

Immortal 571

Chapter 571, Part I: The Shadow Group

Even though this sequence of events took a while to describe, not much time had passed at all.

Just a moment ago, Chu Youzhao's eyes had widened in astonishment. She never expected her notorious trash of a brother-in-law to be so formidable! The assassins were clearly highly-rated killers, yet they had been dispatched so easily.

Did I get out on the wrong side of the bed today?

Am I dreaming? Or is all this an illusion?

Hmph! Why would I ever dream of this stupid guy being so strong...

Her thoughts had been all over the place when she was captured by the assassin a split second later.

Her face turned deathly pale when she felt the chill of the blade against her neck. She froze immediately, not daring to move a muscle.

Zu An gave the two of them a look. He chuckled and said, "Friend? Didn't you see him running at me with a sword just a moment ago? Feel free to kill my enemy for me! Why would you use him to threaten me? Are all assassins so dumb these days?"

Despite the confidence in his voice, he was rather flustered inside. It should have been crawling with guards outside! It would be one thing for Chu Youzhao to enter, since she had her grandfather's command token, but how the hell did all these assassins get in? Moreover, it had been some time since the assassins first broke in, yet none of the guards had reacted.

Zu An listened closely, trying to figure out what was happening outside. A ruckus was going on outside as well, and there was the sound of fighting and killing. Clearly, another party was distracting the guards, which allowed these assassins to approach him.

Of course, none of them could have expected that, not only did their assassins fail to kill him, they had been killed instead.

He was always confused when reading fiction novels of his previous world. Why did the villains always seem so dumb? They would always dispatch henchmen that were only a single rank higher to eliminate the main character, and all of them would be killed by their target instead. Wouldn't it go much more smoothly if they dispatched someone who was several ranks higher instead?

After his experiences in this world, however, he was beginning to understand why.

Fifth rank and sixth rank cultivators were already considered rather outstanding, while those seventh rank and higher were already big shots. Why would they bother dealing with some nobody?

Even if the villains really did dispatch powerful cultivators, none of them would be happy about it. They would be annoyed to have to personally deal with such petty things. They had more than enough on their plate already.

At their level, they had enemies on their own level to deal with, which was more than enough trouble already.

Mosquito Daoist and Cash Warrior hadn't been sent to deal with him, but for his escorts, who had been ranked as highly as them.

Right now, the guards outside were holding back the main force, and there was no way that the ones who made it past would be highly-ranked big shots.

So far, he had only revealed himself to be at the fifth rank. Even though he had showcased all sorts of outstanding skills, four sixth-rank assassins would surely have been enough, with room to spare. There was no way they could have known that he had absorbed Mosquito Daoist's cultivation and grown much stronger.

The ninja was stupefied when he heard what Zu An said. Thinking back to when he first entered, it did seem like this person really had wanted to kill Zu An.

What the hell is a measly fourth rank doing here, though? Which idiot faction sent this fool?

Chu Youzhao was quivering with fury. She was angry at herself for even worrying for this stupid man! If she had known that this would happen, she would have wished death upon him instead!

You have successfully trolled Chu Youzhao for 233... 233... 233...

She took a deep breath, and then said coldly, "I am the grandson of the Vanguard General Qin Zheng and the daughter of Brightmoon Duke, of the Chu clan! I doubt whichever power backing you can suffer the consequences if something were to happen to me. Let me go, and I'm willing to forget all of this!"

Zu An couldn't help but curse. "You bloody idiot!"

Chu Youzhao glowered at him. I don't care if you're not going to do anything to help me, but what's wrong with me trying to save myself? You even dare to curse me? Hmph! I'm definitely going to tell grandfather and big sis about this. They'll see this guy's real and ugly side!

She fully expected to frighten the ninja assassin. However, he roared with laughter instead. "As long as we're paid enough, we're even willing to assassinate the royal family. Who cares about a measly Qin or Chu clan?"

Chu Youzhao was stunned. She did not expect the assassin to look down on even the Qin and Chu clans! Just how strong was the power backing him?

The ninja turned to Zu An and said, "I was almost fooled by you earlier. You are the brother-in-law of this brat, so of course you care about his safety."

Zu An was completely speechless. What was he supposed to do when he had a monkey for a teammate? Despite this, he still tried his best to look indifferent, "Everyone knows that my marriage has already been annulled, so he's nothing to me. Isn't it rather laughable for you to use a stranger to threaten me?"

"Shut up!" That ninja snorted. He tightened his grip around his blade, eliciting a cry of alarm from Chu Youzhao. A bright line of blood appeared along her neck. "Drop your sword! If not, I won't just cut through the skin next time."

All the color drained from Chu Youzhao's face. She was still young, after all. Moreover, she had the Qin clan behind her, and so she was used to being surrounded and praised by all those around her. When had she ever experienced anything as dangerous as this?

The assassin couldn't care less about her credentials. In fact, nobody seemed to care a whit about what she thought. Only now did she realize just how laughable her usual arrogance was.

"Fine, fine, fine! I'll drop it." Zu An would never want a random stranger to be caught up in a dangerous situation because of him, let alone Chu Chuyan's youngest sister.

He lowered the sword to the ground. "Do you want me to put it down horizontally, or vertically?"

Chu Youzhao was stunned. This man really lowered his weapon! Does he really intend to save me?

She wasn't actually stupid. She quickly realized that he had only said what he said earlier to confuse the assassin and sever any apparent relationship between them. That way, the assassin wouldn't be able to use her as a bargaining chip.

However, she had taken the initiative to introduce herself, giving this assassin a weakness to exploit.

"Don't play any tricks, or else this brat dies!" commanded the assassin.

He moved behind Chu Youzhao while saying this. As an experienced assassin, he naturally knew how to guard against sudden attacks.

"Sure, sure, sure. I've already put it down." Zu An frowned. This fellow was being incredibly careful, and was not presenting him with any opportunities.

"Cripple yourself! Do it quickly!" ordered the ninja.

Chu Youzhao panicked. "Don't agree to that! We'll both be dead for sure!"

"Shut your mouth!" The ninja flew into a rage, borne out of humiliation. His hand tightened around his sword, as though he would draw blood if she spoke another word.

Zu An laughed and said. "Do you think I'm as stupid as you? Like hell I'll agree to something like that."

Chu Youzhao was speechless.

Her face was entirely red from embarrassment. Her worry had been completely pointless. This was just way too shameful.

Ahh!! This guy's tone really pisses me off!

The ninja knew that his conditions weren't realistic, so he changed them. "Then break your right arm. That way, you'll still have some strength, and you'll still make a full recovery eventually. Meanwhile, I'll be guaranteed my safety."

He knew from their previous exchange that this person's cultivation was far beyond what he could deal with on his own, which was why escape was his top priority. He would be rewarded greatly once he returned with information about Zu An's true strength.

Zu An frowned. He could follow this line of reasoning as well. How could he just let this man get away with this information?

The ninja's voice grew softer. "If you refuse, then I'll risk it all and take down this Chu clan heir down with me. Let's see how you face the Chu and Qin clans then!"

Someone else suddenly entered the room. "Gui Tian, why hasn't this area been taken care of yet?"

The newcomer was covered head-to-toe in black, only revealing a pair of eyes. She looked just like the rest of these assassins.

Despite her clothing, her figure was exquisite. This was definitely a woman.

The one called Gui Tian was pleasantly surprised to see the new arrival. "Be careful, this person is definitely not at the fifth rank. He may even be beyond the eighth rank! He's already killed my other companions!"

This woman had joined them recently, but she was quite skilled. Most importantly, she was attractive as well. He had wanted to get close to her several times, but the right opportunity had never presented itself. Surprisingly, though, he had been offered this chance to fight alongside her. With luck, they might develop some camaraderie, which could perhaps lead to something even better later on.

He eyed her figure greedily. Not even the courtesan queens of the brothels could compare to her. He had been cursing his bad luck earlier on, but now, it didn't seem quite that bad.

"Oh?" The woman gave Zu An a look of surprise.

Shock ran through Zu An. Why did these eyes seem slightly familiar?

Chapter 571, Part II: The Shadow Group

"How can he possibly be at the eighth rank at his age?" the woman scoffed.

Chu Youzhao nodded in clear agreement. Her own dad was at the eighth rank! Just how old was this good-for-nothing? How could he possibly have such profound cultivation?

The woman's voice drew a strange look from Zu An.

"I'm not lying! The corpses of the rest of my companions are still here!" protested the ninja, Gui Tian.

Chu Youzhao also felt slightly bewildered by the assassin's statement. The images of Zu An easily dispatching the assailants appeared in her head. She had to admit that he looked rather dashing back then...

What the heck! He is one hundred percent a scoundrel!

The female assassin looked at the corpses littering the ground in shock, but she quickly said, "In that case, there is no way the two of us can defeat him alone. I'll retreat and contact the others first."

“That was my intention as well.” Gui Tian sighed in relief. He’d been under way too much pressure facing Zu An on his own. Now that he had the help of another companion, his chances of a successful escape had increased greatly.

Zu An chuckled. “Look at the two of you, chatting like no one else is here. You’re treating me as though I’m no big deal at all.”

Gui Tian snorted. “This fellow is going to die if you dare to try anything.”

He withdrew towards the door, Chu Youzhao in hand. He had no choice but to use Chu Youzhao as a bargaining chip earlier, but he knew that hoping for Zu An to break his own arm was also wishful thinking. Now that he had his companion covering him, there was no time to waste. It was best if he left as quickly as possible.

Zu An immediately froze. It seemed he had been scared off by the threat.

“You know what happened here best of all. Tell our master about it in detail once you return. Go on, I’ll cover you.” The female assassin walked forward. She held her sword at the ready, prepared for a sudden attack by Zu An.

Gui Tian was overjoyed. “Thank you. I will surely repay this debt.”

Despite his words, he didn’t dare lower his guard. All of his attention was focused on Zu An, afraid he might make a move.

Suddenly, his entire body stiffened, and he turned towards his companion in disbelief. “You bitch... why?!”

A thin vine had pierced through his back. There was no surviving this strike.

As a killer himself, he had never fully trusted his companions, and had been paying attention to her sword the whole time as well. He never predicted that she would employ a different method.

That woman chuckled. “Sorry. I met this guy before I met you.”

Gui Tian’s expression changed greatly. Knowing that he was a goner, he tried to raise his hand, intending to drag Chu Youzhao down with him.

However, he discovered that he couldn’t move at all. He had already been entangled by countless thin vines.

The female assassin was beside him in an instant. She didn’t give him another chance and snapped his neck.

“Ah!” Chu Youzhao screamed in alarm. She subconsciously ran towards Zu An.

Even though that scoundrel was annoying, he was still part of her family. He was a little more reliable than this killer.

As soon as she took a step forward, however, she felt a sharp pain on the back of her head, and she fainted.

Zu An rushed over to support her. "Why did you knock him out?"

The female assassin pulled back her hand with a snort. "What, you can't bear to see him get hurt?"

"Like hell I care about him." Zu An tossed Chu Youzhao onto a couch.

The female assassin was momentarily speechless.

"You should exercise some care, lest your Madam hunt you down for that."

"This brat needs to experience a bit of hardship." Even though this was what Zu An said, he still made sure that he was safe. "My clan's Madam? Is that jealousy I sense?"

He undid her face covering as he said this, revealing her charming face. This was none other than Snow, with whom he had parted ways with a long time ago. Her real name was Qiao Xueying.

"When did you recognize me?" Qiao Xueying looked at him with a big smile, her face glowing with radiance.

"When I saw your eyes." Despite his words, he felt rather guilty inside. He had only sensed a slight familiarity when he saw her, and hadn't been all that confident. Only when he heard her voice had he been sure.

Of course, he wasn't stupid enough to say that in such a situation.

Qiao Xueying was obviously delighted. "Hmph! I thought that you'd already forgotten about me a long time ago."

Zu An pulled her into his arms. "How could I dare to forget someone so beautiful?"

Qiao Xueying's face turned red, and a hint of shyness crept into her expression. "You've become more and more of a smooth talker."

Zu An chuckled. "Wasn't I this way when you first met me?"

"You have some nerve! I hated you so much I wanted to chop your tongue off at first." A warm feeling welled up within her as she recalled what happened.

Seeing the young lady's petite red lips, memories of the dungeon flooded Zu An's mind. A great surge of emotion overcame him, and he kissed her.

"Mmm..." Her body instinctively stiffened, but she quickly melted into his embrace. She held her lover, receiving his attentions gently and bashfully.

The moment stretched out, then Qiao Xueying hurriedly pushed him away as if he was burning hot. "The situation is too urgent right now. Let's talk about important matters first."

The sound of fighting drifted in from outside. Zu An knew that guards might rush in at any time, so he didn't dare mess around further. "How did you end up in an organization of assassins?"

"After we separated, I came back to the capital to help my clansmen. Many of my clansmen are serving under the Shi clan. I had to secure the backing of another power, so I joined the Shadow Group." Qiao Xueying explained.

“The Shadow Group?” Zu An froze. It sounded like some sneaky and shady organization.

“The Shadow Group is the most mysterious and powerful assassin organization,” Qiao Xueying replied. “As long as the payout is high enough, they are willing to complete any hit. Of course, there’s no way they can kill someone like the emperor. I rushed over when I learned that the target of the Shadow Group was you, but I didn’t expect you to have become so strong all of a sudden. You even dealt with four sixth rank assassins on your own.”

Zu An smiled. “You took care of one of them.”

Qiao Xueying rolled her eyes. “Hmph! You always had a soft spot for women. Now it seems you’re interested in men as well.” This fellow still had the nerve to say such a thing after forcing her to do something like that! When this deed was exposed, it would be akin to betrayal. The Shadow Group dealt with such matters extremely harshly.

Zu An chuckled in embarrassment. “What can I do? Chu Chuyan is his big sister, after all.”

Judging from her tone, she didn’t seem to know that Chu Youzhao was a girl, and he wasn’t about to clarify this mix-up. After all, this was probably the Chu clan’s greatest secret. If exposed, it could cause disaster, and he didn’t want to be the cause of something like that.[1]

“By the way, who is the master of this Shadow Group? Do you know who put a hit on me? Or could it be that the Shadow Group is the one who wants me dead?” Zu An asked. There had been many attempts on his life from the moment he’d first set out for the capital. He needed more information on this enemy.

Qiao Xueying shook her head. “The master of the Shadow Group is the most mysterious person in the world. I fear that no one besides himself knows his identity. Though I believe someone else ordered this assassination, the Shadow Group always ensures absolute secrecy when it comes to their clients. No one knows who that person is.”

Zu An reached out a hand to brush away a few strands of hair from her face. “I’m sure it’s been dangerous for you, operating in such an assassin organization.”

Qiao Xueying’s smile grew brighter when she sensed his concern. “Relax, I have plenty of skills to rely on. Things haven’t been that bad. Besides, I need the strength of the Shadow Group if I am to protect my clansmen.

“By the way, I’ve arranged for a group of my clansmen to leave the city tomorrow, early in the morning. Come with me. I’ll arrange for you to join them. I’m about eighty percent confident we’ll be able to leave the capital successfully.” Qiao Xueying grabbed his arm and prepared to leave.

Zu An was stunned. “You came to save me?”

Qiao Xueying snorted. “You’re my man, after all. Who else would I save, if not you?”

Zu An was incredibly moved by this, and immediately pulled her into his embrace.

“Oh my gosh, can we hug later? Zhuxie Chixin is going to return soon. It’ll be too late then!” The familiar warmth brought back scenes from their time in the dungeon, and Qiao Xueying felt her legs begin to weaken.

Chapter 572: Beyond Her Understanding

Zu An was about to tell her that she didn't have to go that far, and that he planned to face the emperor and settle the issue on his own once and for all.

However, he couldn't shake the feeling that all that had happened so far was just too strange. Firstly, the emperor did not summon him to the palace, but made him wait outside for a night. Then, a group of assassins somehow reached him so easily. If he hadn't made a great breakthrough in his cultivation, he would probably be dead by now.

He didn't know who was orchestrating all this. If Zhuxie Chixin was one of the perpetrators, and he later found out that the assassins hadn't been able to kill him, he might just send even stronger assailants, or even get personally involved. That would truly be a headache. It was probably safer for him to make his escape first and lie low for a while.

He nodded. "Okay, let's go."

Qiao Xueying beamed. She grabbed his hand and ran towards the window.

"Wait..." Zu An hurriedly picked up Chu Youzhao.

"What are you bringing him along for?" Qiao Xueying wasn't too happy that a third wheel was coming along. "The assassins have failed, and the guards will soon arrive. No one will harm him, given who he is."

Zu An shook his head. "Everything that's happened today is much too strange. Things will get worse if something happens to him."

If it were anyone else, Qiao Xueying wouldn't have cared if they were dead or alive. However, since he was a scion of the Chu clan, she did not object any further.

Zu An walked over to her, carrying Chu Youzhao. As he walked, he felt a soft, squishy feeling. His heart skipped a beat, and he quickly shifted how he was holding her.

What the hell is this girl using? Her disguise seems perfect from the outside, but it's completely different once one touches her.

He looked at the corpses on the ground, and his expression grew stern. With a wave of his hand, they were engulfed in flames. He did not want others to discover what had happened by examining the wounds on these corpses, whether it was Gui Tian's—whom Qiao Xueying had killed—or the other three. Anyone who was determined enough could easily find out the truth. The flames spread quickly, but did not produce any sound. In a few heartbeats, the four corpses were so completely disintegrated that not even ashes remained.

Qiao Xueying was surprised. "You've awakened the fire element? The flames you wield don't seem quite like those of other fire element cultivators, though. They seem rather special."

"Of course they're special. I think they're the magical flames of the nine-tailed fox." The flames he wielded were borrowed from Daji, so there was no way they were merely ordinary.

He had always been jealous of Pei Mianman's destructive black flames, but now, his own flames did not seem all that bad.

The two of them talked quietly as they left the residence under the cover of night.

Zu An made sure to keep an eye on what was happening outside. Many guards were engaged in fierce fighting with a score of black-clad men. Some of these black-clad men had much higher cultivations than the four he had killed.

The bulk of their force was needed to distract the guards for this mission, so they could only afford to send those sixth-ranked experts to take care of him.

The black-clad men beat a fighting retreat. They figured that their companions should have already succeeded, so there was no reason to throw their lives away.

The two of them moved through the shadows silently. There were already soldiers patrolling the streets, having clearly noticed that something was not right within the city.

Qiao Xueying was extremely familiar with the capital. She led the way, just barely avoiding the soldiers' detection. Eventually, the two of them arrived at a quiet, secluded residence.

Qiao Xueying opened the door and invited him in. "This is one of my hidden safehouses. Let's wait things out here. I'll take you to my clansmen once things calm down."

"Okay." Zu An looked about. Even though the interior wasn't all that special, it was still rather nice. It was filled with all manner of plants and flowers, giving the space a refreshing feeling. It seemed that elves had a much greater affinity to nature.

Qiao Xueying helped him place Chu Youzhao on a chair. She was not about to let another man sleep in her bed, even if he was the Chu clan's heir.

Zu An figured out what she was thinking, and couldn't resist a chuckle.

"By the way, do you know anyone from the fox race?" Qiao Xueying asked, rather confused. She hadn't had the chance to ask about this along the way, but they had some time to kill right now. She continued, "Even so... the fox race's abilities lie in their bloodline. They have no way of passing on their flame-wielding skills to you either."

"It's complicated." Zu An didn't know how to explain things either. "If I had to sum it up, I am merely borrowing the flames of a nine-tailed fox."

Qiao Xueying was surprised. "I was worried about how I would introduce you to the fiend races, but it's much easier now, since you can borrow the power that the nine-tailed foxes wield. After all, it's been a long time since there was a true nine-tailed fox within the fox race. You will surely be treated like a distinguished guest. Who knows, you might even be able to become their Saint. Even though the fox race isn't a particularly strong race, they wield significant power, given their special status. It should be easy enough for them to shelter a single person."

Zu An was stunned. "You're planning to send me to live with the fiend races?"

“Where else could I send you?” Qiao Xueying replied. “Right now, you’re wanted by the emperor of the Great Zhou Dynasty, so no place within the Zhou Dynasty will be safe. However, no matter how strong the emperor is, he cannot interfere within the territories of our fiend races. You can hide out together with them for a few years. Once the emperor dies, you can come back.”

The term ‘fiend races’ was used as a collective term for the other races in this world. The elves were one of the fiend races, so that was why she used the word ‘our’.

Zu An laughed. “The emperor of the Zhou Dynasty wants me for the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, which can grant immortality. Do you think that no one else will covet my technique if I escape to the lands of the fiend races?”

Qiao Xueying was stunned. She hadn’t considered this possibility. After a short hesitation, she said, “The lifespans of fiends are longer than that of humans, so they don’t have such a great desire for techniques that grant immortality...”

Zu An shook his head. He gently caressed her beautifully braided hair. “Snow, thank you for worrying about me, but I should go to the palace tomorrow. I will face the emperor and settle this issue on my own, once and for all.”

Qiao Xueying began to panic. “The emperor is the world’s publicly-acknowledged number-one expert! Even if you’ve become stronger, you still don’t stand a chance!”

Zu An chuckled. “Silly girl, I’m not going there to fight him. Don’t worry, I have a plan. If my plan fails, then I’ll escape with you to the lands of the fiends.”

Qiao Xueying was incredibly worried. “But what if you don’t even have the chance to escape...?”

Zu An drew her petite body into his arms. “Trust me. I’ll be okay.”

Qiao Xueying hugged him tightly, as if he might slip away forever if she loosened her hold just a smidge.

After being apart for such a long time, any couple would act like newlyweds when they finally met again. As the two of them held on to each other, the temperature began to rise.

Qiao Xueying’s body slowly grew soft, while Zu An became harder.

No words were needed. Everything proceeded naturally. The two of them kissed each other deeply.

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A while later, Qiao Xueying hastily tidied her messy clothes. She looked at Chu Youzhao, who was nearby, her face completely red. “Not... not over here...”

Zu An chuckled. He wanted to tell her that it was all right because Chu Youzhao was a girl too, and that she was still unconscious anyway.

However, when he saw her pleading stare, he did not bother explaining, but carried her straight to the nearby bed.

Qiao Xueying reached out her fingers. Several fine vines extended outwards, closing the curtains around them.

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After a long time, Chu Youzhao slowly came to. She felt as if she had awaked from a strange dream. Everything within it had been pink and rosy, and it was just too embarrassing. She had dreamt that she was sleeping with a man, and that the man had been toying with her body to his heart's content. All sorts of embarrassing noises had issued from her mouth.

His face had been blurry, but when she moved closer, she recognized that person's face. It was her brother-in-law!

She woke up in fright.

So it was a dream!

She let out a long sigh, and she closed her legs together in shame. Why would she dream of something so embarrassing? And with that scoundrel as well!

Wait, the shameful sounds from my dream are still here.

She subconsciously turned around, and her eyes immediately widened. Even though there was a thin layer of curtains between them, she could still make out the figures inside.

What are they doing? Pretending to ride a horse?

Chu Youzhao was puzzled. Before she could react, a vine stretched out and knocked her out again.

Chapter 573: Entering the Palace

"It's all your fault!" The next morning, Qiao Xueying could scarcely contain her embarrassment and anger. She pummeled Zu An in the chest continuously.

Zu An had a strange look on his face. "There was a screen between us. He couldn't see anything."

"But I feel weird!" Qiao Xueying spun around. She felt really uncomfortable. If it had been First Miss Chu, things might have been different, but this was the heir of the Chu clan!

If not for her friendship with Chu Chuyan, she might have just silenced him forever.

Zu An moved his hand through her elaborately-braided hair. "You knocked him out, right? Besides, even if he saw anything, he would have seen me. I was the one closer to him."

Qiao Xueying pulled her braid out of his hands. "Right, what was that 'steering wheel' you mentioned last night?" she asked, a strange look on her face.

Zu An coughed noisily, almost choking on his own spit. "Nothing! Haha..."

"It's definitely not good." Qiao Xueying's face was completely red. She didn't know how this fellow came up with such things. Miss Chu was always such a cold and aloof woman. Did she let him get away with all of this as well?

Zu An looked out the window. "The sun's almost up. It's about time I went back. I still have to get into the palace."

Qiao Xueying immediately put everything else out of her mind. Her expression grew serious. "Ah Zu, are you sure you can succeed? Why not just stick with my plan and leave when the gates open?"

"Don't worry, I know what I'm doing." Zu An was incredibly touched by her concerned expression. He kissed her delicate red lips again.

Qiao Xueying quickly pushed him away, her face full of fear and embarrassment. "Stop... I really can't take it anymore..."

The bodies of elves were more delicate than humans, and Zu An was much stronger than an ordinary man. Her body felt on the edge of falling apart after being tossed and turned about by him all night.

Zu An laughed. "I'm no beast. I just wanted to kiss you."

"Didn't you say that last night?" Qiao Xueying grumbled.

Zu An had no reply to that.

The two of them embraced each other affectionately for a few more moments. Then, Qiao Xueying got up to help him get dressed.

Zu An sighed in amazement. "You're very skilled with your hands."

"I didn't know how to do any of this before. But as a servant of Miss Chu, I had to pick this up." Qiao Xueying sighed. "I must've owed you lovers a debt in my past life. Not only did I fail to complete my mission, I even ended up suffering a huge loss."

Zu An pinched her cheeks. "We're lovers too."

The gloom hanging over Qiao Xueying immediately disappeared when she heard what he said, and she smiled so broadly her eyes turned into crescents.

Zu An was still worried about Chu Youzhao, but Qiao Xueying assured him that she would escort the Chu heir back to the Qin clan.

He knew that she was more familiar with the capital. Furthermore, she had some connection to the Chu clan herself, so he was willing to trust her with this task.

He returned to the residence he had been staying at the night before. He could hear Zhuxie Chixin's furious bellowing even from a distance away. "Have you found him?"

"Not yet..."

"You can't even figure out if it was the assassins who captured him or if he ran away himself?!"

"Things were too messy last night, so one was able to see clearly..."

"All of you are trash! Give the order to post arrest warrants everywhere! Also, seal up the city gates! No one is allowed to enter or leave until we find him!"

Zu An knew that it was about time. He cleared his throat. "Is the Chief Commander looking for me?"

Everyone in the residence whipped around, and all their eyes lit up when they saw him. After all, if they had really lost the person most wanted by the emperor, not a single one of them would have lived. How could they not be happy to see him return?

Zhuxie Chixin was the one most shocked. "You're okay?"

Zu An chuckled. "Was the Chief Commander hoping that something would happen to me?"

Zhuxie Chixin's face darkened. "What are you saying? Why would I want something to happen to you? Are you injured? Do you need treatment?"

"I'm fine." Zu An said, refusing his offer. Who knew what manner of strange things might happen now if he asked for treatment.

"Then let's head for the palace immediately. I do not want anything else to happen." Zhuxie Chixin waved his hand and ordered his subordinates to make preparations.

Zu An was perturbed by the hurry that Zhuxie Chixin was in. Could my hunch have been wrong?

Zhuxie Chixin escorted him into the palace with a group of guards.

"We won't run into any more assassins along the way, will we?" Zu An pondered aloud.

"If they come, then they will die." Zhuxie Chixin's reply was extremely straightforward. He was clearly full of confidence.

Zu An seemed to fall into deep thought, while it was Zhuxie Chixin's turn to grow curious. "Where did you go last night?"

Zu An smiled. "There were so many people gunning for my life, so I decided to hide for a bit."

Zhuxie Chixin's expression grew slightly strange. "To be honest, there are very few people who I'm unable to comprehend, and you are one of these few. You could have easily run away, yet you came back. Furthermore, you're even cooperating with us as if you're in a hurry to meet His Majesty."

"Could it be that the Chief Commander does not wish for me to meet the emperor?" Zu An asked in return.

Zhuxie Chixin stared at him. "Do you know what awaits you once you meet His Majesty?"

"I do." Zu An smiled. He looked completely calm.

Zhuxie Chixin stared at him uncertainly, then chuckled to himself. He's a weird one indeed.

He did not ask any further questions. The group of them headed straight to the palace.

Zu An was slightly awestruck when he saw the red walls and golden tiles of the structure in front of him. The Forbidden City of his previous world was already incredibly grand, but this imperial palace was far more majestic.

From the height of the palace walls to the aura that their gates gave off, all of it was far greater than those of the Forbidden City.

He supposed that it made sense. This was a world of cultivators, after all, where strength ruled above all. The imperial palace would have to be much more intimidating.

Every guard here had to have at least four ranks of cultivation, and many were even at the fifth rank.

Outside the palace, each one of them would be considered individually outstanding. Moreover, these soldiers had been trained in the use of army formations, which would sharply increase their collective strength.

This imperial palace was probably the safest place in this world.

With Zhuxie Chixin leading the way, no one dared obstruct them. After walking for what seemed like an age, they finally arrived at a majestic gate. There was already an old eunuch waiting for them.

Zhuxie Chixin spoke to Zu An. "I cannot accompany you further. Follow Eunuch Li. He will take you to meet His Majesty."

Zu An was stunned. Most likely, the inner palace lay beyond this gate. The ones who lived within were either imperial concubines, or other women. Ordinarily, other men would not be allowed in.

By letting him go in, it was clear that they did not plan to let him leave alive.

Given the situation he was in, though, he could only deal with whatever happened as best as he could. He hoped his plan would go smoothly.

"Thank you, Chief Commander, for your trouble." After the old eunuch completed the handover with Zhuxie Chixin, he said with a sharp voice, "Follow me."

Even though Old Mi's voice was unpleasant to listen to, at least it wasn't this bad. Zu An was rather disdainful. This old man matched the stereotype of a palace eunuch perfectly. Old Mi probably covered up his deficiencies with his powerful cultivation.

He followed the old eunuch further inside. He wanted to joke around with this old eunuch for a bit, but he did not expect him to be this arrogant. He quickly lost interest in exchanging barbs with the old fellow. After all, the emperor was still the key to all this.

The further in they went, the quieter it became. It was as if they were strolling through a private garden.

The two of them walked along a long promenade that stretched across a stream, and finally stopped under a pavilion. "Wait here," the old eunuch said.

Zu An was stunned. "I thought I was going to meet His Majesty?"

"His Majesty is currently attending the morning court session," the old eunuch replied, "so you are to wait here first. Don't do anything foolish."

With that, he left Zu An alone.

A strange expression spread across Zu An's face. This emperor seemed rather lax! Was he really going to be left alone in the inner palace? Wasn't the emperor worried that he might cause a ruckus?

Some pastries were laid out on a table under the pavilion. Zu An had been busy all night, and Zhuxie Chixin hadn't given him any breakfast. He was actually feeling a little hungry.

Of course, he didn't dare eat any of it.

He tried his best, but eventually, he couldn't sit still any longer. Those pastries were right in front of him, yet he couldn't eat them. What an awful test of willpower.

He decided to take a walk instead. It was always good to familiarize oneself with one's surroundings, after all.

The palace layout was extremely complicated, and he started to feel lost after walking around for a bit. He was just about to turn around when he heard a rather simple-minded voice. "I want you guys to learn to jump like frogs. Do you see any frogs jumping while wearing pants?"

Chapter 574: Dumbstruck

Zu An was dumbfounded. Whoever you are, you're right. Frogs really don't jump while wearing pants.

He traced the source of the voice, and saw a large fatty standing in front of a pool, pointing his finger at several young eunuchs and berating them. The young eunuchs were all lying on the ground, looking like Ouyang Feng practicing the frog technique.

From their miserable expressions, however, he could tell that they were being forced into this.

The big fatty's face was completely round. From his appearance, he didn't seem all that smart.

Who the hell could act so arrogantly within the inner palace? This fatty was scolding those eunuchs like an elder scolding their grandsons, and the eunuchs had their heads bowed, begging for forgiveness. Not a single one of them dared show defiance.

Zu An took a closer look at what the fatty was wearing. He was draped in apricot yellow, and dragons seemed to be embroidered on his clothing.

This couldn't be the emperor, could it?

Zu An immediately rejected this thought. If the number-one expert in the world looked like a handicapped child, this world was done for.

He then remembered the rumors regarding the crown prince. A man who could freely move about in the inner palace and dressed in yellow, dragon-patterned robes... Who else could this be?

Chu Chuyan had mentioned to him that the crown prince was named Zhao Ruizhi. At the time, Zu An had thought that being given such a name was surely an omen for him to turn out mentally deficient.[1]

"Huh? You, little eunuch over there. Hurry up and get over here." By this time, the crown prince had noticed Zu An, and called him over.

Zu An was speechless. Are you blind? Look at my bold and mighty appearance! Who are you calling a eunuch?

Since he had nothing better to do, though, he figured that there was no harm in getting to know this crown prince.

He made his way over.

The other eunuchs stared at him. “What brazen behavior! Who are you? How dare you barge into the inner palace?”

The crown prince somehow couldn’t tell, but the rest of them knew that there was no way this person was a eunuch. Was he an assassin?

Then again, the imperial palace had so many powerful cultivators within its walls, and security was so tight. How could an assassin possibly get in?

Besides, it was possible that he was the heir of a certain minister who had entered with an imperial order, so they dared not openly call him an assassin yet.

Zu An was about to explain himself when that fatty said unhappily, “Shut up. Do frogs speak?”

The eunuchs quickly shut their mouths, bitter expressions on their faces.

The fatty continued, “What about your pants? Do frogs wear pants? Take them all off.”

Zu An added, “It isn’t just pants. Frogs don’t wear clothes either.”

The fatty was extremely pleased, beaming as though he had found his soul mate. “You’re right! Why didn’t I think of that? Little Xu, Little He, take off all of your clothes.”

The eunuchs glanced at Zu An resentfully. This fella was throwing stones at them while they were already down! Wait until we have a chance for revenge. We’ll make sure you’ll get what you deserve!

You have successfully trolled Eunuch Xu Kun for 444 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Eunuch He Te for 444 Rage points!

You have successfully...

However, they couldn’t go against these orders. They knew that their master was moody. Um... wait, to be more precise, he has no concept of good and evil.

A companion of theirs, who had clearly never offended the crown prince, had been given a miserable beating. The crown prince had not felt as though this was an evil act—he just wanted to find out which was harder, a stick or a human skull. It was purely for his amusement.

On balance, though, the crown prince didn’t treat them that poorly. As long as none of them got on his bad side, they actually did pretty well for themselves.

Zu An was speechless as he watched the eunuchs bashfully take off their clothes. He really had no interest in watching eunuchs strip. It would have been much more interesting if these were palace maids.

That was strange, though. There were only eunuchs at the crown prince's side. Not a single maid was in sight.

As he looked around, he asked idly, "Why were you asking them to learn how to jump like frogs?"

The fatty pointed at the frogs in the nearby pond, which was covered in lotus flowers. "I heard several frogs croaking when I was passing by just now. I asked them if the frogs decided to croak on their own, or if they made them croak to flatter me."

Zu An stared blankly for a moment. It took him a moment to realize that he had referred to both the frogs and the eunuchs in much the same way, and was momentarily stunned. This fellow's head worked in truly bizarre ways.

He followed up on the crown prince's statement. "And what did they say?"

The fatty pointed at the thin, weak eunuch and said, "Little Xu said that those frogs croak like that whenever spring approaches."

Zu An felt as though it was a completely appropriate reply, but the fatty said, "It's utterly preposterous that these frogs did not croak in welcome when they saw me! That's why I told Little Xu to learn how to croak like a frog when he greets me, but he just couldn't learn to do so! That's why I asked him to learn how to jump like a frog instead."

Zu An had no reply to that.

He swallowed, then asked about the others. "What about the rest of them?"

The fatty replied, "Oh, I asked Little He the same thing, and he said that the frogs obviously croaked as a way of greeting me."

Zu An figured that, since Little Xu's answer had clearly displeased him, it would be even more stupid if the others didn't change their answer. "Then why did you punish them too?"

The fatty replied angrily, "His reply made me happy, but I wanted to hear the frogs greet me again. Unfortunately, they couldn't make the frogs croak. Doesn't that mean that they were lying to me?"

Zu An was once again speechless.

Of course the frogs would run off when so many people showed up so suddenly!

He looked at the eunuchs with pity. Whichever reply they chose was destined to be the wrong choice. What a terrible plight.

Those eunuchs seemed to have sensed the meaning within his gaze. They nodded knowingly back at him. Finally, someone understands the depth of our suffering!

They were originally angry at him for throwing stones at them while they were down, but after seeing his sympathetic expression, their enmity towards him decreased.

The big fatty continued, "Oh, since you're here, I want to hear your thoughts as well. Did those frogs croak on their own, or were they greeting me?"

Zu An wanted to hit his head against a wall.

If he had known this was going to happen, he wouldn't have asked so many questions!

The eunuchs all took delight in his misfortune. Heh, look at how smug you were a moment ago. You're about to be made to strip and jump with the rest of us.

The fatty was rather dissatisfied that Zu An had yet to reply. "Hello? I'm talking to you. Are you looking down on me by not replying?"

"Of course not." Zu An gave the pond a look. A confident smile appeared on his lips. "These frogs are obviously croaking to greet you."

The fatty was overjoyed. "Haha! I knew it! Can you make them croak a few more times, then?"

The eunuchs exchanged glances, and almost burst out laughing. Where did this idiot come from? You just had to keep talking and draw the crown prince's attention. Look at you now!

"Sure." Zu An chuckled. He walked over to the pond, then spoke as if he was addressing the frogs in the pond. "Fellow frog brothers, my friend wants to hear you greet him some more. Please show him some respect and croak for him."

The eunuchs all laughed. Wasn't this guy even dumber than the crown prince?

Of course, none of them dared give voice to these thoughts. However, they looked at Zu An the way anyone would look at the village idiot.

The big fatty seemed to have discovered a kindred spirit. He quickly rushed over to Zu An's side. "You can talk to frogs?"

Zu An smiled modestly. "Only a little."

Little Xu finally couldn't take it anymore. "Master, you're being fooled! No one in this world can talk to frogs!"

Little He nodded in agreement. "Exactly, Master..."

Before he could finish, the sound of croaking came from the direction of the pond. There were only a few frogs at first, but the croaking became louder and louder. Eventually, all the frogs were croaking in unison.

The eunuchs stared at the pond, all of them dumbstruck. Innumerable frogs were squatting on the lotus leaves, as though all of the frogs in the pond had appeared. They were all croaking at the crown prince, sitting in a proper stance, as though paying their respects.

Chapter 575: Crown Princess

The fatty was elated. He ran over to the pond, looking left and right excitedly. He looked as happy as a child.

Zu An heard many people refer to the crown prince as ‘unsophisticated’. Back then, he thought that they were too embarrassed to call him an idiot, so that was why they changed their wording.

Now, it looked like the crown prince was indeed simple and unsophisticated.

If he was born in an ordinary clan, he might just enjoy his life as a wealthy heir, but in the royal family, he was doomed for a bad ending. He remembered that there was an emperor from the Western Jin Dynasty who was similar to this crown prince in front of him. In the end, the entire country rose in rebellion.

Normally, the emperor of this world would be the most powerful cultivator. The emperor should know this, yet he insists on creating this danger due to his selfish desires!

While his mind was wandering, the fatty ran over with a big smile. His fat jiggled like waves as he ran.

“You really can speak to frogs! How did you do it? Teach me! You’ll be my big bro from today on!” The big fatty tugged on his sleeves in adoration.

Zu An knew that he already had this fatty in the bag. “I can teach you, but honestly, I’m pretty hungry right now, so I don’t think I can teach that well.”

Little Xu and Little He were completely gobsmacked. The crown prince actually called this fella big bro? The worst part was that this guy agreed! He had no idea what the hell he was getting himself into!

“That’s not a problem, there’s a lot of snacks here. Little Xu, Little He, hurry and come serve this...” The fatty was stunned. “Big bro, what is your name?”

“I’m Zu An.” There was no need to hide this. Everyone inside the palace was going to know sooner or later.

“Oh, I’m Zhao Ruizhi.” The fatty welcomed him with a big smile. This was the seat that his people prepared for him. There were all types of fine refreshments and fruits on the table. “Big bro, these aren’t anything special, but you can eat some for now. I’ll have them make something good for you later.”

When they saw the fawning smile on the crown prince’s face and how he stuck to this newcomer like a dog, the eunuchs were stupefied. They wanted to berate Zu An, but with how much the crown prince liked him, they were all too scared to say anything.

“You don’t have to go through all that trouble.” Zu An picked up a pastry and took a big bite out of it. Suddenly, he remembered that there were definitely many people who envied this stupid crown prince. If someone poisoned him, then it really would be incredibly unlucky if he ate it instead.

As such, he handed the pastry in his hand to him. “Eat some too.”

“Sure!” Zhao Ruizhi smiled in a simple and honest manner. He took it and threw it into his mouth.

The others couldn’t stop him in time. All of their faces paled. What if there was some poison on this fella’s hands? There was no way they would survive if something happened to the crown prince!

All of them stared at the crown prince to see if there was anything wrong.

Zhao Ruizhi picked up another pastry. "Big bro, you should keep eating. It tastes pretty good."

When he saw how quickly the food disappeared, Zu An finally understood how this dude ended up becoming so fat.

But now, he didn't have to worry about the food being tampered with. He also picked up a pastry and began to eat.

Zhao Ruizhi's face was stuffed with food, so his voice was muffled as he said, "By the way, how did you talk to the frogs? Hurry and teach me!"

"You need to imagine that you are one of them first, and then you have to let go of your thoughts. You cannot use only your mouth to communicate with them." Zu An told him a load of bullsh*t. The reason he could talk to them was because of the jade badge he got from the Eastern Barbarian girl in the Yinxu dungeon. That thing allowed him to communicate with lower intelligence life forms.

Hm? His expression suddenly changed. He wondered if he could use it to control this dummy crown prince. He didn't seem to be that intelligent.

Zhao Ruizhi seemed to have gained the most important treasure. He wasn't even in the mood to eat anymore and quickly ran over to the pond to play with the frogs.

Then, he suddenly ran over and squatted down, releasing a croak sound.

The frogs also replied with a croak. Zhao Ruizhi was immediately excited. "Big bro, big bro! I learned how to talk to them too!"

Zu An had a strange look on his face. "What did you tell them?" He didn't have time to make those frogs cooperate with him.

Zhao Ruizhi replied, "I asked them if they ate yet."

"Did they reply?" Zu An had a strange look on his face.

"They did! They told me they ate already!" Zhao Ruizhi said without any hesitation.

Zu An: "....."

What the heck. Saves me the effort I guess.

This fella is actually too smart for his own good.

Those eunuchs were stunned. If they knew that it was this easy to con the crown prince, why the hell did they jump around naked like frogs earlier?

But they also knew that they couldn't make the frogs greet the crown prince like Zu An did, so the crown prince obviously wouldn't believe them.

Zhao Ruizhi ran back over to Zu An's side after playing with the frogs for a bit. "Big bro, you're so awesome, so I have something else I want to ask you."

"Ask me anything." Zu An peeled a banana while replying nonchalantly.

Those eunuchs all widened their eyes from how laid back he seemed. This person really was freaking daring!

Zu An knew what they were thinking from the incoming Rage points. However, he wasn't intentionally courting disaster, but rather felt that with an oddball like the crown prince, you can't play your cards the same way you usually do.

It was instead easier to gain the crown prince's favor by putting on this type of smug attitude.

Zhao Ruizhi chuckled. He gave those eunuchs a look, his expression seemingly a bit embarrassed. He moved next to Zu An and said with a hushed voice, "So... there's someone I want to mess with, maybe make her smell my fart or something, but she's way too smart. She always avoids it before I prank her. Do you have any ideas?"

Zu An: "???"

I'm still freaking eating! Why are you saying something so disgusting to my face?

But when he saw his pure and hopeful expression, he knew that this fatty was being serious. As such, he chuckled. This fella really was like a child who just wanted to prank his friends.

He casually replied, "That's easy enough. Next time, when you are about to fart, tell your friends 'something smells like it's burning'. Then, they will subconsciously pay more attention to their sense of smell to check to see if something really is burning. However, that'll just make them breathe in your entire fart."

Those eunuchs were extremely shocked. Is this something a freaking human thinks of? This is just way too evil!

Zhao Ruizhi became even happier. "Big bro is really strong! I'll definitely be able to prank her this time!"

Zu An was surprised. "Who are you trying to prank?"

Zhao Ruizhi replied, "My wife. She is always making fun of me for being stupid, so I wanted to mess with her for once."

Zu An: "....."

This is the freaking crown princess! What the hell am I supposed to say now? You actually want your wife to smell your fart?

"Were you trying to prank me?" A cold voice sounded from behind them at this time.

Zhao Ruizhi trembled. He immediately began to shake all over like a quail.

Zu An turned around with curiosity. His eyes couldn't help but light up.

A beautiful woman slowly walked towards the two of them. Her shoulders looked like they were sculpted, her waistline thin as if it was bound. Her neck was long and graceful like a swan. Her skin was fair and smooth. She was dressed in a set of dazzling and luxurious palace outfit, the two ribbons fluttering behind her making her waist look even more thin and enchanting.

There was a red beauty mark at the center of her forehead. Her hair was dressed meticulously, decorated by an exquisite lotus flower woven out of threads. There were several delicate hairpins at both sides, as well as a shining golden ornament. She naturally exuded a type of noble grandeur.

Her enchanting and dignified eyes were staring coldly at Zu An.

Chapter 576: Young Noble Lady

Zu An frowned. Even though this woman was definitely pretty, she seemed a bit too cold.

This type of coldness was different from Chu Chuyan's. Chu Chuyan's natural disposition was gentle and refined. Together with the Snowflake Sword she cultivated, she gave off the feeling of an ice beauty.

But the woman before him had a type of high and mighty indifference. She was clearly not that old, yet she gave off a type of dignity that didn't match her age.

No wonder that lively fatty suddenly became like a mouse that saw a cat.

Zu An wasn't stupid. He immediately knew that this was the crown princess.

The beautiful woman gave the two of them a look. Zhao Ruizhi stood up from his seat as if his bottom just got burned. He stood there rigidly and obediently...

She saw that Zu An was still sitting leisurely in place, casually eating fruits. She frowned.

The maid next to her saw this change in expression and immediately berated, "Outrageous! Who do you think you are? You dare sit in the crown prince's spot?"

Zu An thought to himself that this crown princess really was incredibly arrogant. It was almost as if he was of too low status to even speak to, so she had her maid scold him in her place.

He gave that maid a sidelong look. "Your crown prince let me sit here. Do I need to ask you for permission first? Are you even anyone important?"

"You!" That maid immediately began to shake all over.

You have successfully trolled Rong Mo for +999 Rage points!

As the crown princess' personal maid, others would try to curry favor with her wherever she went. When had she ever encountered anyone who immediately criticized her? She was so baffled she didn't know how to respond, which made her even more angry.

Zu An sneered. Rong Mo? Why isn't your name Granny Rong?[1]

He could tell right from the start that this wasn't someone he could reason with.

The crown princess gave him a surprised look. She didn't expect this person to be so daring.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +258 Rage points!

Zu An gave her a look too. This woman's name sounded pretty nice, but the person herself was a bit too fierce.[2]

The crown princess felt increasingly unhappy when she saw his fixed gaze. She harrumphed.

She was the crown princess! Normally, all men would bow their heads in her presence. At the very least, they didn't dare look at her.

Even the important ministers of the court would do their best to avoid looking at her too much, yet this fella stared at her in such an unrestrained manner!

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +489 Rage points!

Zhao Ruizhi timidly said, "Little Mo, I was the one who told him to sit there."

That maid was about to say something else when the crown princess stopped her. This foolish girl criticized Zu An with the crown prince's name, yet the other party shot right back using the same name. It was completely pointless to try and argue further on this matter.

She turned her head to ask the naked eunuchs to the side, "What are you all doing here?"

Little Xu and Little He trembled as they replied, "Replying to the crown princess. We were pretending to be frogs."

Bi Linglong: "....."

She knew what kind of person her husband was as well. These shenanigans weren't surprising at all. As such, she changed her approach and asked, "What happened here just now? Also, who is this?"

Zu An's eyes narrowed. This crown princess was much smarter than that maid. From the looks of it, she was looking for another reason to punish him.

Little Xu and Little He hurriedly recounted what just happened. They didn't dare to offend the crown princess, but they were also scared of offending the crown prince, which was why the information was unbiased. They objectively explained what just happened.

But who would've thought that Bi Linglong would be furious upon hearing this. "Chat with frogs? Utterly preposterous! Have this sorcerer who has deceived the crown prince receive twenty strikes to the mouth as a warning to others! All those who dare to deceive the crown prince through such treacherous methods in the future are to be punished severely."

"Understood!" The eunuchs who followed behind her walked towards Zu An with a sinister smile.

Zhao Ruizhi opened his mouth several times, but when he saw the crown princess' ferocious expression, he guiltily swallowed down his pleas for leniency.

Zu An cursed him for being a good for nothing henpecked man. There was obviously no way he would let these eunuchs have their way. He immediately berated them. "Wait a moment!"

Bi Linglong gave him a cold look. She didn't have any intention of talking to him.

Zu An's face darkened. Wasn't the normal trend to give him a chance to explain himself?

Under helplessness, he could only say, "I am a friend the crown prince invited. If you do not believe me, you can ask him for proof." He nudged the fatty next to him while saying this.

Zhao Ruizhi seemed to have woken up from his dream. He thus said, "Linglong, he is my friend, and he didn't lie to me. I wanted to make him my teacher so that I can learn how to talk to frogs. It's much more interesting than the things the tutors teach me."

"He even told you to call him your teacher?" Bi Linglong's expression became even colder. "Absolutely shameful! There is no need for the mouth strikes, just drag him down and have him beaten a hundred times by the rod!"

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +581 Rage!

Those eunuchs immediately quickened their steps and rushed at him.

Zu An gave them a cold look. Those eunuchs' bodies immediately became ice-cold, as if they were facing something terrifying. They didn't dare take even half a step forward.

Even the crown princess and maid's hearts subconsciously jumped.

Why were this fella's eyes so terrifying?

But how could they know that Zu An already experienced countless battles that placed him on the edge of life and death? He even spent several decades as the ruler of the Shang Dynasty! Together with the fact that he always carried the Tai'e Sword with him, a sword known for its dao of power, his aura already changed considerably. Normal people would feel pressure and fear when they faced him. It was just that normally, he intentionally concealed this type of aura.

There was no way he would remain polite when this crown princess treated him with such disrespect.

How could an ordinary person survive a hundred strikes by the rod? Even a cultivator would have a layer of skin shaved off, because the one hitting them would also be cultivators.

Zu An thus said coldly, "The crown prince is already so old, could it be that he doesn't even have the right to choose who he becomes friends with, who he chooses to learn from? As a wife, aren't you too controlling? I wonder if you think you are the crown heir and that he is just your live-in son-in-law."

Bi Linglong's face twitched. How could she dare admit to something like that? It would become really troublesome if this type of rumor got out. She quickly bowed to Zhao Ruizhi and said, "Crown prince, I was just worried that you might be simple by nature, so you ended up being deceived by someone else. There were no other intentions behind my actions."

Zhao Ruizhi didn't pick up on any of the conflict between the two of them. He said with a chuckle, "It's fine, it's fine."

He subconsciously walked over to help her up when he saw her bow towards him.

But Bi Linglong instead got back up before he could do anything. Even though it looked like the crown prince supported her, Zu An was close enough to see that the two of them didn't make any contact.

A pondering expression appeared on his face. This husband and wife relationship was interesting.

He coughed lightly and said, "Then according to the crown princess' words, could it be that you think the crown prince is stupid, that he doesn't even have the ability to distinguish between right and wrong?"

The others' expressions all changed when they heard what he said. The matters of the crown prince being stupid was an absolute taboo. It was something everyone was hush hush about. No one dared to mention it publicly. Yet this fella was quite something! Not only did he say this in public, he even said it in front of the crown prince himself!

Bi Linglong was just about to say something, yet who would've thought that Zhao Ruizhi would say in agreement, "Linglong, what Zu An says is right! I'm not stupid."

Bi Linglong: "....."

This idiot of a husband was messing everything up! What else could she even do about this?

But she wasn't willing to let Zu An go just like that either. Both sides were stuck in a deadlocked situation just like that.

Wait, Zu An, this name... Why does it sound familiar?

At this time, a gentle and soft voice sounded from the side. "May I ask who Little Sister Linglong is upset at?"

Bi Linglong's expression changed when she heard this voice. She recovered her usual smiling appearance and turned around. "Concubine Bai, what made you decide to go for a stroll around here today?"

Zu An followed the sound of the voice. He saw a slender and elegant young noble lady. She was beautiful like a spring mountain, her eyes clear like autumn waters. She was gorgeous, yet she gave off a type of dignified and unapproachable aura.

Chapter 577: Meeting the Emperor

Zu An gave Bi Linglong a look, and then he looked at this Concubine Bai. It really was a contrast of different types of beauties.

But even though this crown princess was stunning, she was a bit too fierce. It was instead this Concubine Bai who seemed more gentle and dignified. Those who saw her immediately produced good impressions of her.

But these two seemed to hate each other. He could even vaguely sense sparks in the sky.

The crown prince immediately became a happy mess. "Big Sis Bai, you came!"

That young noble lady gave him a graceful bow. Even her greeting was graceful like flowing water. "There is no need for the crown prince to address my humble self in such a way. You can just call me Rouxue."

So her name was Bai Rouxue.

Wait, humble self?

Zu An suddenly realized that this young married woman was probably the concubine Chu Chuyan told him about. The emperor gave her to the crown prince, and then she gave birth to a son.

No wonder she called the crown princess little sister earlier. Then, even though Bi Linglong was unhappy, she could only hold herself back and feign civility.

This Bai Rouxue looked a bit older than Bi Linglong. At times, the crown princess still looked like a young lady, but this concubine was more like a married woman, a mature one at that.

His eyes unknowingly drifted towards her impressive chest. Chu Chuyan mentioned that she already had a child... was she still breastfeeding?

Bai Rouxue's face turned a bit red, as if she noticed his eyes. But she didn't say anything and instead turned towards the crown princess. "I heard Little Sister Linglong's voice all the way from the other courtyard, so I came to see who made you so angry."

Bi Linglong was annoyed. Are you mocking me for having a loud voice?

She said indifferently, "I only wanted to teach an ignorant man a lesson. I didn't expect to startle Concubine Bai."

The other party called her little sister because she was a bit older than her. Together with her special identity, this type of address was also appropriate.

But she was absolutely not willing to call her big sister. After all, she was the real princess, so why would she call a concubine big sister?

"Oh? Could it be that this is the so-called ignorant man?" Bai Rouxue gave Zu An a curious look.

Zu An had a strange expression on his face. This wasn't the time for this! He felt as if he was suddenly caught up in a great palace drama.

He gave Zhao Ruizhi a look. This fatty's luck with girls wasn't that bad. Both of these girls were extremely beautiful, and their styles were also completely different.

But the current Zhao Ruizhi was smiling like a complete idiot.

Bai Rouxue sized up Zu An. "Judging from your attire, you don't seem to be a member of the palace. How did you come in?"

Bi Linglong was alarmed. This was indeed the case! She actually forgot this most important issue earlier. It was all because this fella was too daring that she was so pissed off that she wasn't as sharp as she usually was.

Zu An replied, "Zhuxie Chixin brought me in. Then, Elder Li took me nearby."

Bai Rouxue's expression changed. She finally remembered why this name was so familiar. It was that guy with the method of immortality everyone was clamoring about.

Bi Linglong also sized him up in surprise. She also knew who Zu An was now.

Bi Linglong harrumphed and said to Zhao Ruizhi, "Crown prince, let's go back. Your morning lessons are not finished yet."

Zhao Ruizhi began to panic. "But I still want to play more with Zu An! There are so many things to play..."

But Bi Linglong shot him a sidelong glance, scaring him so badly that he swallowed all of the other words back down.

Bai Rouxue pursed her lips and said, "Little Sister Linglong, why are you in such a rush to leave?"

Bi Linglong replied coldly, "I must bring the crown prince back to his lessons. I dare not be negligent."

Hmph! This Zu An is someone the emperor himself wants to meet, yet she ordered for him to be beaten to death! If news of this got to the emperor, then who knew what kind of thoughts he might have towards her and her clan.

She knew that she couldn't do anything else to Zu An, so why would she continue to stay here and make a fool of herself?

She gave the maid a look. The maid named Rong Mo quickly ordered the eunuchs to bring the crown prince back. Everyone hurriedly left. Only Zhao Ruizhi alone turned his head reluctantly, either to get one last look at that gentle Big Sister Bai, or because he didn't want to leave Zu An yet.

Zu An cupped his hands towards this graceful noble lady when they left. "Thank you Concubine Bai for speaking out for justice earlier. You've saved me quite a bit of trouble."

Bai Rouxue nodded her head slightly, a faint smile on her face. She didn't reply and turned around to quietly leave.

Zu An was gloomy. Were all palace women this arrogant?

That beautiful crown princess didn't feel like talking to him either and had her maid speak in her place. Only later on was she finally unable to hold herself back and said some things.

Now, this seemingly gentle and graceful Concubine Bai was also insufferably arrogant, unwilling to even speak a single word to him.

It made him seem like a freaking sex offender. Who the hell are you even on guard against?

Of course, he knew that let alone these imperial concubines, even the women of ordinary families wouldn't talk to male strangers for no reason. They called men outside of the family outsider men, and a single moment of carelessness and there might be rumors of them meeting up with an outsider man. Something like this was catastrophic for the reputation of most girls.

Brightmoon City was more open-minded due to being a trade city. The other cities were much more strict on the matter.

But normally speaking, a place like the capital shouldn't be as conservative.

He suddenly realized something. The crown prince was stupid, so as the concubines of this type of prince, they naturally had to pay more attention to these things to avoid suspicion.

He sighed when he thought of this. Even though this crown prince was dumb, he was quite blessed.

A small eunuch quickly ran over. "My goodness, how did you end up all the way here? All of us were looking for you! Hurry and follow me. His majesty has finished his court session and will now meet you."

Zu An frowned. He was on guard. "Where is Elder Li?"

The small eunuch subconsciously replied, "Elder Li seemed to have made a mistake and the emperor..."

He immediately stopped talking midway. "Stop asking so many questions! Move faster!"

Zu An was amused. He followed this small eunuch to a quiet and elegant room. When he saw the words 'Imperial Study' hanging above the entrance, he sighed in relief. Even though he had his guesses, he was still worried that this small eunuch would lead him to a trap. It now seemed like he was worried for nothing.

This was the inner palace after all, the place where the emperor's personal staff operated. If there was always trouble happening in this type of place, then the emperor really was too incompetent.

The small eunuch said respectfully by the entrance. "Your majesty, I have brought him."

A dignified voice sounded from within. "Let him in."

The small eunuch pushed open the door and gestured for Zu An to go in.

Even though he already thought through his plan, now that it was game time, Zu An discovered that he was still a bit nervous. His heart was thumping, and even his body was shivering uncontrollably.

It wasn't that he was cowardly, but rather an instinctive feeling of danger. After all, he was going to face this world's most powerful cultivator. If his plan failed, then the only thing awaiting him might really be death.

But he was still someone who spent several decades as an emperor in Yinxu Dungeon. He took a deep breath and quickly calmed down. Then, he walked in.

The small eunuch closed the door behind him after he entered.

The noise of the door closing added to the heavy atmosphere.

Zu An felt a type of suffocating feeling when he entered the room, as if even breathing became much more difficult than usual.

His expression changed slightly. He knew that this was the pressure of a powerful cultivator. But even though he already absorbed Mosquito Daoist's cultivation and grew much stronger, he still felt extremely uncomfortable.

This was a pressure he had never faced before. Regardless of whether it was Old Mi, Eunuch Wei, the giant dragon, Mosquito Daoist, or others he faced on his way to the capital, none of their auras could compare to what he was experiencing right now. The only one who was a bit similar was Mi Li when he first met her. But back then, he had the Heiress Ball of Delights, so he wasn't too worried.

He still had the courage to fight back then, but now, he felt a trembling from his very soul. Every single cell in his body seemed to be screaming that it was useless, to not even struggle and accept his fate.

But he remembered the remnant soul of the first emperor of China he faced in the Ursae Dungeon, as well as the Shang King Wu Geng. He even made it through those encounters, so how could he give in so easily now?

Furthermore, as a transmigrator, he had seen everything imaginable on the internet before. He couldn't let his isekai predecessors down!

His perspective changed when he thought of these things. The pressure instantly lessened.

A voice of surprise sounded from not far away. "Oh? You're quite the interesting fella."

Chapter 578: Unfathomable Might

Zu An followed the source of the sound. He saw a tall and robust dragon-robed man standing by a writing desk. This man was currently facing him expressionlessly.

This was clearly the Great Zhou Dynasty's Emperor. His clothes could be copied, but this aura was definitely not something that could be replicated.

He already asked Chu Chuyan and found out that the emperor's name was Zhao Han.

Zu An wanted to see just how exaggerated this number one expert was for himself. But when they looked at each other, he only remembered his sharp and penetrating eyes.

He didn't know how to describe those eyes. He had met emperors before, but the first emperor was already just a remnant soul. Furthermore, he already passed the trial, so the other party treated Zu An as one of his own. He didn't exert his pressure on Zu An.

Later on, this was also true for Wu Geng. He always had the burden of the Shang Dynasty's destruction weighing down on his shoulders. He even pretended to be an ordinary crown prince during the trial, so his aura was deliberately masked. That was why Zu An didn't feel too much pressure.

But the person in front of him was different. Those eyes seemed to stab straight through his soul. They instantly penetrated all of your defenses, as if no secrets remained uncovered.

Zu An knew that this was a type of illusion, but he still subconsciously averted his eyes.

Then, he saw the dragon robes. There was a pen in his hands that was writing something a moment ago. Why do these major figures all love to flaunt this calligraphy stuff?

The emperor's voice carried a mysterious feeling of dignity and confidence. "You are different from other people. Others will immediately become scared witless when they see this emperor, but you still have the leisurely mood to even let your imagination run wild."

Zu An was stunned. He even saw through my random thoughts? Does this guy know mind reading?

But he still replied, "What can I say? When you crawl up from the bottom, where your life is utterly worthless, you tend to develop a bit of an unyielding nature."

"You are even acting like this before me! No wonder you behaved the way you did in front of the crown prince." The emperor lowered his pen. If anyone was standing next to him, they would see that he wrote the word 'immortality' with a few dots behind it. His heart was clearly full of hesitation and indecisiveness while writing these words.

Of course, as an emperor, he wouldn't show this to anyone else.

Zu An was surprised when he heard this. "So your majesty already knew about that."

Just how long had it been since I separated from the crown prince? He even knew about this?

As if seeing through his thoughts, the emperor slowly said, "Of course I know. It isn't so easy to hide anything in this palace from me."

Zu An remained silent. He didn't know what the meaning behind the emperor telling him these things was. He was wondering how he was going to get him to wear the Hat of Forgiveness.

One plan was to use his instantaneous movement skill to dash over and make him wear it. Everything would be easy to deal with once he made the emperor wear it.

But he immediately gave up on this thought as soon as he met the real deal.

The other party was standing there casually, and it seemed like there was only a zhang between them. However, Zu An felt as if there was an endless abyss between them. He couldn't even pinpoint his exact position.

It was obvious that with his cultivation, he wouldn't have any chances of approaching the emperor unless he let him.

The emperor gave him a long look. "If this was in the past, I might admire your temperament and resolve. I might even try to take you under my wing. But now... someone like you would never yield. In the future, the crown prince wouldn't be able to make you bow down either, so this emperor obviously cannot leave a disaster like you alive. Have him executed and inform the entire world that this is the consequence of offending the crown prince."

Zu An: "???"

Bro, you're not playing your cards like how you're supposed to! You're going to execute me already? How am I even supposed to respond?

Guards quickly swarmed in. Zu An was about to evade, but his entire body was restricted after the emperor just gave him an indifferent look. He couldn't move at all.

He was instantly detained by the guards and escorted out.

Zu An shouted, "I refuse to accept this type of baseless accusation!"

The emperor said coldly, "Does this emperor need your acceptance if I wish for something to be done?"

Zu An: "....."

Bro, you won't make any friends talking like that.

He quickly shouted while he was being dragged out, "Then does the emperor not want the method of immortality?"

"Immortality?" The emperor lowered his head and gave his calligraphy a look. A hint of mockery flashed past his lips. With a wave of his hand, that sheet of paper instantly turned to powder, yet the table remained unharmed. One could imagine just how great his control over his own power was.

"Immortality is but an illusory ideal. Monarchs have fallen one generation after the next, which one of them has obtained true immortality? This emperor does not trust in such an illusory immortality. On the contrary, I have led the humans in defeating the Fiend clans and unified the wilderness. Everyone will remember my glorious achievements! This is true immortality." The emperor's originally emotionless face finally changed a bit. His entire being seemed to have been possessed by a type of zealotry.

Zu An immediately began to curse this emperor. Why the hell are you sending people to find the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra if you don't even care about immortality? Why did you even bring me here then?

Since this was already a matter of life and death, his mind moved at lightspeed. He quickly said, "But after ten thousand years, people might not remember your achievements anymore! They might even forget about you after just a few centuries!"

"Impossible!" The emperor erupted into rage. This was the immortality he sought, what he cared about the most. How could he tolerate the doubt of others?

You have successfully trolled Zhao Han for +999 Rage!

An incomparably powerful aura swept out. The two guards who detained Zu An immediately knelt down and begged for forgiveness.

Even though Zu An also felt awful from the pressure, he still sighed in relief.

He finally received some Rage points from this person. He was still human after all, and not a god.

There was no way he was going to waste any time. He seized this fleeting chance. "What I wish to say cannot enter the ears of anyone else."

The emperor gave him a cold look. With a wave of his hand, the two guards withdrew. With his cultivation, there was naturally no need to fear any eavesdroppers.

When the guards left, the emperor said, "You may speak. However, if you dare play tricks on me, heh..." The threatening tone in his voice was clear.

Zu An already sorted out his thoughts earlier. He replied, "Your emperor's idea is fine. There will still be records of your achievements many, many years later. This type of immortality is much more meaningful than someone who lives a life secluded in the mountains. However, your wish won't be truly fulfilled either. After all, if you want your achievements to be passed down for an eternity, then you must have scribes record the details as they are. But if the dynasties change, defamation of previous dynasties is a common practice. Even if dynasties do not change, if someone who doesn't agree with your majesty succeeds the throne, then they might also tamper with history. It might not be able to fool those of the current age, but they will deceive those of centuries and millennia later. At that time, your majesty's achievements would be buried in the great river of time, and those of later generations wouldn't know about what happened. If that happens, then your majesty will not obtain your immortality."

The emperor narrowed his eyes. "What are you implying?"

Zu An smiled. "Your majesty understands fully well. Why must you ask a question you already know the answer to?"

Sorry, King Qi. I can only use you as my shield. Every man for themselves.

The emperor began to think to himself. If someone dared to talk to him with this type of tone normally, he would've had them dragged out and beaten to death already. However, Zu An's words really did prod at some of his deepest insecurities. This was also what he had been worried about all these years.

He gave Zu An a look. He had a pondering expression on his face. "Then what kind of plan do you have?"

Zu An was about to say something when he suddenly noticed his expression. "Your majesty probably already has a plan, so I would only be making a fool of myself. But if your majesty wants to play a game of chess, then I can serve as a chess piece."

He really was frightened earlier, but he already realized that the other party exhausted too many resources to bring him to the capital. There was no way he would immediately kill him off.

The reason why the emperor did what he did earlier was probably just as an initial show of strength.

The emperor was surprised. "You are indeed a bit special. No wonder she interceded for your sake."

Chapter 579: First In History

"Huh?" Zu An was stunned. Someone spoke up for him? He didn't even know if the one the emperor was talking about was male or female. Was it Chu Chuyan? But she wasn't someone who had the qualifications to speak directly with the emperor, right?

The emperor's expression became gloomy. He walked over to the window and gazed into the distant skies. His initial vicious expression now had a trace of softness. "Back then, I owed her a favor..."

His voice trailed off. He was reminiscing, but Zu An didn't know if it was about his past or that person.

Zu An was stunned when he saw his expression. This was probably some old flame. Furthermore, why does the emperor look so much like a simp?

There was a woman in this world that he couldn't obtain?

Zu An immediately felt his thirst for gossip burn within him. Who was this woman? What was even more weird was, why would this woman speak up for him?

When did I ever meet someone like that?

He thought back to the women that he knew. He couldn't think of anyone.

The emperor already turned around. "Right, how has Wanru been recently?"

“Wanru?” Zu An was stunned. Only after a while did he realize who he was talking about. “Mother-in-law hasn’t had it easy recently at all. She has endless worries from all of the dangers surrounding the Chu clan.”

Meanwhile, his thoughts went wild. Qin Wanru had a relationship with the emperor? Why did he suddenly see some greenery above his father-in-law’s head?

Could it be that the one who spoke up for him was her?

But that doesn’t seem right? She can’t even help the Chu clan, so how can she protect me?

“Are you trying to speak up for her?” The emperor harrumphed. “Who told her to pick that Chu Zhongtian fella back then? Otherwise, she would be an imperial concubine right now. There wouldn’t have been any of those annoying vexations.”

Zu An: “.....”

He really was shocked. Even though he guessed that there might be something between these two, he never expected Qin Wanru have had the chance to be an imperial concubine!

Father-in-law really was quite something back then! He actually stole a girl from the emperor himself! No wonder the Chu clan had it so rough these years...

“It’s not like what you’re thinking.” As if seeing through Zu An’s thoughts, the emperor said with a snort, “How can this emperor be the type who gets jealous over a woman? The main reason why I have continued to act against the Chu clan is because the Chu clan is nobility from the previous dynasty, moreover one of their leaders. Their land and wealth do not belong to the court, which makes them a state within a state. How can I tolerate something like that?”

“I get it, I get it.” Zu An had a strange look on his face. Even so, I refuse to believe that you didn’t have any thoughts of taking down your love rival. Otherwise, there are so many other nobles to take care of, why do you just have to start with the Chu clan?

The emperor frowned, clearly unwilling to discuss this matter further. “Even though I promised that person to spare your life, it is on the premise that you hand over the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. Otherwise, do not blame me for betraying the friendship of an old friend.”

Zu An: “.....”

“Didn’t you just say that you didn’t care about that fleeting immortality?”

“It is fleeting for other monarchs, but the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra is now right in front of me, so how can it still be considered fleeting?” The emperor said with a cold laugh.

Zu An was speechless. So this guy was just trying to show off? I almost gave him too much credit.

He deliberately showed hesitation. “But that’s the only trump card I have. What if I still die after I hand it over?”

The emperor said indifferently, “I do not go back on my words. If I say that I have promised an old friend to spare your life, then I will spare your life. Do not challenge my patience.”

Zu An clenched his teeth. He fished out the Hat of Forgiveness and threw it over. "The Phoenix Nirvana Sutra's chants and forms are stored in this hat. You'll be able to sense the scriptures if you put it on."

He was gambling on the fact that the emperor never truly saw the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra before. After all, all of Old Mi's companions were silenced back then, and there was no way he would've sent back any news regarding the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra himself.

Later on, Eunuch Wei Dan never saw the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra either, so there should be no way for the emperor to know what the true scripture was written on.

Of course, he didn't have the skill to leave soul imprints on the Hat of Forgiveness. That was Mi Li's work. Only with her knowledge and cultivation was she able to pull off something like this.

When he received the hat and saw its lush green color, the emperor subconsciously frowned. He didn't immediately put it on.

"I heard that you gave the Sang clan's young master a green hat during the Sang clan's wedding in Brightmoon City?" The emperor's expression became dangerous.

Zu An panicked. He didn't expect the emperor to know even these details. He could only reply honestly. "That is indeed the case, but that hat is different from this one. That was just a normal green hat, but this one has the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra recorded on it."

The emperor frowned. "I still cannot understand why you would give Sang Qian a green hat, and it's even the same form as your most precious 'Phoenix Nirvana Sutra'. According to the intelligence, you and Sang Qian didn't seem to get along."

Zu An broke out in cold sweat. He didn't expect his past pranks to end up messing things up now. "I wasn't thinking about anything else back then, I just didn't want to give him anything expensive, so I chose a cheap hat. It was a coincidence, purely a coincidence."

"Is that so?" The emperor sneered. "I assumed that giving someone a green hat meant that you fooled around with his wife or some similar meaning."

With his powerful information network, it wasn't hard to figure out Zu An and Zheng Dan's relationship.

Zu An: "....."

How could he possibly admit to that? If the emperor knew that this was what you were thinking, then you wouldn't live no matter how many lives you had!

After all, apart from anything that would threaten the imperial throne, what the emperor feared the most was any of his concubines messing with other men.

There were endless beauties within the chamber of concubines, but there was only one emperor. There was no way he could pay close attention to every single one of them. A single moment of carelessness and one of those concubines might seek out another man out of loneliness. That was why all men who had any dealings with imperial concubines would have themselves castrated and turned into eunuchs.

He quickly explained, "That is absolutely not my intention! Furthermore, there is no way I could make something like this hat!"

The emperor nodded. "Hmph, if it wasn't because of the profound mysteries not even I understand within this hat, I would've immediately cut you down upon seeing this type of green hat."

Zu An smiled apologetically. "Your majesty is truly wise and brilliant!"

He sighed. This keyboard warrior system always gave him weird but amazing stuff. That 'Heiress Ball of Delights' was like this. Back then, there was such a huge gap in cultivation, yet he was able to fight back because of the Heiress Ball of Delights.

Now, this Hat of Forgiveness was the same. Mi Li could vaguely sense some mysterious rune formations on it, but that was only because of her extensive knowledge. She had great achievements in this field.

Even though his majesty was strong, he cannot compare to Mi Li in this aspect. That is why he could only sense the mysterious dao within, yet couldn't understand what the source was.

But he knew that this hat was definitely not something ordinary. Forget about Zu An, not even he could make anything like this hat. That was why he believed Zu An.

However, how was he supposed to know that Zu An had crazy cheats?

The emperor returned to his dragon throne with the hat in hand. After some hesitation, he still wore it. With his cultivation, he didn't have to fear any trickery with this hat. The reason he hesitated was because once he obtained the true method of immortality, the faith he pursued his entire life might begin to waver.

But the temptation of immortality was way too great. The battle with the Fiend clans wounded his foundation, which made his life expectancy become much lower than normal. He could even vaguely sense that he didn't have many years left. However, he still had too many things that he wasn't willing to let go of.

Zu An released a long sigh of relief when he saw the lush green hat on the emperor's head. Even though there were some hiccups, things still went pretty smoothly.

He suddenly relaxed. He was probably the first one in history to make an emperor happily put on a green hat, right?

Chapter 580: A Chill Between his Legs

Zu An was disappointed with himself. He was in a life-or-death situation, yet his mind could still manage to wander to such idle thoughts.

He wasn't absolutely sure if the Hat of Forgiveness would work on the emperor. After all, he was the world's foremost expert. It would be a disaster if he possessed something that nullified the hat's effects.

Even though he wasn't betting it all on the Hat of Forgiveness, things would go much more smoothly if it worked.

As his thoughts wandered, the emperor sat on the dragon throne, his eyes closed in thought. Zu An didn't know if the Hat of Forgiveness was doing its work, or if the emperor was examining the contents of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra.

In a few moments, the emperor slowly opened his eyes, his expression hard to read. A while later, he mumbled to himself, "Some things are hardly worth eating, but discarding them would still be a pity."

"Has your majesty comprehended the meaning of immortality?" Zu An asked carefully. Naturally, the technique he had placed in the hat was not the real Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. After all, there was no way he would be stupid enough to hand over his greatest trump card.

Of course, the chant wasn't completely fake. It was, in fact, ninety percent true. However, the ten percent of falsehood was enough to ruin the other ninety percent.

He hadn't read 'Legend of Condor Heroes' for nothing. The tale of how Huang Rong used a fake 'Nine Yin Sutra' to drive Ouyang Feng mad was pretty much common knowledge.

The emperor's cultivation was too great, and he would easily see through simple counterfeits. That is why he didn't dare change too much of it.

Even so, at his level, altering such a thing was beyond him. It was Mi Li who had helped him. She was probably the only one in this present world with sufficient cultivation and knowledge to create such a thing.

Mi Li's expression had been rather strange when she heard that he was willing to share the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra with her, though her thoughts were unfathomable.

"How can such a lowly technique exist in this world? It actually requires that you be beaten up to increase your strength." The emperor frowned at Zu An. "I assume you've been beaten up often?"

Zu An replied, "Indeed. I've walked the line between life and death many times. I've already lost count of how many times I have been beaten up."

The emperor grunted. "No wonder you're such a lowly person."

Zu An felt like he'd been punched in the nuts.

What the hell, man?

He really wanted to smack this guy in the face. Of course, given the difference in their cultivation, he would end up being the one taught a lesson instead, so he dispelled this thought. He could only stare at the green hat and secretly relish in this small victory.

"I am the son of heaven," mused the emperor. "Who in this world would dare to strike me? Whose fists can even reach me? Forget it. Worst of all, you have to throw away all other techniques and solely cultivate this one. What I lack the most is time. I don't have enough time for something like this."

Zu An feigned a look of concern. "But this technique is incredible, and Your Majesty's aptitude is exceptional! Who knows, you might be able to cultivate this technique more quickly than anyone else."

The emperor shook his head. "No matter how fast I can do it, there is still a limit. I will not make it in time. Furthermore, the amount of ki required to progress becomes tremendous later on, so much so that even I am left baffled. Even if one started cultivating from within their mother's womb, they would still not be able to attain immortality. Small wonder why no one had ever truly attained immortality, even though the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra has made several appearances in the past. This technique only has a dismal chance of success."

Given his status, how could he possibly cripple the astonishing cultivation he has built up for himself? Wouldn't all those fellows who were restless with his rule immediately rebel? What would he rely on to quell the chaos then?

Once he died, the entire empire would collapse, and with it, the immortality he sought.

As someone who had attained the highest cultivation in this world, this was clear enough to him. Perhaps others might have been blinded by thoughts of immortality, but not him.

The emperor gave Zu An a strange look. "Zhuxie Chixin reported something unusual. You clearly had several chances to escape along the way, yet you never did. Instead, you cooperated well, as if you were in a rush to throw away your life. The two of us have always been puzzled over this matter. Now, I believe you knew that there was no way that I would cultivate this technique, and that was why you weren't worried. Is that correct?"

"Your majesty is both wise and brilliant." Zu An bowed respectfully. His posture was perfectly humble.

This was precisely why he had made the journey to the capital so confidently. If the emperor had been in the prime of his life, he would have possessed boundless prospects, and Zu An would never have taken the risk of coming to the capital. However, the fact that the emperor was close to death gave him some room for negotiation.

The Hat of Forgiveness was the extra icing on the cake, and not the other way around.

The last thing he expected was for the emperor to sneer at him. "Unfortunately, you've miscalculated. Even though I won't cultivate this Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, you are younger than me. You still have hope. Do you think that I will let someone who has a chance of attaining immortality stay alive?"

Zu An remained calm. "Your majesty, you said just now that no one can truly cultivate this technique, so how could I possibly attain immortality? If I really had a chance of cultivating it successfully, I wouldn't have dared to come to the capital."

He wasn't lying when he said this, because he knew how hard it was to make any progress by relying on the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra alone. Even with the Keyboard supporting him, it was difficult. The amount of Rage points needed to fill the fifth rank's formations was already staggering.

Moreover, the amount of Rage points required for the later formations increased exponentially, which made success even more unrealistic.

For any other person, progress would be much slower.

Of course, his other techniques still gave him some hope, but any other person wouldn't have a snowball's chance in hell.

The emperor's breath caught. He realized that he lost his composure for a moment. His excitement for immortality had led him to feel disappointment. Even his originally ironclad will wavered. His actions contradicted his own words.

He sneered at Zu An. "Showing off your wit in front of this emperor isn't a smart choice."

Zu An replied. "I wasn't trying to show off. I was just stating facts."

The emperor stared at him for a long while, then changed the topic. "What is your opinion on the crown prince?"

Zu An was surprised by this question. As his father, do you really have no idea what your son is like?

Of course, he wasn't so stupid as to boldly claim that the crown prince was dumb. After all, no matter how selfless a father was, he would never like to hear such a thing. "The crown prince is simple and honest in nature. His disposition harkens back to the grace of our ancestors."

Zu An wanted to cry. Do you think it's easy for me to come up with this type of tactful bullsh*t?

The emperor was momentarily stunned, then a smile spread slowly across his lips. "You're quite a crafty fellow."

Zu An took the chance to probe further. "Did Your Majesty have Elder Li lead me to meet the crown prince on purpose?"

He had served as emperor in Yinxu, so he understood the workings of a ruler's mind. There was no need to always be a yes-man. It was sometimes more favorable to bring up important points at suitable times.

The emperor snorted. "That fellow has already been diced and fed to the dogs."

Zu An shivered. Such a response was wholly unexpected.

To be honest, his meeting with the crown prince had seemed strange. From the emperor's words, it seemed like he wasn't the one who incited Elder Li to escort him to a location close to the crown prince.

Elder Li definitely had not acted on his own initiative on this matter, which meant that there was someone behind him, directing his actions.

Whoever they were, they were probably hoping that the crown prince or princess would do them a favor and get rid of him. After all, given the crown prince's morality and his temperament, there was a high chance of Zu An dying. The crown princess had a terrible temper as well, and would have easily ordered him to be beaten to death.

The emperor's order for his arrest had left Zu An clutching the end of his rope. Being humiliated by both the crown prince and princess might have been enough to push him over the edge and make him throw caution to the wind just to bring the crown prince down with him.

Whether it was he who killed the crown prince or vice versa, either outcome would have benefitted the one behind the scenes. It was clear that this person did not have the ability to send assassins into the imperial palace, so they had to resort to such an approach.

Of course, it was impossible for the hidden mastermind to predict that Zu An wouldn't feel like he was in a tight spot at all. He had planned to meet the emperor to settle this matter to begin with, so there was no way that this plan could have succeeded.

The emperor walked over to the window with his hands behind his back, his eyes gazing at the distant scenery. A hint of obsession glinted within his eyes. "Do you know why I arranged for you to spend a night outside the palace?"

Zu An opened his mouth to speak, but hesitated. The emperor laughed. "There's no harm in showing off some of your intelligence. This emperor requires someone with intelligence to face what's to come, not an idiot."

Zu An thus said, "I've been pondering this myself as well. Ordinarily, keeping me outside the palace for another day would only mean an extra day of uncertainty. Sure enough, assassins showed up. As the world's number one expert, there's no way you could have been blind to this fact."

The emperor snorted. "Stop wasting your time with flattery."

Zu An chuckled, then continued. "After meeting Your Majesty, it suddenly dawned on me that Your Majesty was using me as bait to draw out all your enemies so that you could seize them in one fell swoop."

At first, he had only sent King Liang and a few Embroidered Envoy to arrest him. Even though they seemed strong, the secret of eternal life was much too strong of a temptation, and their strength alone had not been enough to stop the attacks of various factions.

This emperor really is vicious. Was my journey not arduous enough? He even gave those fellows another chance in the capital.

If it hadn't been because of all the cheats he had, the weeds on his tomb would have already grown sky high.

"I'm sure that they have their fair share of sharp individuals on their side, though. Would they jump straight in even if they knew it was a trap?"

Zu An replied, "Your Majesty's plan was brilliant, so it wasn't that obvious of a trap. Besides, it doesn't matter even if a few capable individuals are suspicious, because there's nothing to hide. Immortality is something everyone wishes for, and no one would ever wish for Your Majesty to obtain immortality. That is why they had no choice but to take the leap, even if there was a pit in front of them."

The emperor was clearly surprised. "If I wasn't already told that you had grown up on the streets, I would have suspected that you were actually a wily old fox who has roamed the political circles for several decades. You actually managed to see through this plot so easily."

"These are merely blind guesses on my part." Zu An smiled. The other party wasn't actually wrong. He had served as the ruler in Yinxu for several decades, and he had long since mastered the art of such political intrigue.

The emperor continued, "You are correct. I wanted to lure out those who lurked in the undercurrents. There were many seemingly-loyal regional government officials who had long since defected. I needed

to find a way to keep them in check. Since a public assassination attempt occurred within the capital, it's clear that the security officer of the Murong clan won't be doing his job anymore."

The security officer was the central minister in charge of supervising the capital city and the surrounding area, as well as one of the emperor's relatives. He was also in charge of maintaining law and order within the capital, similar to the chief of the later world's Commission for Discipline Inspection and Ministry of Public Security. He played a critical role in the court.

Zu An suddenly grew alarmed. He vaguely remembered Chu Chuyan mentioning this person before. Her grandmother seemed to be from the Murong clan! What the hell, I ended up screwing over my mother-in-law's family...

The emperor smiled ambiguously. "How do you think I should deal with you, then?"

Zu An chuckled. "Seeing how I was so cooperative along the way, and even helped you catch so many fish, I suppose I would graciously accept a noble title. A dukedom or something similar would suffice."

The emperor was less than amused.

Does this fellow think that noble titles are handed out like cabbages? That they are given out casually?

He snorted instead. "It seems you're pretty sharp. I just happen to need a trusted eunuch by my side..."

Zu An's eyes flew wide open.

He subconsciously brought his legs together. For some reason, he felt a chill in his nether regions all of sudden.