

## Immortal 721

### Chapter 721: It's Even Embarrassing for Me to Expose You

The capital was more open-minded than average to begin with. The girls tended to dress in somewhat more revealing outfits, so their nice, thick thighs could be seen from time to time.

However, no one had seen legs as beautiful as these. The worst part was that they were even covered in black stockings! Those stockings had a shine to them that drew the attention of onlookers, and their lace borders had a pulse-pounding allure.

"Holy sh\*t, holy sh\*t! I'd better not see any girls with stockings like these in the government brothel, or I won't even last a stick of incense's worth of time!" Piao Duandiao gulped.

Jiao Sigun looked at him in disdain and ruthlessly saw straight through him, remarking, "When have you ever lasted longer than a stick of incense?"

Piao Duandiao was furious. "What the hell, man? I'm really going to stop hanging out with you! Do you believe I won't?!"

"I don't believe you," Jiao Sigun replied.

"..." Piao Duandiao fell silent before changing the topic. "Which great sir's woman do you think this one is?"

"Could it be big bro Zu?" Jiao Sigun asked quietly.

Piao Duandiao scoffed. "Do you think he's a freaking deity or something? Chu First Miss is already ridiculously beautiful. The fact that she can tolerate the Murong clan's young miss is already the limit. How could she tolerate such a beautiful... woman..."

Before he even finished speaking, that stunning woman wearing those seductive black stockings walked over. Her gait carried a special rhythm, full of elegance and style, unlike the girls of the government brothels. The sounds her high heels made whenever they touched the ground seemed to pierce through to the guards' hearts.

"Hey, do you think that woman's coming over because she likes me?" Piao Duandiao asked as he subconsciously stuck out his chest.

"Nonsense, she's clearly walking in my direction," Jiao Sigun immediately retorted.

However, both of them soon froze. The mature and gorgeous beauty had stopped right in front of Zu An.

"Long time no see," the beauty in the black stockings said as she looked at Zu An. There was a faint smile on her face.

"It's been so long that I'm already all worn out, and yet big sis principal still looks so amazing." Zu An sighed in praise. If this woman had lived in his past world, every man would immediately imagine her as a sexy office lady, secretary, or teacher, among other such fetishes...

Jiang Luofu crossed her arms, which only further emphasized her outstanding figure. “You don’t seem to have changed all that much in my opinion. You’re still so slick-tongued.”

Chu Chuyan was surprised and happy as she asked, “Principal Jiang, why did you come to the capital?”

Jiang Luofu couldn’t help but smile warmly when she looked at Chu Chuyan, the academy’s most talented student. She explained, “I was a bit bored in Brightmoon City. Since some of the academy’s students were chosen by the Royal Academy anyway, I decided to accompany them here and visit home.”

With Chu Chuyan’s background, she obviously knew about Jiang Luofu’s relationship to Jiang Boyang. She was curious about something else and asked, “I wonder which students were fortunate enough to be chosen by the Royal Academy?”

After all, the Royal Academy was the highest-ranked educational establishment in the entire empire. The heaven class of Brightmoon Academy was already full of geniuses, but compared to the brightest geniuses of the entire empire, they couldn’t help but seem ordinary.

The number of students who were accepted into the Royal Academy never exceeded five people. If they were unlucky, then it was entirely possible for not even a single person to make it.

“It really is quite the upsetting topic,” Jiang Luofu said. “You guys were students that I was extremely optimistic about, students who might even have had a chance at shattering the academy’s records. Unfortunately, you disappeared at the most crucial time, and then who knows where Pei Mianman went. Something ended up happening to Zheng Dan too. Without our best students here, we almost ended up with no good candidates this time.”

Chu Chuyan said apologetically, “It’s my fault. I ended up disturbing the academy’s affairs because of my own situation.”

Jiang Luofu sighed. “You don’t need to blame yourself too much. I know it’s not your fault. Thankfully, three people passed. You guys are familiar with two of them, and they even followed me here to visit you.”

“Who are they?” Chu Chuyan asked curiously. After all, in the capital, they couldn’t help but feel like outsiders. Brightmoon City was their real home.

“You guys should come out.” Jiang Luofu waved toward the carriage.

“Principal, you’re really no fun. I was waiting to see if brother Zu could guess who we were,” came a voice. The doors opened, and an attractive man and woman walked out.

Murong Qinghe’s eyes widened in shock. She looked at the man, and then looked at Chu Youzhao next to her. There’s actually another man as handsome and pretty as my big brother Chu? Hmph! I think my big brother Chu is still a bit more handsome!

Piao Duandiao and the other imperial guards sneered internally. A pretty boy who’s worthless otherwise!

However, their eyes were drawn to the girl at his side. Her demeanor was different from Chu Chuyan's quiet and exquisite style, as well as from Jiang Luofu's glamorous bearing. This woman had an educated and distinguished aura that made one unable to help but feel closer to her.

They thought to themselves that even though the government brothel's girls were all proficient in various skills, they all seemed to lack the qualities of a truly talented girl. They also lacked the sort of softness that lay between this girl's brows.

The young lady first nodded in greeting to Chu Chuyan. "Chu First Miss." Then, when she looked at Zu An, she smiled faintly. "Young master Zu."

All of the guards' expressions grew strange. Does this woman have something to do with our big bro Zu too?! Heavens, big bro, we know you're amazing, but there's no need to take all of these incredible beauties, right? Can you leave something behind for the rest of us?

Of course, the thought passed by in a flash. They knew fully well that these girls would never have anything to do with them. It was still those government brothel girls who were more realistic goals. Those were girls they could see and touch.

The guards could no longer endure these mental blows. They bid their farewells one after another and headed toward the government brothel with lowered heads.

Zu An chuckled. "Brother Xie, Lady Xie, it really is touching for people of the same hometown to meet. Come, let's all come together for a group hug!" he exclaimed, walking over with his arms spread.

Xie Daoyun scoffed, looking away to hide her blush. For the sake of protecting his sister, Xie Xiu could only brace himself and walk forward to hug Zu An. "Brother Zu is still as enthusiastic as before, haha."

At the same time, Xie Xiu was conflicted inside. This guy isn't gay, right? He was quite the attractive man. He'd had a few run-ins of that sort over the years, making him hate physical contact with other men.

Zu An hadn't really been aiming for him, however. Both of them felt a bit awkward and tacitly agreed to separate. He commented, "I have a whole new level of respect for brother Xie. You actually managed to get into the Royal Academy!"

Even though Xie Xiu wasn't bad, his specialty had never been cultivation. He wasn't a top student in Brightmoon Academy. Meanwhile, even though Xie Daoyun wasn't good at cultivation, she was excellent in other areas. Wasn't Xie Xiu's forte just chasing after girls? There was no way that was the Royal Academy's basis for recruiting him, right?

"Big sister got in on her own. I only made it here through my father's connections, haha," Xie Xiu explained without holding back anything.

"Your family's strength is also part of your own; there's no need for brother Xie to be like this." Zu An gave the quiet young lady to the side a surprised look. "So Lady Xie was actually hiding your strength all this time?"

Xie Daoyun blushed. "I merely applied as a Rune Master. I didn't enter through traditional means of cultivation."

Zu An praised her, "But a Rune Master is extremely formidable! Regardless of whether it's weapons, building defenses, or army formations, they can be far more useful than a single cultivator. If there's a chance in the future, I'll need to learn well from Miss Xie."

Xie Daoyun subconsciously glanced at Chu Chuyan and said quietly, "I wouldn't dare take that position. It would be best if we could all learn from each other."

Jiang Luofu finally couldn't take it anymore. She stood between the two of them. "What do you mean 'learn from her'? Even I'm a bit embarrassed exposing you. Also, Xie Xiu, why are you always like this? That girl is the Murong clan's young miss, okay? That's not someone you should be messing around with."

It turned out that by this time, Xie Xiu had already rushed over to Murong Qinghe's side to start something, while Chu Youzhao angrily protected her friend.

Zu An chuckled. His little sister-in-law was also a girl, and yet she was this controlling towards Murong Qinghe? Don't tell me you really developed some feelings? Tsk tsk. Even though I don't mind some girl on girl action, isn't that taboo in this world?

## **Chapter 722: You Don't Want My Big Sister, But I Want Your Younger Sister**

When she saw Chu Chuyan's ambiguous smile, Xie Daoyun immediately panicked. She quickly moved away from Zu An. Then, she punched her little brother to get rid of her embarrassment. She pulled on his ears and dragged him off to the side, saying, "The capital isn't Brightmoon City! Stop messing around."

Their father was in charge of Brightmoon City, so they could always scrape by somehow no matter what he did to girls. However, the capital was different. Any random person might have a higher rank than their father! If something happened, then there would be no saving the situation.

"Aaaah! Sis, please let go! I didn't do anything bad!" Xie Xiu screamed. Who wouldn't be embarrassed by having their ears pulled in public?

Zu An was just about to laugh at him when Chu Chuyan quietly moved to his side and pinched his waist without anyone noticing.

Zu An inhaled sharply through his teeth. In the past, when Chu Chuyan hadn't immediately lashed out from jealousy, he had actually felt a bit upset. He had felt that perhaps she didn't care that much about him. But now that she acted jealous, he realized that she had been a bit cuter before. Sigh, am I not just a piece of sh\*t...?

The group chatted for a while before heading to Zu An's residence. Xie Xiu and Xie Daoyun looked around his house with curiosity, and even Jiang Luofu gave it a few looks.

"Haha, looks like we have a base in the capital now. We'll come over to play whenever there's some free time," Xie Xiu said with a laugh.

For the sake of properly fostering these two, their father had deliberately chosen not to purchase any property here. He had made them live in the academy dormitory so they could study properly. But even though the academy dormitory wasn't so bad, how could it compare to a house outside?

Zu An said with a smile, "You're welcome anytime." He looked at Xie Daoyun as he spoke.

Xie Daoyun felt her heart jump. Why am I like this? Don't tell me he said that specially to me? This guy is a pervert after all! Even though she was unhappy, she didn't show any anger. Instead, her cheeks were flushed red, making her look even more charming than usual.

Chu Chuyan had been ordering some servants to set up a fire pan by the entrance and didn't notice what was going on. "Everyone, please cross over this fire pan to burn away bad luck," she urged everyone.

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He didn't expect this different world to have so many customs too. He crossed the fire pan, but right when he was about to enter the room, Chu Chuyan stopped him.

Chu Chuyan said, "Remove all of your clothes and burn them in the fire pan. Don't bring the imperial prison's bad luck back home."

Zu An frowned. "We don't need to go that far, right?"

"Absolutely not; you must do this." Chu Chuyan was extremely stubborn on this matter.

Jiang Luofu smiled and said, "Even though this thing called luck is a bit vague, it indeed exists. There's no harm in being more careful."

Helpless to resist, Zu An could only remove his clothes and toss them into the fire pan.

"Ah!" Murong Qinghe blushed. She quickly covered her eyes with her hands. However, there were small gaps between her fingers.

Chu Youzhao told herself that she was a man right now, so she couldn't act like a little girl in front of everyone. However, if someone looked at her from behind, they would notice a ring of bright red around her neck.

Jiang Luofu was the one who acted the most naturally. As a mature woman, she obviously wouldn't be as shy as these little girls. She looked at Zu An's body with appreciative eyes.

Xie Daoyun was the most ladylike person in the group. She immediately turned around and refused to look at Zu An. However, the image of his masculine body was already imprinted in her mind.

Xie Xiu looked at Zu An's muscles enviously and remarked, "Brother Zu, how do you train your body? I didn't expect you to be so big!"

Zu An's muscles weren't only robust; they didn't bulge like other people's. His body's lines were flowing and smooth, yet the group could all feel the explosive power contained within them.

As a pretty boy, even though Xie Xiu believed that he was unmatched in terms of facial features, he still felt his build was a bit lacking. For example, he felt his abs had already been developed to the highest

level possible. Even though he normally mocked more muscular men, he still couldn't help but admire someone like Zu An who had both looks and strength.

Zu An said proudly, "It's not something you can learn. This is called having strong genes!" He couldn't just say that those muscles had been obtained by getting beaten up, right? That would be way too embarrassing.

Chu Chuyan then said, "Take off your pants," leaving Zu An speechless.

Jiang Luofu's expression also became a bit unnatural. She subconsciously turned to the side and pretended to be looking somewhere else.

Xie Xiu felt even more pained and humiliated. He had finally freed himself from what he had seen that day in the dungeon. Did he really have to see it again? I don't want to!

Xie Daoyun sighed inside. There had been rumors that Chu First Miss and Zu An were husband and wife only in name. But judging from how things looked, they were clearly already a proper couple!

Chu Youzhao turned Murong Qinghe around, saying, "Little Qinghe, you can't look at something like that." However, that scene of Zu An and Chu Chuyan appeared in her head, and her heart rate immediately quickened.

Zu An laughed in embarrassment. "That wouldn't be too good, right?"

"I'm not telling you to take them off in front of everyone." Chu Chuyan rolled her eyes. She ordered a servant to set up a makeshift changing room.

Zu An sighed in admiration. His wife really was meticulous! For the sake of preventing awkwardness, he changed behind cover while asking, "Huh? Where did all of these maids come from?"

Chu Chuyan replied, "Did you forget already? I said I was going to help you with that. You were worried about the people here, so I found some of the clan's servants to bring here. They finally arrived, so there are people to help you with your everyday life now."

Zu An felt warm inside. "I was going to say that these fellows looked familiar. Right, why don't I see that brat Cheng Shouping?" he asked.

Chu Chuyan replied, "I don't know either. My mom said that even the Reader Elder doesn't like him, that he's the most annoying person. That's why she didn't send him. Now that we're on the topic, who is Reader Elder?"

Zu An was stunned and said, "I have no idea. But even though that kid is a bit slow, he's quite the lucky star." However, he didn't argue.

After changing into new clothes, he invited Jiang Luofu and the others inside. A feast had already been prepared. Now that these fellow townsfolk had gathered together, the atmosphere became more and more lively.

Zu An took the opportunity to pour a glass for Jiang Luofu. "Big sis principal, I really have to thank you this time. It's all because of your esteemed father that I was able to safely make it through this matter."

Jiang Luofu thought to herself that this kid was too embarrassed to call her 'gorgeous principal' in front of his wife's face. She replied, "My father has always been an upright and plainspoken man. He wouldn't act out of selfish intentions just because of me. He must have taken care of you because he felt that you were innocent."

Zu An said with a smile, "Your father's moral integrity is truly worthy of admiration. However, I still have to thank you. You tried to help me when I was captured by the Embroidered Envoys before as well."

Jiang Luofu felt her cheeks grow warm. "I don't dare to claim credit for that. Even though I tried to do what I could, it wasn't of any use."

Zu An shook his head. "Just the intent alone is already something I'm extremely grateful for."

Chu Chuyan was incredibly shocked and also raised her cup. "I didn't expect Principal Jiang to have helped us so much. I'll also drink a glass out of respect."

When Jiang Luofu looked at Chu Chuyan's clear and cold, but smiling eyes, she couldn't help but feel like there was more behind her gaze. Her own expression became a bit unnatural. "What do you mean 'intent'? It was mainly because Liuyu wanted to save you. I was so annoyed that I finally couldn't take it anymore and asked my father for help."

Jiang Luofu ended up selling her friend out in the end. But she wasn't even here anyway, so it didn't really matter.

"Teacher Shang..." The woman in that gazebo appeared in Zu An's head again, and he entered a momentary daze.

Chu Chuyan had an ambiguous smile on her face. "Ah Zu, I didn't expect your network to be that wide. Even the academy's mysterious Teacher Shang views you favorably?" She had chosen him as a drafted husband mainly because of his ordinary and slow personality. Yet in the end, he had ended up being a womanizer! She had been completely fooled.

Zu An was alarmed and said, "Teacher Shang is kind-hearted by nature. She couldn't bear to see her student be wronged. Please ask father and mother-in-law to help me express my thanks."

"Sure." Chu Chuyan's expression immediately softened considerably.

The already tipsy Xie Xiu moved over. "Ah Zu, do you have a little sister or someone like that?"

Zu An was stunned. "No, why would you ask that?"

Xie Xiu looked disappointed. He gave his older sister a look and said dejectedly, "I feel like I'm really losing out here..."

### **Chapter 723: Simp All You Want, You Won't Even Get a Crumb**

Xie Daoyun, who had been paying attention to their side of the room, felt her face heat up. She pulled her little brother's ears, flustered. "Stupid brat, what the heck are you saying?"

Even though she did think of Zu An favorably, it would never be at the level where she would be willing to marry him. Besides, was he really going to say that right in front of Chu First Miss? How was she even supposed to show herself in public in the future?

Xie Xiu chuckled. "I'm going back to my old habits, haha. Let's drink, let's drink."

Fortunately, Murong Qinghe helped him out of his embarrassment. She got up and proposed a toast to Zu An. "Brother Zu, I know that my grandfather has troubled you quite a bit during this period. I hope you can forgive him. That's just his nature."

She was still thinking about marrying into the Chu clan. Chu First Miss seemed to be the one managing the household, and her big brother Chu seemed to trust and adore this brother-in-law greatly, so it was best to remain on good terms. Otherwise, if he talked badly about her, he might end up ruining her relationship with her big brother Chu!

Zu An smiled and said, "Qinghe, you don't need to worry. Your grandfather was only acting out of duty and not for petty revenge. How could I blame you guys?"

That old fart Murong Tong had probably had thoughts of getting revenge, but he still hadn't gone against the verdict in the end. As such, it wasn't that big of a deal. Since Murong Qinghe was already humbling herself like this, it was clearly because of Youzhao. He couldn't just interfere and get in the way of those lovebirds, right?

Murong Qinghe sighed in relief when she heard Zu An's words. She drained her glass in one gulp, and then said with a big smile, "Thank you, big brother Zu!"

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As they drank and chatted, the atmosphere quickly became more and more lively. Time gradually passed.

It was already quite late by the time they finished. Jiang Luofu and the Xie siblings left one after the other. On the other hand, Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe didn't leave. It wasn't that they wanted to stay behind, but rather that they were completely drunk.

The two girls rarely drank to such an extent. But because of the festive mood, they had downed one glass after another and had quickly become drunk.

That fellow Xie Xiu had tried to go after Murong Qinghe again. He was definitely a part of the problem, encouraging her to drink more.

As such, Chu Youzhao had obviously become unhappy, drinking in her partner's place. However, how could she be a match for Xie Xiu, who lived and breathed this type of atmosphere? She was quickly defeated.

Murong Qinghe stubbornly stepped forward to help out her big brother Chu when she saw such bullying going on. It was unknown whether the reason was her bloodline, but even though she was young, she could definitely hold a substantial amount of alcohol. Furthermore, Chu Youzhao had already fought part of the battle for her.



In the end, the drinking contest ended in mutual defeat. The two girls were completely defeated, but Xie Xiu wasn't much better off, needing the help of the Xie clan's servants just to walk.

When he saw the unconscious Murong Qinghe, Zu An said with a sigh, "She's really quite the little hot pepper. Even Xie Xiu was unexpectedly defeated today."

Chu Chuyan harrumphed. "That fellow had bad intentions anyway, so he had it coming. But Little Qinghe had to suffer for this." She knew that this girl was close to her little sister, which was why she was also concerned. She arranged for some servants to clean up the table while supporting Murong Qinghe, taking her to a room to rest.

As for Chu Youzhao, Zu An had to carry her back. After all, in front of everyone else's eyes, she was a man. As her big sister, it wasn't too appropriate for Chu Chuyan to carry her back.

When Zu An picked her up and followed behind Chu Chuyan, he thought to himself, This girl really is soft. Who would believe she was a guy if they carried her like this?

"Mm..." In her drunken slumber, Chu Youzhao instinctively twisted her body to adjust to a more comfortable posture. Her small tongue licked her bright red lips, as if she were still drinking while asleep.

Zu An's face heated up and he averted his eyes. I've sinned, I've sinned!

"What are you coming in for?" Chu Chuyan rebuked, suddenly turning around to look at him.

Zu An was stunned, asking, "Aren't we moving them to a bed so they can get some rest?"

"That doesn't mean you can sleep here too." Chu Chuyan said in annoyance. "Even though we know they're both girls, no one else knows. This might tarnish Qinghe's name."

"Oh..." Zu An realized what was happening. He had almost made a crucial mistake. As such, he carried Chu Youzhao to the room next door, and then helped her take off her shoes. When he saw her cute toes, he was a bit stunned.

You're a disgusting beast! he thought to himself. Then, he pulled over the covers and covered her up.

But just when he was about to leave, Chu Youzhao grabbed his arm, saying, "Brother-in-law... Brother-in-law..."

Zu An was stunned. "What is it?"

"Don't leave..." Chu Youzhao muttered. Her voice was sweeter than usual.

Zu An pinched her cheeks, which still had some baby fat on them. "Alright, I won't leave." At the same time, he controlled a bit of water and slowly moved it across her face to help her wash away the residual effects of the alcohol, and also to serve as a cold compress.

When he saw that she didn't react even after a long time, Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. He thought that she had woken up, but she had just been subconsciously dreaming. He had no idea what she was dreaming of, that even he would appear.

A while later, Chu Chuyan entered and said, "I already sent the remaining people outside. No one will come in here."

Her sister was cross-dressing as a man, so there was no way she would allow any male servants to serve her, but female servants also seemed unsuitable. Chu Youzhao was currently drunk and defenseless. It would be really troublesome if someone found out she was female.

When she saw them holding each other's hands, Chu Chuyan said impatiently, "Even though Youzhao is young, you're still different genders. You should pay more attention to that in the future."

Zu An replied with a bitter smile, "She was the one who grabbed my hand and didn't let me leave! I can't just pry her hand off, can I?"

Chu Chuyan harrumphed. "I don't know what kind of black magic you used. Youzhao normally has quite the bad temper, but she's already getting along so well with you after such a short period of time."

Zu An chuckled. "Didn't I tell you that I was an incredibly charming man? Everyone who sees me can't help but feel close to me. Wasn't that true for you too?"

"Pah, shameless!" Chu Chuyan harrumphed. Immediately afterwards, she spoke with a serious expression, "Huanzhao is one thing, but Youzhao is our Chu clan's heir! There is no way she'll marry anyone, so you'd better not do anything to her. Otherwise, our Chu clan's centuries of effort might be ruined."

Zu An's eyes lit up. "Then... That means Huanzhao is fine?"

Chu Chuyan's eyebrows rose. "So you had those thoughts after all!"

You have successfully trolled Chu Chuyan for +66 +66 +66...

Zu An quickly interrupted her, exclaiming, "I was just joking!" But immediately afterward, he frowned. "But aren't you all ruining Youzhao's life?"

Chu Chuyan released a deep sigh. "What choice do we have? This is the fate of women. We enjoy the wealth and glory of our clans from childhood, so we should also bear our clan's responsibility. Every one of us has made sacrifices, just like when I chose you back then..."

Her face reddened as she spoke. She had chosen a good-for-nothing off the streets as a drafted husband, truly intending to sacrifice a lifetime of happiness. But now, it seemed more as if she were pushing her luck too far.

Zu An laughed and took her into his arms. "What, was it really a huge sacrifice to be with me? Since you've already said it like this, then I guess I have no choice but to ravage this legendary ice queen." He smiled in an evil manner. With just a single hand, he had made this publicly acknowledged cultivation genius completely weak.

"No... not here..." Chu Chuyan couldn't hold back her bashfulness when she sensed him getting closer and closer. Her little sister was right there! Even though she was already asleep, Chu Chuyan was still too thin-skinned to do it here.

"But Youzhao won't let go of my hand! I'm scared that I might harm her." Zu An was a bit conflicted.

Chu Chuyan's cold cheeks were flushed. It was unclear whether it was because of the alcohol, or because of the situation. There was a bit of charm in her expression as she said, "I was always a bit embarrassed when you did this to me before. But after experiencing it again and again, I've realized that there are really too many unexpected things in life. Since we're together right now, then I should be giving myself to you to prevent us from having any more regrets."

After she said those words, as Zu An watched in shock, she gently moved her hair behind her ears and then slowly lowered her head.

Zu An subconsciously grabbed her hair. His entire body went rigid, and he released a long exhalation...

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A while later, when Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe woke up, Chu Chuyan took both of them back home. At the Murong clan's main gate, they happened to run into a young master, Murong Qinghe's older brother Murong Xiu.

Chu Chuyan subconsciously frowned. This man was always fawning upon her, and he had previously been one of her pursuers. No matter how she refused him, even after she had already gotten married, he had still never stopped persistently chasing her. But this was Murong Qinghe's older brother, so she didn't want to offend him too badly.

After both sides exchanged conventional greetings, Murong Xiu asked out of surprise, "Chu First Miss, why does your voice seem to be a bit rough today?"

Chu Chuyan's face reddened. "It's nothing much. It's just that my throat is a bit sore."

Murong Xiu quickly began firing off questions. "Have you taken any medicine for it?"

"Did you catch a cold from dressing too lightly?"

"You shouldn't eat anything greasy."

"Make sure to stay warm at night."

"Is your forehead hot?"

"Do you have any other symptoms?"

"Should I bring you to an imperial physician and have him take a look?"

"Don't worry, I'm close to the imperial physician. I, Murong Xiu, have at least this much of a reputation."

"Also, as long as Chu First Miss wants me to, I'm free for twenty-four hours every day!"

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Chu Chuyan was extremely uncomfortable under this endless barrage. She really wanted to completely shut him up by replying that it was because her husband had...

But she still had to keep up appearances. In the end, she couldn't bring herself to say that. She replied indifferently, "Thank you, for your concern, young master Murong. I feel fine; I'll be okay after some rest."

Murong Xiu opened his mouth again, and was about to shower her with more words when Murong Qinghe finally couldn't take it anymore and said, "Hey, why are you so freaking annoying? You just blabber on and on!"

#### **Chapter 724: Even an Honest Person Flips Out Sometimes**

"I've shown Chu First Miss a poor side of me, haha." Murong Xiu was quite embarrassed and finally stopped his chattering. He gestured for a maid to support Murong Qinghe.

Chu Chuyan nodded slightly, then turned around to leave with Chu Youzhao. Murong Xiu was momentarily dazed as he watched that sweet, fair, and graceful figure walk away.

Murong Qinghe couldn't help but say, "Stop looking already; she's already gone."

Murong Xiu harrumphed. "What does a kid like you know about true love?"

"Chu First Miss is already married!" Murong Qinghe rolled her eyes. Did this guy have a fetish for other people's wives?

"Miss Chu has already divorced that guy surnamed Zu or whatever." Murong Xiu quickly justified himself, as if her words were slandering his goddess. "Furthermore, with Chu First Miss' beauty, character, and ability, I don't mind at all even if she has married once. The one I like is her; no matter what choice she makes, I'll still like her."

Murong Qinghe stared at him for a long time. In the end, she couldn't help but say, "You really take your simping to a whole different level." This was a term she had learned from Zu An. It really was quite fitting here.

Murong Xiu frowned. He had a feeling the term didn't mean anything good. "With a strong will, one can achieve anything. What does a brat like you understand?"

Murong Qinghe opened her delicate mouth and gave her brother a sympathetic look. You have no idea what your goddess has just gone through, and yet you're still blabbering about will or whatever...

Murong Qinghe had actually woken up in the middle of the night. Her cultivation was higher than Chu Youzhao's, and her bloodline made her sober up faster than normal people.

She had felt a bit parched when she woke up, so she'd looked for water to drink. As she passed by Chu Youzhao's room, she noticed that the door wasn't completely closed, and that her big brother Chu was sleeping inside.

Something seemed to possess her when she saw his ridiculously handsome face. She snuck in and began to look at her big brother Chu's fair cheeks and his red lips. Her heart beat crazily. How can this world have a man this beautiful?!

After some hesitation, she finally couldn't resist the temptation and secretly lowered her head to kiss his little mouth. Even though she was normally rough and straightforward, she was still a girl in the end. She was worried that the other party might wake up when she did such a daring thing, and she felt extremely guilty doing so.

Suddenly, she heard a noise from off to the side that frightened her. However, the sound was very strange and disturbing. She couldn't resist her curiosity and moved over to the window to take a peek.

Just like that, her entire worldview was shattered. Was that still the cold big sister Chu she remembered?! After all, she had seen her fair share of Chu Chuyan's cold exterior because of Murong Xiu. Was this totally submissive and charming woman really the same person?

When she recalled all of this, her eyes became filled with more and more sympathy when she looked at her older brother. She felt she should once more warn him that his goddess already belonged to another man.

Suddenly, Murong Xiu said, "Why are you even talking like that anyway? Shouldn't you be helping me? If I can obtain Chu first miss and become that big brother Chu's brother-in-law, then I can help you more! Wouldn't it be easy enough for the two of you to get together then?"

Murong Qinghe's eyes lit up. That makes sense! Then I won't tell him about what happened for now.

...

Zu An obviously didn't know what they were talking about. After a beautiful night, he felt refreshed and energized. He changed into the uniform of the crown prince's secretary, then entered the palace for morning roll call.

When he arrived at the eastern palace, he greeted Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun with a smile. "How was last night?"

But the two of them didn't respond to him, and instead continuously gestured toward him. Zu An was surprised. Had something happened?

A flustered and exasperated voice emerged from inside. "That Zu An guy came? Arrest him for this crown prince immediately!"

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun were helpless and could only arrest Zu An. Still, they warned him quietly, "You have to hold back no matter what. You can't go against the crown prince! Otherwise, it's hard to predict what might happen." Over the years, the crown prince had had too many people beaten to death. That was why they immediately warned Zu An.

Zu An frowned. It was actually the stupid fatty this time. When had he offended this fellow?

They quickly entered the palace. The crown prince sat high up on a chair while two lesser eunuchs fed him grapes. When he saw Zu An, he immediately picked up the plate next to him and threw it at Zu An's head.

Unfortunately, his accuracy was too poor and he couldn't hit the target. It instead landed on Piao Duandiao's face. Piao Duandiao was stunned, but he didn't dare show any dissatisfaction and instead maintained a smile.

When the scattered grapes and juice splattered onto him, Zu An's expression sank. What kind of tantrum is this damn fatty throwing now?

“You actually dare to take advantage of Linglong?!” the crown prince exclaimed, enraged. “Men, beat this man viciously until he dies!”

You have successfully trolled Zhao Ruizhi for +888 +888 +888...

Zu An hadn’t expected this idiot to be able to provide so many Rage points. Although his intelligence was poor, even children knew how to protect their toys, it seemed. After all, the crown princess was obviously the most precious and important toy to him.

He could only try to explain, “The crown prince has misunderstood. Nothing happened between me and the crown princess. This is something your majesty’s father and even King Qi have already investigated. Even Sir Libationer personally set out to prove my innocence. If the crown prince doesn’t believe me, you can ask them.”

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun quickly parroted, “Indeed, crown prince. There are villains who are trying to trick you! Sir Zu is innocent.” These colleagues, whom Zu An had a good relationship with, both spoke out for his sake.

The crown prince roared out, “I don’t care! Regardless of who it is, anyone who offends Linglong shall die!”

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Zu An only now remembered his first encounter, when he had seen the fatty’s sinister expression. Back then, he had heard that there were many eunuchs and maids who had been killed by this guy. He had almost been fooled by the crown prince’s simple exterior these past few days, and forgotten how ruthless he was.

“What? Why aren’t you all doing anything? Are you all colluding with him?” The crown prince roared furiously at the other people in the room, “If you still don’t obey me, then all of you will be punished the same way!”

The attendants of the eastern palace looked at each other in dismay. They quietly said to Zu An, “Sir Zu, sorry about this. Please endure for a bit.” This was because Zu An had a good relationship with these people. If it were anyone else, they would already have been beaten until they lost a layer of skin.

Zu An was tied to a seat and a group of guards walked over with thick sticks. His expression was gloomy. He could increase his strength through getting beaten up, but wasn’t this too humiliating? He wasn’t a masochist. He could tolerate being beaten up by a high level cultivator, but he definitely wouldn’t accept something like this.

Just as he was beginning to consider how he might get out of this situation, an icy voice shouted, “Halt!”

The attendants sighed in relief. Thank goodness the crown princess had come. She was the only one who could keep the crown prince in check. Otherwise, if the crown prince really went crazy, then they might also go down with Zu An.

The crown prince was excited when he saw the crown princess. “Linglong, you came at the perfect time! Watch how I’m going to discipline this guy who bullied you.”

The crown princess scanned the area for a moment before her eyes fell on Zu An. She had a rough idea of what was happening. Her brows rose sharply as she asked, "What is the crown prince doing?"

The crown prince replied, "I'm beating up the one who bullied you!"

"His majesty and Sir Libationer already said that we were framed, and yet you're beating him up here. What would others think of me if news of this got out?" The crown princess began to cry from frustration. "People would only think that something had really happened between the two of us. How would I even live in the future?! Crown prince, is this because you really want to make Concubine Bai your official wife? That isn't necessary; I'll just retire on my own! What's the point of being a crown princess anymore?"

The crown prince immediately panicked. He had no idea where to put his chubby hands. "Linglong, please don't get mad. That's not what I meant! I just wanted to help you..."

"If the crown prince really wants to help me feel better, then look for the ones who framed me, and don't act against Zu An." The crown princess' tears poured out like pearls. "Not only are you not helping me, you're instead condemning me to eternal damnation..."

The crown prince became flustered. "Won't it be okay if I just don't hit him?"

The crown princess immediately cut him off. "Not only can you not hit him, you must put him in an important position. Only then can we show that we have a clear conscience! Only then will everyone be convinced."

Zu An was stupefied. This woman really had the crown prince in the palm of her hand.

## **Chapter 725: Time to Settle Things**

The crown prince began to hesitate when he heard that not only could he not punish Zu An, he also had to put him in an important position. "But..."

The crown princess glared at him. "What, do you not even believe my words?"

The crown prince was dispirited. He quickly giggled and said, "I believe you, I believe you! Linglong's words are always right. Men, award Zu An a hundred taels of gold and five hundred taels of silver. Also, grant him... Grant him..."

He was momentarily stunned. He gave the crown princess a pleading look. "Linglong, what rank should we give him?" He didn't have any concept of the eastern palace's various official ranks.

The crown princess said indifferently, "Just make him the crown prince's chamberlain."

The position of crown prince's chamberlain was extremely high. Its name made it sound similar to a secretary-general or chairman's assistant, but it had real authority comparable to a prime minister in feudal China. Of course, that was still limited to the eastern palace.

"Then let's just give him the position of chamberlain." The crown prince didn't treat it as a big deal and just did whatever the crown princess thought was right.

The crown princess nodded slightly and looked at Zu An. "Why aren't you thanking the crown prince yet?"

"This subject thanks the crown prince and princess!" Zu An exclaimed, shocked. In his time here, he had obviously found out what kind of position this was. He hadn't expected to suddenly be placed in such a vital position! It seemed the crown princess was true to her promise, promoting him at an insane rate after he saved her.

The crown princess said some more things to the crown prince, causing his expression to immediately improve. Then, he happily called out to Little He and Little Xu so he could play with them.

When they left, the smiling crown princess' face suddenly sank. She gave a lesser eunuch who was shaking in the corner a look and said, "Someone, drag him into the prison to have him beaten to death."

That lesser eunuch finally collapsed. He fell to the ground and pleaded, "Crown princess, spare my life, please spare my life!"

The crown princess' expression was cold. She didn't pay him any attention. Her trusted aide soon brought away the lesser eunuch, who was so scared he pissed his pants. Then, she looked coldly at those who remained. "This is the result of gossiping around the crown prince. I hope no one else will do something so foolish in the future."

"Understood!" The attendants bowed respectfully, keeping quiet out of fear.

The crown princess really was formidable. She knew everything in the eastern palace like the back of her hand. She had been able to discern who was responsible immediately, and then had dealt with the situation swiftly and decisively. It didn't look as though anyone would dare to double cross her again.

"Sir Zu, follow me. I have something to ask you," the crown princess said before heading into the inner chambers.

Zu An was stunned. He thought, Isn't the crown princess being a bit too daring? There was just a sex scandal between the two of us, yet you aren't avoiding me at all? But he had many questions to ask her as well, so he followed her inside.

Piao Duandiao nudged Jiao Sigun, who was next to him. "Hey, do you think there really is something between big bro Zu and the crown princess?"

Jiao Sigun immediately moved a bit farther away from him. "Don't drag me down with you if you wanna die." Piao Duandiao immediately realized what he meant and knew that it was a warning. He quickly shut his mouth.

...

Meanwhile, Zu An followed the crown princess into the inner chambers. The crown princess said, "Bring Sir Zu a seat."

A maid quickly brought over a chair for Zu An. When Zu An sat down, he asked respectfully, "May I ask what the crown princess needs of this subject?" He still had to show her basic courtesy in front of other people.



The crown princess waved her hands, and the maids withdrew outside. There was no way they could close the door, as that would lead to endless gossip.

The maids guarded the entrance outside. At this distance, they could clearly see what was happening inside, but it wasn't to the point that they could eavesdrop on what was being said.

"How was your time in the imperial prison?" the crown princess asked when she saw that the maids had all left.

Zu An replied, "It really is a terrible place! His majesty's people immediately forced an interrogation on me as soon as I arrived. He wanted to know if I violated his daughter-in-law. Then, King Qi's people came and did the same thing, wishing to force me to admit that there was something between us, so they could use that to bring down both you and the crown prince. However, I remained steadfast and held on. I absolutely didn't yield!"

"Forced an interrogation?" The crown princess had an ambiguous expression as she said, "But I don't see any injuries on you."

Zu An remained unfazed. "That's because I recover fast. Also, I have Divine Physician Ji's medicine, so that's why I was able to recover quickly. Crown princess, you don't need to be too grateful; true men don't talk about their pain. Also, please don't like me because of that; I'm a married man."

The crown princess was speechless. After a moment, she asked, "Why are you always like this?" She rolled her eyes. "I heard that your relationship with Right Guard General Guo Zhi was quite good, so your days in the imperial prison were spent quite comfortably. The only thing missing might have been some government brothel courtesans to serve you."

Zu An sighed. "I didn't expect the crown princess to know so much about everything, even though you were locked up inside the eastern palace all day. You're right, General Guo and I are pretty close, and he didn't make things hard for me inside either. However, I was interrogated quite frequently, and many people wanted to get rid of me as soon as possible. Oh, right, I was once attacked by someone in the imperial prison. It wasn't someone you sent, right?"

The crown princess' expression changed as she replied, "Why would I do something like that? Even though the dead can't speak, my innocence would come into question. How could I take this type of gamble? I would never do something so foolish!"

Zu An smiled and said, "I didn't think it was too likely to be you either."

The crown princess smiled. "Thank you for trusting me. I indeed wronged you this time, and it was because of you that I was able to survive. However, how did you survive Sir Libationer's trial?"

This was what she was the most curious about. Who was the Libationer? In all these years, no one had ever been able to tell a lie in front of him. Back then, she had already despaired when she heard that the Libationer was getting involved. How could she have expected this sudden turn for the better?

Zu An replied ambiguously, "I naturally have my methods. Crown princess, you don't need to worry about it."

He didn't say that the Libationer had secretly helped him, because he felt there was more to it. He had to look into this himself.

The crown princess was a bit distracted when she looked into his eyes. Even though this man was normally a bit unrestrained, he had many secrets on him. He had actually even been able to make it through the Libationer's questioning! If it could be said that she had merely viewed him favorably before, now her impression of him was that he was an enigmatic and incomprehensible person.

"By the way," Zu An asked out of curiosity, "Why didn't Sir Libationer question you? I was actually more scared about your end."

The crown princess thought to herself, Sure enough, this fellow didn't fear the Libationer's questioning after all! She really didn't know what he had up his sleeves. She thought to herself that she had to look into the situation given a chance. She said, "I'm still the crown princess in the end, and his majesty cares about the royal family's reputation. As long as the interrogation on your side went well, then I'd naturally be fine. If there had been something wrong on your side, then all that would have awaited me was the rope."

When he heard the lingering fear and rare dejection in the crown princess' voice, Zu An knew that she really had been scared badly this time. He instinctively tried to console her. "Heaven helps the worthy. The crown princess is destined to become the mother of our empire, so you have the heavens' protection."

The crown princess smiled sweetly. "Your mouth is surprisingly sweet."

Zu An suddenly remembered how the two of them had hugged and kissed that day in the rock garden to get past Zhuxie Chixin. For some reason, he suddenly remarked, "I think the crown princess' lips are sweeter."

The crown princess also couldn't help but remember that night as well. Her pretty face turned red. However, when she heard what he said, her face instantly fell. "Sir Zu, I've already forgotten what happened before, and I hope you can do the same. Otherwise, it won't be good for either one of us. I don't know how many pairs of eyes are watching us. We can't make the slightest mistake."

Zu An also regretted saying those words, using this chance to say, "Fine."

The crown princess got up and said, "Follow me."

"Where are we going?" Zu An asked, stunned.

"Obviously, to get revenge on the main culprit of all this!" A hint of ruthless killing intent flashed through the crown princess' beautiful eyes.

## **Chapter 726: The Reveal**

The main culprit was naturally Concubine Bai. What happened to them had taken place in the Hundred Flower Palace, and the one who had poisoned them was her personal maid. There was no way that woman was uninvolved.

Zu An was a bit hesitant. "How about we investigate them secretly first? We might startle them and scare them away if we go without any proof."

The crown princess harrumphed. "An investigation requires proof. I'm not going there for an investigation, but rather to vent my anger!" She stormed out immediately after, and her personal maid Rong Mo quickly followed behind her. She also summoned some maids and servants to accompany them. Zu An quickly followed along.

"Big bro Zu, congratulations on your promotion," Jiao Sigun and Piao Duandiao moved over and said happily.

"How about we celebrate this tonight at the government brothel?" Piao Duandiao suggested excitedly.

Zu An gave the black circles under Piao Duandiao's eyes a look and couldn't help but say, "Didn't you guys just go yesterday? Won't your waist be sore if you go today too?"

"Of course n..." Piao Duandiao subconsciously straightened out his chest, but pain surged through his body. He subconsciously rubbed his waist. "I guess I am still a bit sore."

"You should just get some proper rest. Don't let those government brothel girls suck you dry day after day." Zu An patted his shoulder with a chuckle. After he had parted ways with Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, he had already lost most of his interest in the government brothel.

Piao Duandiao sighed quietly as he watched Zu An's departing figure. "Big bro Zu has changed."

Jiao Sigun rolled his eyes. "If you had the Chu clan's first miss as your wife, you wouldn't be all that interested in those powdered prostitutes either."

"But won't you get tired of even the prettiest girl eventually? The government brothel has all sorts of different girls, so they can give you fresh feelings," Piao Duandiao retorted.

"Heh," Jiao Sigun sneered. "Did you forget all those beauties we saw at the palace gates yesterday? Who says big bro only has Chu First Miss alone? He might sleep with Chu First Miss today, and then he might have the young Murong lady tomorrow. It could be Miss Jiang the day after, and then Lady Xie... There would be a new flavor every day. Once it became Chu First Miss' turn again, then wouldn't it be fresh again? Why would he feel any boredom?"

"This is the first time you've made sense." Piao Duandiao was stupefied. His eyes were full of jealousy. "I thought I understood what made big bro Zu happy before, but now that you've opened my eyes, I realize I can't bring him any happiness at all."

The crown princess' group quickly arrived at the Hundred Flower Palace, but Concubine Bai was already ready to meet them. "I greet the crown princess!" Piao Duandiao, Jiao Sigun and the other servants thought to themselves that Concubine Bai was beautiful, and even her words were gentle. They really enjoyed listening to her speak.

Zu An really found it hard to associate this charming and graceful exterior with the vicious person who had schemed so viciously against them. He couldn't help but be on alert. The prettier the girl, the better they were at lying. Zu An, how could you be fooled by the oldest trick in the book?

Comparatively speaking, the crown princess wasn't fooled by her exterior at all. She replied coldly, "Concubine Bai, why did you come out so quickly today?"

Concubine Bai looked troubled and said, "This one doesn't understand what the crown princess is saying."

Even Piao Duandiao and the other eastern palace subordinates felt the crown princess was crossing the line when they saw Concubine Bai's pitiful appearance, that she was bullying someone as gentle as that. Of course, they only dared to think these thoughts; they wouldn't dare to speak them out.

Zu An was the only one who knew that the crown princess was talking about the last time they had gone to the Hundred Flower Palace, how Concubine Bai had never shown herself.

The crown princess harrumphed and didn't say anything else. After all, this wasn't a matter she could easily talk about. She walked straight into the Hundred Flower Palace, and sat at the most important seat as soon as she went in. She looked around and said, "Why don't I see that maid of yours?"

"Is the crown princess talking about Xin Rui?" Concubine Bai replied, "She requested a leave of absence a few days ago, so she isn't here. She hasn't returned yet."

"She requested a leave? Are you sure she wasn't just silenced?" the crown princess sneered.

Concubine Bai remained unfazed. "The crown princess must be joking."

The crown princess slammed her chair. "Who's joking around with you?! Men, arrest this lowly woman and strike her across the face!"

Piao Duandiao and the other guards frowned inside. They didn't understand what the crown princess was trying to do. Of course, this type of thing required physical contact with a concubine, so it wasn't for the men to do.

Instead, Rong Mo walked forward in a threatening manner alongside some maids. The maids of the Hundred Flower Palace were all alarmed. They subconsciously thought of protecting their master. However, how could they be a match for Rong Mo? They were blown back by her strength, and Concubine Bai was detained soon afterward.

Rong Mo raised her hand high, but just when she was just about to bring it down, Concubine Bai spoke. "Crown princess, even if you wish to strike me, you must at least give me a reason."

The crown princess said indifferently, "You treated me with disrespect. According to the palace laws, I naturally have the right to strike you."

"This one has always treated the crown princess with respect. I have never dared to show any negligence in this matter. I wonder what this disrespect you are speaking of is." Concubine Bai gained the sympathy of the onlookers with her pitiful appearance. There were tears in her eyes as she looked around. "There are so many people watching. All of them can serve as witnesses."

"Is that so? Then do you all feel that I'm making things difficult for Concubine Bai for no reason?" The crown princess scanned the place with her sharp gaze.

Those maids and eunuchs all shook their heads. "We don't!"

Zu An couldn't help but laugh. These people were all scared of the crown princess' 'tyrannical abuse'. To be honest, even though the crown princess wasn't that old, the awe she inspired was much greater than that of others her age.

Just then, Concubine Bai looked at Zu An. "Sir Zu, can you speak a few words for the sake of justice?"

The crown princess frowned. This lowly woman loved to seduce men with her pitiful appearance. She didn't say anything this time and gave Zu An a curious look, wanting to see how he would reply.

Zu An said with an embarrassed smile, "We aren't actually that close..."

Even though Concubine Bai had met with him alone before, given him some gifts, and even offered him her Hundred Flower Tea, meaning their relationship shouldn't have been that bad, he had almost been done in by her this time. As such, he couldn't afford to be soft-hearted here.

"Men all forget favors and justice after all. I helped you before, but you're so quick to turn your back," came a voice next to Zu An's ears, accompanied by a sigh. His eyes widened, because Concubine Bai was only staring at him with her large, misty eyes, but she hadn't opened her mouth.

But these words had clearly been spoken by her! Concubine Bai was actually a hidden expert! Furthermore, what was even more important was the voice she spoke with...

Rong Mo finally became impatient and her palm flew downward, but Zu An quickly walked forward to stop her. "Wait!"

Rong Mo frowned. She gave him a cold look. The others broke out in cold sweat because of Zu An. You can't go against the crown princess just because she favors you!

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun exchanged a look. Lust can lead to bad consequences!

The crown princess became unhappy and asked, "What the heck are you doing?"

Zu An said quietly, "Concubine Bai has things she wishes to say to the crown princess. Would it be possible to have everyone else leave for now?"

The crown princess raised her eyebrows. She wouldn't have batted an eyelid if Concubine Bai had said so, but if it was Zu An saying those words, then she knew there was definitely a reason for it. After a bit of hesitation, she waved her hands, gesturing for Rong Mo and the others to leave.

"Crown princess..." Rong Mo was worried that something might happen to the crown princess if she were left here alone.

The crown princess said indifferently, "It's fine. All of you are to guard the entrance. No one is permitted inside without my orders."

Rong Mo had no choice but to leave. She gave Zu An a hateful look when she walked past. The crown princess always discussed everything with me before, and would never hide things from me. Now, this kid comes out of nowhere and I suddenly feel estranged from the crown princess! There are many things I can't even listen to anymore. Everyone likes to call women vixens, but in my opinion, this is probably the king of male vixens!

You have successfully trolled Rong Mo for +233 +233 +233...

When everyone withdrew, the crown princess gave Concubine Bai a cold look. "Speak. What do you have to say to me?"

Concubine Bai stood up from the ground. She no longer carried her usual lovable air, and her entire demeanor became incredibly calm instead. "I know why you came today. However, I can tell you clearly that the one who framed you that day isn't me. On the contrary, I even saved you two."

## **Chapter 727: Daggers Hidden Behind a Smile**

The crown princess' expression changed and she exclaimed, "What is the meaning of this?!"

Zu An said, "She isn't lying. Everything happened too suddenly that day. There was one thing I didn't have time to tell you about.

"When I was in the room, and the two of us were... in that situation, when both of us were at a loss for what to do, I heard a woman warning us to run away as quickly as possible. Furthermore, she helped us stall some of the ones trying to catch us in this scam... Ahem, stall them for a bit. Otherwise, we would've already been ruined by the mastermind.

"The situation was too dire back then, so I wasn't sure who that woman was. Just now, I heard that woman's voice again." He looked toward Concubine Bai and finished, "So it was Concubine Bai."

The crown princess' eyes narrowed. She suddenly looked toward Concubine Bai, asking, "Your cultivation was actually that high? Do you have ulterior motives for approaching the crown prince?"

Concubine Bai said indifferently, "Crown princess, don't forget that I was assigned to the crown prince by his majesty. The reason I got closer to the crown prince was first to serve him, and second was of course to protect him."

Zu An sighed regretfully. How was that damn fatty worthy of the service of a woman as wonderful as this? However, something clicked inside of him at that instant. Wait, this woman was sent by the emperor. Doesn't that mean the emperor knows about what happened between me and the crown princess?

The crown princess' face instantly paled. She had clearly realized that fact as well.

Concubine Bai noticed their changes in expression. She giggled and said, "The two of you really are kindred spirits; even your thoughts head in the same direction. Don't worry, I didn't report what happened to his majesty. Otherwise, how could you two have arrived here safely?"

The crown princess' expression turned cold. "Are you threatening me?"

Concubine Bai shook her head. "I'm not threatening you, but rather informing you that we're all in the same boat. King Qi's schemes against the crown prince are only growing more and more troublesome. The crown prince's great test is approaching soon. What meaning is there in us sisters fighting right now? What is most important is helping the crown prince out of his current predicament."

The crown princess stared at Concubine Bai. But right when Zu An thought that she was on the verge of going crazy, her serious expression suddenly became extremely amiable. "I didn't expect little sister Concubine Bai to have done so much for me. I was a bit too strong-minded, and I might have offended you, little sister. Please don't take it to heart. In the future, we'll serve and assist the crown prince on the imperial throne together."

Concubine Bai also regained her usual lovable yet bashful smile as she said, "I fear I might have to trouble big sister for more pointers in the future. I will follow big sister faithfully."

Even though strictly speaking, Concubine Bai was a bit older than the crown princess, the crown princess was the main wife after all, so it wasn't wrong for her to use the term 'big sister'.

Zu An was completely stupefied. The two of them had been at each other's throats a moment ago, yet now, they were as close as siblings? Wasn't this difference a bit too drastic? In that instant, he began to question life. Looks like I can't trust those pretty girls no matter how close they seem to be on the surface!

Zu An finally couldn't tolerate the two anymore. He coughed lightly to interrupt their act. "Concubine Bai, I believe Xin Rui didn't really take a leave of absence, right?"

Concubine Bai put away her formal smile. "Indeed. After that day, Xin Rui disappeared without a trace. I suspect that not only has she left, she might also have been silenced by the true mastermind."

The crown princess opened her mouth, but there was a hint of hesitation on her face. In the end, she held herself back and didn't say anything.

Zu An guessed her thoughts and helped her by asking, "Xin Rui is your personal maid, after all. Why would she be bought out by another?"

The crown princess gave him a look of admiration. This fellow understands me pretty well.

For some reason, she recalled the scene of them kissing each other again, which made her suddenly blush. She quickly calmed herself down and banished those nonsensical thoughts from her head.

Concubine Bai sighed and said, "I can't understand that either. From what I know, Xin Rui should be extremely good-natured. Even now, it's hard for me to believe that she did such a thing.

"In the end, I believe that it's because I lived in seclusion for so long that I neglected the thoughts of my subordinates. That's why she ended up being tempted by others."

"Do you think that it might be Shi Jun?" Zu An asked.

The one who had come to catch him and the crown princess was Shi Jun. The other party was an official of the Huang gate, so he could enter and exit the palace at will. It was entirely possible for him to have colluded with Xin Rui.

Concubine Bai shook his head. "I don't know."

Zu An and the crown princess exchanged a look. It seemed like they had to investigate this matter from this angle.

The crown princess finally spoke up. "That day... Why did you arrive later? I... I..." She was too embarrassed to continue.

Concubine Bai gave her an understanding smile. "Big sister, don't worry. This matter is a crime punishable by clan eradication. Xin Rui didn't dare to use other people, so she personally carried out everything. I noticed that she was acting strange and followed her here. When I arrived, I was able to stop Shi Jun's people. That's why no one else saw what big sister looked like back then..."

She suddenly paused. Her eyes stopped on Zu An's body, her expression ambiguous. Her intended meaning was clear. Apart from him, no other man saw you. However, this matter was too sensitive, so she didn't want to start any further conflict.

A trace of shyness flashed across the crown princess' face. Soon afterward, she recovered her usual coldness. "By the way, Sir Zu was almost silenced that day in the imperial palace. Does Concubine Bai have any clues regarding this?"

Concubine Bai shook her head. "I normally don't get involved in these kinds of matters. How could I know anything?"

The crown princess could only ask, "Then does your maid have any family?" She was clearly planning to start investigating from that angle.

Concubine Bai thought for a bit, and then replied with uncertainty, "Her father has already passed away, so she grew up with her mother. Oh, right, she seems to have a younger brother. As for anything else, I don't know. You'll have to check with internal affairs for the exact details."

The crown princess asked a few more questions, but Concubine Bai didn't know the answers to most of them. She really did seem to be a sweet and naive woman who always stayed in her residence. However, after experiencing such matters, no one would think of her as that sort of person.

When they left the Hundred Flower Palace, the crown princess gestured for her subordinates to stay a bit further away. She had something to say to Zu An alone.

Rong Mo had a bitter expression. This male vixen was winning more and more favor.

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun exchanged a look. They both saw worry in the other's eyes. Their big bro Zu and the crown princess were a bit too close! Were these two really not going to avoid each other after such a huge thing had happened?

They both pricked up their ears. They wanted to hear what the two had to say to each other. They were two imperial guards from the eastern palace, so they had to shoulder the responsibility of monitoring the situation. If an outer subject really ended up fooling around with the eastern palace's women, they would also be blamed.

They thought to themselves that if they sensed anything strange between the two, they would have to immediately warn Zu An and tell him that he absolutely couldn't make such a mistake. Even though the crown princess was pretty, she wasn't someone he could handle!

However, they sighed in relief soon afterward, because the two talked about completely normal topics. She chatted with Zu An the same way she would talk to any other important figure.



Although the two of them seemed to be chatting about all sorts of high-minded subjects, they were actually conversing with ki transmission. Zu An said, "Crown princess, let's start from Xin Rui's family. Let's see if we can find out anything."

The crown princess replied, "That side has probably already been cleaned up by the other party, so we won't find much, but we can give it a try. You're pretty sharp, so take a look and see if you notice anything."

Zu An nodded. "By the way, what do you think about Concubine Bai?"

"Concubine Bai?" The crown princess sneered. "Find a chance to secretly deal with her."

Zu An was speechless. Weren't you chatting all nicely with her a moment ago? Why do you have so much killing intent now?

He couldn't help but ask, "Shouldn't we focus on our real enemies first right now? The other party has expressed her sincerity. That wouldn't be too good, would it?"

"Looks like you've been confused by that vixen after all." The crown princess shot him a look and said, "These are nothing more than stalling tactics. She has us by the throat right now. She'll act as soon as this exam matter is over and take my place to become the new crown princess. How can I let her do as she wishes?!"

## **Chapter 728: Bad Cop**

When she saw Zu An's stupefied appearance, the crown princess asked unhappily, "What, do you think I'm being too vicious again?"

Zu An sighed. "I do think you're being a bit too merciless."

The crown princess said coldly, "This imperial palace is a cruel place. It's kill or be killed. Those who couldn't do heartless things have already packed the cemeteries."

Zu An couldn't help but reply, "Why is there a need to do this? The two of you are allies. If you've guessed her intentions incorrectly, then you might instead help King Qi's people."

"I won't place my own safety in the hands of others." The crown princess gave Zu An a sidelong glance. "What, do you feel bad for her? Don't forget that the two of us are bound together now. If she ends up doing something, I'll be finished, and you'll be even more dead."

Zu An fell silent. He knew that what she had said was true.

When she saw his reaction, the crown princess' tone eased. "If it weren't because we had no choice, I wouldn't want things to be like this either. However, the only one I can trust right now is you. I can't entrust this matter to anyone else. That's why you can't let your emotions affect your decisions."

Zu An said quietly, "I know what I need to do." Still, even though her plan was the safest one, he didn't want to become her blade.

The crown princess nodded in satisfaction when she saw that he didn't directly oppose her. When their group returned to the eastern palace, she returned to the inner chambers to rest.

Zu An was met with congratulations from his colleagues, but inside, he had too many things to think about. Suddenly, a lesser eunuch told him that his majesty had summoned him.

Everyone else in the eastern palace had envious expressions on their faces. Apart from some great subjects with tremendous authority, there probably weren't many others who were able to meet with the emperor again and again. They even wondered if the concubines met his majesty as much as Zu An.

But Zu An knew that this wasn't a blessing at all. The pressure he experienced during each meeting was great. That fellow was incredibly moody and equally paranoid. With a single mistake, Zu An's life would be forfeit. The reason he had been summoned this time was most likely due to the rumors involving the crown princess.

...

Sure enough, when Zu An arrived at the imperial study, the gloomy-looking emperor looked at him with an unfathomable gaze. "I heard that the crown princess promoted you to chamberlain?"

Zu An shivered inwardly. So little time had passed, and yet the emperor already knew? He had eyes and ears everywhere in this palace after all. He answered, "Replying to your majesty, the crown princess indeed promoted me to chamberlain."

The emperor said emotionlessly, "I heard that the crown princess even talked with you in private, and the eunuchs and maids were made to wait outside?"

Zu An replied, "The crown princess' heart is pure and clear like the moon. She only had official matters to discuss with me, so there was no reason to avoid each other."

"She's surprisingly smart. She knows that the more things like this, the more it will shut others up." The emperor suddenly changed the topic. "However, this emperor still suspects that something happened between the two of you."

Zu An's expression changed a bit and he quickly said, "Your majesty is wise and brilliant. The crown princess and I are innocent. We were completely slandered and framed. This matter has already gone through much investigation, and even Sir Libationer was invited to question me. All of them can attest to my innocence."

The emperor harrumphed. "I heard that you all just went to the Hundred Flower Palace; is that right?"

Zu An thought to himself that this fellow's thoughts really jumped around quickly. Of course, his expression still remained respectful on the surface as he answered, "Yes."

"Why did you head there first? Did something happen there?" The emperor was seated high up on his dragon throne, so it was hard to see his current expression.

Zu An thought to himself, Could it be that the emperor already knows something? However, he still looked rather calm on the surface. "The crown princess suspected that the one behind the scenes was Concubine Bai."

"Then why did they sound as if they were getting along so soon afterward?" The emperor brought some tea to his lips.

Zu An couldn't be bothered with the fact that the emperor's intelligence was so precise. "That's because Concubine Bai's nature is kind, and she quickly explained the misunderstanding. Furthermore, the crown prince's test is imminent, so they wish to cooperate through this trial and avoid further complications."

The emperor harrumphed. "At least they know to think about the bigger picture." Then he continued, "Then who do you think is framing you?"

Zu An said sullenly, "I am not sure."

"You're not sure?" The emperor sneered. "You even said that it was the Shi clan who harmed you in the imperial prison."

Zu An explained, "That was just a random guess. I could say that to those three ministers, but I have no proof, so I don't dare to make random claims to your majesty."

The emperor's mood improved when he saw how tactful Zu An was. "Do you know why this emperor decided to keep you alive this time?"

Zu An asked probingly, "Because Sir Libationer proved my innocence?"

The emperor sneered. "There's something you don't understand. The libationer wasn't here to prove your innocence, but rather the crown princess'. The fact that a subject was involved in this sort of rumor with the crown princess is already a crime that even death can't atone for."

"This subject was wrong!" Zu An broke out into cold sweat. It seemed he had still underestimated this emperor. Motherfucker... I was an emperor myself in Yinshang's secret dungeon! But when did I ever make decisions unjustly like you?!

The emperor then said, "You did well with the Devil Sect's case last time, and you also managed to find out who was colluding with the assassins in the palace. As you have some talent, I've decided to leave you alive for now. You'll be the one in charge of finding the one who framed the crown princess as well. You have until the crown prince's exam to find out who the mastermind is. If you can't find anything, there will be no use in keeping you alive anymore."

Zu An was speechless. Bro, there should be a good cop and a bad cop, but you're only using the bad cop side! What the hell? But even though he was cursing inside, he could only smile on the surface.

"Understood; this subject will do everything I can to find the perpetrator."

"Remember to investigate with your Golden Token Eleven identity," the emperor reminded him. Then, he closed his eyes and indicated that Zu An could leave.

Zu An was surprised. He used this chance to ask, "Your majesty, something strange happened earlier."

"Speak." The emperor seemed to be meditating.

Zu An said, "I discovered that someone has been secretly investigating me all this time, but no matter what kind of method I try to use, I still can't find out who he is. That person seems to be extremely proficient in stealth techniques."

He paid close attention to the emperor's expression while asking this. Previously, he had suspected that it was the emperor who had sent that mysterious person. But over time, he grew more and more convinced that that was impossible. Of course, he didn't lower his guard. He wanted to obtain some information from the other party's expression.

"What?" The emperor's eyes suddenly widened. In that instant, his expression became extremely sharp. "Since you know this person is extremely proficient in stealth techniques, then how did you discover him?"

Zu An replied, "I have a special ability that lets me see people within a certain distance around me. I could sense that he was nearby, but I just couldn't find him."

He had already told the emperor that he'd obtained all of Old Mi's skills. As such, the emperor knew that he was already a powerful expert, so there was no need to hide anything. Either way, such a skill was still nothing much before the emperor.

Sure enough, the emperor didn't ask more about it and instead began to think to himself. "With your current cultivation, the people who could evade your detection..."

A while later, he seemed to have thought of something. He said seriously, "You don't need to worry about this matter anymore. I'll send someone to take care of it."

"Understood!" Zu An had already obtained the information he wanted, so he left, satisfied.

When he walked out, Eunuch Wen came to accompany him. He said with a smile, "Sir Zu truly is impressive! This one hasn't seen anyone who has received the appreciation of the emperor like Sir Zu in all these years."

"Eunuch Wen is too polite," Zu An replied, but inwardly, he cursed endlessly. Like hell this is appreciation! That bastard is ready to kill me at a moment's notice. Hmph, I'll make sure those concubines of yours have a taste of my viciousness in the future too.

...

After chatting with Eunuch Wen for a bit longer and thanking him for taking care of Chu Chuyan, he left while the mood was still pretty good. He changed into his Golden Token Eleven clothes in his courtyard, and then went to meet with Right Guard General Guo Zhi.

Guo Zhi cupped his hands when he heard of Zu An's arrival. "Sir Eleven, please tell me if there is anything I can help you with."

Even though his rank was higher, the Embroidered Envoys had a special status. Furthermore, the golden token envoys were all deep and immeasurable existences. This person was acting directly under the emperor, so he obviously didn't dare to offend the other party.

Zu An asked, "I wish to look through the records of everyone who has entered and exited the palace these past few days."

## **Chapter 729: It's Him?**

Guo Zhi was shocked. "All of the records? That's a lot of work to go through. May I ask what Sir Eleven is investigating? I can help you narrow down the scope a bit first."

After a bit of hesitation, Zu An said, "I wish to investigate the records of the palace maids who have entered and exited the palace."

Guo Zhi sighed in relief. "That's not too difficult. There are four palace gates in the palace. The southern Zhuque Gate is a gate that only opens where there are important ceremonies or court gatherings. The western Yunlong Gate is what the civil and military officials use. The eastern Wenhua Gate is for the nine ministers' men and some imperial secretaries. The palace maids and eunuchs can normally only move through the northern Xuanwu Gate. That's why you only need to investigate one gate's records."

Zu An hesitated. "What if they left through another gate?"

Guo Zhi shook his head. "That's absolutely impossible. There are so many eyes around the palace gates. There's no way a palace maid could possibly leave through those other places."

Zu An felt relieved. "Then I'll have to trouble General Guo."

"Sir Eleven is too polite." Guo Zhi brought Zu An to the northern Xuanwu Gate.

Soon afterwards, a golden-armored general with thick eyebrows and big eyes rushed over. "I greet General Guo and... Sir."

Guo Zhi introduced Zu An. "This is Golden Token Eleven, who is investigating a case on imperial orders. You need to do everything you can to cooperate. This is Xuanwu Gate's Manager Ou Wu, and he's in charge of the Xuanwu Gate's various matters. You can ask him anything you need."

Every single gate had a manager in charge of the gate's imperial guards.

"I greet Sir Eleven." Ou Wu didn't dare to show any negligence when he saw that this was a golden token envoy Guo Zhi had personally introduced.

"Greetings, General Ou." Zu An cupped his hands. "I wish to inquire about all of the maids who entered and exited through this gate recently."

"That isn't an issue." Ou Wu nodded. "All who pass through the imperial palace's gates are recorded in detail. Sirs, please follow me."

The two of them were quickly brought into a storeroom near the palace gates. Ou Wu had someone bring over something that looked like an account book. "I wonder which maid Sir Eleven wishes to investigate?"

Zu An said sternly, "I'll look over it myself. Bring out all of the records within the past half month." He wasn't willing to let others know about his investigation of Xin Rui, and he deliberately extended the time frame.

"Okay!" Ou Wu wasn't surprised at all. These types of things happened quite often in the imperial palace, and he knew that sometimes, the less he knew, the better.

Thick registers were quickly brought to Zu An one after another. He began to quickly flip through them. Ou Wu tactfully stepped outside, and Guo Zhi also followed him out to chat with him.

Zu An was shocked when he flipped through the densely packed records. There were actually this many people who came and went through the palace each day?

This was a result of having been misled by the costume dramas of his past world. The imperial palace engaged in quite a bit of exchange, as the things in it needed to be purchased outside. There were so many esteemed people living in the palace. If every one of them used a few servants, then the numbers would be quite high when added together.

Fortunately, after becoming a cultivator, Zu An's mind was much more powerful than it had been in the past. His speed of reading was also far faster. He quickly sifted through the corresponding records. About two hours later, he finished looking through everything. However, he didn't find any records of Xin Rui leaving the palace.

Zu An left the room. Guo Zhi had already left in the interim, and only Ou Wu had stayed behind.

"Did Sir Eleven obtain what you needed?" Ou Wu asked.

Zu An shook his head. He asked, "Is there a possibility that someone might have left using the identity of another? I didn't find any records of that person."

Ou Wu cried out in alarm. "I don't think so! That would be a crime punishable by death. Who would take such a risk?"

"But you're saying there's a chance?" Zu An continued to ask.

Ou Wu hesitated before saying, "If the other party could obtain the waist token and command tile of another servant, then there would be a chance. However, that would be extremely difficult..."

Zu An directly interrupted him. "I'll have my Embroidered Envoys cooperate with all of you to check the identities of every single person who entered and exited the palace."

He was worried that it wouldn't be enough if he left this matter to the palace gate guards alone. After all, if a mistake really were found, then they would be the ones held responsible. That was why he specially transferred over some Embroidered Envoys to supervise the process. He had to admit that having people under him made things much easier.

Ou Wu shivered inside. "Understood!"

...

Zu An went to the Embroidery House and transferred some Embroidered Envoys over. He had already had such authority as a golden token envoy, never mind the fact that he was now acting directly under the emperor's orders.

Then, he sent another group to investigate all of the imperial palace's wells, ponds, lakes, and other hiding places to see if they could find a maid's corpse.

He really did suspect that after those events, Xin Rui had most likely been silenced. But if she was still alive, then they needed to find her. If she was dead, then they needed her corpse.

...

After arranging all those things, he went to the Internal Affairs Manor to investigate Xin Rui's background. He quickly found what he wanted. Sure enough, it was as Concubine Bai had said.

Xin Rui's father had passed away a long time ago, leaving only her mother and her young brother back at home. Because Xin Rui had become the Hundred Flower Palace's head maid, their lives had gradually improved. She had managed to purchase a residence with her salary and rewards, so her family had moved there. Her family's address was also written down.

Zu An sighed. He hadn't expected houses in the capital to still be so expensive! For better or for worse, Xin Rui had had a decent job, yet she had only been able to purchase a house on the outskirts.

He didn't want to waste any time and immediately called over a group of Embroidered Envoys to leave with him. He didn't know if they would make it in time, or if it would already be too late.

...

Meanwhile, in the eastern palace, the crown princess and some trusted officials were discussing the crown prince's impending exam. Rong Mo quietly moved over to whisper something to the crown princess.

"The Embroidered Envoys are investigating a palace maid?" The crown princess' brows furrowed.

Due to the way the crown prince was, most of the eastern palace's matters were under her management. As such, she naturally had eyes in the palace. Zu An's enthusiastic investigation didn't escape the notice of those who were paying attention, so she quickly received the news.

"Do you know why?" The crown princess looked worried. Why was a maid being investigated right now? Was it because of the matter involving her?

"He seems to be investigating the records of those who came and left through the palace. At the same time, there are many Embroidered Envoys searching through wells and other hiding spots to see if they can find any corpses." Rong Mo voiced her own suspicions. "I really don't know which unfortunate maid was beaten to death by her master, and then ended up drawing his majesty's attention. Once that master is found, I fear he'll have quite the price to pay."

The crown princess' face paled. How could the death of an ordinary palace maid draw the attention of so many Embroidered Envoys? This was clearly someone going straight after her! Why had these Embroidered Envoys learned that there was something wrong with the maid so quickly?

"Where is Sir Zu? Have him meet me right now." The crown princess was extremely confused and flustered right now. She couldn't discuss this matter with anyone else, so she instinctively thought of Zu An. That fellow had even been able to survive that type of ordeal, so he should have a way out of this matter too. For some reason, her anxious heart seemed to calm a bit whenever she thought of him.

Rong Mo harrumphed. "That fellow didn't return after he was summoned by his majesty."

“He’s still in the imperial study?” The crown princess’ expression changed. Had something happened to him?

“I heard that he came out, but he didn’t come back to greet the crown princess! He really has no respect for your highness.” Rong Mo chattered continuously, using this chance to get some revenge on that annoying male vixen. It’s all his fault for stealing my spot under the crown princess!

The crown princess sighed in relief when she heard that Zu An was fine. Her personal maid’s thoughts didn’t escape her notice, but she didn’t plan to expose her. After all, it wasn’t a good thing to view Zu An too favorably in front of others.

“Right, which Embroidered Envoy is in charge of the investigation this time?” The crown princess picked up her teacup. At the same time, she wondered if she could use her connections to get in touch with him. Even though the Embroidered Envoys worked directly under his majesty, after years of managing the eastern palace, she had friendly relations with the sirs there.

“The one who is in charge seems to be a golden token; I believe it’s Sir Eleven.” Rong Mo replied.

“Sir Eleven?” The crown princess’ tea almost spilled. Her expression immediately became somewhat confused and bashful. “So it’s him...”

### **Chapter 730: Tough Guy**

Zu An continued his investigation with his group of Embroidered Envoys. He searched for Xin Rui’s mother and brother according to the address recorded in the internal affairs documents.

These Embroidered Envoys weren’t like Zu An, who had just recently arrived in the capital. They were all familiar with the capital’s streets and alleys, so they found the courtyard soon afterward.

The Embroidered Envoys split into several groups expertly. One group circled around to the back door, while another occupied the high points and watched the surroundings. Yet another group guarded the various entrances into the alleys.

The remaining group then went up to the main entrance to knock on the door. After knocking a few times without hearing a reaction, they directly kicked open the door and stormed in ferociously.

Zu An slowly walked in. He didn’t need to do anything himself, so he had more time to examine the surrounding details. When he saw the scene inside the courtyard, he sighed. It seemed he was still too late.

Sure enough, someone reported back to him soon afterward. “Sir Eleven, we didn’t locate our targets. Judging from the scene inside, it has been many days since anyone last lived here.”

Zu An nodded and said, “Dig up the entire courtyard and see if there are any corpses. Also, question the surrounding neighbors to see if we can find any clues.”

The Embroidered Envoys quickly set out to take care of their tasks. The courtyard was quickly excavated. After all, cultivators could do such things much faster than ordinary people. Unfortunately, they didn’t find anything.



Someone brought over an older woman and said, “Sir Eleven, she was sneaking around and looking in this direction earlier.”

That older woman quickly waved her hands and said, “I’m being wronged here! I was just wondering what the Hua clan had done wrong; I’m definitely not an evildoer! That Hua clan lady who lived here must’ve been a scoundrel after all.”

“Hua clan?” Zu An recalled that Xin Rui’s surname had been Hua before she joined the palace. When he heard the older woman criticize her like this, he asked, “Do you hold any grudges with this clan?”

That older woman’s expression changed. “Not at all! How could I hold any grudges against them?” How could she possibly dare to get involved in something so big? If this clan had been harmed and she claimed to have enmity, then what could she do if these officials wanted to make her a scapegoat?

Zu An said coldly, “She insists on speaking falsehoods. Detain her and question her harshly.”

That older woman was so scared that her entire body went weak. She quickly said, “I’ll speak, I’ll speak! I really have no grudges with their clan, but I just couldn’t bear to see them idling about like that and still living better than the rest of us!”

“Idling about?” Zu An frowned.

“Yes!” That older woman was scared that he wouldn’t believe him and quickly said, “They moved here three years ago. At first, it was just the Hua clan older miss and her son. That son of hers, sigh... He just idles about all day! He never lifts a finger and always asks his mom for money to gamble away. Seeing how pitiful that Miss Hua was, I introduced her to a clothing repair store so they could just barely get by.

“But later on, I heard that her daughter was working in the palace, and that even this house had been purchased with the money she earned! Sigh, if I had such an outstanding daughter, just how great would that be?

“Still the Hua clan’s older miss continued to work at the clothing repair store day after day.”

...

When he heard her continue to blabber endlessly without getting to the point, Zu An unhappily cut her off. “It sounds like your relationship wasn’t so bad. Why did you carry so much resentment earlier?”

“Hmph, people change,” The older woman said angrily. “One day, she suddenly stopped working. I was curious what they were doing. Their daughter did work at the palace, but they had practically wiped out their savings after purchasing this house. They shouldn’t have had any spare money to spend.”

“But not only had they not become poverty-stricken, the Hua clan’s lady was instead covered in gold and silver. Tsk tsk tsk, that was jewelry I wouldn’t be able to purchase even if I worked my entire life!” The older woman’s voice was full of jealousy. “She said that her daughter received the appreciation of an esteemed individual in the palace, but I think she probably stole the palace’s goods! This is probably retribution.”

Zu An frowned. “And that’s why you’re so happy that they might have suffered?”

"If that were all, someone as old as me obviously wouldn't get angry." The older woman's eyes were filled with resentment. "My son is of marrying age, you see. I found a girl for him, but we're just lacking a bit of money for the wedding. I wanted to borrow some from the Hua clan first, but not only did that woman reject me without any hesitation, she even said that her daughter didn't have it easy either. Hah! If it weren't for the fact I found out that that woman was setting her son up with a girl too, I might've really believed her."

Zu An was speechless. Eventually, he said, "It's their money. Is it that unreasonable for her to want to leave it for her son?"

The older woman began to panic. "But how poor were they when they first arrived at the capital? If it weren't because of my help, they would've already starved to death! Yet when I needed help, she instead pretended she didn't know me. After all, just any random piece of that jewelry she normally wore would've been enough!"

Zu An thought to himself, This is a model case of being jealous after someone you previously looked down on suddenly gains great success. He wasn't in the mood to care about these petty matters, though, so he asked, "When was the last time you met them?"

The older woman said, "Around half a month ago, I think."

"Did they leave on their own, or were they brought away?" Zu An asked.

"I have no idea." The older woman shook her head.

"Did anything strange happen around that time?" Zu An continued to ask. After all, this age wasn't like later generations. Rumors spread quickly from mouth to mouth, and all these people lived close to each other. If there had been any strangers, there was no way they wouldn't leave behind any traces.

"There seems to have been a carriage that came a few days ago. Right... We've never seen such a grand carriage before," the older woman said enviously.

Zu An frowned. "What kind of carriage was it? What do you mean by grand? What kind of symbols did it have?"

The older woman was confused. "Grand is grand; how would I describe something like that?"

Zu An ordered some of his subordinates to find someone good at drawing to work with this older woman and get a decent image out of her, to see if they could find some clues this way. Then, he asked some more questions about the Hua clan's day to day life. After he finished, he had her leave for the time being.

"Wait." Zu An suddenly thought of something just as the older woman was about to leave. "When did their clan begin to take a turn for the better? When did she start to wear all those things you were talking about?"

The older woman stopped. She thought for a bit and then replied, "About a year ago, but I don't remember the exact date. I know it couldn't have been longer than a year and a half, though."

Zu An began to think to himself. It seemed Xin Rui had already been bribed by a mysterious person a year before. This was quite the long plan. "Where is the Hua clan's old home?" he eventually asked.

"I think it's in Caoxian," the older woman replied.

Zu An nodded. That matched the recordings, after all. As such, he ordered all of his subordinates to investigate Caoxian to see if anyone had returned recently.

After all, the people of this world were quite attached to their homelands. If they took the initiative to leave, then they would subconsciously choose to return home.

Of course, there was a high chance that they'd already had their freedom restricted. They might not even be alive. He was only investigating this because he didn't want to let any clues go.

...

By the time Zu An returned to the Embroidery House from Xin Rui's home, Shi Jun had already been detained and was waiting there. His furious roars could be heard as soon as he entered the prison.

"You bastards, do you know who I am?!"

"Do you all know who my father is? My father is the court's great Minister of War..."

...

"Stop crying already. It doesn't matter who your father is at this point." Zu An directly interrupted him. This person had been extremely zealous about catching him and the crown princess in the act. He was the biggest suspect after Xin Rui.

Shi Jun's eyes narrowed when he saw Zu An's uniform. He obviously knew what a golden token envoy symbolized after spending so much time in the palace. However, when he remembered his father and his older brother, as well as the Shi clan's influence in court, he was able to calm down a bit. He asked, "If I may, what crimes have I committed? What proof do you all have to detain me here? I want to see my father."

Zu An harrumphed. "Everyone who comes here says they're innocent at first, but things rarely go as they wish. Speak, why did you wrong the crown princess?" He didn't even mention his own name. After all, in this sort of situation, someone like Zu An was completely insignificant. The main target had been the crown princess.

Shi Jun shouted noisily, "I've spoken only the truth! When have I ever wronged the crown princess?!"

"You rascal, Sir Libationer has already proved the crown princess' innocence. Can it be that you're questioning him?" Zu An retorted as he slammed the table.

Shi Jun's expression went blank. "I don't know why Sir Libationer would say that, but I really did see her with Zu An that day."

Zu An was annoyed when he remembered how much of a dilemma he had been put in that day because of this fellow. He commanded, "This person is dishonest. Use torture!"

"Understood!" The Embroidered Envoys didn't have any misgivings. They were always fearless, and it didn't matter which official they acted against; they would make sure that person lost a layer of skin. What did a trifling Huang Gate guard count as?

Shi Jun began to panic. "I'm innocent, so why am I getting beaten? You're all just trying to obtain confessions under torture!"

Zu An looked rather annoyed. Soon afterward, a roaring whip lashed out, and Shi Jun screamed in agony. Zu An's mood finally improved a bit.

"You're forcing out confessions through torture! I'm going to report you!"

"I'm going to report all of you for abusing your power!"

"My dad won't let all of you go!"

You have successfully trolled Shi Jun for +888 +888 +888...

Zu An said coldly, "It looks like we haven't hit you hard enough."

This fellow had deliberately made things hard for him at the entrance of the palace gate. If not for the fact that he'd had enough tricks to depend on, he might have already been done in. Later on, Shi Jun had even framed him and the crown princess. Had that succeeded, it would have been a crime punishable by clan eradication. How could he be lenient on this fellow?

Shi Jun kept cursing at first, but he lost his strength soon afterward. He instead began to beg for mercy.

"Please, please stop hitting me..."

"I'll speak, I'll speak... Isn't that enough..."

...

Zu An said disdainfully, "I almost thought you were quite the tough guy. Looks like you're merely a spineless coward."

Resentment flashed through Shi Jun's eyes. He thought to himself, So what if you're a golden token envoy? Wait until I get out! My father will make sure you die many times over!

You have successfully trolled Shi Jun for +999 +999 +999...

Zu An sneered when he saw the incoming Rage points. He didn't bother exposing Shi Jun and indicated for the others to leave first. Then he asked, "How did you and Xin Rui meet?"

"Xin Rui?" Shi Jun's eyes narrowed, but he quickly recovered his cool. "The Hundred Flower Palace's maid? I have some impression of her since I've been in the palace for a while, but we didn't have much interaction. We don't really know each other."

Zu An replied, "Oh. Then let's continue with the torture." He called his subordinates back while saying, "Young master Shi, the Embroidered Envoys have many different ways to get the information we need. After all, we have all the time we need, so we can test them out on you one by one."

He had wanted to just scare this fellow with the intimidation methods he had learned from those shows and novels he read, but once he had learned more about the Embroidered Envoys' torture methods, he'd realized that they were the real deal. These were the real professionals! They really exemplified what it meant to wish for death.

“Nooooo!” Shi Jun’s eyes were filled with horror. He lived in the palace, so how could he not know about the Embroidered Envoys’ methods? Forget about testing them out one by one, he would completely break down from just a single one of them.

“I’ll speak...” he began, but as soon as he spoke up, the door suddenly slammed open.

Then a terrifying pressure spread outward and a voice yelled, “Who dares to harm my son?!”