just about to say something when Pei Mianman giggled. “I was wondering why all of the boys in the academy were acting so strangely after making their way out of the Ursae Dungeon. Some rumors were spreading, and I even caught a few of them to interrogate them, but not a single one dared to speak. Now, I finally know why.”

Zu An blushed with shame. This woman really was tough! She had actually captured some other students and interrogated them about this!

Pei Mianman's face turned pink when she said this. She snorted and said, "No wonder those men called you a donkey. I thought they were cursing you back then, but now..." Her words dissolved in a fit of giggles.

Zu An was upset. "You evil witch, are you taunting me? If I lose control, you'll have to bear the responsibility!"

Pei Mianman leaned into his embrace. She twirled a strand of hair between her fingers. "I'll bear the responsibility."

Zu An's heart was beating fiercely. He wasn't entirely sure what she meant.

Once again, Pei Mianman lifted a corner of the covers. She gasped and said, "Wow... how did Chuyan's delicate body take on such a monster?"

How could Zu An still possibly hold himself back? He rolled and pressed himself down on her, looking straight into her eyes. "Won't you know once you give it a try?"

Pei Mianman looked back at him with her misty eyes. "You dummy, I've already told you that I'm yours. Why are you hesitating?"

Zu An let out a bestial roar. He pressed his lips against hers and kissed her passionately.

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A while later, Pei Mianman's beautiful brows knit together in a frown. Her charming face showed the barest hint of pain. She pressed a hand against his chest and said, "Hold... hold on..."

"What's wrong?" Zu An was about to curse. My bowstring is pulled all the way back and ready to fire! Are you trying to kill me?!

The sensation of pain had triggered another thought in Pei Mianman's mind. "Ah Zu, aren't we still in a trial?"

Zu An nodded. He remembered the reason why they were here as well.

Pei Mianman pursed her lips for a moment, then asked him a few small secrets only the two of them knew about. When he answered every one correctly, she sighed and said, "I was worried that I might have fallen for some sort of illusion. That's why I had to confirm your identity first."

Zu An chuckled and said, "Manman, you really are sharp." At the same time, he was a little perplexed. What exactly was this trial supposed to be about? Could it be that this trial really was a honey trap?

Chapter 533: My King, There's Bad News!

Zu An was a little uneasy after all. He noticed that their surroundings were absolutely magnificent, and there seemed to be some people on guard outside the room. He covered Pei Mianman with the blanket, then shouted. "Send someone inside!"

The door was opened with a creak. A young maid slowly walked in.

The maid was quite pretty. In his previous world, she would have been considered the prettiest girl in class.

However, Zu An was already used to having the absolutely stunning Pei Mianman around him, and was greatly immune to such beauty. He wasn't so easily moved by such ordinarily pretty girls.

Her outfit was quite eye-catching, though, mostly because she wasn't wearing much at all. She wore a small corset and a miniskirt, which just about covered her key areas.

The young lady's fair and slim waist was exposed, as well as her well proportioned legs. Her youthfulness was on full display.

After the initial shock had passed, Zu An realized that goods were probably in short supply in ancient times. The industries of spinning and weaving hadn't quite taken off yet, so people were often dressed in less clothing. This young lady wasn't deliberately trying to expose herself.

He sighed in envy. Men from such ancient times really were blessed!

While his mind was wandering, the maid greeted them respectfully. "My King, what orders do you have for me?"

"King?" Zu An was shocked. Pei Mianman's eyes also went wide. She clearly did not expect this either.

"What dynasty are we in?" Zu An quickly asked.

"Dynasty?" The maid looked confused. She clearly didn't understand the meaning of this word.

Zu An quickly cleared his throat and tried again. "Which state are we in?"

The maid understood him this time. "This is the Shang State. My King, is there something wrong? Why are you suddenly asking me something so strange?"

Zu An was startled. He was worried that he had just slipped up in front of her. But after thinking it over for a bit, he realized that he was the king, after all, and there wasn't anything to be worried about. After all, those in the Shang Dynasty were quick to offer up human lives as sacrifices.

As such, he put on a serious expression and cleared his throat. "Am I the one asking the questions, or are you?"

That maid was so scared that she threw herself to the ground when she saw his anger, not knowing it was feigned. Her entire body shook as she said, "My King, please spare me! Please spare me!"

From her horrified expression alone, Zu An could sense just how terrifying the Shang Dynasty's methods of punishment were.

Scaring a girl like this made him feel rather awful. However, he remembered his objective, so he had no choice now but to harden his heart. "Speak my name, and I shall spare your life."

That servant girl frantically kowtowed in apology. "My King, please spare me! This servant doesn't dare speak your glorious name!"

Zu An snorted. "If I tell you to say it, then say it. If you don't speak, I will have you turned into mincemeat."

This maid's expression altered greatly. She clearly understood just how bitter a punishment being turned into mincemeat was. "Respectfully, my King, your name is Wu Ding, history's greatest monarch..."

She was quite bright, and immediately launched into a long list of bootlicking praise.

"Wu Ding?" Zu An frowned. He recalled the documentary that he'd watched in his previous world, and the murals which Mi Li had explained. A bunch of information about Wu Ding flooded his mind.

He was here to participate in a trial. Why did he suddenly become the Shang Dynasty's Wu Ding?

Something else occurred to him. He pointed at Pei Mianman and said, "What about her? Who is she?"

The maid had a strange look on her face. My King, how could you forget who she is? Have you somehow been possessed, your Majesty?

Of course, she did not dare give voice to any of these thoughts. Instead, she hurriedly replied, "My King, she is your queen, Fu Hao."

"Fu Hao?" Zu An's shock was even greater than when he found out that he was Wu Ding. After all, Fu Hao was the first female general recorded in Chinese history, as well as a queen and a high priest. All that added together made her an absolutely legendary figure.

Pei Mianman was shocked as well. Even though she wasn't familiar with the history of the Shang Dynasty, she knew that she was an outstanding and heroic woman, from the way Ya Zhang had praised her earlier. They had entered into this trial through Fu Hao's bronze owl statue as well.

Zu An looked at the shaking maid kneeling before him. As someone who had crossed over from a civilized world, he couldn't bear to watch any more of this. He let her go after asking a few more questions.

He even offered her a few words of consolation, which helped to calm her down.

"I apologize if I have disturbed your rest, my king and queen." The maid felt as if she had received a huge pardon. She quickly closed the door and withdrew.

Pei Mianman looked worried. "Ah Zu, this trial is way too weird! I have no idea what is being tested."

Zu An nodded. He said with a serious tone, "Right now, we only know one thing."

"What is it?" Pei Mianman quickly asked.

Zu An smiled when he looked at her. "That we're already a proper husband and wife, so we can do what husbands and wives do."

Pei Mianman protested playfully. She thought that he had something important to say, since he seemed so serious, but she never expected that.

Now that they knew the context of the trial, however, they no longer felt as alarmed. Furthermore, the two of them had feelings for each other, and the intimate physical contact that they'd shared had enhanced them even more. Her heart was beginning to grow fonder.

Zu An immediately threw herself at her, eager to continue their previously unfinished business.

"But what if this trial is truly a test of your lust?" Pei Mianman was still a bit worried.

Zu An shook his head. "It can't possibly be. Wu Ding and Fu Hao were an ordinary, married couple who loved each other. They even had a few children. It's better if we go along with the script for now."

"How do you know all of this?" Pei Mianman was confused. This Shang Dynasty, Wu Ding, and all the other stuff were things that she had never heard of.

Zu An favored her with a faint smile, and pointed at his head. "This is the world that I saw in my dreams."

Pei Mianman blinked. "I didn't expect the world in your dreams to be so similar to these dungeons," she couldn't help but reply with a sigh. "Sometimes, I wonder if you really are blessed by the heavens."

Zu An chuckled. "Then why don't we bond a little more so that you can experience this natural blessing for yourself? Who knows, your cultivation might even progress by leaps and bounds!"

"Pah! Do you really think you're some sacred, cultivation-boosting treasure?" Pei Mianman said with a snort. After a moment, though, she froze. She remembered that her cultivation had been around the same as Chu Chuyan's, and she might even have been slightly superior, given the strength she had been hiding. Yet, after the dungeon incident, her cultivation had suddenly shot through the roof. The last time they'd met, she was already at the seventh rank! What if it really was because of this guy's... seed?

However, her thoughts quickly became jumbled up as she gradually lost herself to Zu An's skillful movements.

Where did this guy hone his skills at stealing hearts...? This vague thought flashed across Pei Mianman's mind as she subconsciously embraced the man who was entwined around her body.

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After some time, she sensed her lover begin to hesitate, his movements becoming more tender. She said with a sweet smile, "Ah Zu, it's okay. I'm already completely yours."

"You really are a temptress..." Zu An sighed. Pei Mianman and Chu Chuyan were two entirely different personalities! Chu Chuyan was cold and aloof, like a block of ice, while Pei Mianman was as hot and passionate as a raging fire! Once she had acknowledged their relationship, she was the one constantly coming on to him.

There was no way Zu An would hold himself back after this soft and gentle invitation. He threw himself right into it.

Even the strongest and sharpest sword would have its blade sealed by a scabbard.

Pei Mianman looked as though she was in pain and ecstasy at the same time. She took a deep breath, and embraced her lover. Only after an eternity did they pause to catch their breath.

Her face was rosy pink, and her eyes clouded over with mist. "I really pity Chuyan."

Zu An was bewildered by her sudden remark.

Pei Mianman bit her lip and said, "She's abused by you like this day after day."

Zu An leaned into her ear and whispered, "Then what about you?"

Pei Mianman smiled mysteriously. "My body isn't as delicate as Chu Chuyan's. You can abuse me however you want... I like it..."

Her words were more effective than any aphrodisiac. The bed began to rock and sway more vigorously, the sheets rising and falling like ocean waves. The bed itself groaned in pain, as though it might collapse at any time.

The maid standing guard outside swallowed. "The king and queen are really affectionate towards each other..." she mumbled to herself.

"The king's stamina is also... outstanding..."

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The two of them lost track of time. Suddenly, the sound of hurried footsteps came from outside. "My King! There's bad news!"

Chapter 534: A Crisis

The maid quickly stepped in to stop him. "Lord Prime Minister, the king and queen are currently resting."

"This is a military emergency! There will be serious repercussions if there is any delay!" A middle-aged man replied in panicked tones.

"Lord Prime Minister, we'll be punished severely if we disturb the king now..." The maid was about to cry.

Zu An was speechless when he heard what was happening outside. Right now, he was holding Pei Mianman in his arms and sharing words of love. The last thing he wanted was to be disturbed.

However, Pei Mianman quickly pushed him away. "Hurry up and invite him in already. We can't hold up important matters. I don't want to be known as a beautiful woman who caused the downfall of this country."

Zu An laughed. He finally knew why there were so many incapable rulers throughout history. When there were gorgeous imperial concubines all around you, getting out of bed early to hold a morning court session really wasn't easy.

He let Pei Mianman get dressed. There was no way he could invite someone in while she was still lying in bed. He didn't have any NTR fetishes, and preferred to enjoy his women on his own.

As Pei Mianman sat up, her chest rippled, driving Zu An berserk.

"Have you not seen enough yet?" Pei Mianman teased playfully.

Zu An swallowed. "I'll never grow tired of this sight for the rest of my life! Even ten lifetimes is not enough for me to have my fill!"

As the words left his mouth, he couldn't help but lunge at her, reaching his hands out greedily.

Pei Mianman huffed in dismay and pushed him away. With important people outside, she was in no mood to play around with him.

She finally eluded his pursuit and found some clothes to put on. Her expression grew a little strange. "These clothes... is that all to them?"

Zu An had seen how the maid had been dressed earlier on, so he had a rough idea what she meant. But when he turned around, he almost vomited blood.

As a queen, her clothes were made of more material than the maid's, but there was still no way it could compare to what could be produced using the spinning and weaving technology developed in later periods.

Her clothing was considered bold, even by the standards of the brothels in later periods!

Just like the maid's, her outfit comprised an upper garment and a short skirt. Because Pei Mianman's chest really was a bit too large, though, her top was rather short, which left her fair waist exposed. Together with her well-proportioned thighs and long legs, she was the perfect example of a wild and primitive beauty. The visual impact of her was just too staggering.

Pei Mianman was also rather uncomfortable with the amount of skin she was showing, and backed away subconsciously. However, her brows drew together suddenly, and she subconsciously bent over.

"What's wrong?" Zu An was alarmed by this, and quickly rushed over to check on her.

Pei Mianman rolled her eyes at him. "Have you forgotten what you did to me earlier?"

Only now did Zu An realize what was going on. She had been a virgin until not too long ago, and she had just gone through such a wild experience. It would have been more surprising if there weren't any consequences.

"Stop laughing!" Pei Mianman said in annoyance. Something else worried her more. "There are people coming in. Do you think I'm revealing a little too much?"

Zu An chuckled. "Nope, it looks great on you. This is in line with the customs of this period. Don't worry about it." This sort of outfit was a little too revealing in Brightmoon City, but dressing up like this was

completely normal during summertime in his previous world, and many girls wore things that were even bolder.

Every period had its own treasures.

His heart blossomed with joy as the thought crossed his mind, and he gave the order for the one outside to enter.

In moments, the door opened, and a middle-aged man strutted in. "This subject, Fu Shuo, pays my respects to the king and queen."

His expression was pure, and he did not give Pei Mianman any unnecessary looks. Zu An nodded in approval. This was an honest man. Moreover, he could tell from his appearance that he was a loyal subject who cared about his country.

"Fu Shuo?" Some information quickly entered Zu An's head. Wu Ding had been given a dream by the deities, which led him to begin searching the world for the one subject sent to him by the heavens. Eventually, he found him.

This middle-aged man used to be an ordinary slave working as forced labor. He was building a wall along the side of the road when Wu Ding showed up and chose him.

This was mentioned in both books 'Mencius' and the 'Book of Documents'.

After being chosen by Wu Ding, he rose up the ranks rapidly. Eventually, he became the prime minister of the Shang Dynasty, someone with tremendous authority.

Zu An obviously did not believe the nonsense about him receiving a dream from the deities. What were the chances of a random slave picked off the streets growing into someone capable?

More likely than not, Wu Ding had grown up among the common people during his childhood, and he probably already knew this Fu Shuo from back then. He then deliberately concocted this 'dream from the deities' as a reason.

When Wu Ding rose to power, he didn't have enough experience, prestige, or manpower. That was why it was recorded in history that he did not say anything for three years, spending the time silently observing the workings of the court. Later on, he found Fu Shuo, someone he knew, to strengthen his foundation.

Zu An knew full well that this was someone under his personal command. As such, he quickly returned the greeting and said, "Lord Prime Minister, what is the matter?"

In ancient times, the position of prime minister was very significant. It allowed whoever held the position to converse with the monarch directly. Only after feudalism developed later on was the role of prime minister reduced. Eventually, even they had to bow down before the emperor.

"We've received news from the front line that the troops we sent to suppress the Qiang Faction have been entirely wiped out!" Fu Shuo said with a grave expression.

"What?!" Zu An had already begun to slowly assume the role of Wu Ding.

Even though he didn't quite know what was the purpose of this trial, since he and Pei Mianman had taken on the roles of Wu Ding and Fu Hao, making decisions that benefited the Shang Dynasty would definitely be the right choice.

Information poured into his head. The Qiang Faction was a powerful tribe to the northwest of the Shang Dynasty. Their range of influence extended roughly over the present Gansu and Shanxi provinces. They would send their forces to plunder the common folk of the Shang Dynasty from time to time.

The word 'faction' in this case had the same meaning as country. The people of the Shang Dynasty called all the countries around them 'factions'.

This time, the Qiang Faction had launched a great invasion along the borders of the Shang Dynasty. Although the Shang Dynasty dispatched a general to stop them, their army had been completely wiped out.

This put the Shang Dynasty in a perilous situation. After all, the Qiang Faction was an old enemy of the Shang Dynasty, and were far from weak. The slightest carelessness would lead to utter destruction.

Zu An fell deep into thought. Is the purpose of this trial to see if we could resolve the Shang Dynasty's crisis?

"Who has the most wisdom in the art of war in our country?" he asked.

Fu Shuo replied, "That would be you, my king."

Zu An wanted to slap the man.

"Think about the situation before us! Stop buttering me up and tell me the truth!"

"Buttering up?" Fu Shuo was confused. He clearly didn't understand this phrase. "I am speaking the truth. You are our dynasty's greatest general. The second-best general was sent to deal with the Qiang invaders, and he has already been killed."

Zu An took some time to silently process this.

Finally, he sighed. "It looks like I can only make the trip myself."

Given how the situation was, there was no other choice. After all, he had thousands of years of history as reference, and he'd played a crap ton of strategy games too, so it wasn't like he stood no chance at all.

Fu Shuo quickly tried to dissuade him. "My king, you mustn't leave Yin Capital!"

Zu An was stunned. "Why is that?"

Fu Shuo looked at him in confusion. "Respectfully, my lord, please tell me that you haven't forgotten about the dangers you are in! You tried to seize back the authority to make appointments, angering many of the older nobility. Trouble is brewing, both inside and outside Yin Capital. You are still safe within these walls, but if you leave, something bad might immediately befall you!"

What a pain in the ass. "Do you have any suggestions, then?" Zu An asked.

This dude is supposed to be a well-known and capable subject, right? I hope his reputation isn't undeserved...

Fu Shuo looked at Pei Mianman and said in a serious tone, "We might need the queen to set out this time. We absolutely cannot lose this battle, so we must send out the rest of the capital's military! There are too few people around that we can trust. If we place this responsibility in the hands of anyone with ulterior motives, there will be terrible consequences. Only the queen will not betray my king. Furthermore, she will be leading three thousand elite troops, who are going to join up with the king's army. I believe that she will definitely be able to defeat the invading Qiang Faction!"

Zu An immediately turned pale with fright at the suggestion that Pei Mianman would have to fight on the battlefield. "No, absolutely not!"

Chapter 535: A Happy Coincidence

What kind of joke was this? The real Fu Hao might have been some goddess of war, but it was Pei Mianman in the guise of Fu Hao right now, and she was just a young lady! In fact, she had just been under him begging for mercy a moment ago—how could she tolerate the trauma of a battlefield?

More than that, though, this trial was really strange. He didn't know much about this Qiang Faction, but they had somehow managed to wipe out the Shang Dynasty's entire army. Wouldn't it be suicide to send Pei Mianman, someone who had never fought a war before?

Fu Shuo tried to persuade him. "My king, I know you care a lot about the queen, but now isn't the time to act impulsively! The queen has subdued an internal uprising before, which shows that she is more than capable at handling military affairs. My king, you do not need to worry."

Zu An did not like this idea at all. He couldn't just explain what was really going on to Fu Shuo.

Seeing that he had not yet come around, Fu Shuo continued his efforts. "My king, we are at a critical moment of life and death! If either your uncles or cousins were to lead the troops, your position as king will begin to crumble once they return victorious!"

Zu An froze. "Why is that?"

A hint of uncertainty flashed across Fu Shuo's face when he heard this question. "In our Shang State, one of the king's brothers succeeds him upon his death. Once a king passes, his brother will take the throne, and so on and so forth. Only in a few situations will the throne be passed on to the king's son.

"In the past, Pan Geng moved to Yin Capital, and when he passed on, his throne was passed on to his younger brother, Xiao Xin. When Xiao Xin died, the throne was passed onto his brother, Xiao Yi, who is your father. In theory, he should have passed on the throne to his younger brother or one of their older sons, yet he gave it to you, his own son. The rest of his brothers were obviously unhappy with this, and tried to usurp the throne. If we allow those men to lead the army and defeat the Qiang Faction, their prestige will rise sharply. My king, how will you deal with that, then? I know how much you treasure the queen, but if your throne is seized, you won't have the strength to protect her.

"If this subject may be so bold, the queen is absolutely stunning. Once you fall from power, many may start to covet her. Once that happens, it will be too late for regrets."

His careful explanation was all Zu An needed to understand the situation. This Fu Shuo was truly worthy of his status as a renowned ancient statesman. He had managed to dissect the situation so clearly, which marked him as an exceedingly competent individual. If the two of them had been Wu Ding or Fu Hao, it might have been enough to convince them. Unfortunately, they were both complete fakes.

He was just about to think of a way to refute him when Pei Mianman spoke up. "Fine, I will go."

"Manman!" Zu An was shocked. He never expected her to volunteer herself like that.

Fu Shuo was confused. Why did the king address the queen as such? In the end, he assumed that it was a nickname that the king had given her, and dismissed the matter.

Pei Mianman pulled Zu An to the side and said through voice transmission, "Ah Zu, I know you are worried about me, but we came here to overcome a trial. It might seem safe for now, doing nothing but hiding in this palace, but it will only amount to waiting for a slow death. Once the opportunity passes us by, the situation will be beyond saving."

"This Fu Shuo is clearly sent by this trial to give us the information we need. I believe we can trust what he says. If I do not command the troops, there will only be two possible outcomes: either the Qiang Faction will invade, leading to the destruction of the Shang State, or your uncles and cousins will defeat the Qiang Faction and then seize your throne... Regardless of which one it is, we will definitely fail this trial."

Zu An frowned. "But leading troops is just way too dangerous! You don't have any experience in this field, so everything points to disaster if you head out."

Pei Mianman smiled sweetly. "Please do not treat me as some spoiled and obedient daughter. I've faced all sorts of difficulties on the road to my current cultivation. I've even been to an army camp before..."

Zu An was shocked. "You served as a soldier before?"

He recalled the story of Mulan, a woman who had dressed up as a man to join the army. When his eyes landed on her chest, however, he immediately rejected this thought. There was no way she could pull that off!

"I was never a soldier, but I've been to an army camp, and I know my way around." Pei Mianman smiled. "The Pei clan is a powerful clan in the Zhou Dynasty, after all. We have some influence in the military."

She continued, "Don't worry, Ah Zu. We cultivators seek our own path, and we believe that all things in this world come from a common origin. If I can reach the sixth rank at such a young age, I refuse to believe that I am a fool when it comes to matters of war."

Seeing her overflowing confidence, Zu An reminded himself that she wasn't just a pretty decoration, but a cultivation genius. She had definitely experienced unimaginable difficulties and overcome great challenges in order to reach her current level of accomplishment. She didn't need others to worry about her at all.

"I was the one who was too closed-minded," Zu An said in apology.

Pei Mianman blushed in return. "You care about me way too much."

Zu An laughed loudly. "Then I wish you success!"

Pei Mianman grunted in agreement. "Do not worry, I will definitely complete my mission. This trial requires both a man and a woman to participate together, which means that both of them will have their own tests to overcome. You need to be careful as well."

Zu An nodded. If the woman needs to defeat the Qiang Faction as part of the trial, then what do I need to do?

Despite pondering over the matter for a while, he couldn't come up with anything concrete. As such, he let it go for the moment, and decided to help Pei Mianman with the issue of the Qiang Faction.

He wanted to help her out as much as he could, but the Shang Dynasty hadn't left many historical records behind, and there were no records at all regarding how Fu Hao defeated the Qiang Faction. Feeling rather helpless, the best he could do was to give her a rough explanation of the terrain of Shanxi and Gansu. After all, Pei Mianman knew nothing about this world.

Zu An didn't know if this would help. After all, he didn't have a detailed military map of the terrain, and only had some rough knowledge about several mountain ranges and rivers in the area.

Fu Shuo was rather shocked by this. "My king actually knows so much about the Qiang Faction! How did you learn about this?"

Zu An was at a loss for words. He was about to say that he'd sent someone to scout it out, but Fu Shuo was his trusted aide, so this lie might not get past him. As such, he used a different approach. "I had a dream, and in this dream, a deity taught me these things."

Fu Shuo was overjoyed. "Incredible, a divine dream! It looks like even the heavens are assisting my king and protecting my great Shang State. Our troops will surely return victorious!"

Zu An had a strange look on his face. He had been a little worried about this lie at first, but it seemed that the people of this period were extremely superstitious, and thus were very easily convinced.

After his initial joy, Fu Shuo suddenly remembered another matter. "There is one other issue right now. We need the high priest to pray to the heavens before our army sets out for battle, and await the deities' decree. The high priest belongs to the old nobility. If they interfere in this process, Her Majesty might not be able to set out to battle so smoothly."

Zu An sniffed in disdain. "I've already been blessed with a dream from the deities. The deities are protecting me. Let this information be known. Let's see if they still dare to use these foolish tactics then!"

Fu Shuo's eyes lit up. "Excellent! We can use the information my king has received regarding the terrain as further proof. The high priest wouldn't dare hinder us then, and it will also boost the morale of our troops. This matter is already half-solved!"

A sudden thought occurred to Zu An. "A drawing itself might not be enough. Let's make a sand table of the terrain for the officers and soldiers to observe."

“A sand table?” Fu Shuo was confused.

Zu An explained the concept of a sand table, to Fu Shuo’s amazement. “My king is both wise and brilliant! Once we secure our victory, we can easily use this momentum to promote the queen to the position of high priestess! This way, even the divine right will be under our control. My king, I believe your ambitions will soon be fulfilled.”

Pei Mianman was looking at him as well, her beautiful eyes swirling with tender feelings. This man had brought her way too many surprises! A sand table was a wonderful idea that she had never heard of before, but she could easily imagine how useful it could be on a battlefield.

Zu An secretly knew that everything was going so smoothly only because he was a transmigrator, standing upon the shoulders of giants, and he just happened to be familiar with this period of history, which inadvertently negated a myriad of potential dangers.

No matter how brilliant the previous participants of this trial had been, they had known nothing about the Shang Dynasty. They might not have even made it past the obstacle of the high priest, let alone managed to defeat the powerful Qiang Faction.

Chapter 536: Who's the One with the Problem?

After discussing several more details, Fu Shuo left to make his preparations.

He advised Pei Mianman to inspect the three thousand elite troops he’d brought over from the vassal state to prepare them for their upcoming battle.

Zu An wanted to go as well, but Fu Shuo reminded him that he had to remain within the palace, as there were many people out for his life.

Pei Mianman gave him a reassuring look. “Ah Zu, don’t worry. I will be careful and act according to the situation.”

It was true that she had been an extraordinary woman and a brilliant genius even before he’d met her. Zu An acknowledged that his worry might indeed be a little excessive.

They exchanged a few more words, and then he let her go.

Zu An chuckled when he saw how overcome with emotion Fu Shuo was when he expressed his trust in him. If he hadn’t had foreknowledge of Fu Shuo—that he was extremely loyal to Wu Ding, and even one of the great ancient sages—he might still have been too worried to let Pei Mianman go off alone.

It was easy for him to picture how things went for the others who had attempted this trial. They would definitely have been on edge after entering this unfamiliar world. When met with Fu Shuo’s advice to split up, they would probably have suspected him, and resorted to either interrogating him or even outright refusing his advice. The male participant might even have insisted on going along as well. All of these would inevitably have led to a bad end.

Of course, knowledge of history wasn’t absolutely essential for this trial. Even those who were completely ignorant of it could tell from their conversation, and the situation they were in, that Fu Shuo

and Wu Ding shared a special relationship. However, it was difficult for others to gain enough information within a brief amount of time, which made it that much harder.

No wonder all those who attempted this trial before failed! To be honest, I don't even think they could have made it past this first obstacle.

Zu An's imagination began to run wild. He had already begun to treat this trial as an open world game. All sorts of possibilities and paths began to appear in his mind.

If this Fu Shuo was sent to help the trial participants, there would definitely be an antagonist as well...

When Zu An opened the door, he noticed the same maid standing outside the door. A thought occurred to him, and he called her over to make a request.

"I greet the great king and queen." The maid knelt on the ground, her body shaking slightly. She was clearly still frightened by Zu An's earlier threats, and had not fully recovered yet. She was clueless as to why he would suddenly call her over.

Zu An carefully looked this young lady over. He had to admit that even though she wasn't exceptionally beautiful, she was rather delicate and pretty, especially with those long and slender legs that were completely exposed. Her fair and glowing skin also gave off a wild and primitive sort of beauty.

"What was your name again?"

The maid stiffened. The king has even forgotten my name! However, she didn't dare question him again, and quickly replied, "This servant's name is Xiao Tuo."

"Xiao Tuo?" Zu An thought it a rather strange name, but then again, names in these ancient periods were all quite weird. Even the names of the Shang monarchs seemed rather sloppy, so he didn't worry too much about it. "Xiao Tuo, where are you from?"

Pei Mianman, who was already several steps away, had a strange look on her face. She sent him a ki transmission. "Ah Zu, don't you know the situation we're in right now? How can you still be in the mood to play around with this girl?"

Zu An smiled. "What, are you jealous?" he replied.

Pei Mianman sniffed disdainfully. "Whatever. You're the king, so play around if you want. But please remember that this is a trial, so don't forget your real objective."

As someone from a great clan, she clearly didn't mind her man having some fun on the side. She was only worried that it would somehow affect the results of this trial.

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing. Something's not right with this maid," Zu An replied.

A look of surprise flashed across Pei Mianman's eyes. She subconsciously glanced at that servant's lovely and pitiful appearance, but couldn't see what the issue was.

Of course, she knew that Zu An wouldn't say such a thing for no reason. Now that she knew he wasn't about to play around, she warned him once more to be careful, then left with Fu Shuo.

The maid replied with a gentle voice, "I am from the Tuo State."

"The Tuo State?" Zu An froze for a moment. He had never heard of this country before. Of course, there were many small countries in these ancient periods that had long been erased by the flow of time.

He reached out a hand to help her to her feet. Still holding onto her hand, he led her to a table off to the side. "Where is the Tuo State? Can you mark it out for me on the map?"

The maid blushed, clearly embarrassed that a man was holding her hand.

"Tuo State is to the southeast of the Shang State," She hurriedly replied. "It's around here."

Using this chance to free her hand, she drew a circle on the map he had drawn out earlier.

Zu An's smile grew wider, and he wrapped his arm around her shoulder like a pervert. "Xiao Tuo, please tell me a little about your homeland's sights and customs."

Are you joking? How could a normal maid possibly know how to use a map?

She was able to accurately pinpoint the position of the Tuo State from just a casual look, which meant that she had special training in this field.

He'd deliberately held her hand earlier and put on that perverted act in order to throw her off, hoping her nervousness would lead her to subconsciously reveal gaps in her act.

This wasn't the only hole in her façade. As a maid, obtaining the favor of a monarch was an extraordinary opportunity, yet her body had stiffened just now, subconsciously rejecting his touch.

She had even found a reason to throw aside his hand. Even though the reason seemed appropriate, he was already suspicious of her, and this only served to confirm them.

For a woman to resist the touch of a king meant that either she hated the Shang monarch, or that she already had another lover in her heart. Otherwise, she wouldn't have subconsciously rejected him. Which one was it?

That was why he wanted to carry on the conversation, to see if he could pick up any more clues.

The maid hadn't expected him to show such indifference towards military affairs, and instead asked about her homeland, while holding her in such an inappropriate manner. What a perverted and incapable ruler.

You have successfully trolled Xiao Tuo for 123... 123... 123...

Zu An felt his certainty growing as he saw the influx of Rage points.

He had to admit that her pure and youthful appearance made for a good cover. She was also the personal maid of the Shang monarch, which meant that the participants of the trial would subconsciously mark her as someone trustworthy.

Those who had come before him had probably asked her many questions from the start, and fallen right into her trap.

The one who designed this trial probably did not expect Pei Mianman and himself to be in no hurry to look for clues, but romp around in bed instead...

Since they didn't have the time to ask the maid about anything else before Fu Shuo's arrival, they naturally hadn't been misguided by whatever misinformation she might have provided.

Zu An's face took on a strange expression. I guess being a pervert isn't so bad sometimes.

This maid began to answer his question, giving him some information on the Tuo State while thinking about how she was going to escape from his clutches.

Zu An nodded as he listened. "It sounds like quite a beautiful place, but that's to be expected. How could the Tuo State be a bad place if it managed to produce a charming girl like you?"

When did women from ancient times ever experience such a manner of flirtation? Even though she constantly reminded herself that this was a perverted and incapable ruler, she still couldn't help but smile. After all, which girl didn't like being praised?

"My king, I do not deserve such praise." The maid bowed respectfully. "This servant must ask to be excused."

Zu An held onto her to stop her. "Hey, did I say you can go? Keep me company for a while longer. My heart is distraught with anxiety right now."

Are you kidding me? How could he let her go and give her a chance to release any information?

He hadn't noticed this about her earlier, which was why he hadn't excluded her from his conversation with Fu Shuo and Pei Mianman. Even though there was a door between them, it wasn't too difficult for her to eavesdrop if she wanted to.

It would be disastrous if she'd overheard their plans and leaked them out.

Only after Fu Shuo finished his preparations and Pei Mianman set out to battle would the situation stabilize. When that happened, he could let her go without worrying about any leaks.

But how was he supposed to keep her here? Did he really have to play out the role of a perverted and incapable ruler?

Chapter 537: A Maid's Contempt

The maid's heart was pounding as Zu An held her in his embrace, so loudly that even Zu An could hear it.

"Xiao Tuo, why are you so nervous?" Zu An suddenly knew why people loved having authority. Harassing those beneath you while being in a superior position, holding all the cards in your hands... This really was a pretty good feeling.

"I'm not... I'm not nervous." The maid said hurriedly, trying to explain her way out of it.

Zu An almost laughed out loud when he saw how anxious she was. It seems these people from the past were rather simple. Even specially-trained female spies can't hide their thoughts. There was no way he would be able to see through the spies of later feudal dynasties so easily.

The maid gradually calmed down, finally realizing that she wouldn't be able to get away from him, at least for some time. In that case, she would use this opportunity to complete the young master's mission.

Zu An took this opportunity to ask about something else. "By the way, since Tuo State is to the east, do you know anything about the Eastern Barbarians?"

He knew that asking her about her real motives directly was a useless endeavor, so he decided to ask her some questions about things she couldn't possibly lie about. With that, he would gradually lower her vigilance before coming around to the main matter.

"The Eastern Barbarians?" The maid was taken aback. She didn't expect him to ask her about something completely unrelated. Shouldn't he be asking about the Qiang Faction?

This incompetent ruler began to seem more and more enigmatic to her, but she replied nonetheless. "I know a bit about them. They excel at the use of the bow and arrow, and their customs are greatly different from the Shang State..."

Zu An nodded as he listened to her reply. He was able to learn a lot more about the Eastern Barbarians from her. "By the way, do you know who the princess of the Eastern Barbarian is? Do they have a jade badge as their national treasure?"

He recalled the promise he'd made with the young lady in the upper tomb, and how Ya Zhang also mentioned that Fu Hao was fond of this jade badge. The Eastern Barbarians were a part of this period after all.

"The Eastern Barbarian princess?" The maid thought for a bit and then replied, "There was a great battle between the Shang State and the Eastern Barbarians two years ago. Our Great Shang won a great victory, and princess Jiang was captured."

"Where is she?" Zu An asked immediately.

The maid looked at him strangely. "She was offered up as a sacrifice already. Her head was even put into a bronze earthenware vessel and steamed."

Zu An was momentarily at a loss for words.

Sigh, I really feel bad for Jiangjiang. I wanted to see if I could save her since I'm currently the king of the Shang State, but I guess there's no way to change her tragic fate...

"What about the jade badge that belongs to the Eastern Barbarians?" asked Zu An. As matters stood, he could only do what he could to bring her spirit peace.

The maid hesitated, but eventually said, "According to the Eastern Barbarians, the jade badge has spiritual properties. That is why it is currently in the hands of the high priest, who uses it to strengthen the offering rituals."

"The high priest?" Zu An recalled her hesitant expression and said, "Xiao Tuo, are you close to the high priest?"

The maid seemed flustered by this question. She quickly said, "My king has misunderstood me! The high priest is venerable, and this servant doesn't dare to have any presumptuous thoughts. That was why I was hesitant in my reply."

Zu An recalled that the high priests of this age were considered the emissaries of deities, and from a certain point of view, they could be considered of equal status as the Shang monarch. Fu Shuo had mentioned seizing back the divine authority earlier on, probably because the current high priest wasn't on their side.

"Tell me more about this high priest," Zu An said. "What is his name?"

The maid's expression grew stranger. How can you not know this? Are you possessed? But she still replied, "The High Priest's name is Lian, my king, and he is your cousin..."

Zu An listened to her reply, asking further questions when necessary, and finally got an idea of who this high priest was. The high priest was the son of a previous Shang monarch, Xiao Xin. When Xiao Xin died, his son was still young, so he passed on the throne to his younger brother Xiao Yi, who was Wu Ding's father.

This made the situation much clearer. Lian was definitely unhappy that Xiao Yi had passed on the throne to his own son. Given the usual way things worked, the throne should have belonged to him and his line. That was why he was disloyal.

He hadn't watched all those dramas for nothing. It was easy enough for him to see through these relationships.

Objectively speaking, it wasn't Lian's fault for being unhappy. If such a thing had happened to him, Zu An would also want to find a way to seize back what he deemed to be his family's throne.

Of course, Zu An was currently Wu Ding. Furthermore, Wu Ding was known to be an outstanding monarch who ruled for many decades. Knowing this, there was no way he would just abdicate the throne.

"My king, you seem to place a lot of trust in the Lord Prime Minister," the maid suddenly said.

Zu An noticed that she had deliberately changed the subject. She clearly didn't wish to talk more about Lian, as it wouldn't do her any good.

"Fu Shuo is my friend, and he is an upright and capable man. I have reason to trust him," Zu An explained with a smile.

Instead of refuting this statement, the maid proceeded to flatter him greatly. However, as their conversation continued, she tried to sow dissent between Fu Shuo and Wu Ding.

She actually did this quite skillfully, without blowing her cover. Unfortunately for her, Zu An was already on guard from the beginning, and her words had little effect on him.

With her mission complete, the maid tried to excuse herself again. She desperately wanted to leave, so that she could pass on the information that she had gained.

As she made to leave, however, Zu An grabbed hold of her. "Why are you leaving? I need you to keep me company as I sleep."

The maid was completely speechless.

You have successfully trolled Xiao Tuo for 233... 233... 233...

This perverted ruler had asked her about so many things, but this was what he had been angling for all along!

Feeling deeply uncomfortable from the masculine aura surrounding her, she grew agitated and began to struggle subconsciously.

Zu An gasped in surprise. He had to give credit to the designer of this trial. After all, their bodies weren't allowed in, only their souls. These people within it could be considered NPCs within a game, a game in which failure would result in the player's death.

However, weren't these NPCs just too realistic?

He could keenly sense the astonishing suppleness of her skin, as well as the heat coming off it. As she struggled, she rubbed against him constantly, which made him go even crazier.

Zu An had only planned to scare her a little at first, but the more she struggled, the more he felt a flame begin to burn within him.

"Could it be that Xiao Tuo feels that I, a king, am not good enough for you?" Zu An said, letting displeasure creep into his voice as she continued to struggle.

"Xiao Tuo doesn't dare." The maid cursed inwardly. What else can I say? Can I really say that you aren't? I'll be chopped up into mincemeat!

By now, though, she realized that something was different with the king, and slowly ceased her struggle.

"Then do you already have a lover?" Zu An continued to probe.

"Xiao Tuo does not," denied the maid. As she said this, though, the face of a man flashed across her mind. She sighed. It looked like the two of them were not fated to be together... The only thing she could do for him was to help him achieve his dream.

Zu An smiled when he sensed her reaction. Instead of exposing her lie, he carried her into the bed, wrapping a leg around her as though it was the most natural thing to do.

Feeling the tightness of his embrace and the weight of his body against her, the maid's heart sank.

She knew that there was no way she would be able to escape. She could only sigh secretly. Big brother Lian, Xiao Tuo cannot remain pure for you...

Tears trickled out of the corners of her eyes.

Despite this, she understood what her mission was. She bit her lip. Since this was her fate, she would use her body and get on good terms with this incompetent ruler and earn his trust. She would ruin his relationship with his wife! That would help big brother Lian the most.

She was already mentally prepared to sacrifice herself. However, the man behind her did not take that final step.

In moments, the sound of snoring came from behind her.

The maid was stunned. He fell asleep?

She recalled what had gone on between this foolish king and Fu Hao earlier on. Her face reddened, and she sniffed disdainfully. It looks like not even a pervert like you has unlimited stamina!

How dare you have the nerve to take advantage of me?!

She twisted her body about in an attempt to leave, but the arms that were wrapped around her felt like iron clamps. No matter how she tried, she could not break free.

Afraid that she would him up, she had no choice but to give up her struggle. She lay there, thinking about her next move, while also disparaging the man holding her in her mind.

Suddenly, her face turned red. She could feel something prodding against her.

Chapter 538: Childhood Sweethearts

The maid wasn't a dumb lass. She didn't have to have experience to know what that was.

She was the king's personal maid, and there was no way she wouldn't know what was prodding at her right now.

She was still a maiden, and this was the first time she was being held in this way by a man, surrounded by his masculine aura. The people of this period were dressed lightly as well, so there was a lot of skin-to-skin contact, and she could even hear his heartbeat clearly. How could she possibly stand this?

To cap it all off, she could constantly feel that loathsome thing prodding against her. She really wanted to cut it right off!

Unfortunately, that was mere wishful thinking. Even if she had a blade, she wouldn't have dared. If the king died suddenly, the high priest would be the prime suspect. That was why she had to move slowly, knocking down this incompetent ruler's prestige little by little. The invasion by the Qiang Faction provided the best opportunity. If the matter played out as it should, then Wu Ding would be humiliated, and the High Priest's prestige would soar. At that point, ascending the throne would be a foregone conclusion.

Even though she continued to distract herself with these thoughts, the man behind her continued to hold onto her tightly, and his embrace was beginning to feel like a furnace. He kept rubbing against her body as well, making her heart pound madly and her thoughts scatter.

Is this guy actually sleeping or not?!

The maid was hopping mad, but powerless to do anything about it. She could only try her best to avoid his constant grinding.

Unfortunately, locked in his embrace this way, there was only so much room for her to move about. No matter how she wiggled, some part of him would still be rubbing against her.

After a long struggle, she exhausted most of her strength, and her breathing was beginning to grow ragged as well.

Every time she twisted about, she could keenly sense the thing behind her pushing into her more and more firmly. She dared not move about anymore, and silently grew still.

Zu An almost laughed out loud when he sensed just how much the girl in his arms was trembling. It seemed to him that the female spies of this era had yet to undergo truly specialized training, and their bodies remained extremely sensitive. The female spies of later eras would have been used to treating their bodies as weapons. None of them would have been so uncomfortable just from being held by a man.

However, he had to admit that the girl had really soft skin, and holding her like this actually felt pretty good.

They had been constantly surrounded by danger, and he had just engaged in an intensely passionate struggle with Pei Mianman not too long ago, so he was quite exhausted. Lying on such a comfortable bed with a girl in his arms was a welcome respite, and drowsiness slowly overtook him. Before falling asleep, he made sure to wrap his arms around hers, and drape a leg across her waist. This way, he would immediately wake up if she made any strange movements.

Of course, this made things extremely awkward for the maid. She didn't dare let herself get the slightest bit distracted, yet the more on edge she was, the more sensitive she became. Eventually, her entire body felt heavy and stiff.

She was incredibly ashamed that she was left in this state by the king she usually looked down on, and that she was letting down her lover. She also began to question her own life, wondering if she really was an emotionally fickle woman.

...

The next morning, the maid discovered that she had actually fallen asleep in his arms. Her expression flickered between shame and horror as she struggled free from his arms at once.

Knowing that Pei Mianman should have already completed whatever she needed to do, Zu An didn't bother stopping her.

The maid bowed before leaving, then hurriedly left the palace, secretly heading to a remote hut.

She smiled when she glimpsed a familiar face. She was just about to walk up to it when a cold voice came from within the darkness. "You're late."

The maid's smile froze, and she quickly explained, "I wasn't able to get away earlier. Last night, that incompetent ruler made me stay..."

Midway through her sentence, she stopped suddenly. She didn't know how to explain herself.

"You were forced to stay behind and sleep with him?" The voice chilled further.

The maid began to panic. "Big brother Lian, don't misunderstand! He didn't actually do anything to me!"

The person in the shadows in front of her wore a crown filled with feathers. There were a few streaks of color across his face, and he held an intricate jade badge in his hand. If Zu An were here, he would have recognized it as the jade badge sought after by the young Eastern Barbarian girl.

This was the high priest of the Shang State, Lian. He was also Wu Ding's cousin, the son of the man who served as the Shang monarch before Wu Ding's father.

"According to the people from the palace, Wu Ding took you to bed." It was hard to make out his expression from the mysterious patterns drawn on his face.

"We didn't do anything, he only hugged me... and then fell asleep," The maid hurriedly explained.

"That was the reason why I sent you in in the first place, even if nothing went on between the two of you." Lian clearly didn't believe her. A man and a woman, sleeping together for an entire night in the same bed, wearing very little. Who would believe that nothing had happened?

The maid was truly beginning to panic. "That incapable ruler and the empress went at it for quite a while, and he was tired out. He fell asleep while holding me."

"The empress..." Lian's eyelids twitched. A glint of mad jealousy flashed across his eyes when he thought about how another man had toyed with that stunning woman.

Wu Ding, everything that you possess should have been mine. One day, I will seize back everything. Your throne, your wife, and everything else you own will be mine!

You have successfully trolled Lian for 999... 999... 999...

Zu An smiled as he noticed the Rage points flowing in. He had more or less pieced together what was going on, but now, he had confirmation that Lian was indeed a major boss in this trial.

He had to give props to the Keyboard system, though. It was able to follow him into this trial that not even Mi Li could enter! She had been forced to stay outside with his physical body, within the Tai'e Sword.

It made some sense, though, as the soul was the one that had been drawn into this trial, and the Keyboard system was much more tightly bound to his soul.

He expressed gratitude for his blessings. This damned trial hadn't given him a single hint, and he'd had to rely on his own investigative prowess. The other participants had probably taken a long time to realize who the real enemy was, and by then, it would have been too late for them.

...

Meanwhile, in the remote hut, the maid was done talking about her night spent with the incapable king. She quickly changed the topic, bringing up what Zu An, Fu Shuo and Pei Mianman had discussed.

Lian had also calmed down. After listening to all of this, he said in a serious tone, "This Fu Shuo is quite formidable. He actually managed to come up with such a plan. It's a pity that you've come to me too late. They've already spread the news, and now everyone knows that the king has received a divine

dream. The idea of the sand table was also magnificent, and managed to convince everyone of his claim. Even though I am a high priest, it is already too difficult for me to stop them.”

“I guess that incompetent king still has some skill, considering how he managed to come up with something like that,” The maid said in amazement.

Lian snorted and said, “Fu Shuo was probably the one who came up with the sand table. Before Fu Shuo was an official, he worked in matters of construction, which makes this his specialized field. Wu Ding probably laid claim to it to increase his own prestige.”

Based on what she’d heard, the maid wasn’t so sure that this was the case, but it didn’t feel appropriate for her to correct him. “Big brother Lian, it’s all my fault that I couldn’t tell you about it in time and messed up your plans,” she said in the end.

“No harm done!” Lian waved his hand. “If they want to send the empress out to battle, then so be it. How can a woman like her possibly lead the troops? Once she messes up and loses both our army and Wu Ding’s personal guard, it’ll be a piece of cake for me to take over.”

The maid smiled. She liked seeing this confident side of him.

“Although...” Lian changed the topic. “I believe this Wu Ding is suspicious of you.”

“What?!” The maid couldn’t contain her shock.

Lian’s voice hardened. “I believe that he deliberately kept you in the palace to prevent you from contacting me.”

“There’s no way that’s true.” The maid just couldn’t believe that that pervert was such a meticulous thinker.

“I hope that you’re right.” Lian looked at her with a mixture of conflict and hesitancy. “But I can tell that this incapable king is quite fond of you, though. Perhaps you can use this opportunity to become his woman and earn his trust.”

“What?!” A tremor ran through the maid’s body. She could not believe what she’d just heard. “Big brother Lian, you know how I feel about you, yet you want me to...”

“Of course I do. Xiao Tuo, the two of us were childhood sweethearts, and we’ve shared a deep affection. Even if you lose your purity, I would not mind it at all. Once I ascend to the throne, you will still become the empress,” Lian said gently. As he said this, though, it was Fu Hao’s gorgeous appearance that appeared in his mind instead.

“Is there no other way?” The maid’s thin lips were about to bleed from how hard she was biting them. “I can use a different means to gain his trust! Also, the Qiang Faction has already begun their invasion. Who knows, he might be dethroned very soon. Why do I have to...”

Lian cut her off. “I’m asking you to infiltrate his bedroom not just so you can obtain his trust. It is a key part of my great plan later on!”

“What plan?” The maid was on the verge of tears.

Lian shook his head. "Now is not the time to reveal it yet. You will know when the time comes. You just need to remember one thing—use all of your charms to make him completely infatuated with you. That's all."

Chapter 539: Business or Pleasure

Xiao Tuo couldn't believe what she was hearing.

Even though he wasn't speaking loudly, every word rumbled like thunder.

She never would have thought that her childhood sweetheart would push her into the arms of another man! He had even told her to do everything she could to seduce him!

She suddenly wondered if she had made the right choice.

As if he could sense the change in her emotions, Lian's voice softened. "Xiao Tuo, I know that I'm being unfair. If you don't want to do it, then just leave the palace. I won't serve as the high priest anymore, and the two of us can just travel the world. I refuse to believe that Wu Ding can catch us so easily."

The maid was somewhat tempted at first, but she calmed down when she heard the last part. "Big brother Lian, how can I be that selfish and let your years of hard work become wasted? You are the well-respected high priest. How can I make you follow me into a life of hiding? Furthermore, you're the one who should be king, so why should you run? Big brother Lian, I like you, so of course I will help you."

Happiness blossomed within the heart of the man across from her, but he maintained his outward appearance of heartbroken grief. "But I'm making things difficult for you! No, let's try to find another way."

The maid pressed her finger against his lips. "It's already too late to change the plan now. Don't worry, I'm willing to do anything for your sake."

Lian held her hands, his voice full of emotion. "I'm the one at fault, for being so useless that I have to sacrifice my own woman to achieve my goal."

The maid's expression blossomed with happiness when she heard the words 'my woman'. After all, her big brother Lian had never publicly admitted to this before. Now that she heard him say this, she felt as though any sacrifice was worth it.

"This has nothing to do with you. It was Wu Ding's father who disregarded the rules and selfishly passed on his throne to his son, wronging you in the process."

"Xiao Tuo..." Even though Lian had ulterior motives, he was still moved by the devotion that his childhood sweetheart was showing towards him. In that instant, he almost felt reluctant to send away his beloved girl.

After all, the high priest was already a well-respected position. Why was there a need to strive for the throne? He even had a lovely girl at his side...

The maid's heart beat frantically as she and her lover held hands. Her face gradually reddened, and a different mood began to surround this place.

The two of them slowly drew closer and closer. For some reason, the image of what had taken place last night appeared in her head, and her body suddenly stiffened.

This slight reaction also snapped Lian out of his trance. He quickly let go of her hands, his back dripping with cold sweat. Lian, you bear a heavy familial responsibility on your shoulders! How can you let mere feelings get in the way of such important matters? Are you going to throw away all the years of hard work that everyone has put in?

Wu Ding would definitely realize something was wrong if he took Xiao Tuo's virginity. Everything would be ruined if he became suspicious!

"Xiao Tuo, you've been away from the palace for quite some time now. It's time for you to go back." Lian's eyes grew clear again, and his voice was perfectly calm.

A hint of bitterness swirled within the maid's eyes, but her mind was a mess as well. She didn't say anything else, merely bidding him goodbye before leaving.

Lian's expression was pained as he watched the beautiful figure of his childhood sweetheart slowly disappear into the distance. The two of them had shared a deep affection for each other since they were young, and there was no way he could remain hard-hearted.

He clenched his fists tightly, hatred shrouding his face. "Wu Ding, I will definitely chop your corpse up to ten thousand pieces!"

The maid was extremely nervous when she returned to the palace. How in the world am I supposed to seduce that incompetent king?

When she remembered his shameless and perverted behavior, though, it became clear to her that she probably wouldn't have to do a thing. He would probably seek her out on his own.

She thought about his romp with the empress in his bedroom earlier, and how he'd carried her to bed as well, and she grew more convinced of that notion.

...

At the moment, though, Zu An wasn't in the mood to attend to her. He had left the room quickly in order to participate in the ceremonial sacrifice.

A country is often built on sacrifice and battle.

For the Shang Dynasty, these two things—sacrifice and battle—were valued above all else, and at this time, both matters were intersecting.

Almost all of the high-ranking individuals within the Shang state were present at the altar, which was surrounded by row upon row of warriors.

Three thousand of them were elite troops under the command of Fu Hao, while another ten thousand were part of Wu Ding's personal guard. Each one of them was well-built, strong and muscular.

Such an army was considered massive in ancient times. Sending out troops in the thousands was already unusual, and this time, more than ten thousand troops setting out together was unprecedented.

Behind their serious expressions, a hint of nervousness lurked. None of them knew how this battle would end.

Both Lian and Xiao Tuo rushed over to the ceremony separately. Xiao Tuo's information had come too late for the high priest to have made any preparations, and he could only do as Wu Ding and Fu Shuo wished.

Either way, Fu Hao leading the troops wouldn't affect his plan. To a certain degree, it even made it even easier for him.

He knew how much was riding on the outcome of this battle. Even though he was eager to see the king's troops wiped out, causing him to lose all of his prestige, he didn't dare show any hint of it. One misstep, and everyone might suspect him of stirring up internal strife.

He respectfully and formally completed the first part of the ceremony. After burning the tortoiseshell, he interpreted the cracks that formed on its surface, declaring that the deities had decreed a victory. Everyone cheered.

Of course, he subtly played around with the phrasing of it, so that he wouldn't end up trapping himself. This way, even if their battle ended in defeat, he could still push the blame onto the king instead.

The others who were present at the ceremony noted nothing amiss, but Zu An was already suspicious of him from the start, and obviously picked up that something was not right.

However, he kept his suspicions to himself. He trusted Pei Mianman, and in the course of history as well. Pei Mianman would surely return victorious, and the high priest's plans would amount to nothing.

He examined this hidden boss. This man was rather well-built, and taller than the people around him. Despite the face paint, he gave off a heroic and mighty aura. This man... is almost on my level.

The ceremony seemed like hocus-pocus Zu An, and he had very little interest in all this superstitious nonsense. He spent the time sharing intelligence with Pei Mianman through ki transmission.

When it came time for the sacrificial offerings, though, both of them frowned. Because this ceremony was more important than ever before, only selected the most important human lives had been chosen as offerings. Ten or so Qiang Faction captives were brought out.

When he saw that these captives were about to be decapitated and have their innards fished out, Zu An hurriedly called matters to a halt. He ordered that livestock be used in their place.

It wasn't because he was some Mother Teresa; he just didn't want these human sacrifices to end up on his dinner table after being cooked. He'd learned from Ya Zhang that these offerings were made into delicacies after they had been offered to the deities, and he'd also confirmed this tradition with Fu Shuo and Xiao Tuo.

More than that, however, he knew that these captives were much more valuable alive than used as sacrifices.

Why was Huo Qubing able to fight within the vast Hexi Corridor with just a single army, leaving the Huns trembling in fear? Back then, the Han people had never even been to that area, yet he seemed to have his own personal GPS system! [1]

Aside from his obvious military talent, this was largely due to his use of Hun slaves. He was able to achieve his military miracle by having them lead the way.

The current situation was similar. The forces of the Qiang Faction were primarily located around the Shanxi and Gansu regions. Even though he'd drawn a map for Pei Mianman, it was only enough to give her a broad overview of the area. Only the locals would know more detailed topography.

How could he afford to kill off these living maps?

He shared his thoughts with Pei Mianman, and she immediately agreed with him. The two of them would protect this group of people.

Everyone else present was shocked. Why weren't they going to use the highest quality human lives as an offering for the ceremony? What if they incurred the wrath of the heavens?

Lian almost laughed out loud. If something bad truly ended up befalling their army on the battlefield, he had the perfect way to blame it all on Wu Ding. This saved him quite a bit of work! As such, he also encouraged this change.

...

Just like that, the army of the Shang State began their relentless northwestern advance to face an unknown fate.

Back in the palace, Zu An was left to deal with all manner of government affairs. They swept away some rebel forces that were hiding in Yin Capital as they waited painfully, minute by minute, for news to return from the battlefield.

Finally, one night, Xiao Tuo found herself outside the palace bedroom. She took a deep breath to steady herself. She knew that she couldn't stall any longer, especially since her big brother Lian's forces had suffered attacks these past few days. She had to earn the king's trust and obtain some vital information as soon as possible.

Chapter 540: A Pure and Innocent Female Spy

Zu An was currently seated in front of a desk, reading through some documents on a tortoise shell. A civilization without paper meant that daily life was terribly inconvenient. He had to carry bones around with him day after day. Aside from tortoise shells, he had to lug around cow bones, sheep bones... It seemed as though any sort of bone that could be carved on was used.

"Even bamboo slips would be better than this," Zu An complained. At least it was his soul that had entered this trial, which meant that he could understand these oracle script and converse normally with the people of this world. Not being able to read or write while in this trial would have been truly terrible.

A shadow fell across him, and the scent of a young lady gently filled his senses. Zu An raised his head to look at the maid in front of him. "Xiao Tuo, why are you here?"

In truth, Zu An had already made a rough guess, given the nervousness in her expression and the tension in her body.

Xiao Tuo bit her lip. "My king, it's already so late. Why aren't you resting yet?" she said with a gentle voice.

Zu An looked outside the window. Using the way time was measured in his previous world, it wasn't past eight in the evening yet. In his previous life, sleeping before midnight would have been early for him. There was no way this could be considered late.

But for the ancient people, there was no electricity, and even lighting a fire was costly. It was already quite late for them.

He raised the bone in his hand. "I still have some documents to take care of."

Xiao Tuo was surprised. This good-for-nothing king was surprisingly diligent.

Despite this she remained focused on her mission. She walked behind Zu An and gently leaned against his shoulder. "Should I help my king release some stress?"

Zu An chuckled. "Xiao Tuo, I wish you'd been this accommodating earlier on!"

Xiao Tuo scoffed in her heart. She wanted to strangle this man in front of her to death! However, she knew that there was nothing she could do. Forcing herself to smile, she began to massage him, at the same time keeping an eye on the documents in his hands to see if she could obtain any important information.

She never expected Zu An to lean backwards all the way, almost burying his entire head into her chest! He let out a relaxed sigh. "Ah, that's more like it. Your massage techniques are pretty good!"

Xiao Tuo's body went rigid. All thoughts of reading the documents in front of him fled from her mind, and she almost subconsciously pushed him away.

However, she quickly remembered the reason she was here. Gritting her teeth, she forcefully held herself back.

Zu An was obviously able to read her body language. A strange smile appeared on his face. He'd deliberately fallen into a sensitive part of her to feel out her true motives. She had clearly been against this sort of behavior before, yet there was surprisingly little reaction this time around.

It seems like she's really here to seduce me today.

But what made her change so noticeably all of a sudden?

Hatred? Or perhaps... love?

He'd taken note of the high priest Lian earlier on during the ceremony. Such a tall and well-built figure did seem like something girls would fall for.

He had already asked Fu Shuo to look into this maid's background a few days ago. The document he'd been reading was the file he'd compiled about her. She did come from the Tuo State, but there was something else interesting: she seemed to have grown up together with Lian.

Are they childhood sweethearts? I'm surprised Lian is willing to do such a thing.

A mocking smile spread across Zu An's lips.

In that case, I'll let you have a taste of an amazing double loss! But how am I going to make this spy unwittingly become my spy...

"My king, what are you smiling at?" Xiao Tuo asked as she gently massaged his temples. With this fellow lying on her chest this way, she felt extremely flustered. She was desperate for a change of topic in order to get rid of the awkwardness.

"Why wouldn't I be smiling? Xiao Tuo is making me feel so good." Zu An had to admit that this trial was just way too realistic. Although only his soul had been transferred into it, everything felt just like reality.

His fun with Pei Mianman was one thing, since she was also a participant in the trial.

But this maid was just an NPC, yet she could totally pass off as an ordinary, real-life person! He could feel the softness of her chest, and the heat from her supple skin. He could even smell the special fragrance that only a young lady carried.

Isn't everything way too realistic? Wait, there's still something else I need to test...

"Thank you for your praise, my king." An embarrassed smile graced Xiao Tuo's lips, but she was secretly cursing him inside. He was a perverted and useless king after all!

At this moment, though, she was in a dilemma. Just how was she supposed to go on from here?

If she threw herself straight at him, she would seem a bit too cheap. Who cared if he wasn't interested in the end? Even she wasn't willing to let herself go so low.

Fortunately, Zu An spoke up. "I've been feeling rather tired these days. Please accompany me to the bath."

He had already gone over every nook and cranny of the palace over the last few days. He did not want to miss any vital information or clues within it which could prove crucial to the completion of this trial.

In his investigation, he had come across a hot spring in the palace that had been modified into the king's personal bath.

All this while, he'd been busy with his investigations and had not had the time to rest. Now that he'd built up a decent understanding of this trial, he could finally take it a little easier.

Xiao Tuo stiffened for a moment, but she quickly lowered her head in acceptance. "Okay."

She obviously knew that it was easier for things to happen in a place like a hot spring. This is fine...

Carrying a fresh set of clothes, she followed him to the bath. Zu An removed his clothes and walked straight into the hot spring.

Xiao Tuo's face flushed red. She quickly turned her head to the side, secretly cursing him. This man really is a scoundrel! Even though she'd turned away, however, his strong and sturdy body continued to surface in her thoughts from time to time.

Especially that elongated object that had prodded her repeatedly that night.

Just recalling the events of that night were enough to make her cheeks go bright red.

Zu An felt the heat of the hot spring seep into his body, and sighed blissfully.

If he wasn't being hunted down by humans, then he was being hunted down by ghosts. He really was exhausted. Now, he finally had a chance to completely relax! It was a pity that Manman wasn't given the same chance to rest, even now. He wondered how things were going for her.

While he was lost in his thoughts, he suddenly felt a pair of trembling hands rest on his shoulders, then begin to massage him gently.

Zu An turned around and saw that Xiao Tuo was kneeling at the edge of the hot spring. Her posture was quite strange because of the difference in height.

"You should come in. You look quite uncomfortable up there," Zu An said with a chuckle. Since this girl wanted to seduce him, he'd give her that chance! Meanwhile, he could enjoy these benefits that came with being a king. Why would he give up such a perfect opportunity?

Xiao Tuo bit her lip. There was a conflicted look on her face.

Zu An didn't continue to pressure her, and closed his eyes restfully instead. He wasn't going to fall so low as to force a girl into pleasuring him. He wouldn't make her do anything she didn't want to do herself.

A few moments passed, and a soft voice called out to him as a pair of hands pushed him forward. "My king, please move forward a little so that I can massage you properly."

Zu An opened his eyes. The scene before him almost made blood gush out of his nose! This young lady's golden skin shimmered, reflecting the clear spring water just as well as the water reflected her gorgeous image. Most of her body was obscured underwater, but the mystery only made it harder for any man to resist.

Zu An had a strange look on his face. "You didn't have to take off your clothes, you know."

Xiao Tuo was momentarily at a loss for words.

Bloody hell, why didn't you say so then!

This useless king was definitely trying to make a fool out of her!

You have successfully trolled Xiao Tuo for 233... 233... 233...

Of course, there was no way she would put her clothes on again, now that they were in this situation.

She took a deep breath to calm her flustered mind, and then she hid behind Zu An to continue massaging him, as if this would somehow make her feel a little better.

He knew that she was deliberately hiding from his line of sight, so Zu An didn't turn around to look at her again. This little girl looked like she was already about to cry!

Sigh, even the female spies of this age are so adorably innocent... I feel embarrassed just teasing her.

He continued to relax with his eyes closed. He already had so many female friends, so it wasn't too hard for him to resist temptation. Rather than going further, he was more than content with just enjoying this hot spring while having a pretty young lady massage him.

His mind was at peace, but the maid's was definitely not. Never in her entire life had she ever been so intimate with another man.

Her face slowly grew redder and redder, although she didn't know if it was because of the heat of the hot spring or from being so close to the body of such a strong man. Her heart began to beat faster and faster.

She sighed. Since she'd already made it this far, she might as well follow through with her mission.

She reminded herself of her sweetheart's dream, and a flash of decisiveness flickered across her eyes, accompanied by a trace of sorry. She wrapped her arms around Zu An, then pressed herself gently against his back.