

Immortal 61

Chapter 61: I'm Jealous

Zu An waved his hands and addressed the crowd. "I'm sure that you all saw how reluctant I was to make a move earlier. But he insisted that I fight him one-on-one, so I had to oblige. Who could have known that this fellow was all talk, and was actually so weak?"

The crowd of gamblers looked at Zu An with conflicted expressions.

You're so good with your mouth that no one is a match for you when it comes to arguing.

At first, they couldn't fathom how this wastrel had managed to win the fancy of the Chu First Miss. No matter how hard they tried, they could find no way in which they were personally inferior to him. They honestly felt that she should have chosen them instead.

However, it was finally dawning on them that there was one thing in which Zu An was clearly superior—the thickness of his skin.

Seeing how incensed the onlookers had become, Zu An considered saying a few more words to agitate them further and squeeze some extra Rage points from them. However, he decided that slow and steady growth was the optimal strategy. There was no point in squeezing these people dry right away.

He addressed Plum Blossom Seven. "I have a feeling that my luck will be good today. Come, let's begin."

"Of course! Young master Zu, this way please!" Plum Blossom Seven's heart blossomed with happiness.

I feared Brother Thirteen's interference had messed things up. But this fellow is insisting on barging right through hell's gates! Well, since he's already gotten this far, I'd be letting him down if I didn't squeeze at least a hundred thousand silver taels out of him!

The one thing that concerned him was any possible interference from the Chu First Miss. He would have to find an opportunity to lure her away, or else she would surely stop her husband from racking up a huge debt.

The casino patrons watched intently as Plum Blossom Seven led Zu An to a gambling table. After the earlier spectacle, they were all curious to see what would happen next. They crowded around the table to watch the show.

Zu An examined the gambling table before him with keen interest. The only gambling dens he'd seen in his previous life were in dramas and movies—this was the first time he was seeing one up close.

It appeared different from what he'd envisioned. Betting 'big' and 'small' were just two of the ways to play—there were many other bets that players could place as well.

Even though Zu An had never played this before, the way the table was laid out made the rules pretty self-explanatory. It didn't take him long to figure out what was going on.

There were three dice in total. If the result ranged between 4 to 10, it would be considered 'small'. Between 11 to 17, it would be considered 'big'. For these two options, the payout was 1:1.

It was also possible to bet that all three numbers on the dice would be the same—the payout rate for this was 1:24.

For players looking for a riskier bet, they could go further and bet on the specific number that the dice would show if they were the same, such as all of the dice showing ones, or all showing twos. The payout for that was a massive 1:150!

Alternatively, one could bet on the sum of the numbers of the three dice. Betting on the sum being '4' or '17' had a possible payout of 1:50. If one chose '5' or '16', the payout was 1:18. The easier it was for the sum to be reached, the lower the payout would be.

"Young master Zu, would you like to bet on 'big' or 'small'?" Plum Blossom Seven asked with a bright smile. In his mind, he was concocting the perfect scenario to ensure that Zu An walked out of the casino in heavy debt.

Zu An shot a glance at Plum Blossom Seven. "Are you planning on allowing me to win a few rounds first so that I don't get scared off?"

Plum Blossom Seven was shaken. How did he know?

The astonishment in his eyes vanished so swiftly that it seemed merely an illusion, and he laughed smoothly. "Young master Zu, you're making fun of me. How can any of us possibly interfere with the outcome? The only thing that is at play on this gambling table is luck."

Still feeling a little uneasy, Zu An dragged Chu Chuyan over to his side. "Is that so? I should warn you beforehand that my honey is a fifth rank cultivator. If you get caught trying to pull any tricks in front of her, you shouldn't complain if your hands get sliced off," he threatened Plum Blossom Seven.

Chu Chuyan shot a sharp glare at Zu An, dissatisfied with the intimate way he had addressed her. Of course, there was no way that she could reveal the true nature of their relationship in front of so many witnesses.

Zu An's ploy worked, however, and Plum Blossom Seven's smile froze in place. "Young master Zu, please be assured. We at the Silverhook Casino are proud of our reputation. There's no way we would resort to underhanded tricks. Do you see the inscriptions on our dice shakers? These are artifacts inscribed by a runemaster in the capital. It can isolate a cultivator's ki, preventing them from reading the outcome within."

The other gamblers clicked their tongues in annoyance. They knew full well that there were no casinos that didn't resort to underhanded tricks. While it was true that the inscriptions on the dice shakers prevented cultivators from reading or interfering with the outcome, these runes didn't impede any physical interference. It was likely that there were mechanisms under the table that could change the numbers at the last moment.

Of course, those crowded around were united in their desire to see the smug Zu An lose it all, so none warned him of this possibility. They were just here to enjoy the show.

Plum Blossom Seven, however, knew better than to underestimate the keen sight of a fifth rank cultivator. He knew that she could uncover any tricks he played, which left him feeling a little stifled. This was a hitch in his plan for sure, but it was not the end.

At the very least, he was confident he could make Zu An lose his entire fortune even without resorting to trickery.

“Young master Zu, how much are you planning to bet?”

Zu An secretly took out the Fortune Pill and swallowed it, then declared, “I dislike dragging things out, so it goes without saying that I’m going all in!”

“All in?” Plum Blossom Seven was stunned.

“You operate a casino but you don’t know what ‘all in’ means?” Zu An rolled his eyes in disdain. “Going all in means to bet everything!”

Like hell I wouldn’t know what ‘all in’ means! Plum Blossom Seven’s smile faltered for a moment. He suppressed his overflowing rage and said, “Young master Zu sure is a straightforward man.”

He signaled the dealer with his eyes. With Zu An going all in right from the first round, they had to be cautious, to avoid scaring him off right away.

The dealer received Plum Blossom Seven’s signal. He raised the dice shakers and shook them for a while before finally slamming them down on the table. “Place your bets!”

Zu An took out a wad of banknotes and waved them at Plum Blossom Seven. “Plum Blossom Thirteen was kind enough to gift these to me. I wonder how much you’re going to give me this time around.”

Plum Blossom Seven’s face twitched. He had already heard about what happened to Plum Blossom Thirteen. You tricked Brother Thirteen and made use of the academy’s teacher to get your way. How can you be so shameless as to claim that it was a gift?!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 155 Rage points!

No matter. This is a good opportunity for me. Plum Blossom Thirteen is nothing more than an oaf; he thinks that the world revolves around him just because his cultivation is higher. Over the years, the sect master has placed high expectations on him because of that. Today, I shall prove to the sect master that brains are more important than brawn!

The smile on Plum Blossom Seven’s face widened further. “Young master Zu, are you going to bet on ‘big’ or ‘small’?”

Zu An scanned the table leisurely. He had a sense of what Plum Blossom Seven had in mind. It was unlikely that he would rig the first round, since he did not want to scare Zu An off. So, regardless of whether he bet on ‘big’ or ‘small’, he would have a fair chance of winning.

But then, why would Zu An even be interested in a mere 1:1 payout?

He confidently placed all his banknotes—worth a thousand silver taels—on ‘17’, saying, “We should go big or go home. That’s how I like to roll!”

A slight furrow formed on Chu Chuyan’s forehead as Zu An placed his bet without batting an eyelid. Even if she was no gambler, she knew full well that betting on a single number was much riskier than just betting on ‘big’ or ‘small’, especially on a number like ‘17’. The payout for that was 1:50!

With such a high payout, the most likely outcome of betting a silver tael was to lose that silver tael!

Chu Chuyan was about to advise Zu An against it, but hesitated. Even if he lost, it wouldn't be so bad. At the very least, he would give up, and she would be able to get him away. She didn't like the smell of this place.

"Open it! Open it!"

The spectators began cheering loudly for the dealer to reveal the number. They shared the same thoughts as Chu Chuyan, and they were eager to see how the showoff would react after losing a thousand silver taels in an instant.

It would be best if the Chu First Miss could see her husband's true colors, and realize that he was a wastrel who couldn't be reformed. Perhaps, in her moment of disappointment, they might just stand a chance with her.

For a woman as beautiful as her, being married before was hardly a dealbreaker.

Even Plum Blossom Seven couldn't contain his glee. He laughed boisterously. "Young master Zu, you're still too young. You should go slow and steady to make big money. Why don't you allow our casino to lend you some money so that you can earn more? Don't worry, since you're part of the Chu clan, we won't even charge you any interest!"

That was how they had managed to lure Zu An into losing a thousand silver taels the last time. Back then, he had been cautious, gambling tael by tael. But now, just a few days later, he had somehow gotten so full of himself that he could throw away a thousand silver taels without even batting an eyelid!

Gosh, he's like a chicken who has somehow transformed into a phoenix. Is mooching off women really that lucrative?

Maybe I've been going about it the wrong way thus far.

While Plum Blossom Seven was engrossed in his thoughts, he suddenly sensed something amiss. Around him, the casino had, at some point, turned deathly silent. The surrounding gamblers were all looking at him, their faces hard to read. Their expressions seemed to carry a tinge of... pity?

A fearsome premonition struck Plum Blossom Seven's heart, and he hurriedly turned to take a look at the game table. The dice shaker had been removed, and the three dice proudly displayed the numbers '6', '6', and '5', which added up nicely to 17!

Plum Blossom Seven felt his mind explode there and then. He stared blankly as he struggled to come to terms with what had just happened.

With a 1:50 payout, their casino had just lost 50,000 silver taels!

Bloody hell, 50,000 silver taels!

Plum Blossom Seven felt his vision blacking out just thinking about that humongous sum. It was equivalent to half a month of profits for their casino!

He shot a ferocious glare at his disciple, wondering if Zu An had somehow bought the man off. However, he quickly dismissed the possibility. He had investigated the backgrounds of his disciples carefully before taking them in, and he was certain that they were all trustworthy.

Could Zu An have just been lucky?

Zu An waved leisurely at him, an insufferable smile on his face. “Hahaha, you brothers sure are kind to me. It wasn’t so long ago that Plum Blossom Thirteen generously gifted me eight hundred silver taels, and now, you’re giving another fifty thousand. Hahahaha! Time to pay up.”

Plum Blossom Seven nearly spurted blood. Like hell I’m giving you money!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 543 Rage points!

Just a moment ago, he’d belittled Plum Blossom Thirteen for falling prey to Zu An so easily. Who would have thought that a worse fate awaited him?

No, wait a moment. His tone... Doesn’t that mean that...

“Young master Zu, are you leaving now?” Plum Blossom Seven asked anxiously.

“What else would I do?” Zu An replied with a smile. “I’ve already won fifty thousand silver taels. Why would I need to continue gambling here?”

He was truly impressed with the effects of the Fortune Pill. To be honest, he hadn’t been confident about his chances at all, but things really worked out in his favor, just as the pill had promised.

Plum Blossom Seven flew into a panic. If he allowed Zu An to walk away with fifty thousand silver taels just like that, the sect master would surely skin him alive!

“Young master Zu, please wait a moment!” Plum Blossom Seven rushed to block Zu An’s way. His henchmen stepped in to surround Zu An, weapons in hand.

Zu An’s face darkened. “What’s wrong? You’re not allowing me to leave with the money I’ve earned? Is this how your casino operates?”

As he said this, he slyly snuck behind Chu Chuyan and pushed her forward gently. “Honey, these people are out to cheat us!”

Chu Chuyan was uncomfortable enduring such physical contact with another man, but it wasn’t the right occasion to berate him. Once again, she could only channel her anger toward Plum Blossom Seven and his cronies. “Are you intending to make a move on us?”

The other gamblers joined in the protest.

While they couldn’t stand how a toad like Zu An had managed to latch itself onto a swan like Chu Chuyan, they couldn’t allow the casino to default on its obligation to pay a fellow gambler his winnings. If they let it happen to Zu An, it could very well happen to them some other day too.

Chapter 62: Guts Turning Green with Regret

A chill enveloped Plum Blossom Seven's body. He sensed that just one wrong word would cause him to turn into a frozen statue. He quickly raised his hand and gestured for his henchmen to back down. Then, with a fawning smile, he said, "Miss Chu, you're misunderstanding my intentions. How could we possibly dare to make an enemy out of you? I apologize for not having disciplined my people well."

Sensing that the danger had passed, Zu An leaped out once more. "Why are you blocking our way then? Also, where are my fifty thousand silver taels?" he demanded arrogantly.

Zu An's smug attitude began to grate on Plum Blossom Seven, and he was starting to understand why Plum Blossom Thirteen had lost all reason and barged into the casino. This scoundrel was truly despicable scum all the way to his core, a man who possessed no true ability, but relied solely on the backing of his connections.

"The reputation of our Silverhook Casino isn't just for show; of course we'll pay up. Men, bring young master Zu's money over!" Despite his frustration, Plum Blossom Seven had no choice but to force a smile with Chu Chuyan around. The more he thought about it, the more furious he became.

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 344 Rage points!

In terms of weight, fifty thousand silver taels was too heavy to carry around, so banknotes were conventionally used to represent such large sums.

Plum Blossom Seven had his henchmen pass the banknotes to Zu An. "Young master Zu, please keep them well."

Fifty thousand silver taels was by no means a small sum of money, but the Silverhook Casino could still afford the loss. They couldn't allow this matter to leave their reputation in tatters.

After receiving the money, Zu An began counting every single note one by one. Plum Blossom Seven's face turned even more livid.

"Young master Zu, are you doubting us? Do you suspect us of underpaying you?"

"Isn't that obvious? To be safe, I think I should count my money properly." He casually pushed half of it towards Chu Chuyan, saying, "Honey, help me count this."

Chu Chuyan turned her body sideways and snubbed him, not bothering to hide her disgust at the dirty money earned from the casino.

Those running the casino also felt a cloud of fiery rage slowly consuming their minds. In their view, Zu An was openly gloating by counting his winnings right in front of them. It made them seriously contemplate just smashing his face in, consequences be damned.

Of course, this meant yet another wave of Rage points. Each individual contribution was small, so thankfully there were quite a number of them. Just like that, Zu An earned yet another thousand or so Rage points.

"Young master Zu, are you done counting yet?" Plum Blossom Seven asked with barely-suppressed anger.

“Oof. I was doing perfectly well a moment ago, but you suddenly disrupted me, and now I’ve forgotten what number I was at.” Zu An flung his hands around in an exaggerated manner, then restarted his counting.

Plum Blossom Seven nearly lost it.

Where’s my sword?!?!

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Seven for 800 Rage points!

Zu An counted everything once more, then sighed with pleasure. “The feeling of counting money sure is great.”

Just looking at the stack of notes in Zu An’s hands made Plum Blossom Seven’s heart bleed. That is our money! Damn it!

However, his years of experience as the manager of the Silverhook Casino allowed him to conceal his emotions and maintain a professional smile before his patrons. “Young master Zu, are you intending to leave now?”

Zu An tilted his head sideways and offered Plum Blossom Seven a sardonic smile. “Are you really intending to stop us? Honey…”

“Ah, no, no, no, of course not!” Plum Blossom Seven waved his hands at Zu An to placate him. He cursed Zu An under his breath. That lout took every opportunity to bring up his backing. “Young master Zu, please don’t misunderstand me. I was just thinking that, since lady luck is on your side today, it would be a waste for you not to play a few more rounds and take back more winnings.”

Chu Chuyan frowned at this suggestion. It was obviously a ploy by the casino to keep Zu An here and slowly strip him of his winnings.

It was such a blatant attempt that she felt no need to warn Zu An. Any human being with the slightest semblance of common sense would have seen through it and rejected it immediately.

However, things didn’t play out the way she had envisioned.

“I also think that my luck is extraordinarily good today! Since you’ve extended such a sincere invitation to keep earning your money, I would be letting you down if I left just like that. Very well, I’ll play a few more rounds!”

“Young master Zu, this way please!” Plum Blossom Seven was overjoyed. He had been afraid that Zu An was going to leave right then.

Since you have chosen to stay, I shall not only make you pay back all of the money you have won through sheer luck, I’ll make sure that you incur a huge debt on top of that! Otherwise, I shan’t be known as Plum Blossom Seven!

Chu Chuyan clenched her fists tightly as Zu An wasted no time strutting back to the gambling table. This fellow knew that it was a trap, yet he still foolishly leaped right in. No wonder those in the city look down on him so much!

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 233 Rage points!

A storm was brewing on her face. Her opinion of him had just started to improve after what had just happened earlier, but in the end, he was still the same wastrel as before.

It looks like I was expecting too much out of him.

Surprisingly, this thought quelled her rage and helped her regain her composure. She calmly followed Zu An over to the gambling table, her emotions firmly under control.

Plum Blossom Seven did not feel confident in allowing his disciple to handle the next round, and decided to assume the responsibility.

“Oh ho, you’re going to hold the fort personally? Are you that afraid of losing?” Zu An teased.

A vein popped out from Plum Blossom Seven’s temple, but he quickly replied with a fawning smile, “Of course not. This fellow seems a bit too nervous at the moment—look at how his hands are trembling! I’m afraid that his inexperience will dull your enjoyment. However, you need not worry. With lady luck shining on you today, I have faith that you’ll do well.”

Despite his words, Plum Blossom Seven’s thoughts flowed in a different direction.

Luck? Hah! Those who depend on luck in the casino have already had their wives sold off to brothels!

“Well, well, aren’t you a smooth talker! I accept your well wishes. Let’s begin,” Zu An replied with a smile.

“How much do you intend to bet this time around, young master Zu?” Plum Blossom Seven asked.

With an extravagant sweep of his arm, Zu An replied grandly, “Do you even need to ask? I’m going all in! A true man should be decisive and charge right in!”

Those words made Chu Chuyan shake her head, but she made no move to stop him. The other gamblers shook their heads as well. They had seen many such people in the casino over the years—those that got ahead of themselves as soon as they earned a bit of money, and eventually ended up losing it all back to the casino.

It was common for gamblers who were faring badly to wish poor luck on others who fared well. The other patrons quietly gathered around again to watch the show, waiting and wishing for Zu An to lose all of his money.

Plum Blossom Seven was more than delighted at Zu An’s pronouncement. “Young master Zu sure is direct!”

He had feared Zu An would play carefully after his huge killing. It would have been troublesome if he’d lost his nerve before losing all fifty thousand silver taels. However, since Zu An was betting everything on this single round, Plum Blossom Seven would still be able to face the sect master, even if he couldn’t get Zu An into debt.

Out of the blue, Zu An said, “You can’t be planning to cheat, right?”

Plum Blossom Seven nearly choked at the sudden accusation. He quickly waved his hands to assure him. "Look at how many veterans there are in here; I would never dare to cheat in front of them! Besides, Chu First Miss is watching me as well. There's no way I would be able to fool her if I attempted something."

The payment ratio was set well in favor of the casino. It was extremely difficult to beat the odds, and anyone was almost guaranteed to lose in the long-run. Even if someone won a few rounds now and then, they were most likely to leave the casino having made a loss.

Zu An nodded. "Very well, hurry up and shake the dice."

Plum Blossom Seven favored him with a cold sneer as he began shaking the dice shaker dexterously. His arm moved so swiftly that it left an afterimage in its wake, and drew awed exclamations from the crowd.

While Plum Blossom Seven wasn't a particularly strong cultivator compared to the other godsons of the sect master, he had managed to secure his current position through his superior skill at gambling.

As long as he willed it, he could get any number he wanted.

He decided to shake out a triple, which allowed him to win all bets, regardless of whether one bet on 'big', 'small', or even a specific number. The only chance to win was if Zu An bet on triple, which was extremely difficult to win given the long odds.

Halfway through his shaking, Plum Blossom Seven suddenly hesitated. What if that fellow somehow wins the bet while being all in?

Betting on a triple had a payout of 1:150, which meant that he would owe Zu An seven-and-a-half million silver taels. Even if they sold the entire Plum Blossom Sect, they wouldn't be able to raise that much money!

Even so, it would be close to impossible for Zu An to win. There were six different sets of triples, so even if Zu An did bet on a triple, he still only had a one-in-six chance.

What am I so afraid of?

Plum Blossom Seven quietly reassured himself as he finally slammed the dice shaker onto the table. He looked at Zu An and smiled. "Young master Zu, please place your bets."

His predatory gaze seemed to say: 'Come and deliver your money right here!'

Zu An, however, was in no rush to proceed. He first turned to look at Chu Chuyan, who said to him, "Rest assured, he didn't cheat here."

Considering the disparity in their cultivation—Chu Chuyan was at rank five whereas this fellow was only at rank two or so—there was no way Plum Blossom Seven would be able to hide any tricks from her.

However, Zu An shook his head and said, "That's not what I'm not asking. I'm asking you if you have any copper coins on hand."

Chu Chuyan was confused. "Copper coins? What do you need those for?"

As someone in charge of the Chu clan's businesses, she always had some money on hand in case of emergencies. At Zu An's request, she fished out a single copper coin from her coin pouch.

"Lend it to me for a moment." Zu An plucked the copper coin from her hand and leaned over to whisper in her ear, "Help me blow on it."

Chu Chuyan's face immediately turned cold. "Stop messing around."

Zu An insisted with a chuckle. "Just help me out this once. As long as you give it a wisp of your divine breath, I promise you that I will win this bet."

"Blow on it! Blow on it! Blow on it!"

The gamblers in the room loved a good commotion, and they began chanting in unison.

With all eyes on her, Chu Chuyan found herself put on the spot. She had no choice but to blow softly onto the copper coin. Her fair cheeks colored with a slight tinge of red. She told herself that she would surely settle this score with Zu An later on.

Zu An smiled in satisfaction as he felt a slight breeze tickle his fingers. "All right, with my wife's divine breath on my side, my win is assured. I shall bet on whatever this copper coin falls on!"

As he said those words, he flicked the copper coin up into the air. Everyone watched with bated breath as the copper coin fell onto the gambling table and rolled around. Even Chu Chuyan was unable to tear her gaze away.

She had intended to watch nonchalantly from the sidelines, but Zu An's request for her to blow on the coin had ended turning her into a participant in his show.

Her heart, which had for many years remained still, began to hasten for once. She found herself anticipating—almost eagerly—the result of the toss.

The copper coin continued to roll until it finally struck the edge of the gambling table. It rebounded, before finally settling on the box indicating triple ones.

With a hearty peal of laughter, Zu An placed all of his fifty thousand silver taels' worth of banknotes onto the box, declaring, "Since destiny has decreed so, I shall stake all of my money here!"

"Open it! Open it! Open it!"

All the gamblers around found themselves dying to know the outcome of the throw. Needless to say, they were all praying for Zu An's loss. This man actually dared to flirt with his wife in the middle of the round. How abominable!

With his hand still on the shaker, Plum Blossom Seven's face twisted in horror. How could this be possible?

His mind went blank, and his ears failed him. He couldn't seem to hear any of the commotion ringing around the table; all he saw were mouths opening and closing, seemingly shouting something at him.

"Hm?"

Seeing how the dealer wasn't lifting the dice shaker, the gamblers realized something was amiss. This brat couldn't have been so lucky as to have really guessed it, can he?

"Plum Blossom Seven, why aren't you lifting the dice shaker?"

"Hurry up and open it!"

Chapter 63: I Am the God of Gambling!

All the gamblers who had been eagerly anticipating Zu An's shameful downfall now sensed an even greater drama about to unfold. The atmosphere rose to a new high as they pressed Plum Blossom Seven to reveal the outcome.

At the urging of his disciples, Plum Blossom Seven finally snapped out of his daze. He swallowed hard and cursed himself for being so foolish as to actually roll a triple. If it had been any other combination, he wouldn't have lost so badly.

He could already imagine the tragic plight that awaited him.

That's seven-and-a-half million silver taels! We wouldn't be able to raise that much money even if we sell all of the Plum Blossom Sect's businesses!

The sect master will dice me up and feed me to the dogs!

The vividness of that image steeled his resolve, and he discreetly slipped his hand beneath the table. A switch was cleverly hidden there, that would trigger a mechanism to change the outcome of the dice.

Given the current circumstances, there was nothing to do but gamble and pray that Chu Chuyan wouldn't notice.

Unfortunately, he had no understanding of just how powerful a fifth rank cultivator was. His action wasn't a gamble at all, but a guaranteed failure. As soon as his hand started moving, he found himself shrouded by a white aura, and in an instant, his entire hand had frozen up, becoming completely immobile.

"What are you trying to do over there? Cheat?"

Chu Chuyan had been watching him like a hawk, especially since she was personally invested in this round of gambling. She couldn't possibly allow anyone to tamper with the outcome.

Zu An sighed deeply and said, "I warned you not to cheat, but you wouldn't listen to me."

He casually pointed to one of Plum Blossom Seven's disciples. "You over there, open it!" he ordered.

"Open it! Open it! Open it!"

The eyes of the gamblers around had turned red in agitation. Will we be seeing a miracle today?

Plum Blossom Seven, on the other hand, was in a state of utter panic. He was just about to say something when an unseen pressure crushed down on him, preventing him from uttering a single word.

The disciple that Zu An had pointed to hesitated, at a loss as to what to do. He looked around fearfully, but there was no one else around to back him up. In the end, he stretched forth a trembling hand and removed the cap from the dice shaker. Three brilliant red dots stared upwards at him.

There was a moment of breathless silence. Then, the casino erupted in an uproar.

Even Chu Chuyan's breathing hastened!

At a payout of 1:150, that made a colossal sum of seven-and-a-half million silver taels! How could anyone wrap their head around that number?

The Chu clan was renowned for its vast fortunes that rivalled the wealth of a country. Its salt and arms businesses brought in huge amounts of money every single day. Even so, its annual profits paled in comparison to what Zu An had just won.

The Chu clan wouldn't make that much even if they saved up three years of profits!

Zu An looked at Plum Blossom Seven gleefully. "Thanks a lot. If you hadn't stopped me earlier, I would have walked away with only fifty thousand silver taels. Never in my wildest dreams did I see myself winning seven-and-a-half million silver taels here. I must say, your mouth really brings me good luck! Here's a tip of ten silver taels for you. Use it to buy yourself a cup of tea or something to quench your thirst."

Those words reminded Plum Blossom Seven of how desperately he had tried to keep Zu An from leaving, and made him feel like an utter fool. In the end, it was he who had brought about his own downfall!

The ten silver taels shone dully in the muted light of the casino, silently mocking him for his naivety. Unable to take any more, he spurted a mouthful of blood and collapsed to the ground.

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

His collapse only fueled Zu An's displeasure. "Hey, hey, hey! Don't think that you can escape from this just by fainting. You, come here and settle the debt!"

Just like how Chen Daozai was able to earn 27,000,000 HKD with just 20 HKD, I, Zu An, have earned seven-and-a-half million silver taels with just a thousand silver taels today! Converted into the currency of my previous world, that would be 13,500,000,000 RMB![1]

This is what being the God of Gambling means!

...

Meanwhile, over at the headquarters of the Plum Blossom Sect, Mei Chaofeng let out a leisurely laugh. "Say, Miss Qiao, you really need not worry so much. From the moment that trash decided to enter the Silverhook Casino, he fell firmly into my grasp! It's impossible for anything to go wrong! Once he rakes up a debt of tens of thousands of silver taels, you can rest assured that there would no longer be a place for him in the Chu clan."

Snow nodded in agreement. "Indeed. The Chu clan is extremely strict on its clan members, and Madam Chu has never had a high opinion of her useless son-in-law. Even if he made a loss of several thousand

taels, not to mention tens of thousands of taels, I reckon that Madam Chu would do everything she could to evict him from the household!"

Mei Chaofeng thought for a moment. "The only problem facing us is that Chu First Miss. She wouldn't turn a blind eye as he rakes up a huge debt. Miss Qiao, may I ask you to head over there and find a way to distract her? We need to lure her away before our brothers in the casino can work on Zu An."

Snow shook her head in response. "It's too risky. Chu First Miss already harbors some suspicion toward me. If I lure her off at this juncture, I'll surely give away my identity. We can't mess everything up just to deal with Zu An."

Mei Chaofeng nodded slightly before bursting into laughter. "Indeed. The young master will only be able to rest easy with Miss Qiao keeping an eye on Chu First Miss, to ensure that she isn't sullied by other men."

Snow's face immediately turned cold. "Don't gossip about the young master behind his back."

"I'm just joking, I'm just joking!" Mei Chaofeng replied with a laugh. On the inside, however, he bristled at how rudely Snow was talking to him. A mere lass like you dares to strut about just because you have the young master's favor. Hmph! It's only a matter of time before I get the young master to betroth you to me. Then, you'll know what fate awaits those who offend me!

Snow stood up and looked in the direction of the gambling den. She recalled all the bickering she'd had with Zu An over the last few days, and a hint of worry crept into her eyes. "Why do I have an ominous feeling about this?"

"You're worrying too much! That wastrel can't possibly pull off anything!" Mei Chaofeng replied casually, amazed at how much women liked to worry about pointless matters. "If I'm not wrong, it should be about time we received news of our success."

Just after he said those words, there was the sound of approaching footsteps. A sect member rushed over while shouting anxiously, "Sect master, b-bad...!"

Mei Chaofeng's face immediately darkened. "Who are you calling bad? Slap your own face!"

The sect member was stunned, but out of fear of Mei Chaofeng, he knelt down immediately and slapped himself viciously without protest.

Meanwhile, Mei Chaofeng leisurely picked up his teacup and blew across it lightly. "Remember, don't act in such an uncultured manner in the future."

"Yes..." The sect member felt unfairly maligned, but he dared not refute the sect master's words.

Mei Chaofeng finally nodded his head in satisfaction. "Speak. What's happened?"

The sect member got around to his report. "It was a loss of fifty thousand silver taels."

"Fifty thousand?" Mei Chaofeng burst into laughter. It wasn't as much as he'd imagined, but Plum Blossom Seven still performed immaculately this time around, especially since he had done it right under the nose of the Chu First Miss. "Fifty thousand silver taels should be enough to get Zu An kicked out of the Chu clan."

Snow's lips betrayed the barest hint of a smile. She concurred that a debt of fifty thousand silver taels would be enough. With some subtle nudging, she was certain that Madam Chu's patience with that detestable fellow would wear out, and she would not hesitate to kick him out.

The sect member realized that his words had been misinterpreted, and anxiously clarified the matter. "Sect master, I meant that we have lost fifty thousand silver taels!"

"Ah?" Mei Chaofeng's smile froze instantly. His eyes slowly turned back to the sect member, and his gaze became murderous. "What did you just say?"

The sect member had no choice but to suppress his fear and repeat his report once more. "It was the Silverhook Casino that has lost fifty thousand silver taels to the young master of the Chu clan."

Bam!

The teacup in Mei Chaofeng's hands shattered as he flew into a state of rage. "What the hell is Plum Blossom Seven doing? How could he lose that much money to that wastrel? Even if I were to put a pig on the gambling table, it wouldn't be so inept as to lose fifty thousand silver taels!"

"Actually, it was all lost in a single round," reported the sect member.

"In a single round?" Surprised, Mei Chaofeng quickly demanded the details of the matter, which the sect member duly provided.

After hearing the full story, Mei Chaofeng lapsed into silence, but his complexion slowly lost its angry red hue. He dismissed the sect member with a wave of his hand, then leisurely made his way back to his chair to sip on yet another cup of tea.

Snow couldn't stand how Mei Chaofeng could remain unfazed by news of the loss. She barged forward and demanded, "Why are you still sitting down here, sipping on your tea? Aren't you going to head there to take a look? You've already lost fifty thousand silver taels!"

"There's no rush," Mei Chaofeng replied calmly. "Miss Qiao, don't let your anxiety get ahead of yourself."

"How can I not be anxious? You won't be the only one to bear the responsibility for ruining the young master's plans!" Snow pointed out coldly.

Mei Chaofeng clenched his fists furiously at her use of the young master's name to threaten him, but he quickly composed himself and explained, "It would have been a serious problem if Plum Blossom Seven had lost fifty thousand silver taels after a series of bets. However, just as you have heard, they had only gambled a single round. It's obvious that Zu An had simply been lucky.

"Luck might save him once, but it won't save him every time. Rest assured, Plum Blossom Seven will earn the money back very quickly and place Zu An in debt."

"What if Zu An refuses to continue gambling?" asked Snow with a frown.

Mei Chaofeng burst into laughter. "I've seen countless people like him over the years. They lose themselves as soon as something good comes their way. He doesn't have the wisdom to quit while he's

ahead. Besides, Plum Blossom Seven is there. Even if Zu An wanted to stop, he has his own ways of keeping him there in the casino. I wouldn't have placed him in charge of the casino otherwise."

"You seem to trust Plum Blossom Seven a lot," Snow observed.

"Of course! He's one of my most trusted aides." Mei Chaofeng revealed a hint of triumph. "I have nurtured quite a few talents over the last few years. Just wait and see, good news should be coming in very soon."

His statement was followed by a flurry of footsteps at the door. Mei Chaofeng pointed and remarked with a laugh, "See what I just said? Looks like they're here now."

Snow's lips slowly parted in a faint smile. It looks like the Plum Blossom Sect is still quite reliable after all.

After a moment, a sect member scrambled into the room, his face completely pale. He rushed to Mei Chaofeng and panted, "R-report... Lost... Lost seven-and-a-half million silver taels!"

Mei Chaofeng's face darkened immediately. "What do I always tell you all? Why do none of you ever learn? If you can't even keep your composure, you'll never be able to achieve great things!"

Mei Chaofeng suddenly twitched, and he asked sharply, "Hm? What did you just say?"

"Seven... seven-and-a-half million silver taels..." reported the sect member once more.

Ravenous joy broke out on Mei Chaofeng's face. "Hahaha, seven-and-a-half million silver taels! That brat is done for! Even if the Chu clan sells all of its properties, it won't be able to raise that much money!"

It's no wonder why my sect member is so agitated!

Mei Chaofeng had already forgiven his subordinate for his breach of etiquette. Even he could hardly keep his cool after hearing such a shocking number.

Snow was floored by the report. "That fellow actually lost seven-and-a-half million silver taels?"

For someone to lose so much money within such a short period of time was beyond her imagination.

Despite it all, the news put her heart at ease. If Zu An had racked up a debt of tens of thousands of silver taels, there was an outside chance that the Chu clan would be willing to clean up after him. However, a debt as huge as seven-and-a-half million silver taels was absolutely out of the question.

Not just the Chu clan; if one threw in the Yuan clan, Zheng clan, and Wang clan as well, it might still be impossible to raise such a huge sum.

Mei Chaofeng poured a cup of wine and passed it to Snow. "Miss Qiao, your mission has been successfully accomplished. May you be able to return to the young master's side soon."

Chapter 64: Reaching the Peak

Although Snow was not a drinker, the news that Zu An was a goner filled her with such overflowing joy that she subconsciously accepted Mei Chaofeng's offer of wine. "I'm grateful for your help all this while. Once I'm back at the young master's side, I'll make sure to speak to him on your behalf."

Mei Chaofeng laughed heartily. "Yes, may we have a pleasant partnership!"

They clinked their glasses together in celebration. Seeing this, the sect member realized his words had been misunderstood. With a voice verging on tears, he clarified nervously, "Sect master, it's not Zu An who lost seven-and-a-half million silver taels. We are the ones who owe him that amount!"

Mei Chaofeng was in the midst of celebrating his victory when he heard those words. His hands, which had never trembled while taking the lives of others, twitched violently. The wine cup that he was holding fell to the floor, shattering into countless pieces.

Snow felt her mind go blank as well. Not even in her wildest imaginings had such a situation arisen.

"Repeat that again." Mei Chaofeng's expression was dreadful. His high cultivation meant it was almost impossible for him to mishear anything. Never once had he asked a subordinate to repeat a report, but what he'd heard was simply so incredible that he had to verify it once more.

"Zu An has won seven-and-a-half million silver taels in the Silverhook Casino. Master Seven has already fainted, and the brothers in the casino are at their wits' end. Sect master, please hurry to the casino to hold down the fort!" the sect member cried out anxiously.

Mei Chaofeng found himself unable to move.

Seven-and-a-half million silver taels. Just how much money was that?

Without even considering the Plum Blossom Sect, not even the surrounding municipalities combined could earn that much money in their annual taxes!

Over! It's all over!

Mei Chaofeng's legs were trembling so hard that even standing upright was impossible. His body swayed, and he stumbled backwards into the chair behind him.

Snow, on the other hand, had held on to a last shred of composure. She anxiously asked the sect member, "What happened? How did Zu An earn so much money?"

The sect member was surprised to see such a ravishing young woman in the sect master's room. Even though most of her face was concealed by a veil, her shapely figure and bewitching eyes were more than enough to hint at her beauty. However, this was no time for him to be distracted.

"He first bet all his money on '17', which has a payout of 1:50. That won him fifty thousand silver taels. After that, he bet all of his money on triple-ones, and with its payout of 1:150, he won seven-and-a-half million silver taels right away."

Mei Chaofeng finally recovered from his daze. He leaped out of the chair like a ferocious lion and grabbed the sect member by his collar. "How could that wastrel possibly win both bets? The possibility of that happening is so small... Did he cheat?"

“He didn’t!” The sect member went numb with fear. He prayed that the sect master wouldn’t snap his neck in a fit of rage. “There’s no way anyone could cheat in front of us in the Silverhook Casino. That’s why all of our brothers are spooked.”

Snow spoke. “Could it be that Chu First Miss sensed the revolutions in the dice and secretly whispered the outcome to him?”

Despite saying so, Snow didn’t really believe in that possibility. She couldn’t imagine Chu Chuyan participating in a gamble, let alone helping out that wastrel.

Mei Chaofeng shook his head adamantly. “Impossible. Our dice shakers have formations inscribed by a renowned runemaster in the capital. These formations isolate ki, preventing anyone from sensing what’s happening within the dice shakers. Even a Grandmaster wouldn’t be able to read the results of the dice shakers, let alone a fifth rank cultivator! Otherwise, casinos in this world would have long gone bankrupt by now!”

Snow sighed deeply. “There’s no point speculating here. We should hurry to the scene and take a look ourselves.”

“You’re right...” Snow’s words spurred Mei Chaofeng to shake off his lingering panic and regain his composure. “Relay my orders. All of our brothers are to follow me to the Silverhook Casino right now!”

His mind was made up.

Pay up? That’s a sum of money that I’ll never be able to fork out even if I work my entire life!

That’s seven-and-a-half million silver taels! I won’t be able to raise that much money even if I sell everything in the Plum Blossom Sect!

Mei Chaofeng had already made up his mind to default on this debt even if it meant falling out with the Chu clan.

The headquarters of the Plum Blossom Sect was not located too far away from the Silverhook Casino. Mei Chaofeng’s nervousness imparted a swiftness to his steps, and it didn’t take him long to arrive at the casino.

A huge crowd of people had already gathered outside by now. The news that someone had managed to earn seven-and-a-half million silver taels had spread like wildfire, and curious passers-by had begun gathering around the area to watch the commotion.

It took quite some effort for Mei Chaofeng to squeeze his way through the crowd. Pandemonium had broken out in the casino, and the onlookers were chanting loudly, “Pay up, pay up, pay up~”

Hoh, they have a good sense of rhythm.

Zu An was lounging in a chair that someone had brought over for him, his feet resting arrogantly on the gambling table. Someone had delivered a cup of tea to him, and more were busy massaging his back and legs. Even more outrageous, there were maids waiting on him, plucking grapes one-by-one to feed him.

This ridiculous scene left Mei Chaofeng utterly speechless. He could tell that the servants and maids attending to Zu An were reserved specially for guests in the VIP room. Why were all waiting on that wastrel?

Are you trying to start a mutiny? At least poison the goddamned grapes that you're feeding him!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 400 Rage points!

Upon seeing the inflow of Rage points, Zu An waved his hands and said, "Shoo, shoo! Open up a path."

He pushed the people closest to him aside, and found himself face-to-face with a livid Mei Chaofeng.

Zu An leisurely stretched a hand out. "You must be Sect Master Mei. Since you're here, I'd have to ask you to hurry up and pay me my earnings. It's seven-and-a-half million silver taels in total~" he demanded in a singsong voice.

Chu Chuyan, who had been standing off to the side with a permanent look of disdain, took several discreet steps toward Zu An. Mei Chaofeng was known to be a vicious figure who had ruled Brightmoon City's underworld in recent years. Many innocent lives had been lost at his hands.

Zu An's words made Mei Chaofeng's cheeks twitch. How in the world can I raise seven-and-a-half million silver taels for you?

Zu An sighed softly at Mei Chaofeng's silence. "Sect Master Mei, you can be considered a distinguished individual in Brightmoon City. Surely you aren't thinking of defaulting on your debt, are you? There is no shortage of eyewitnesses here."

"Indeed! Pay up, pay up~"

The surrounding crowd took up the chant. There were so many of them right now, and Chu First Miss was here to back them up too. There was no need for them to fear the Plum Blossom Sect!

Their only regret was not betting together with Zu An. If they had, they would have made a huge killing as well.

If they could do it all over again... well, it was still unlikely that any of them would have had the guts to bet on triple-ones. The probability of that outcome was just too low.

Mei Chaofeng took a deep breath to calm himself. "There are too many people here to talk things out. Why don't we proceed inside to discuss the matter thoroughly?"

Unexpectedly, Zu An flatly rejected his request. "I think it's perfectly fine to discuss things here. Everyone here is so warm-hearted, and they say such pleasant words. I love it here. As the saying goes, a gentleman has nothing to hide from others. Sect Master Mei, feel free to speak here."

You must be joking! How am I supposed to earn Rage points from everyone else if I discuss things with you in private?

Mei Chaofeng was incensed at his refusal. This bastard!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 631 Rage points!

“Very well. Since young master Zu wishes to talk things out here, let’s do it then.” Mei Chaofeng’s years of ruling the underworld weren’t just for show. It didn’t take long for him to adapt to the situation. “Since young master Zu’s luck is so good here, why don’t you accept another gamble?”

He wasn’t sure what was going on here, so he decided to personally make a move. Regardless of whether Plum Blossom Seven and the others had betrayed him, or if Zu An had really been that lucky, now was the time for this situation to unravel. He was confident that no one could pull any tricks with him watching.

So what if Zu An had won seven-and-a-half million silver taels from him? He was confident that he could win it back.

Everyone thought that Plum Blossom Seven was the number one gambler in the Plum Blossom Sect, but they had forgotten the fact that it was Mei Chaofeng who had imparted the knowledge to him. Factor in the difference in cultivation as well, and there was no way Plum Blossom Seven would stand a chance against Mei Chaofeng in a gambling match.

It was only because Mei Chaofeng had risen to a high position that he had stopped managing the casino personally.

What if Mei Chaofeng lost the bet?

Firstly, Mei Chaofeng didn’t think that he would lose. Also, it was not as if losing the bet would drastically alter the current situation. What was the difference between owing Zu An seven-and-a-half million silver taels and owing him ten million silver taels? He couldn’t pay up either way.

Desperate times called for desperate measures indeed.

Chu Chuyan grew a little anxious at Mei Chaofeng’s invitation. While she could easily see through Plum Blossom Seven’s attempts at trickery, the same couldn’t be said for Mei Chaofeng. Just like her, Mei Chaofeng was a fifth rank cultivator, and he was clearly much more experienced. It was likely that his dirty tricks would go undetected by her.

She hastened over to Zu An, meaning to counsel him to turn down the offer. After all, he was a really hot-headed person. He’d even fallen for Plum Blossom Seven’s provocation so easily; it would really be the end if he recklessly accepted Mei Chaofeng’s invitation.

Surprisingly, before she could even say a word, Zu An had already turned down the invitation with a wave of his hand. “Why would I gamble with you? I have already won seven-and-a-half million silver taels! Besides, I reckon that you’d have difficulties trying to fork out the seven-and-a-half million silver taels in the first place; you wouldn’t be able to pay me even if I won anything else from you. Do you really take me for an idiot? Cut the crap and pay up! I’m itching to return home to embrace my honey in bed!”

Even if Mei Chaofeng had the money, there was no way Zu An would continue. It had been quite some time since he’d taken the Fortune Pill, and its effects were bound to fade soon.

Zu An’s words brought a relieved smile to Chu Chuyan’s lips. This fellow looks reckless, but he isn’t a fool after all.

Her mind belatedly registered his last sentence, and her smile quickly slid off her face.

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for 199 Rage points!

The other gamblers who had crowded around simmered in envy. Barely half a month ago, Zu An had been a notorious wastrel that they'd looked down on. Yet, in the blink of an eye, he had won seven-and-a-half million silver taels, an unimaginable fortune! Not only that, he had somehow married such a beautiful wife. He was the literal definition of 'winning in life'!

Of course you are proud of your accomplishments, but do you need to keep flaunting them in front of us?

Just the thought of Zu An having his way with the ravishing Chu First Miss sent blood gushing to their heads. They had merely gathered to watch the drama unfold, but they were all seized by the same sudden thought: it wouldn't be too bad of an idea for Mei Chaofeng to strangle the life out of this darned scoundrel!

You have successfully trolled Gambler A for 77 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Gambler B for 77 Rage points!

You have successfully trolled Gambler C for 77 Rage points!

Chapter 65: Despair

Zu An joyfully reaped his bounty of Rage points. His wisdom for rejecting a private discussion with Mei Chaofeng was once again affirmed.

The triumphant look on Zu An's face made Mei Chaofeng grit his teeth in anger.

Just a month ago, this trash wasn't even worthy of standing before me. Even my underlings could make him hunch over respectfully.

Now, in the span of just a few days, not only is he standing before me as an equal, he even dares to threaten me so openly?

Shit! I should have pimped myself out as well when I was younger!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 666 Rage points!

Mei Chaofeng took in another deep breath to compose himself. He seemed to be doing that a lot today. He beckoned to his subordinates. "Men, bring Plum Blossom Seven over!"

There was a short lull, and some of his henchmen appeared, dragging an utterly horrified Plum Blossom Seven in with them. As soon as Plum Blossom Seven saw Mei Chaofeng, he fell to his knees and hugged the sect master, tears and snot flowing down his face as he cried pitifully, "Godfather, I have let you down! I didn't expect to bring such huge trouble to you!"

Without sparing a glance for Plum Blossom Seven, he kicked his whimpering godson aside and coldly declared, "The earlier gamble was conducted under Plum Blossom Seven's own discretion, and was not

officially sanctioned by our casino. If you want money, get it from him. Since Plum Blossom Seven has flouted the rules of our sect and brought shame to our sect, I hereby declare that he's permanently expelled from the Plum Blossom Sect!"

"Godfather! Sect master! You can't treat me like that! I have worked hard for you over the years..." Plum Blossom Seven knew immediately that he was being abandoned, and wild panic set in. He didn't even have the ability to fork out ten thousand silver taels, let alone seven-and-a-half million silver taels! He wouldn't be able to raise that much money even if he were to sell himself off as a slave!

He was on the verge of protesting further, but one of his now-former brothers smashed a fist right into his chin, knocking his lower jaw out of place. That prevented him from uttering any more.

The casino fell deathly silent as everyone witnessed Plum Blossom Seven's pitiful fate. They suddenly remembered that the Silverhook Casino was run by an underworld organization that had murdered countless innocents in cold blood.

Zu An's eyes narrowed.

It looks like this fellow is quite skilled at cleanups. Even so, it's not that easy to run away with my money!

"Sect Master Mei, do you consider everyone here to be fools?" Zu An said. "Plum Blossom Seven is your godson and your aide, and this casino is a business run by your Plum Blossom Sect. Yet, you refuse to acknowledge both when you lose money. After this display, who would dare visit your casino in the future?"

"That's right, that's right~"

The surrounding crowd whispered agreement amongst themselves. The most important thing to a casino was its credibility, and a casino that lacked credibility was bound to close down.

If the Plum Blossom Sect wouldn't even honor its agreement to someone who had the backing of the Chu clan, it didn't take a genius to figure out what would happen to powerless individuals like them when they finally struck it rich.

Mei Chaofeng sneered coldly at Zu An's threat. "I can tell you outright that I'll be taking your money today! I'll gladly pay all the other customers whatever they have earned. In the entire Brightmoon City, you will be the only one to whom I won't even pay a single copper coin. What can you do about it?"

Hah, a wastrel like you wants to fight with me? No matter how hard a bird tries to fly to a higher branch, it'll never transform into a phoenix! I have weathered all sorts of storms over the years. What could a mere brat like you possibly do to me?

Do you think that the world is only filled with reasonable people? Very well, I'll show you the treacherous side of the world then!

"Sect Master Mei, your behaviour is absolutely shameful!" Chu Chuyan's stepped forward, her face cold, but she was unexpectedly held back by Zu An.

Zu An favored Mei Chaofeng with a smile. "Sect Master Mei, do you think that there's nothing I can do to you?"

“What can you possibly do?” Mei Chaofeng scoffed contemptuously.

A mere wastrel who has risen to his current position on the coattails of a woman; what could he possibly be capable of?

Zu An shrugged calmly. “It’s fine if you aren’t willing to pay me. From this day forward, I’ll head to every single casino under your name and teach all of these people how to place their bets. I shall make sure that every single one of them wins every single round they play. What do you all think of that?”

Those words immediately galvanized the gamblers, and their excitement spread quickly to the spectators outside.

“Sounds good!”

“Love live young master Zu!”

“Young master Zu, you’re handsome!”

“Young master Zu, you’re like our new parent!”

“Young master Zu, has anyone told you that you and Miss Chu make the perfect pair?”

“Holy shit, how could you spout such blatant lies?”

“Aren’t you doing the same too?”

...

As the old sages once said: for a fifty-percent increase in wealth, a man would choose to take risks; to double his wealth, a man would be willing to forsake all social norms; to quadruple his fortune, a man would be willing to commit any crime, even murder.

The amount of wealth that could be earned at the gambling table was massive—Zu An was living proof of that. In one round, he had multiplied his fortune one hundred and fifty times!

Who could possibly keep their composure when offered such a chance? Many of these gamblers were people who were willing to die for money. If the Plum Blossom Sect then dared to withhold every person’s winnings, these gamblers would undoubtedly band together and riot, no matter how powerful the Plum Blossom Sect was. There was no way the Plum Blossom Sect would survive such a challenge.

Mei Chaofeng understood the implicit threat in Zu An’s words. His face twisted in consternation. “You’re really able to win every round?”

Zu An gave him another cool shrug. “I’ve already won seven-and-a-half million silver taels from you today. What do you think? Please call me the God of Gambling from this day onward!”

Blinded by the promise of great riches, the surrounding crowd worshipped him with their shameless flattery.

“God of Gambling~”

“God of Gambling~”

“God of Gambling~”

...

Zu An closed his eyes and savored the cheers of the crowd. All that was lacking was an appropriate background music track to underscore his awesomeness.

Mei Chaofeng’s cheeks began twitching uncontrollably. He had no idea how Zu An managed to do it, but based on his confident tone, it appeared that his wins had not been down to luck at all.

There was no rational way to justify his wins as mere coincidence, and no way that a person could ever be that lucky.

If this fellow were to lead the other gamblers and wreak havoc in his other casinos, his business would be run completely into the ground. However, paying up wasn’t an option either. This was a sum of seven-and-a-half million silver taels, not just seventy-five thousand!

He found himself well and truly in a quandary.

Just then, a disturbance broke out near the entrance.

“Stand aside, stand aside!”

A squad of soldiers barged in, led by a young man wearing golden armor. This young man had a slender frame and a decent-looking face, and the shine from his armor amplified his eye-catching appearance.

“Waaaa, what a handsome man!” The girls close to him whispered excitedly.

Zu An sniffed indignantly. Aren’t they merely being seduced by the uniforms alone? These women really haven’t seen much of the world before.

He snuck a glance at Chu Chuyan. Upon seeing her nonchalance toward the new arrivals, he heaved a sigh of relief.

“Who is causing trouble here?” The young commander scanned the crowded casino floor, and his gaze fell on Zu An.

“What are you looking at me for? Are you envious that I’m better looking than you?” Zu An responded impatiently. The fact that this man had eyed him right from the moment he entered betrayed his ill intentions. With that established, there was no reason to hold back.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 100 Rage points!

Sang? What a rare surname, Zu An thought to himself.

The young commander’s mouth hung open. Clearly, he’d been about to interrogate Zu An, but the abrupt jab had thrown him completely off course, leaving him clueless as to how to proceed.

Fortunately for him, Mei Chaofeng rushed to his side, embracing his newly-found backing. “Commander Sang, you’ve arrived just in time. This fellow has conducted fraud in our casino. When I confronted him about it, he threatened to lead the other gamblers in cheating at my casinos in order to ruin my business.”

The members of the crowd were completely dumbstruck. We know that you are from the underworld, but surely that's too blatant a lie? Do you think us braindead fools?

Despite this, not a single person came forward to speak up for Zu An. They knew just how unreasonable the world could be, and so no one wanted to get involved until it was clear which side was odds-on to be the winner.

While the money promised by Zu An was enticing, it would be all for naught if they were killed before they could even earn or spend it.

The young commander named Sang Qian immediately stepped forward and bellowed, "Do you know what's the crime of committing fraud?" He turned to Mei Chaofeng. "Ah right, how much did he scam you?"

"Seven-and-a-half million silver taels," Mei Chaofeng replied with a bitter smile.

"Seven-and-a-half million silver taels?" Sang Qian repeated dumbly. His brain was still processing the shock..

Do you all play with such high stakes here? My father was once the Minister of Finance, but that's still considered an astronomical sum of money by the royal treasury!

His face lit up in excitement. "The crime of committing fraud involving a huge sum of money warrants a sentence of three to ten years in prison, or even beyond that in particularly severe cases. For daring to scam the Silverhook Casino for over seven-and-a-half million silver taels, you should resolve yourself to spend your entire life in prison!"

Zu An rolled his eyes, not bothering with response. Instead, he turned to Chu Chuyan and asked, "Honey, who is this fellow? Why has he decided my crime and pronounced my sentence just after hearing from that Mei fellow? It looks like he has been accepting quite a bit of money from the Plum Blossom Sect, huh?"

Those words sparked a commotion in the crowd.

Chu Chuyan's lips crept upward in a slight smile. "Commander Sang is the son of the ex-Minister of Finance. Lord Sang has become the new governor of our Linchuan Commandery. You shouldn't take him lightly."

Sang Qian sketched her a quick bow. "Miss Chu, you're too kind. I'll be needing the Chu clan's help for our work here in the future."

No man in the world could resist a beauty on the level of Chu Chuyan. Even though this father-son pair had obviously been sent here to deal with the Chu clan, Sang Qian still wanted to impress her.

Just as Sang Qian was congratulating himself on his impeccable etiquette, a harsh voice rang out, "Tsk~ I was wondering how capable of a person you were, but it turns out that you're someone relying on connections just like me."

There stood Zu An, casually picking his ears.

Sang Qian nearly choked on his own breath. Although he'd never met Zu An in person, the reputation of the notorious drafted son-in-law of the Chu clan was well-known. This wastrel was a laughingstock in his own circle! And yet, he had to associate himself with this scoundrel now?

What utter humiliation!

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 300 Rage points!

Mei Chaofeng's eyes widened in astonishment as well. Sang Qian was a man of prestigious background. His father was an illustrious official from the royal court, holding power over huge swathes of land.

On the other hand, Zu An was nothing more than a scoundrel who had been lucky enough to have gotten involved with the Chu clan.

Can they even be considered to be backing you? How shameless must you be to say such words! How shameless!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 300 Rage points!

Zu An was puzzled. His insult had been directed at Sang Qian, yet he had somehow provoked Mei Chaofeng as well. It strongly suggested some kind of illicit, underground relationship between the pair of them.

Meanwhile, Chu Chuyan observed the rage in Sang Qian's eyes and chuckled quietly to herself. The world finally gets to see Zu An's shamelessness as well. She cleared her throat and said, "Young master Sang, if I'm not mistaken, you're merely the commander of the River Patrol Team. You don't have the right to interfere in civil cases such as this. It doesn't seem appropriate for you to pass judgment on this matter."

Chapter 66: In a Tight Spot

Brightmoon City was a commercial hub that was heavily involved in the salt and metal industries, and goods were frequently imported and exported. Most of the trade was facilitated along the river, and so the River Patrol Team was formed. The River Patrol Team dealt with the threat of smugglers, and was also tasked with protecting the shipping of strategic resources and necessities, especially from the ferocious beasts that frequented certain points along the river.

Sang Qian answered Chu Chuyan calmly, "While I'm responsible for the River Patrol Team, it's also my job to ensure the security of the people. With so many people gathered here today, a sudden disturbance could easily lead to a stampede. Isn't it only natural for me to drop by and enquire about it?"

"There's no need to trouble Commander Sang with this matter," a gentle voice suddenly called out.

A young man holding a paper fan walked in from the entrance, escorted by a group of guards. He had a face that was as fair as white jade, and he gave off a scholarly air.

"Is this person a guy or a girl?"

“Shhh, are you tired of living? He’s the young master of the City Lord Estate!”

...

Zu An was stunned to see Xie Xiu here. He’d never understood why royal families and nobles liked to rear male concubines, but if they were as beautiful as Xie Xiu, it would be perfectly normal...

Pui, what the hell am I thinking about?

Sang Qian’s eyes turned grim as soon as he caught sight of Xie Xiu. “So it’s young master Xie! If I recall correctly, young master Xie should be studying in Brightmoon Academy at the moment and has no official position yet. Isn’t it inappropriate for you to issue an order to the guards despite the lack of authority?”

Xie Xiu snapped his paper fan shut and smiled calmly at Sang Qian. “Of course I’m not the one who brought these guards here. I had been drinking at the Heavenly Immortal Tavern just a moment ago when I spied Uncle Pang leading a group of men over. It was merely a moment of curiosity that made me tag along as well. Isn’t that so, Uncle Pang?”

A pot bellied man stumbled into the casino, using one hand to steady his officials’ hat and prevent it from falling off. The man had clearly been in a hurry to get here.

“This man is the vice magistrate of the city, Pang Chun. He’s a fifth rank cultivator, as well as the third-in-charge of Brightmoon City. He’s on good terms with our Chu clan, so you better not run your mouth and insult him by accident.” Chu Chuyan hurriedly forewarned Zu An, fearing that he might spew nonsense at any moment.

Zu An nodded vigorously at her, though his features were oddly twisted. A man named Pang Chun? Just what in the world are his parents thinking?

In spite of these distracting thoughts, Zu An managed to glean some important information from Chu Chuyan’s words. The Chu clan shared a close relationship with the city lord, but just a few days ago, Chu Zhongtian had mentioned that the governor Sang Hong had been dispatched to the Linchuan Commandery to deal with them. It was safe to assume that Sang Hong’s appointment represented the will of the royal court.

My gosh, could the Chu clan be harboring thoughts of rebellion? Are they colluding with local officials to undermine the royal court?

Zu An thought that he had grabbed on to a pair of sturdy thighs, but it turned out to be a boat that was on the verge of capsizing. No wonder they weren’t in a position to deal with a mere underworld organization!

Should I find an opportunity to leap off this boat?

If Chu Chuyan had known what he was thinking, she would have thrown him to the ground and beaten him to a pulp.

Pang Chun clasped his fist and greeted Sang Qian with a smile. “It’s a pleasure to meet you, Commander Sang.”

Sang Qian dared not offend the vice magistrate, the third-in-charge of Brightmoon City. He answered quickly, "Yes, it's a pleasure to meet you too, Lord Vice Magistrate."

The two of them quickly traded pleasantries before turning their attention to Xie Xiu. This seemed to amuse the young man. "What are the two of you looking at me for? I have no official position, so you should deal with the situation here according to the rules!"

Sang Qian could think of more than a few retorts. Don't pretend that we don't know you were the one who called Pang Chun here! His loyalty to your father runs deep, so who else would he listen to other than you?

Pang Chun, on the other hand, favored Sang Qian with another smile. "Commander Sang, would you mind if I take over this case?"

Sang Qian forced himself to smile. "This is the jurisdiction of the Lord Vice Magistrate. I dare not to overstep my boundaries."

The vice magistrate wielded great authority, and was responsible for maintaining security within the city. In essence, he was comparable to a sheriff or police chief.

Pang Chun's expression grew serious as he considered the other parties gathered in front of him. "What happened here?"

Chu Chuyan stepped forward and explained the chain of events to Pang Chun.

When Pang Chun heard the words 'seven-and-a-half million silver taels', he almost jumped in shock, just like the many others before him who'd heard it for the first time. However, he quickly recovered and followed Chu Chuyan's account to its logical conclusion. "Sect Master Mei, it looks like you're in the wrong here. Since you opened a casino, it's only right for you to accept a loss. Otherwise, if all casinos were to operate in the same way as you, the world would be in utter chaos!"

Mei Chaofeng was infuriated to see that Pang Chun was siding with Chu Chuyan, but he still answered with composure. "Lord Vice Magistrate, you are unaware of the full story. This man took only two rounds to win seven-and-a-half million silver taels. That's beyond the realms of reason. There's no doubt that he employed some form of trickery. How could we accept such a thing?"

Zu An was amused by the accusation. "Say, don't you think that it's embarrassing that a casino owner like you is worried about his customers cheating? Does this show that your skills are lacking, or that you're just downright shameless?"

"You!!!" Mei Chaofeng furiously pointed his finger at Zu An. If the two of us were alone, I would have smashed this lowly bug with a single finger of mine!

Shit!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 499 Rage points!

Pang Chun agreed with Zu An's comment. "Sect Master Mei, since you claim that Zu An has cheated, do you have any evidence to back up your statement?"

This was the first time Zu An enjoyed the privileges of having a superior back him up. Every single word uttered was in his favor—although he was indeed on the side of reason this time around.

Mei Chaofeng hesitated a little before answering. “I don’t have any evidence. I was not present earlier. Furthermore, Zu An came here together with Miss Chu. Miss Chu is a fifth rank cultivator, and there’s no way our men in the casino would have been able to tell if she’d tried to pull a fast one.”

Chu Chuyan’s face turned frosty at his slander. “Are you insinuating that I am a cheat?”

Since both sides had already fallen out with one another, Mei Chaofeng had no qualms offending the Chu clan. “Well, that’s hard to tell. He’s your husband after all. Who knows whether the two of you are working together to scam me?”

“Our Chu clan will not accept such slander. I shall challenge you to a duel!” her tone of voice sucked all the warmth out of the air.

Mei Chaofeng refused to back down. “I have addressed you respectfully thus far out of consideration for the Chu clan. Don’t take my consideration as a weakness!”

Zu An could barely contain his excitement as the conflict escalated, eager to witness an incredible duel. He was curious to see how rank five cultivators clashed with one another, to learn how to better protect himself when dealing with one in the future.

As for whether Chu Chuyan would be hurt in the duel... to be honest, he wasn’t worried about that at all. Both Xie Xiu and the vice magistrate were here, and Brightmoon City was still the fief of the Chu clan. There was no way Chu Zhongtian would allow his own daughter to be bullied here.

On top of all that, she had the backing of the Brightmoon Academy as well.

It was clear that Mei Chaofeng was at a severe disadvantage.

Xie Xiu chose this moment to step forward and defuse the situation. “Please calm down and allow me to speak justice. As everyone in Brightmoon City knows, the Chu clan has always strictly forbidden its own members from gambling...”

All eyes turned instantly on Zu An, which left Xie Xiu momentarily at a loss for words. However, he quickly fashioned a plausible excuse. “Well, Zu An has only just married into the Chu clan not too long ago, so he might be unfamiliar with their rules. However, I trust that everyone in Brightmoon City knows what kind of person Chu First Miss is like.”

“Indeed, how could Chu First Miss possibly cheat?”

“Sect Master Mei, it’s one thing for you to refuse to pay up, but how could you stoop to slandering Miss Chu too?”

“Indeed! Miss Chu would never resort to such despicable tricks!”

...

A chorus of statements from the crowd backed Xie Xiu up.

Zu An was surprised by the resounding popularity of his wife. I hadn't expected so many people to like her. It seems my position is precarious.

Xie Xiu raised his hand to calm the crowd down, then continued. "Also, as everyone knows, I'm someone with hardly any strengths, and spend my days idly... I dare not claim knowledge in any other field, but I admit to being proficient when it comes to matters concerning gambling. To my knowledge, all the tools used in casinos are specially inscribed by runemasters in order to prevent cultivators from tampering with the outcomes by using their ki. It's false to claim that Miss Chu was cheating just because her cultivation is higher."

As he watched events unfold, Sang Qian had also become annoyed at how Mei Chaofeng had chosen—of all things!—to drag Chu Chuyan's name through the mud. In such a situation, he had no choice but to speak up. "Indeed. I can vouch with my life that Chu First Miss wouldn't cheat either. She..."

Before Sang Qian could finish his sentence, Zu An muttered contemplatively, "Honey, if you admit that you were cheating right now, will we be able to get that guy over there to commit suicide?"

There was the sound of crickets chirping. Sang Qian, Xie Xiu, Pang Chun and Mei Chaofeng all stared at him, their expressions ranging from stunned disbelief to outright fury.

It's just a figure of speech, are you really taking it literally?!?! What the hell? Just what kind of son-in-law did the Chu clan draft into their household?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 213 Rage points!

Chu Chuyan's face had also darkened. "Be quiet. Don't talk nonsense."

Sang Qian pretended to have missed Zu An's remark, and tried to continue on. Wait, where was I at earlier? Damn that fellow!

"Miss Chu would never cheat, but as for young master Zu, I trust that everyone in the city is familiar with his personality, as well as his... talent. It's impossible for him to win seven-and-a-half million silver taels here within two rounds. That only leaves a single possibility—he has bribed Plum Blossom Seven ahead of time to scam the casino of its money!"

Sang Qian had fallen just short of openly claiming that Zu An was trash.

Mei Chaofeng's eyes lit up. His earlier accusation had contained many loopholes, but Sang Qian's argument demonstrated firmly that Zu An had used illegitimate means to obtain the seven-and-a-half million silver taels. Not only that, this provided the perfect platform to turn the tables on Zu An and go on the offensive.

As expected of someone who had come from the capital! What an ingenious ploy!

"Wuuuuu~" Plum Blossom Seven, who had been watching from the sidelines, was scared out of his wits. He hadn't expected to be dragged into this shitshow. Unfortunately, with his lower jaw broken, there was little he could do to defend himself.

Pah~ Pah~ Pah~

Slow applause rang out. All eyes turned to find the source, only to see that it was Zu An. "Commander Sang, could you possibly be one of the bosses behind this Silverhook Casino?"

Sang Qian's face immediately darkened. "What rubbish are you talking about? Slandering an official of the royal court is a heavy crime!"

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 200 Rage points!

"If you aren't one of the bosses of the Silverhook Casino, why haven't you stopped speaking up for them ever since you stepped in here?" Zu An asked.

Sang Qian sniffed coldly. "I'm just making a logical deduction based on the facts here."

"As you said, it's only a deduction. So, based on how you've been speaking up for Mei Chaofeng, I'm just making a logical deduction that you are in cahoots with the Plum Blossom Sect. May I know if my deductions can be entered as evidence?"

"You!!" Sang Qian turned his face away. "I can't be bothered to argue with someone like you."

You have successfully trolled Sang Qian for 100 Rage points!

Sang Qian was slowly calming down. Given the disparity in their standings, it was beneath him to argue with Zu An in public.

Zu An let him be, and turned to the plump Pang Chun instead. "Lord Vice Magistrate, in your many years of experience dealing with such cases, I trust that you have a clear idea as to what's going on here?"

Sang Qian countered, "Lord Pang, please don't allow the threats of another man to affect your judgment."

"This..." Pang Chun found himself in a tight spot. Sweat droplets were falling from his forehead.

Of course, the current situation was crystal clear. However, the Plum Blossom Sect had been 'offering tributes' to the various administrative departments in the city over the last few years, and their backers had been hard to pin down. Since Sang Qian was already openly backing the Plum Blossom Sect, could it mean that the Plum Blossom Sect was backed by none other than Sang Hong?

Chapter 67: Xie Xiu's Principles

Of course, with the son of the city lord and First Miss Chu watching, he was sure to offend one of the parties involved no matter what he decided. Dealing with this situation was making his head ache.

He was granted a reprieve by the sound of galloping hooves coming from outside. A glint flashed across both Sang Qian's and Mei Chaofeng's eyes.

In the entire Brightmoon City, the only power that controlled an army of cavalry was the Chu clan.

The sound of hooves died as the horses were reined in. A tall figure built like a metal tower marched into the casino, followed closely by a group of soldiers, resplendent in their golden armor and red

cloaks. There was a sharpness in their eyes that kept others away. As soon as they entered the casino, they split into two rows, taking up positions along the sides and surrounding everyone.

Their sharp and organized footsteps turned the atmosphere grim and heavy.

“This is the Chu clan’s Red Cloak Army. They do look much more formidable than those from the River Patrol Team.”

“Shhh, quiet down! Are you truly tired of living?”

...

Sang Qian’s cheeks twitched as the whispers of the crowd reached his ears. He stepped forward and demanded in a loud voice, “Yue Shan, what are you doing? How dare the Chu clan mobilize its private army without any legitimate justification? Are you plotting a rebellion?”

Even though Sang Qian had only been appointed recently, he was still able to recognize the leader of the Chu clan’s Red Cloak Army.

“We received word that our First Miss had been bullied, so we came to protect her. Surely our Chu clan is justified in ensuring the safety of its own clan members?” Yue Shan replied coldly.

He walked up to Chu Chuyan and bowed respectfully. “Paying respects to the First Miss.”

This turn of events further hyped Zu An up. How cool would it be if he calls me ‘young master’ in such a situation?

He eagerly awaited Yue Shan to greet him too, but the latter merely looked at him hesitantly before turning away without a word. It seemed Yue Shan was disregarding his presence.

Chu Chuyan smiled in response to the commander’s greeting, and she reached out to help Yue Shan up.

After the exchange of formalities, Yue Shan quickly got straight to the point. “First Miss, the Master has said that no matter how weakened our Chu clan has become, we will not allow a mere underworld organization to threaten us with impunity. As long as you give the word, we’ll obliterate the Plum Blossom Sect today!”

His declaration immediately provoked a huge reaction from the crowd.

Even Mei Chaofeng shuddered in shock at his words. The Plum Blossom Sect had fared well in recent years not because they were powerful, but because the powers in Brightmoon City had implicitly recognized their existence and turned a blind eye to their activities.

However, if they were to fall out with one another, the head of an underworld organization like him, even with the backing of some higher-ups, couldn’t possibly be a match for a ducal clan!

Putting aside the fact that the Brightmoon Duke was an eighth rank cultivator, just the Chu clan’s Red Cloak Army was more than enough to obliterate the entire Plum Blossom Sect!

He had no choice but to turn to Sang Qian for help.

Sang Qian was also taken aback by how decisive the Chu clan was regarding this matter, and was unsure what stance to take.

Seeing his adversaries' reactions, Zu An felt exhilarated. He had indeed made the right choice to cling onto the thighs of the Chu clan. It sure felt good to oppress others with his connections!

He even forgot his earlier thoughts to abandon this 'sinking ship'.

In the end, Pang Chun was the first to speak. He coughed slightly and remarked, "It doesn't seem appropriate for the Chu clan to get involved with the administration's affairs here."

Those words jolted Sang Qian out of his daze, and he hurriedly added, "Indeed! Is the Chu clan intending to stage a rebellion?"

Chu Chuyan stepped forward with a sneer. "Is clearing an underworld organization considered a rebellion? I must ask you to watch your words. If not, I have no choice but to consider you to be intentionally defaming the Chu clan."

With the First Miss of the Chu clan making her stance known, the soldiers of the Chu clan placed their hands on the handles of their swords, ready to draw their blades and clear the field as soon as the command was issued.

Sang Qian swallowed in fear. "Whether the Plum Blossom Sect is an underworld organization or not, and the manner of its punishment, should be a matter for the city lord to decide. It's against the rules for the Chu clan to overstep its jurisdiction."

"Very well, let's follow the rules then." Chu Chuyan's eyes turned utterly cold. "Someone plotted to electrocute my h... husband in the suburbs of the city. Right after that, there was an attempt to assassinate him outside the city. And, just recently, someone tried to make use of his debt to sever his limbs... All these are related to the Plum Blossom Sect. May I ask Lord Pang to arrest Mei Chaofeng and his thirteen godsons, as well as all of the ranking members of the Plum Blossom Sect? They must be thoroughly interrogated to ascertain their involvement in this matter."

"Ah, that..." Pang Chun was put in a tight spot. He turned a pleading gaze toward Xie Xiu.

Xie Xiu himself was unsure how to manipulate the situation. He had heard rumors that Zu An was barely tolerated in the Chu clan, but the current situation appeared to disprove them. In fact, Chu Chuyan appeared to be ready to go all out for Zu An.

This left him feeling deeply envious. While he maintained a cordial friendship with Zu An, he was still a man after all. No man could remain unmoved after seeing a woman as beautiful as Chu Chuyan standing up for another man.

However, Xie Xiu quickly centered himself. His end goal wasn't to snare a perfect woman like First Miss Chu. After all, no matter how perfect a woman was, the happiness she offered could never be a match for a harem of women.

At the very least, that was his life's philosophy. He knew better than to become involved with extraordinary women, as they would only hinder his philandering. He liked how things currently were—

flirting around with lesser-known beautiful women and doing as he liked in a carefree way; this was what life should be like!

Pang Chun, waiting for Xie Xiu to give him a directive, couldn't fathom the bizarre expressions he was making. This left him at a loss as to what to do.

Noticing his silence, Chu Chuyan spoke up once more. "If Lord Pang is worried about offending others, why don't I have my men personally capture them and deliver them to the magistrate's court?"

"Miss Chu, please calm down." Pang Chun took out a handkerchief and wiped his brow. "Let's talk things over first."

Sang Hong's eyes had turned grim at Chu Chuyan's testimony. Attempted assassination of a member of a ducal clan was a serious crime. Sensing the killing intent of the Chu First Miss and the members of the Red Cloak Army surrounding them, he dared not speak up for the Plum Blossom Sect recklessly anymore. Doing so could put his father in hot water.

Mei Chaofeng's heart pounded out a frenzied beat. Am I going to meet my end here?

A vicious glint flashed across his eyes as he made up his mind. At the very least, I'll take some of them down with me!

A voice came to him. "Write out a promissory note for seven-and-a-half million silver taels and put an end to the matter here."

Mei Chaofeng could tell that it was Snow secretly transmitting her voice to him. Somehow, he'd lost track of the original reason behind this whole exchange. The Chu clan was going hard on him because he owed seven-and-a-half million silver taels. Was it really safe for him to write out such a note, though?

Sensing Mei Chaofeng's hesitation, Snow continued in a rush, "Are you a fool? If you write a promissory note, you can buy yourself time to think of ways to delay the payment, or even nullify it all together later on! If the Chu clan were to eradicate your Plum Blossom Sect today, the years of effort that the young master put in would go down the drain!"

A tight furrow formed on Mei Chaofeng's forehead as he replied, "The Chu clan doesn't have the authority to pass judgment on us. If they dare to make a move here, the governor would surely clamp down hard on them afterwards."

Snow was frustrated by Mei Chaofeng's inability to understand the gravity of the situation. "It's not so simple. The city lord of Brightmoon City is someone from King Qi's faction. Besides, once you're locked up in prison, there will be no shortage of people stepping forward to testify against you. You know full well how many evil deeds the Plum Blossom Sect has committed over the years. Once the authorities start looking into it more seriously, you'll be done for!"

Mei Chaofeng was conflicted, but he knew that there was no other option. He turned to Chu Chuyan and bowed. "Our Plum Blossom Sect has acted inappropriately today and offended Miss Chu. Please accept my humblest apologies. I hope that you'll be magnanimous and forgive us for our mistakes today."

Having to say such subservient words before such a huge crowd left him with a burning heat on his cheeks. There was no doubt that he would become the laughingstock of the crowd after tonight. Just like that, the reputation that he had built up painstakingly over many years would be left in ruins.

It was the only thing that he could do. He dared not test the Chu clan's determination to pull him down. If the Chu clan ordered its army to apprehend everyone from the Plum Blossom Sect, it would spell the end of the sect for sure.

If the decision only affected him, he might have considered throwing all caution to the wind to uphold his dignity. However, the Plum Blossom Sect didn't just belong to him.

There was someone else behind him, and that someone had devoted great effort and resources towards supporting him over the years. If the Plum Blossom Sect were to be destroyed in a single night, and he somehow managed to save his own life, there was no doubt that his backer would subject him to a cruel death.

In the end, he could only set aside his pride and apologize to this lady who was much younger than him. Every single stare directed at him from the crowd weighed on him like a huge burden of shame.

Despite his apology, Chu Chuyan appeared unmoved. He knew very well that it was impossible to settle the matter with just a few words, so he shouted, "Men, bring me paper and a brush!"

A subordinate rushed over with the writing materials he'd requested. He quickly wrote out a promissory note and handed it over to Chu Chuyan. "Miss Chu, here is a promissory note for seven-and-a-half million silver taels. We're willing to admit our loss and pay what is owed to you. However, we can't afford to fork out such a huge sum of money at a moment's notice—there's probably no power in the world who has the ability to pull that off. So, I beg Miss Chu for her patience. We'll make sure to pay interest on this debt every year. As for the main sum, we'll find a way to raise the money. May I know your thoughts on this arrangement?"

Mei Chaofeng had played a little trick here. The note stated that the money was owed to Zu An, and not the Chu clan. While there was no good way for him to default on a debt to the Chu clan, there was still room to maneuver if the promissory note was made out just to Zu An.

Chu Chuyan noticed this detail, but let it pass. Since the money had been won by Zu An, she didn't think it appropriate for her to claim his earnings as property of the Chu clan. So, she turned to Zu An and asked, "What do you think?"

Zu An was pleased that Chu Chuyan sought his opinion. He examined the note, then remarked pretentiously, "Aiyo. If only Sect Master Mei did this earlier, this matter could be resolved easily. But you just had to try your luck. Looks like you're the kind of person who needs a spanking before you'll learn!"

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 888 Rage points!

Mei Chaofeng nearly spurted out blood on the spot. If not for the Chu clan, I would never allow a wastrel like you to talk shit to me!

He nearly gave in to his urge to pummel Zu An into dust, but one glance at Chu Chuyan and the Red Cloak Army that Yue Shan had brought was enough for him to choke down his grievance.

Examining the note further, Zu An questioned, "Hm? You're only going to pay the interests? Well, I shall be magnanimous and go easy on you. I shall charge only ten percent per annum. I trust that it's acceptable to you?"

"Yes, it is," Mei Chaofeng replied through gritted teeth.

To be fair, a rate of ten percent per annum was not at all exorbitant. Compared to the high interests charged by the Plum Blossom Sect for their loans, an interest rate of ten percent was almost nothing.

Yet, why did these words coming out of Zu An's mouth sound so jarring? Furthermore, the merciful look on his face made it seem as if he was showing pity to a beggar...

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 345 Rage points!

Zu An waved a hand and accepted his agreement. "Since you've agreed to it, let's tally the interest payments right now, shall we? Ten percent of seven-and-a-half million silver taels is seven-hundred-and-fifty thousand silver taels. Are you going to pay with silver ingots or banknotes?"

Sang Qian, Xie Xiu and Pang Chun all turned blank stares at him.

Mei Chaofeng's mouth opened and closed, but no words came out.

Chapter 68: Fiance

Even the soldiers from the Chu clan's Red Cloak Army couldn't help but stare at one another. Their young master was more than a little shameless.

"Where in the world do you see anyone collecting interest right after making a loan? At the very least, you should wait a year!"

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 200 Rage points!

"Ah? There isn't such a practice?" Zu An looked around in confusion, feigning ignorance of the rules of these financial practices.

Chu Chuyan wished the ground would open up and swallow her whole. Why in the world had she chosen such a shameless fellow as her husband?

"The usual practice is indeed to collect the first interest payment in a year's time. However, based on what I know, Sect Master Mei does practice '90% for 130%', so I don't think it's unreasonable for us to collect seven-hundred-and-fifty thousand silver taels in advance."

The so-called 90% for 130% referred to a common practice of loan sharks. The loan shark would sanction a loan with a ten-percent interest rate, but only give the individual 90% of the agreed amount. He would then demand 130% back at the end of three months. Many individuals had been driven to bankruptcy by these loan sharks and their shady practices.

Chu Chuyan considered the ten-percent-per-annum interest rate to be extremely merciful, considering The Plum Blossom Sect's typical rate of ten percent per month. If not for the fact that seven-and-a-half million silver taels was indeed a huge sum, she wouldn't have accepted such terms.

Of course, she could tell that the Plum Blossom Sect had no intentions of paying off their debt in full. Thus, it was best to collect as much as they could before the Plum Blossom Sect tried anything.

Mei Chaofeng gritted his teeth. He had already realized that he wouldn't be getting out of this without forking out a sum. He waved a hand impatiently and ordered, "Men, bring one hundred thousand silver taels' worth of banknotes here!"

As his subordinates scurried off, he turned to Chu Chuyan and said, "Miss Chu, please pardon me. Even this sum is impossible for us at a moment's notice. However, we'll pay you one hundred thousand silver taels first as a show of sincerity. We'll repay the rest at the end of the year. Is that acceptable to you?"

Mei Chaofeng didn't even bother to consult Zu An on this matter. He did not dare take a chance on whatever bullshit that scoundrel might spew. In any case, he could tell that the real decision-maker here was Chu Chuyan.

Chu Chuyan hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement. Based on her estimation, a hundred thousand silver taels was likely to be the maximum sum that the Plum Blossom Sect could raise on such short notice. It wouldn't be good to force the Plum Blossom Sect into too tight of a bind.

One of Mei Chaofeng's subordinates appeared with the banknotes. Mei Chaofeng's first intention had been to hand them over to Chu Chuyan, but after some thought, he decided to pass them to Zu An instead. "Young master Zu, would you like to count them?"

It would be hard for him to get those banknotes back if they landed in Chu Chuyan's hands. However, if they were with Zu An... Hehehe, I have my means to make him spit it out!

"Yes, of course!" Zu An greedily took the banknotes and began counting them one by one. With each banknote worth a hundred silver taels, a sum of one hundred thousand silver taels meant that there were a thousand banknotes in total.

Mei Chaofeng nearly choked on his saliva. It was just a figure of speech! Who in the world counts out such a sum of money right in front of others?

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 111 Rage points!

Watching Zu An counting out the banknotes one by one like a scrooge, Sang Qian frowned in incomprehension as he wondered why a woman as beautiful as Chu Chuyan would choose to marry such an unseemly man. It was like a fresh flower being covered in a pile of cow dung. I would have been a much better choice than him!

Many in the crowd shared the same thought, including the soldiers of the Red Cloak Army. Zu An watched his balance of Rage points rise steadily.

Zu An suddenly exclaimed in astonishment, which drew everyone's attention. "Hm? Why is there a banknote missing?"

"How is that possible? There are so many witnesses, so how could there be money missing?" Mei Chaofeng asserted, his face growing dark.

Sensing the intent stares of the crowd, Zu An shrugged casually. "I'm just saying it to test if you are lying to me or not."

Mei Chaofeng stared at him furiously.

So you're just making fun of me?

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 211 Rage points!

By the side, Sang Qian's patience finally snapped. "Enough! Since this matter has been resolved, all of you should disperse now!"

He didn't want to stay here and watch a wastrel prance around as if he owned the world. The fact that he was powerless to do anything to him only fueled his frustration.

Pang Chun laughed heartily and said, "Indeed. Since the matter has been resolved, you all should go back to do what you were doing. Let's leave, everyone."

All this while, his heart had been pounding in his throat, ready to leap out of his mouth at any moment. If the Chu clan had gotten into a conflict with the River Patrol Team here, or if the Plum Blossom Sect got desperate and attempted to break out of the casino, the situation could very well have escalated into a major incident. In the end, he would have had to be the one to take responsibility for the matter.

Following the orders of the two highest-ranking individuals present, the gamblers and spectators quickly dispersed. They had no wish to linger further and be embroiled in whatever followed.

Xie Xiu waved a hand and Zu An, saying, "Brother Zu, you have really refreshed my opinion of you today. I shall treat you to wine another day. I would honestly love to trade insights with you."

Zu An laughed in response. "There are also many things that I would love to learn from Brother Xie too, such as your ability to tread freely amongst flowers without a single petal falling upon you."

"Let's talk about it another day~" Xie Xiu smiled sheepishly as he noticed the terrible look on Chu Chuyan's face. You sure are an incredible man. To think that you would dare to say such words in front of your own wife.

Afraid of getting caught up in Chu Chuyan's wrath, he bade a quick farewell and fled.

Zu An felt slightly dissatisfied by his haul this time around. The crowd had left before he could earn his fill of Rage points, and he felt as though something was missing inside. So, he turned to Mei Chaofeng and asked, "Sect Master Mei, are you still going to keep your casino open? Can I come here to gamble once more?"

Mei Chaofeng glared silent daggers at him.

If you dare come here once more, I shall rip off your skin!

You have successfully trolled Mei Chaofeng for 267 Rage points!

Chu Chuyan couldn't stand to watch this anymore. "Let's go."

No matter how nonchalant she seemed, even she couldn't stand all of the shocking words that constantly fell out of Zu An's mouth.

Yue Shan marched right up to Zu An and personally escorted him out of the casino. As someone who had served the Chu clan for many years, he was used to the proper way in which nobles acted, and so Zu An's shameless actions were hard for him to endure.

Mei Chaofeng watched coldly as Zu An and the others left, his fists clenched tightly in anger.

"Sect master, are we really going to pay that fellow seven-and-a-half million silver taels?" One of his dumber subordinates approached Mei Chaofeng and asked worriedly.

"Don't be stupid!" Mei Chaofeng slapped the man hard, and he collapsed to the ground.

With a dreadful look on his face, he stalked off to the room that served as his private retreat in the casino. As he opened the door, he found someone already waiting for him inside.

"Miss Qiao, you're the one who got me to write out that promissory note. How do you intend to resolve this matter?" Mei Chaofeng asked as he shut the door. His tone was no longer as amiable as before.

"You should have a good idea of just what kind of situation you were in earlier. Would you have gotten out of it if you hadn't written out that note?" The sweet voice that confronted him belonged to none other than Snow. Seeing Mei Chaofeng's cheeks twitching, she consoled him, "Don't worry, the promissory note is in the hands of the wastrel Zu An. You should be able to get it back with ease."

Mei Chaofeng frowned. "I'm just worried that he would hand the note over to the Chu clan."

Snow shook her head and replied, "There's no need to worry about that. Chu Chuyan is a proud woman, so she wouldn't take Zu An's money. As for Chu Zhongtian, he is upright to a fault, and the Chu clan strictly forbids gambling. He wouldn't forsake his principles and accept money earned through gambling. In fact, the Chu clan will not approve of Zu An's actions today; on the contrary, it's likely that he would be severely punished. After all, his actions fly in the face of what the Chu clan stands for."

"Will they chase Zu An out of the Chu clan over this?" Mei Chaofeng asked.

Snow sighed deeply. "I don't know. Seven-and-a-half million silver taels is a huge sum of money, but if we could get Zu An chased out of the Chu clan over it, it's still not too bad."

Mei Chaofeng was at a loss for words.

It's not your money, so of course you don't feel anything about it! Do you even understand what seven-and-a-half million silver taels is worth? With this much money, I would be able to hire assassins to get rid of the patriarch of the Chu clan! And yet, you think it's okay that I've spent this much money just to deal with a wastrel?

Fortunately, Snow's next statement managed to placate him a little. "Rest assured, I'll personally make a move tonight. Not only will I steal the promissory note, I'll also get rid of that brat so as to resolve any future problems."

Mei Chaofeng was overjoyed. "Thank you, Miss Qiao."

With his strength, he could kill Zu An as easily as he could an ant. However, Zu An was usually either in the Chu Estate or Brightmoon Academy, leaving him with no chance to make a move. An insider like Snow had a much higher chance of getting the job done.

Meanwhile, in the Zheng Estate—located not too far away from the Silverhook Casino— a woman was staring at a man seated attentively before her. Her eyes were clear like refreshing spring water, and her skin was fair as snow. ‘Gorgeous’ would be an apt word to describe her.

“What’s wrong, young master Sang? You look rather agitated today.” The woman poured a cup of tea for the man before her. Her movements were incredibly graceful, and could be easily mistaken as part of some elaborate dance.

This man was none other than Sang Qian, who had just left the Silverhook Casino.

“Miss Zheng’s tea brewing skills are indeed a feast for the eyes.” The woman’s elegant voice and tender disposition calmed Sang Qian’s heart.

The woman smiled gently. “Once the period of our engagement is fulfilled, I’d be more than happy to brew tea for you every day.”

This woman was none other than the young miss of the Zheng Clan, Zheng Dan. The Zheng clan had entered into an alliance with the Sang clan through the promise of marriage, making her Sang Qian’s fiancée.

Even though this was not the first time they were meeting, Sang Qian’s eyes still shone with wonder. When Sang Qian first heard that his father had engaged him to the daughter of a businessman in Brightmoon City, he had been unsatisfied. He’d even fought with his father on several occasions over the matter.

However, as soon as he met Zheng Dan, all his opposition instantly vanished into thin air. The reason for that? The daughter of that businessman was simply too beautiful. It was not at all a harsh fate to be married to such a woman.

“Thank you, Miss Zheng.” Sang Qian reached out to take the teacup, secretly making use of this opportunity to brush Zheng Dan’s hand. However, Zheng Dan pulled it away gracefully.

“Young master Zheng, I’ll be yours once we marry one another. When we do, I’ll go along with whatever you wish to do with me. But now...” The meaning behind Zheng Dan’s words was crystal clear. She didn’t want to get intimate with him prior to their marriage.

A hint of rage flickered across Sang Qian’s eyes, but he swiftly concealed it. The more Zheng Dan acted shyly, the more enticed he was. It felt almost like someone was tickling his heart, stoking his desire for her. He even wondered if all men were born such desolate creatures, only desiring things that were out of their reach.

“Something happened earlier at the Silverhook Casino...” In order to conceal his awkwardness, Sang Qian quickly went through what happened earlier.

A tinge of astonishment colored Zheng Dan’s face as she remarked, “Hm? The Silverhook Casino actually allowed Zu An to walk away with winnings amounting to seven-and-a-half million silver taels? I’ve long heard that the young master of the Chu clan is a wastrel, but it looks like the rumors can’t be trusted.”

Her tone, which seemed to be complimenting another man, left Sang Qian feeling uncomfortable inside. “Hmph, he was just lucky. He just managed to get two bets right blindly.”

Zheng Dan chuckled softly as her crimson lips curled up into a beautiful smile. It wasn't hard to decipher Sang Qian's thoughts, so she intentionally avoided saying anything to trigger him.

Sang Qian continued, "Since we're here, I have something that I could use your help with."

Chapter 69: Honey Trap

Zheng Dan smiled and said, "We're going to be a family soon. Any problem you're facing is naturally my problem too. Feel free to speak."

Sang Qian quietly clicked his tongue. You speak such beautiful words, but you wouldn't even allow me to hold your hands.

"Zu An has a promissory note for seven-and-a-half million silver taels at the Silverhook Casino at the moment. He's under the protection of the Chu clan, and he spends the rest of his time at Brightmoon Academy. As you know, I'm not in a good position to interfere in the affairs of the academy. May I ask you to get close to him and 'borrow' the note from him?"

"How should I get close to him?" Zheng Dan frowned, an ominous premonition growing in her heart.

"All men in the world are vulnerable to the ensnarement of a beauty, and trash like him even more so. With your looks, you'll surely be able to enchant him easily and make him do your bidding." Sang Qian made a confident gesture as the corners of his lips crept up in a cold sneer.

Zheng Dan's expression immediately turned frosty. She stood up and demanded hotly, "Just what kind of person do you take me for?"

Sang Qian quickly explained himself. "I know that I'm putting you in a tight spot, but you're the only one I can trust. That's why I came to seek your help."

His excuses did little to placate Zheng Dan's rage. "So, the idea you came up with is to have your fiancée seduce another man?" she snarled angrily.

Sang Qian frowned. "Don't phrase it so awfully. I just want you to find an opportunity to get close to him. It's not like I'm asking you to get in bed with him. I reckon a lowlife like him barely has any experience with women. With your looks, all you have to do is whisper some sweet nothings at him, and you'll have him dancing to your tune."

"His wife is the number one beauty of Brightmoon City, Chu Chuyan! With someone like that by his side, can he really be considered as someone who has no experience with women?" retorted Zheng Dan.

"I've never thought of you as inferior to Chu Chuyan in any way. In terms of appearance, each of you has your own charms. The only reason people see her as the number one beauty is in deference to her position as the daughter of the Brightmoon Duke. Haven't you thought that stealing her man would help to vent the frustrations you've pent up all these years?" Sang Qian's keen senses had noticed the slight fluctuation in Zheng Dan's tone, so he decided to push a little harder.

He was aware that, despite his fiancée's gentle exterior, she had always viewed Chu Chuyan as her rival. She would easily lose her composure whenever it came to affairs involving Chu Chuyan.

As expected, Zheng Dan's eyes immediately lit up. She was intrigued by Sang Qian's proposal. "Since you don't mind, I'll give it a try. However, if Zu An manages to take advantage of me, the one that'll lose out is you."

Sang Qian burst out laughing. "Others might not know better, but I know that beneath your gentle exterior lies a proud soul. Trash of Zu An's level could never catch your eye, so how could you possibly allow him to take advantage of you?"

"It's too early to say that. Since you want me to lay a honey trap for him, I'll have to offer him some benefits in order to hook him. We should prepare for the worst. How much would you be willing to tolerate?"

"The limit of my tolerance... at most, a hug. No, that won't do as well. Just holding hands, that's the most I can accept!" Just the thought of Zu An taking advantage of his fiancée made Sang Qian itch all over. "Once the matter is done, I'll make sure to cut off his hands."

Zheng Dan chuckled softly at Sang Qian's display of jealousy. What's the big deal about holding hands? I just have to wash them afterward. It's merely his ego that makes him overly obsessed with such trivialities.

"Speaking of which, why did you all settle for the promissory note? You can't possibly believe the Plum Blossom Sect has the resources to fork over all those silver taels, right?" asked Zheng Dan.

"The Plum Blossom Sect alone doesn't have the ability to raise that much money, but it's a different story if we consider the master they're serving," Sang Qian said with a scheming laugh.

While they were currently partners, ultimately, their goals still differed from one another. If they ever had a falling out in the future, this note would prove an invaluable weapon.

Zheng Dan merely nodded in response. She couldn't be bothered with the details of such lowly schemes. The higher a person's standing, the more they scorned such despicable and dirty tricks. "Tell me more about this Zu An. I've only heard rumors about him thus far. Since you met him today, the information you have should be more accurate."

Thinking about his encounter in the casino, Sang Qian began speaking hatefully, "He's a minor character who let his arrogance get ahead of his ability just because he managed to climb up to the high branches of the Chu clan. He's an incredibly shameless and despicable person..."

...

"Achoo!"

Zu An rubbed his nose and wondered who was talking about him behind his back.

Beside him, Chu Chuyan glanced over and said, "You must be very happy right now."

Zu An replied with a chuckle, "Anyone would feel happy after winning seven and a half million silver taels."

"With how the incident has blown up, I reckon my parents are already aware of it by now. Let's see how you deal with them then," Chu Chuyan scoffed in response.

Zu An was taken aback. "It's still an issue even if I won?"

"This isn't about the money. My parents care a lot about the reputation of the Chu clan, and it's a known fact that our Chu clan strictly forbids its clan members from gambling. You went a bit too far this time, nearly stirring up a conflict between our private army and the local guards. There's no way they'll turn a blind eye to that," replied Chu Chuyan.

Zu An was displeased. "But that's seven-and-a-half million silver taels we're talking about here! Does the annual profit of the Chu clan even come close to that number? Why am I going to get punished after earning so much money?"

"Are the seven-and-a-half million silver taels in your hands right now?" Chu Chuyan silenced him with a sharp jab. "We all know there's no way the Plum Blossom Sect will repay its debt. We're putting ourselves at risk for a blank promise of repayment. It's only natural that my parents would get angry."

"But can't we still collect interest from them every year?" asked Zu An weakly.

"That's just mere words. There's bound to be complications later on," Chu Chuyan sighed.

She knew the Plum Blossom Sect would renege on its promise, but there was nothing she could do. She couldn't possibly order the Red Cloak Army to massacre the Plum Blossom Sect, after all—that would be falling right into the enemy's trap. If that happened, the royal court would have all the justification it needed to deal with the Chu clan.

"Young miss, young miss~"

Snow ran toward them, gasping for breath.

"Where did you go? What took you so long?" asked Chu Chuyan with a frown.

Snow quickly explained, "I also don't know what's up today, but my stomach feels unwell...."

Zu An waved his hand before his nose in disdain. "In other words, you went to take a shit, right? You must've filled up the entire lavatory if you took so long."

Snow was struck dumb.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 444 Rage points!

She had rushed over after meeting with Mei Chaofeng, and she was just making an excuse to satisfy Chu Chuyan. A normal person would have let the matter rest without further comment. Who knew Zu An would actually dig deeper, and even scorn her? It was almost as if there was a stench coming from her!

"Young miss, look at him!" Snow stomped her feet angrily as she tugged Chu Chuyan's sleeves in protest.

I'm going to kill this vile fellow later in the night, so we can't get into a conflict right now. I'll make myself the prime suspect, otherwise.

Chu Chuyan glared at Zu An. "Could you stop being so disgusting?"

It was worth noting that, even though she had berated Zu An, she had still subconsciously shaken off Snow's hand. Clearly, Zu An's remark had affected her perception of Snow, too.

This minor gesture was a critical blow to Snow.

This scoundrel...

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 300 Rage points!

Zu An shrugged casually and said, "If anyone here is disgusting, it should be that human-shaped shit-maker over there, not me."

"Shit-maker?!" Snow felt blood rushing to her head, and nearly fainted on the spot. For a split second, she was willing to throw everything away just to obliterate that bastard in front of her. She had never felt such extreme hatred for anyone. If she could, she would have diced up his body from head to toe.

You have successfully trolled Qiao Xueying for 888 Rage points!

Even Yue Shan, who was walking silently ahead of them, shuddered a little at that insult. Our young master might be trash in every other aspect, but his ability to provoke rage is really top-notch. I doubt there's anyone in the whole of Brightmoon City who can hold a candle to him. To safeguard my mental health, I should really try not to cross him in the future.

"Enough! Stop messing around, both of you. Don't either of you feel embarrassed, causing a public spectacle here?" Chu Chuyan could almost see smoke rising from Snow's head, so she quickly separated the two.

Snow huffed impatiently and turned her head away. If I don't make this fellow beg for a quick death tonight, I'll renounce my own name!

An old man stood by the entrance of the Chu clan. His clothes were prim and proper, with not a single wrinkle in sight. His white hair was combed neatly. His appearance reflected his austere personality.

Zu An recognized the old man. He was the butler of the Chu Estate, Hong Zhong.

Hong Zhong greeted Chu Chuyan with a bow, and she quickly greeted him in kind. The old man had loyally served the Chu clan for decades now, and he had earned the respect of everyone in the estate.

After exchanging greetings, Hong Zhong informed them, "Master has ordered me to bring the young master to the study once he returns."

Then he turned around and led the way forward. Chu Chuyan shot an I-told-you-so glance at Zu An and followed Hong Zhong to the study.

Zu An was surprised that Hong Zhong's attitude and tone were no different than before. By now, the old man should have heard about the conflict he'd had with Hong Xingying earlier in the day. So why did he seem completely unfazed?

Hong Zhong seemed to have guessed Zu An's thoughts. "Young miss, young master, I already heard about what happened with Xingying. That child has always been proud and reckless, and it was in a moment of folly that he crossed the young master. Allow me to apologize to the young master on his

behalf. Young master, I hope you won't take this matter to heart. I'll teach him a lesson once he comes back."

"Uncle Zhong, you're taking this matter too seriously. Zu An has his faults, too," Chu Chuyan quickly replied.

Zu An was obviously displeased by that response. What does this have to do with me? It's that proud fellow who keeps trying to mess around with me.

He was just about to say something when Chu Chuyan shot him a piercing glare, leaving him no choice but to swallow his words. It seemed Hong Zhong had a high standing in the Chu Estate.

Fine. I'll let this go, since you're my wife.

Hong Zhong shook his head and added, "I know that child well. He harbors some grandiose thoughts, so it's inevitable that he feels a little frustrated at the moment. Without a doubt, he was the one who started this conflict. Even though Master and Madam haven't said anything about this matter, I've been feeling deeply guilty about it."

His words carried a deep sincerity. Zu An couldn't fathom how someone as upright and honest as Hong Zhong could possibly have raised such a narrow-minded son. Out of consideration for the old butler, he decided that he wouldn't exact vengeance on Hong Xingying, as long as he didn't mess with him anymore.

Chu Chuyan responded with her own heartfelt reassurance, and with just a few words, she was able to quickly alleviate Hong Zhong's awkwardness. She smoothly transitioned the conversation over to the Chu clan's businesses, and it didn't take long for the atmosphere to lighten.

Zu An had wondered how someone as cold as Chu Chuyan could properly manage the Chu clan's businesses. Now, he was starting to see why.

It wasn't long before the group arrived at the study, where Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were waiting for them.

"Zu An! The gall! The audacity! How dare you visit the casino so publicly? Not only that, you even brought Chuyan with you!" Qin Wanru slammed a palm on the table and glared at him angrily.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 77 Rage points!

Chapter 70: A Huge Killing

The sound of his wife's palm hitting the table startled Chu Zhongtian, who was in the midst of sipping his tea. He gave an involuntary jerk, nearly causing his tea to spill. In order to conceal his awkwardness, he cleared his throat and went along with his wife. "Indeed! Zu An, do you know what you've done wrong?"

Zu An inwardly scoffed at Chu Zhongtian for being a henpecked husband, but he replied with all the sincerity he could muster, "I know that I've done wrong."

Both Chu Zhongtian and Qin Wanru were taken aback by Zu An's response. They had expected him to rebut them, as he had done many times before, and they had even thought of how to counter his rebuttals. Zu An's unexpected act of yielding took the wind out of their sails, leaving them scrambling to find an appropriate way to continue the conversation.

Chu Chuyan and Yue Shan exchanged surprised glances. This show of obedience from Zu An was startling. Was this really the fellow who had dominated everyone else in the casino with his sharp mouth earlier?

Qin Wanru pondered for a moment before deciding to go ahead with the script she prepared earlier. "Don't you know that our Chu clan has rules forbidding our members from gambling?"

"I was unaware until you just mentioned it," Zu An lied without even batting an eyelid. He thumped his chest and confidently reassured her, "Mother-in-law, please quell your rage. Don't let your anger harm your body. I promise never to walk into that sort of vile and depraved place in the future."

Just how dumb must Mei Chaofeng be to allow him to enter the casino and continue winning their money? This promise was basically a no-brainer!

Qin Wanru's righteous anger deflated even further. Zu An's oddly earnest attitude had robbed her of her chance to use her prepared lines. She turned to glare at Chu Chuyan instead. "You should have warned him then! How could you go along with him?"

Chu Chuyan hesitated for a moment, but in the end, she decided not to expose Zu An's lie. "It was my negligence."

She was worried that Zu An would be too severely punished, so she decided to carry some of the blame for him.

Snow was tempted to speak up, but she held her tongue in the end. I'm going to take this fellow's life later anyway, so it doesn't matter whether the Chu clan punishes him or not.

Needless to say, Qin Wanru clearly saw through Chu Chuyan's attempt to cover for Zu An. Just what kind of sorcery has Zu An cast on my daughter to make her speak on his behalf so soon?

It was as if her precious daughter had been stolen from her! She glared sharply at Zu An.

You have successfully trolled Qin Wanru for 33 Rage points!

Zu An was stunned by this sudden notification. Even Chu Chuyan has already spoken up on my behalf, yet you're still angry at me? Aren't you being too unreasonable?

That being said, he was more than happy to receive additional Rage points. It was his key to growing stronger, after all.

Chu Zhongtian coughed lightly before interjecting with a deep voice, "This matter was blown way out of proportion. We nearly got into a fight with the local guards. In the end, the main culprit who started this is still you..."

Before he could finish his words, Zu An took out the promissory note and presented it to his parents-in-law. "Allow me to offer this seven-and-a-half million silver taels to the two of you. Chuyan is my wife, which makes me her man. Naturally, anything I own belongs to the Chu clan too."

Black streaks appeared on Chu Chuyan's face. While the words Zu An had said were true, they sounded oddly jarring.

Qin Wanru huffed in response. "We could never accept your money. Our Chu clan prides itself on its incorruptibility. We have and will never touch dirty money earned through drugs, prostitution, and gambling. If we do take your money, outsiders will start gossiping about how our Chu clan has fallen so far that we need our son-in-law to gamble in order to help with our finances."

"Indeed. We can't ruin the good reputation the Chu clan has built up over several centuries over this. Keep your money well, and don't ever bring up this matter again," added Chu Zhongtian.

At this, Snow heaved a sigh of relief. Even though she had guessed that this would be the case, she hadn't been able to shake her worry that the promissory note would somehow fall into the hands of the Chu clan. It would have been terribly difficult to clean up the situation in that case. It was heartening to see that things were still going according to plan.

Zu An stuffed the note back into his robe. In the end, you're just turning it down because it'll be hard to collect the money. If seven-and-a-half million silver taels were laid out right before your eyes, I reckon that you wouldn't be able to remain so 'incorruptible'.

How much could the Chu clan possibly earn in a year? What are mere family rules, in the face of absolute profits?

What a pity...

Zu An was troubled by this outcome. He knew that the promissory note was useless in his hands, since he didn't have the ability to demand that the Plum Blossom Sect repay its debt. At most, he could only try to claim the annual interest.

Mei Chaofeng, however, was obviously not an honest person. It was extremely naive to expect him to fork out the interest on his own. It was a given that he would try all sorts of tricks to avoid payment.

"You have to be punished for what happened today. If not, we'll be sending out the wrong signal to the other clan members. Your actions today might leave them with the wrong impression that it's no big deal to visit the casino!" Qin Wanru slammed her fist on the table as she spoke. "Head to the Reflection Room and copy our family rules ten thousand times!"

"Ten thousand times?" Zu An's eyes popped in disbelief. "How am I supposed to finish copying that?"

"You'll be grounded in the estate until you finish copying the family rules, lest you go around stirring trouble again," said Qin Wanru with a gleeful glint in her eyes.

Hmph, don't think that I'm unaware that you got Cheng Shouping to copy the rules on your behalf the previous time. Now that you have to copy it ten thousand times, you won't be able to finish it even if you recruit him to help. With this, you'll have no choice but to remain in the estate obediently for the next few nights.

“You’re dismissed. Head to the Reflection Room right away and start copying.”

At Qin Wanru’s orders, Zu An had no choice but to depart with a bitter look on his face. After he was gone, Chu Chuyan couldn’t help but ask, “Mother, isn’t ten thousand times too many? How long would it take for him to finish copying all of that?”

“Why? Are you sympathizing with him now?” Qin Wanru sniffed.

“When did I start?” Chu Chuyan’s face reddened a little. Why in the world would I sympathize with that shameless fellow?

Chu Zhongtian interjected with a soft chuckle, “Chuyan, you need not worry. Your mother might have a sharp mouth, but she’s a softie inside. It might look like she’s punishing Zu An, but in truth, she’s protecting him. Just think about it. Would the Plum Blossom Sect let him off after suffering such a huge loss at his hands? If Zu An continues gallivanting around the city, it would only be a matter of time before they made a move on him. If we don’t have any evidence against them on hand by then, we won’t be able to exact vengeance for him.

“However, if he remains in the estate obediently, no matter how many connections the Plum Blossom Sect pulls, they wouldn’t be able to bypass our guards to harm him.”

Chu Chuyan’s eyes widened with understanding. “I didn’t know that you put so much thought into it. I should have considered it more.”

A gentle smile finally emerged on Qin Wanru’s stern face. “Chuyan, you’re far more talented than any one of us here. All you lack is just experience and time. In time to come, you’ll eventually surpass the two of us.”

Chu Chuyan let her lips curve up in a smile, but her eyes shone with a hint of sorrow. By that time, my youth would be gone, and I’d still be all alone.

Zu An wasn’t even a consideration for her.

...

“Achoo!”

Zu An rubbed his nose as he wondered which young lass was thinking about him.

“Young master, you’re finally back!” a young voice called out as Cheng Shouping rushed over, the two buns on his head bouncing away.

He heard that the young master had gone out with Snow this time, and he was hoping to bump into her if he rushed over in time. To his disappointment, the only person beside Zu An was the butler, Hong Zhong.

A sinister smile curled Zu An’s lips as he grabbed Cheng Shouping by his collar and said, “You came at a good time. Let’s head off to copy the family rules together.”

“Again?” Cheng Shouping’s face crumbled immediately. “How many times do we need to copy them this time around?”

Zu An waved his hands casually with a smile, "Don't worry, it's not much. Just ten thousand times."

"Ten thousand times?" Cheng Shouping recoiled in horror. Is our young master bad at math? Or does he have a different understanding of what 'ten thousand' means?

Just like that, the horrified Cheng Shouping was dragged all the way to the Reflection Room in the company of Zu An and Hong Zhong. Once they arrived at their destination, Hong Zhong said, "Young master, please do not leave the Reflection Room until you're done copying the family rules."

He left right after that, leaving Zu An and Cheng Shouping to stare at one another.

"Young master, please spare me. I can't possibly copy the family rules ten thousand times!" Cheng Shouping was determined not to help Zu An this time around, no matter what the latter said. He was still traumatized by how he had been tricked into copying the family rules all alone for the entire night the previous time.

"C'mon. Who else is going to help me if not you?" Zu An wrapped his arms around Cheng Shouping's shoulders and nudged him with a smile.

Cheng Shouping shook his head adamantly. "Hmph, I refuse!"

Seeing this, Zu An sighed deeply before taking out a banknote. "Huh, I was still thinking of rewarding you with a hundred silver taels if you were to help me with this task. However, since you aren't willing to do so, I've no choice but to look for someone else then."

While the debt note of seven-and-a-half million silver taels hadn't been cashed out yet, he did manage to take away a-hundred-and-fifty thousand silver taels from the casino earlier. Looking at it this way, his trip to the Silverhook Casino had still been fruitful.

Cheng Shouping's eyes lit up. His hand shot out to swipe the banknote, and he smiled obsequiously. "As the study companion of the young master, how can I possibly allow someone else to wait upon you? It's only normal for me to do it."

"Alright, I'll leave it to you then. I'll be heading off to sleep now." Zu An yawned. It seemed his short walk outside had been quite draining.

A tight knot instantly formed on Cheng Shouping's forehead. "But young master, I can't possibly copy them by myself ten thousand times!"

Zu An rolled his eyes and replied, "Why do you think I gave you a hundred silver taels? Don't you know how to use it to buy the help of the other study companions in the estate?"

Cheng Shouping's eyes lit up for a second. A moment later, however, he frowned. "But wouldn't that leave me with less money for myself?"

Zu An shrugged casually. "I've already given you the money. It's up to you whether you want to copy it on your own or get others to help you; you just have to finish copying the family rules ten thousand times."

After saying those words, he strutted away gleefully, leaving Cheng Shouping behind to struggle with his options.

On the way back to his residence, Zu An began calculating the amount of Rage points he had earned. Ones, tens, hundreds, thousands, ten thousands...

Holy crap! I managed to get 60,224 Rage points!

A bright smile broke out on Zu An's face. On the basis of what happened earlier, it was much better to play the antagonist than the protagonist.

He reached his small residence, and was just about to wash his face and prepare to draw the lottery when a voice suddenly came from behind him.

"How did you manage to do it?"

Zu An jumped three feet into the air. He hurriedly turned around to take a look, and saw the feeble Old Mi appear behind him.

What the hell! This fellow looks as if he would crumble at the slightest gust of wind, but he walks around without making a sound at all. Even after I've raised my cultivation by so much, I'm still unable to sense his presence at all!

"What do you mean by that?" Zu An quickly replied, not daring to throw his weight around in front of Old Mi. He was able to act fearlessly before others to earn Rage points, but for some reason, he was well and truly intimidated by Old Mi. It seemed folly to provoke the old gardener.

Why is that so?

Zu An turned the question over in his head, but was unable to come up with an answer.

Old Mi eyed Zu An with small beady eyes filled with curiosity. "The entire estate has been talking about how you managed to win seven-and-a-half million silver taels from the casino. How did you manage to do it?"