

## Immortal 731

### Chapter 731: Loving Family

The Embroidered Envoys in the room all readied their weapons and looked at the entrance vigilantly. "Who dares to cause trouble in the Embroidery House?!"

What kind of joke was this? What kind of place was the Embroidery House? This was the Embroidered Envoys' headquarters! No matter which court official was brought here, they would all tremble in fear. Yet now, someone dared to cause trouble here?

Several Embroidered Envoys brandished their Soul Reaping Chains in that direction to immediately restrict the individual. Unfortunately, they were all blown back by an invisible force as soon as they attacked.

Even though the Embroidered Envoys were capable of formation tactics, and the Soul Reaping Chains specialized in penetrating ki, all of that was meaningless before an absolute difference in power.

This was a master rank cultivator!

Those present shivered inwardly. Zu An turned around as well. The one who had come was a tall white-haired elder with sharp brows. His eyes were filled with anger.

Zu An couldn't help but smile. "I was wondering who it was. So it was sir Minister of War! I wonder what sir Minister of War intends by barging into the Embroidery House."

He had seen Shi Miao interfere during Yun Jianyue's assassination attempt on the eastern palace, so he recognized this person.

"Dad, hurry and save me, dad!" Shi Jun became extremely excited when he saw his father. He finally saw a ray of hope in an endless abyss. The Embroidered Envoys' torture methods were just too terrifying, and he really didn't want to experience them.

Shi Miao gave Shi Jun a look. When he saw the blood on his son's body, his face instantly sank. He scanned the place with his sharp eyes. "Who caused those injuries on his body?"

The Embroidered Envoys looked at each other in dismay. They were usually domineering, but that didn't mean they were stupid. In front of a master, wouldn't stepping forward be the same as asking to be punished right now?

All of them gave Zu An pleading looks. He was the highest ranked individual here, so he was the one who should speak right now. However, they didn't feel too optimistic. Even though golden token envoys were formidable, none had reached the master rank. What could he possibly do in this type of situation?

They were probably going to be used to take the blame, but once Chief Commander Zhuxie Chixin returned, they would then get their revenge on these people.

Under their looks of despair, Zu An said indifferently, "Stop looking all over the place. The one who hit him was me."

“Sir Eleven!” All of the silver and bronze token envoys were moved, but equally worried.

Sure enough, Shi Miao erupted with fury. “You’re courting death!”

You have successfully trolled Shi Miao for +444 +444 +444...

By the time he finished speaking, he had already shot straight at Zu An like an artillery shell. It was as if a tornado had swept through the room, as the powerful winds made several tables instantly explode.

‘Sir Eleven is finished!’ thought most of the Embroidered Envoys present. The Embroidered Envoys excelled at formation tactics. In the entire Embroidery House, apart from Sir Zhuxie, it would mean death for any one member to face a master rank.

But no one could have expected that, with a loud thud, Zu An promptly raised his hand and exchanged a palm with the other party.

The shockwave from the impact made dust fall from the wall beams. The Embroidered Envoys swayed unsteadily from side to side, while those with lower cultivations began to bleed from their noses.

However, Zu An, who had been at the very center of the explosion, was only knocked back by one zhang. His expression seemed to be at ease, as if he hadn’t really been injured. Meanwhile, Shi Miao was also blown back by nearly one zhang!

The onlookers were so shocked their jaws had practically fallen to the ground.

Not only was Sir Eleven unharmed after being attacked by an enraged master rank cultivator, he had even equally blown his opponent back by one zhang! Just how terrifying was this person’s cultivation?

Shi Miao was bewildered as well. He had thought his attack would have been enough to seriously injure his opponent. He had wanted to use his target as an example. Yet not only had he failed, he was instead the one embarrassed.

This person’s hand was strange. He recalled that just when they were about to make contact, the other party’s hand seemed to have released a powerful suction force that drained away a large portion of his strength. That was why their exchange had seemed to be evenly matched.

Other Embroidered Envoys flocked over when they heard the activity. Shi Miao was completely surrounded, preventing him from suddenly attacking again.

After Shi Miao’s palm strike had easily been handled, he was left in great shock. How could he dare to attack again?

Zu An said sternly, “How brazen. Do you know what kind of crime entering the Embroidery House without permission is?”

“All those who trespass without permission shall die!” an Embroidered Envoy added from the side. There were many people who had been injured because they stood in Shi Miao’s way. They were quite angry right now. When had they ever suffered so much in their home base, ever since the Embroidered Envoys were founded?

So what if he was a Minister of War? The Embroidered Envoys were separate from the court. They didn't have to bow down to anyone.

Zu An was amused when he heard this. There really hadn't been much he could do to the Shi clan before, but this fellow had ended up courting death today. How could he let such a great chance go? As such, he decisively gave the order, "Men, kill this intruder on the spot!"

Even though the other party was a master, there were many experts in the Embroidery House. Furthermore, they excelled in detaining someone together. With his help, it wasn't too difficult to detain Shi Miao at all.

Shi Jun was stupefied. This fellow even dared to kill his father? Was there something wrong with the world today?

When he saw those Embroidered Envoy charge at his father with drawn blades, he felt a chill run through his bones. If his father really were killed here, then he would truly be done for. He quickly shouted, "Death pardon token! Dad, use your death pardon token!"

If this golden token envoy had been taken out, Shi Miao would have been confident that he could take care of this entire place. After all, Zhuxie Chixin wasn't here. However, he hadn't expected the golden token envoy to be able to match him evenly, which had greatly boosted the morale of the other Embroidered Envoys. If they really fought, he might even have a chance of losing.

He suddenly realized something when he heard his son's reminder. He quickly brought out a dark golden death pardon token and raised it above his head. "This is his majesty's death pardon token! Who dares to kill me?"

The Embroidered Envoys looked at each other in dismay and stopped moving forward. They belonged to the emperor's secret infrastructure. They could disregard the threats of any official, but they couldn't disregard the emperor's orders.

Zu An was starting to find this situation tricky as well. He hadn't expected this fellow to have such a thing on him.

Those people who had been given such a thing in history never had good endings. For example, in the Ming Dynasty, for those who had been granted death pardon tokens by Zhu Yuanzhang, having their entire clan eradicated would be considered on the lighter side.

Of course, the emperor had the authority to decide whether he wanted to pardon them or not. However, as subjects, they couldn't overstep their authority, or else they would draw the emperor's suspicion.

Zu An could only point at Shi Jun and say, "There's only one death pardon token. Since he doesn't have one, keep beating him."

Shi Jun was stunned. He hadn't expected that he would still be the real clown. He quickly reached his hand toward Shi Miao. "Dad! Dad! Hurry and give me the death pardoning token!"

Zu An smiled. Ah, what a loving family.

“Shut up!” Shi Miao’s forehead darkened. What the hell was wrong with his son today? Why had he suddenly become so stupid? “This token doesn’t protect me alone! Back then, his majesty personally said that as long as the Shi clan didn’t conspire against the empire, this would be enough to protect our entire clan!”

Shi Jun finally woke up from his daze. He really had been scared badly by these Embroidered Envoys. He gave Zu An a resentful look out of embarrassment. It was all because of this guy!

You have successfully trolled Shi Jun for +233 +233 +233...

In the end, Shi Miao brought Shi Jun away with the death pardon token. The Embroidered Envoys were left too scared of doing something wrong. Furthermore, they hadn’t gone through proper procedure to detain Shi Jun, so they could only release him.

The Embroidered Envoys all went to make a complaint to the emperor with righteous indignation. Zu An knew that the emperor most likely wouldn’t pay any attention to this matter, since the Shi clan wasn’t a normal clan. Furthermore, that ‘accident’ had taken place in the eastern palace, so he couldn’t criticize them too harshly.

Sure enough, the emperor only berated Shi Miao a bit and punished him by deducting an insignificant year of his salary, and then the matter was dropped. Shi Jun couldn’t be investigated further, either.

While Zu An was having a headache over this matter, the Palace of Peace sent a eunuch to contact him. The empress had invited him for an audience.

### **Chapter 732: You Can Definitely Help Me**

“The empress?” Zu An responded, startled. He’d actually had some things he needed to talk to the empress about himself. He headed straight to the Palace of Peace, and ran into Eunuch Lu just outside the palace.

Eunuch Lu gave him a look, and then revealed a smile that seemed even more bitter than if he had been crying. “You should head inside; the empress is waiting for you.”

Zu An felt a chill run down his back. Why was the way this fellow looked at him so strange? Please tell me he doesn’t like me... As he went inside, fragrances swirled about him. Their unique scent naturally calmed his mood.

“I greet the empress,” he said respectfully. There were still maids and eunuchs nearby, so he needed to show proper etiquette.

The empress was seated on her phoenix throne. Her splendid attire seemed more and more impressive the longer Zu An looked. When he saw her, it was as if he were seeing the crown princess’ future. Even though the two of them had no blood relation, they still carried some similarities in terms of poise and grace.

Wait, no, there is at least one huge difference. I can vaguely make out the empress’ ridiculous ass from here. That isn’t something the crown princess can compare with, Zu An thought. Of course, the crown

princess wasn't bad either. He still remembered the elastic feeling he'd experienced that day. It had carried a youthful feeling that was entirely different from the empress.

The empress waved her hands, indicating for everyone else to back down for now. Only Little Gui and Little Zhuo remained behind to wait upon them. Even though she was the respected empress, there were still many taboos involved in meeting with outside subjects. She needed to keep some people here.

When the other maids and eunuchs left, she gestured for Little Gui and Little Zhuo to wait outside the doors. The two withdrew respectfully. When they passed by Zu An, they gave him a friendly smile. They clearly remembered the kindness he had shown them.

There were only two people left soon afterward. The empress said indifferently, "If anyone else had stared at this empress like this, I would've already had their eyes gouged out."

Zu An released a long sigh. "The empress is so beautiful, yet you can only spend your time alone in this vacant palace. The other servants have misgivings towards your highness' status and prestige and don't dare to look at you. This beauty really is being wasted, so I naturally need to stare a bit longer to help compensate for that."

The empress' cheeks blushed. Her somewhat fierce, but beautiful eyes softened. "Your mouth is as sweet as always. However, I fear that these words would be enough to end your life if they reached his majesty's ears. His majesty doesn't want others to do the things he should be doing."

Zu An was surprised. This was a mature and sophisticated woman after all! She was just as good at teasing back. If he didn't take care, he might instead lose himself and go too far.

He replied with a smile, "As long as your highness doesn't talk about it, how could his majesty know?" That emperor always used force to threaten him, constantly using fear, so he was naturally incredibly upset. His words no longer sounded as respectful.

The empress' expression sank. "Audacious! You dare to say something so disrespectful?!"

If it had been anyone else, they might really have been scared by her, but Zu An wasn't shaken in the slightest. "Your highness has asked everyone else to leave. Should I take this as an implied message?"

The empress stared straight at him. A while later, she burst out laughing. "You really aren't like the other servants after all! I suddenly feel like having a partner like you makes things more interesting."

"Is that so?" Zu An declined to comment. "Your highness, why did you seek me out today?"

"What, I can't ask you to come if I don't need you for anything?" The empress stood up. As she moved, a refreshing fragrance filled Zu An's senses.

Zu An gave her radiant and beautiful face a look. "Perhaps your highness has been alone for so long that you desire a man?"

The empress chuckled. Her eyes flickered with a strange light. "Can I not?"

It was now Zu An's turn to be completely stunned. When she saw his blank expression, the empress harrumphed. "You damn servant, you really were going after me. I really don't know if you're ignorant or just extremely daring."

Zu An said, "I'm not daring at all; I've always behaved properly in the court. I don't dare to cross any lines."

"Heh..." The empress sneered. If you really want to follow the rules, all of the men in this palace must be eunuchs. "Would someone cowardly dare to touch even the crown princess?"

Zu An's expression grew serious. "Both the crown princess and I are innocent. Your highness, please don't say nonsensical things."

The empress sneered. "Others might really think you weren't so bold if they saw you, but you dared to even treat me... Hmph, what does a crown princess count for?"

Zu An didn't let her words affect him. "If I weren't innocent, why would his majesty let me go?"

The empress' brows furrowed tightly. "That's what I'm the most confused about. With Zhao Han's nature, even if you were innocent, there would be no reason to keep you alive after a scandal broke out between you and the crown princess."

"Maybe I'm just lucky." Zu An sighed. They really were husband and wife after all... This woman understood the emperor too well.

It was just that the emperor still needed him to deal with King Qi and didn't really plan to let him go. Once King Qi was dealt with, the emperor would immediately get rid of him. Furthermore, he was in charge of finding out who framed the crown princess. If he didn't produce any results, that would be a GG for Zu An.

Motherfucker... He clearly needs me to work for him, yet he still constantly threatens to kill me. Zu An was becoming more and more nervous, because the deadline was getting closer and closer.

"Right, you sent Chu First Miss last time to have me investigate those maids and eunuchs..." the empress suddenly said.

Before she even finished her sentence, Zu An asked, shocked, "Did you find out anything?!" Shi Jun had been brought away, so his trail was cut short. He was extremely vexed about the situation.

The empress was confused. "It's not as if you're investigating this case, so why are you so worried?"

Zu An didn't reveal his true intentions. "I need to at least find out who framed me, right?"

"I'm not so incredible that I can find that out," the empress said, "I only managed to eliminate some suspects. They knew nothing about this matter and were swept along by their companions. After looking around, I discovered that those people had been called together by seven individuals for various reasons."

"Which seven people?" Zu An asked.

The empress walked to the side with a graceful demeanor. She removed a booklet from the cupboard and said, "The names are right here."

Zu An moved to grab it, but the empress instead retracted her hand, hiding the booklet behind her. "What benefit will there be for me if I hand you this?"

Zu An frowned. "What kind of benefit do you want? As long as I can take care of it, I'll definitely do it." At the same time, he was curious. This was the glorious empress! What didn't she have? Why would she need something from him?

The empress smiled and replied, "You can definitely do it."

When he saw her mysterious smile, Zu An felt that something was wrong. "What is it exactly?"

The empress didn't reply and instead changed the topic. "When you were sent to prison, Chu First Miss sought me out. I have to admit, you're quite a lucky fellow. Chu First Miss is incredibly beautiful, and she cares so much about you."

Zu An revealed a soft smile. "She is indeed amazing."

The empress chatted with him about Chu Chuyan's matters a bit more, and then she said, "Later on, Chu First Miss visited me a few more times. I heard that back then, all of her meridians were destroyed in the secret dungeon, but it was because you heroically stepped up that the two of you gradually grew closer."

"That was probably just fate, haha." Zu An smiled while thinking to himself, Why did that foolish girl tell her all of this?

But he soon realized that Chu Chuyan had probably been anxious to save him back then, and the empress was one of the people who would have had the highest chance of saving him. That was probably why she had told the empress so much.

The empress then asked in a carefree manner, "Right, how did you heal her?"

Zu An replied, "I managed to find an Evanescent Lotus at an opportune time. That was why I was able to save her." He couldn't tell the empress that it was because he had worked diligently on Chu Chuyan body, that his yang force had saved her, right? If he said this, the empress wouldn't suspect him of anything either.

"Is that so?" the empress remarked indifferently.

Zu An said, "I've already answered everything. It's time for you to give me that booklet, right?"

The empress still shook her head. "Come back at night. I'll give it to you then."

Zu An was shocked. "Why does it have to wait until nighttime?"

The empress replied, "Because I'll need you to help me with something then."

### **Chapter 733: Trap**

Zu An couldn't help but say, "Why does it have to be at night? I need to be outside of the palace after dusk."

He already had PTSD after he and the crown princess had fallen into the same trap. He was worried that this might cause some kind of misunderstanding or trouble. Even though he had his status as an Embroidered Envoy, he couldn't let the empress know about that.

"You'll know exactly what it is then," the empress said indifferently. "As for leaving the palace, you don't need to worry." She brought out a uniform from her drawers and said, "Leave the palace at dusk, and then change into this. Come back with this waist token. No one will know it's you."

Zu An's expression was extremely strange when he looked at the familiar uniform in front of him. It was an Embroidered Envoy uniform. Of course, it belonged to the lowest-ranked bronze token envoy.

Even though he was still confused at first, he quickly calmed down. The resources at the empress' disposal were definitely beyond his imagination. It wasn't all that surprising for her to have obtained an Embroidered Envoy uniform.

Still, even with all her influence, she could only get a bronze token uniform. It seemed the Embroidered Envoys' secretive nature was still formidable.

"Okay, I'll come back at night," Zu An said. With his identity, entering at night wasn't all that hard. Since he had a proper excuse this time, he obviously wouldn't refuse. He was also curious what the empress needed his help with.

When Zu An left, Eunuch Lu's gloomy figure appeared in the room. He asked, "Your highness, have you made your decision?"

The empress' expression was indifferent. "Do I have a choice? If I had known this was the case from the start, I wouldn't have done that. But instead, I ended up leaving behind some hidden dangers..."

Eunuch Lu hesitated. "It might not be as your highness thinks."

The empress shook her head. "There would be nothing lost if I guessed incorrectly. However, if I guessed correctly..." Her eyes began to burn fiercely.

Eunuch Lu's eyes also flickered with a strange radiance. "Then I wish your highness the best."

The empress' beautiful eyes stared blankly. "You damned servant, why do you look even more excited than I do?"

Eunuch Lu sneered. "This servant is merely happy for your highness. There is finally hope after your highness suffered for so many years."

The empress raised her eyebrows, and her chest rose and fell rapidly. She clearly wasn't calm at the moment. She asked, "How are the other matters going?"

Eunuch Lu said respectfully, "Your highness, please do not worry. Everything is already in order."

The empress voiced her acknowledgment. She waved her hands, indicating for him to withdraw for now. Then, she walked up to the bronze mirror and stared at her reflection, gently caressing her own cheeks.



Her little finger and ring finger had precious gems on them, making her skin look even more glamorous and beautiful.

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After Zu An left the Palace of Peace, he took a detour. When he was sure that no one was following him, he changed into his Golden Token Eleven uniform and returned to the Embroidery House, where someone quickly came to inform him about the results of the investigation.

Xin Rui's younger brother was named Hua Bao. He was a good-for-nothing who idled about and loved to go to the gambling den. He lost more than he won, and he would always ask his mother for more money. However, his mother didn't make much money from repairing clothes, so it was almost always Xin Rui who gave him money.

It seemed that recently, Madam Hua had found him a wife, and she had even prepared many gifts. Everyone who knew Hua Bao had been jealous that he had such a great older sister. After all, the one who had made all of this possible was his older sister.

The neighbors had suddenly realized that Madam Hua doted on this son a lot, and yet she constantly criticized her daughter. At a certain point, that daughter really couldn't take her younger brother's gambling habits, and had said that she wasn't willing to support him anymore. Madam Hua had wept endlessly that day and called her daughter unfilial, saying she wanted the Hua clan to be without a successor.

The neighbors had all sympathized with Madam Hua's daughter. They had met her a few times and knew that she was pretty, and her temperament was also gentle. Many people had even tried to act as matchmakers for her.

But later on, they found out that she worked in the palace. Furthermore, they didn't want to get involved with her gambling-addicted younger brother. Those neighbors thus gave up on the thought.

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Zu An sighed inside when he heard the results. He hadn't expected this world to have spoiled sons too. He then asked, "By the way, did you get a picture of the carriage?"

That subordinate replied, "Yes, but those people don't know much, so they immediately get confused when they see something even slightly intricate, even if it's just an ordinary carriage in the capital."

Zu An took the image and gave it a look. It seemed there was no valuable information he could get from this after all. Still, that made sense. After all, why would the other party use any carriages that would give their identity away?

A silver token envoy who was in charge of the palace's internal affairs came over to report, "Sir Eleven, we investigated all of the imperial palace's wells, ponds, lakes, and other hiding spots. We found a few sets of skeletal remains, but they all belonged to old cases. Furthermore, we've confirmed that none of them are Xin Rui."

Zu An was stupefied when he heard this. No wonder there had been so many supernatural rumors about his former world's imperial palace. Who knew how many tragic deaths and vengeful souls there were in these types of places?! The imperial palace was a monstrous place after all.

"But that shouldn't be..." Zu An was getting annoyed. "We couldn't find any records of her leaving the palace, yet we can't find her inside the palace. How could a living person vanish into thin air?"

The silver token envoy said, "There were no records of her leaving alive. What if she was killed, and then brought outside?"

Zu An was startled. That made sense; there were spatial rings in this world! But still, other people's spatial storages weren't as ridiculous as his Brilliant Glass Bead. Such a thing didn't seem too likely.

He immediately ordered, "All of you should investigate the records for entry and exit from the palace gates. This time, don't look for Xin Rui; instead, see if anyone left carrying a spatial storage."

The silver token envoy shook his head. "Sir Eleven, there is something you don't know. No spatial storages are allowed to enter or exit the palace. This is for the sake of preventing those with ulterior motives from bringing in hazardous materials to harm distinguished individuals. There are specialized personnel by every gate in charge of this task."

Zu An was stunned. He hadn't expected the palace's security to be so strict! They had managed to think of even this. Fortunately, he had already refined the Brilliant Glass Bead in his body, so others couldn't investigate it at all.

Wait... if the imperial palace's security is so strict, then how did Yun Jianyue and the others get in? Zu An thought. Even though that case had been concluded, he knew that Cheng Xiong was but a scapegoat. He hadn't ended up finding the real perpetrator behind Yun Jianyue's case.

He shook his head to clear his mind of such disorganized thoughts. Investigating those things wasn't top priority right now, so he focused on his current case. "Then you should all head out and investigate to see if anyone had large packages on them. I've already observed that there are strict security checks upon entering the palace, but leaving the palace with goods is much easier."

He suspected that Xin Rui might have been brought out as a corpse. Of course, if the other party had things like the corpse decomposition powder found in those tv dramas, he could only admit defeat.

The silver token envoy's expression changed. He was just about to say something, but Zu An had already flung over a stack of silver notes. "I've really troubled you all this time. Take this and split it with everyone. Once you complete this task, there will be more rewards from his majesty as well."

If Zu An wanted people to work like slaves for him, he couldn't copy those entrepreneurs who only knew how to prattle about ideals in his past world, right? He had more than enough money now, anyway, and the crown princess had rewarded him quite a bit not too long ago.

The silver token envoy's eyes lit up when he saw the notes. He didn't trouble Zu An further, as expected, and happily left to pass on the orders.

After Zu An made himself busy for a few more hours, night gradually descended. He left using his normal identity to leave behind a record. That was an opening he had left during the matter with the crown princess last time. He didn't want to repeat that mistake.

Once outside, he changed into the bronze token envoy uniform the empress had given him. After reentering the palace, he headed toward the Palace of Peace.

The Palace of Peace was the empress' private palace. Under normal circumstances, there would be many maids and eunuchs around. However, the palace seemed exceptionally quiet today. Only a few individuals passed by on occasion.

Zu An became vigilant. The empress didn't set a trap for me, did she?

### **Chapter 734: Beaten**

After having been scammed the last time in the Hundred Flower Palace, Zu An really was frightened badly. As such, he quickly used his jade badge to control the small creatures around him. There were a lot of cats at night, so he used their eyes to examine the surrounding disturbance. When he was sure that there were no ambushes set up in the palace, he then quietly snuck in.

Suddenly, Zu An had a bad feeling. He quickly stopped and hid behind a tree. He saw a group of people head in his direction through the eyes of the cats. One figure in bright yellow robes was the emperor himself, Zhao Han!

Zu An's entire body was covered in cold sweat. Empress, what's the meaning of this?! She made me come here, yet the emperor came himself. Is she trying to destroy me?! He didn't dare to even breathe too hard. At the same time, he used the Mirror Mirage technique to make his own aura more and more faint.

As the emperor passed by, no one else noticed anything, but the emperor suddenly stopped.

"Your majesty, is there something wrong?" Eunuch Wen stepped forward and asked.

The emperor turned around to look at the direction Zu An was hiding in. His eyes were incredibly sharp as he yelled, "Show yourself! You dare trespass here?!"

The tree in front of Zu An exploded as soon as the emperor finished speaking. He subconsciously wanted to evade, but he discovered that the air around him had become incredibly viscous. It was as if an invisible power were restraining him.

He suddenly realized something. The last time this had happened, he couldn't move at all. But this time, it didn't seem as ridiculous as before... However, he didn't evade and instead stood in place, crying, "I pay my respects to your majesty!"

The guards around the emperor reacted then; all of them drew their blades, quickly surrounding Zu An. However, they hesitated when they saw the Embroidered Envoy outfit he was dressed in.

The emperor frowned and remarked, "It's you?" Zu An was wearing a mask right now. However, with the emperor's cultivation, he didn't need to look with his eyes at all anymore. He asked, "Why are you here?" His gaze seemed to penetrate through Zu An.

Zu An quickly replied, "Your majesty put me in charge of investigating that case. That's why I came here to look for clues."

The emperor harrumphed. "And your investigation brought you all the way to the empress? Don't tell me you suspect her?"

"This subject doesn't dare." Zu An replied. "It's precisely because I don't dare to suspect her highness that I came here in secret, to avoid drawing suspicion to her in this case."

"Nonsense!" The emperor gave Eunuch Wen beside him a look. "How should we deal with a servant intruding upon the chambers of my wives?"

"He is to be executed by the law!" Eunuch Wen gave Zu An a look. He thought to himself, Did this Embroidered Envoy go crazy? Does he not even want to keep his own life for the sake of this case?

Zu An was alarmed. "Your highness, please forgive me. This subject is still a newcomer and doesn't know the rules. Furthermore, the case's deadline is approaching, so that's why I became anxious..."

He knew that the emperor needed him for many things, so he definitely wouldn't be killed here. However, he still had to display a show of strength in front of everyone else.

Sure enough, the emperor nodded. "Forget it. Out of consideration for your loyalty, I won't take your life. However, a crime is still a crime. Men, flog him fifty times as a warning."

Zu An was alarmed and furious. This guy really was something! Motherfucker! Ever since I came to the capital, I've always been forced to do this and that. Not even a production team's donkey would be abused like this! The worst part was that apart from being given the status of a golden token envoy, he hadn't gotten a single benefit afterward. He was only threatened again and again.

He wanted to say something else, but the emperor had already entered the Palace of Peace. He wasn't given a chance to explain himself at all. Zu An was left speechless.

Then, Eunuch Wen walked over with a group of vicious looking guards and said, "Apologies, sir."

He was always amiable, and even in this type of situation, he didn't want to randomly offend anyone. After all, anyone whom the emperor would spare even after intruding so deep into the palace was definitely special. However, that didn't mean that he could ignore the emperor's orders.

Several guards pushed Zu An down, then used their scabbards to beat him viciously.

Zu An's face remained expressionless. However, rage burned within him.

In truth, he didn't suffer many injuries at all from this beating. It would actually even improve his strength a bit. However, this feeling of having been wronged was unbearable. Ever since he had arrived at the capital, he had always lived like a fucking slave.

Even though he was an optimistic person and acted in a carefree manner, there was still a limit to what he could take. This was the straw that broke the camel's back.

The emperor clearly needed Zu An to help with several cases and obviously wouldn't kill him, yet he still continued to pretend to spare him out of kindness. Then, he would award Zu An with a vicious beating.

In the end, it was because Zu An was still too weak. In the emperor's eyes, he was probably just a servant that the emperor could order around at will. He was probably seen as just a dog, and more than that, a dog that didn't listen too well.

That was why the emperor always beat him down with these methods. These were actually the normal methods of a ruler. If it were any other person, they might already be incredibly scared and feel that the emperor was deep and unfathomable. Then, they would work tirelessly for fear of the emperor.

However, Zu An was a transmigrator. He had been raised according to an entirely different set of values. Furthermore, he had even served as a ruler before in the secret dungeon, so how could he possibly tolerate this?

I need to grow stronger! This thought was stronger and more powerful than ever before in Zu An's mind.

Meanwhile, in the Palace of Peace, the empress walked forward with Eunuch Lu to greet the emperor. "This humble wife greets your majesty!"

The emperor gave her a look of surprise. "It's been a while. Ning'er has grown prettier and prettier."

The empress seemed to have paid special attention to her appearance today. Her eyelashes were long and elegant, and her lips were red and moist. Her clothes were also tighter than usual, making her curves seem even more outrageous. Even the emperor, who was used to seeing all kinds of beauties, was a bit surprised.

The empress blushed and replied, "Thank you, your majesty!"

Eunuch Lu secretly gave the emperor a look. Don't tell me he's going to stay in the Palace of Peace tonight? Tsk tsk tsk, he hasn't come over for so many years, yet he just had to choose today. Could it be that this is the will of heaven?

When faced with her clear and beautiful eyes, the emperor didn't immediately continue and instead looked around. "Hm? There don't seem to be many people in the Palace of Peace tonight. It's also quite dark...?"

Eunuch Lu began to panic. He gave the empress a worried look. Despite that, the empress remained calm and replied, "Something happened to the crown princess recently, so everyone in the Palace of Peace has been busy investigating all manner of intelligence. Now that things have settled, I gave them some time to rest."

The emperor smiled. "The empress is truly a model example in treating your subordinates. Men, grant every single member of the Palace of Peace half a year of salary as a bonus."

The empress immediately bowed respectfully. "This humble wife thanks your majesty in their place. Ah, why did your majesty suddenly think of the Palace of Peace today?"

The emperor replied, "I was carried away by a whim and decided to take a look around. Ah, right, have your injuries improved?"

The empress lowered her head and said dejectedly, "This humble one has already acknowledged my fate."

The emperor said, "I will search the world for medicine. Your past injuries will definitely be healed."

"Thank you, your majesty!" the empress cried happily. However, inside, she sneered. I might have believed you if this had been a few years ago, but so many years have already passed. In the end, they're always the same half-hearted goods. I already know you're only doing this to keep the other wives in check, and not because you want me to recover at all. In the end, she had to find a solution herself.

"Ah, right, I heard some clamoring outside. What happened?" The empress was worried that the emperor might read her true intentions and quickly changed the topic.

"Just an ignorant Embroidered Envoy. I already dealt with him." The emperor sounded as if he were just talking about something insignificant.

The empress was alarmed. She immediately thought of the Embroidered Envoy uniform she had given Zu An. Was it him? This was just too unlucky, right? All of my plans are falling apart!

Even though she was furious right now, she didn't show anything. She didn't continue to ask about it either. After all, it would be strange for a powerful empress to be concerned about a single Embroidered Envoy. Furthermore, this man in front of her was also quite the paranoid person.

The two chatted for a while longer before the emperor got up and said, "Empress, please take some time to rest and recover. This emperor will head back first."

The empress looked disappointed. "Your majesty is not going to stay for the night?"

The emperor's brows furrowed ever so slightly. Then, he shook his head. "Too many things have happened recently. There are still many official matters for me to take care of."

The empress' expression seemed to suggest that she had expected this. But of course, she was still reverent and respectful on the surface. "The affairs of the empire are the most important. I will accompany your majesty!"

"Empress, there is no need to see me out!" the emperor replied before turning to leave the Palace of Peace.

As the emperor exited, he came across Zu An, who had just been punished. Eunuch Wen returned to give a report, to which the emperor replied before looking at Zu An. He said, "Make sure to pay more attention next time. The inside of the palace is different from the outside. If you make this mistake again, not even I can protect you." He thought, This kid is from the streets. He's a bit too wild and needs to be beaten once in a while.

Zu An was filled with curses inside. How could someone like him, who was familiar with the ruler's art of statecraft, not see through these methods? This guy was clearly threatening him, yet he was putting on this benevolent appearance.

Of course, even though that was what he thought, he didn't show a trace of it on the surface. He said, "Thank you, your majesty, for your grace."

When he saw Zu An's weak and dispirited appearance, the emperor left in satisfaction. Looks like the results of beating this kid are pretty good.

Zu An sat in place, meditating. He circulated his Primordial Origin Sutra. He could even quickly recover from life threatening injuries, so these superficial wounds weren't much at all. His wounds quickly recovered, leaving only some scabs on the surface.

However, though his physical wounds had healed, his rage didn't settle in the slightest. His expression was overcast. All sorts of thoughts that would normally be considered disgraceful and blasphemous filled his head.

He needed to become stronger. He couldn't be at the mercy of anyone else ever again.

Suddenly, a mind-clearing fragrance swept over. When Zu An raised his head, he saw that the beautiful empress was already standing in front of him. She asked, "Are you okay?"

### **Chapter 735: Badger Game?**

Zu An couldn't help but sigh in amazement. This world of cultivation made everyone in it more attractive than the people of his previous world.

Perhaps it was because she had once been a powerful cultivator, but time hadn't left behind any traces on the empress' body. Her skin was as smooth as a young lady's, yet she also carried a maturity that young ladies could never hope to have. Zu An could sense the suppleness and softness of her body even through her clothes.

Zu An realized that the emperor had left just now. Is that guy a freaking eunuch? Why did he still leave the palace after meeting with such a mature and stunning beauty? However, he was in a bad mood right now. He said coldly, "Was your highness trying to harm me on purpose? Did you want to use his majesty to get rid of me?"

She had arranged for him to meet her in the Palace of Peace at night, yet the emperor had just happened to show up here. The emperor rarely came here, after all. Could there really be such a coincidence in this world?

The empress sighed and said, "If I wanted to harm you, then I wouldn't have come out here to see you. Honestly, I don't even know why his majesty would come here today."

Zu An refused to comment. He only asked, "What do you need me for? Can you tell me now?"

The empress looked around and said, "Let's talk inside. There are too many eyes here."

Zu An frowned and stayed put. The empress smiled ambiguously and said, "What? Are you scared that I'll eat you inside?"

Zu An harrumphed. He was really upset right now. Even though he knew that she was teasing him, he took a large step and passed her. "I'm quite curious as to just what kind of methods your highness is going to use against me."

...

When Zu An entered the empress' room and smelled the expensive fragrance in it, he secretly swallowed an antidote pill first for fear of being poisoned. Ji Xiaoxi had given him many medicines before, but he had been careless last time in the Hundred Flower Palace and neglected to use them.

After he took the pill, he felt a bit more at ease. He looked around and asked, "Why is it so dark?" The Palace of Peace was quite dark. The lights were much dimmer than usual.

The empress walked over, her long dress dragging along the smooth floor, making her seem even more glamorous. "Why would I leave all those lights on? Having such a vacant place brightly lit would only make it even more uncomfortable."

When he sensed her strong hidden resentment, Zu An couldn't help but ask, "Why doesn't his majesty visit your highness often? Is there some embarrassing truth that can't be revealed?"

The empress chuckled. "You're quite the bold one, aren't you? If his majesty heard you say that, you might already be dead."

Zu An gave her an indifferent look and said, "I'm just concerned about his majesty's dignified body."

The empress was left speechless. Eventually, she said, "You really are something." She couldn't help but give Zu An a few looks before continuing, "I know what you're thinking. I can tell you that there's nothing wrong with his majesty's body."

Zu An had a strange expression as he carefully looked at the beautiful woman in front of him. He didn't think there was any man who wouldn't be tempted by this kind of stunning beauty. Since there was nothing wrong with the emperor, then was there something wrong with the empress?

The empress' face blushed when she saw his gaze. "What are you thinking? The reason his majesty hasn't stayed with any of his harem is because he doesn't have much time left. For the sake of preserving as much longevity as possible, he already started to refrain from such things a long time ago."

Zu An immediately understood. "So that's what's happening. However, if he can't even touch women, then what fun is left in being number one in the world?"

The empress harrumphed. "That's something only a kid like you would say. The joy authority can bring you is far greater than what other things can provide. Once you reach his level, you'll find many things more interesting than women."

Zu An didn't agree with her statement at all. When I was an emperor in Yinxu, I still felt these things were more interesting.

The empress' gaze rested on the blood covering Zu An's back. She reached out her hand to touch his wound, but she was worried that her golden fingernails would hurt him. "Does it hurt?"



Zu An said indifferently, "Not too badly." He had experienced far worse pain, so this much was nothing. However, the mental blow was too much. It had made him question many of his previous thoughts and decisions.

The empress walked over to the side of the room. She squatted down by a cabinet, revealing her mature and full figure. She quickly returned with several bottles of medicine and said, "Take off your clothes. I'll help you apply some medicine over your wounds."

Zu An was stunned. He said with a frown, "Wouldn't that be inappropriate?"

He couldn't help but glance around. He saw that Eunuch Lu had already left, and he hadn't even seen a single eunuch or maid after entering the Palace of Peace. He felt something was strange.

The empress said, "You were punished because of me. I feel quite apologetic as well, which is why I wanted to compensate you somehow."

Zu An's expression turned strange. What the hell is the empress up to?

The empress laughed when she saw Zu An's expression. "What's wrong? The man who had the boldness to play around with the crown princess and even dared to hit my bottom is suddenly becoming shy?"

She hadn't seen it herself, but while others might believe that nothing happened between him and the crown princess, with her understanding of Zu An, she knew that he had definitely done something.

"Woman, you're playing with fire right now." Zu An had already been upset to begin with. Now that he was being teased like this, he decided to just take off his clothes and expose the wounds on his back. He really wanted to see what this woman was up to now.

Even though the empress was already mature and experienced, when she saw the strong and healthy body of the man in front of her, including his muscles that carried explosive power, her heart rate still quickened. She remarked, "I didn't expect you to actually be so muscular, even though you usually have that weak and scholarly appearance."

Zu An frowned. "What exactly does your highness need me for?"

"There's no rush. Let's talk about it later." The empress had a faint smile on her face. She lifted her dress and sat down behind him. She scooped out a bit of ointment with her finger, and then gently applied it over his wounds. "That damn servant really was vicious. He didn't hold back at all."

Zu An said indifferently, "They were the emperor's orders. No one dares to show any negligence."

This was a world of cultivation, so beatings were naturally a bit different from ancient times. The ones who carried out punishment specialized in dealing with cultivators as well. Furthermore, the tools they used all had special runes carved into them, making it harder for the beaten to resist.

"Hm? It's nice to be young. Your injuries have already healed so much." The empress' fingers gently caressed the area around the wound on Zu An's back. The shocking heat and elasticity coming from his skin even made her eyes become misty. This was the vigor of a young man. She had already almost forgotten this kind of heart palpitating feeling.

Zu An frowned. The empress was sitting right behind him, and the two of them were almost within reach. He could even smell the fragrance coming from her body. Her fingers were extremely sleek and soft, but the sensation made the rage he felt go further out of control. For fear that something might happen, he said darkly, "Your highness, are you seducing me right now?"

The empress chuckled and said, "I'm merely applying medicine for you."

Zu An was speechless. What the heck was going on? If a concubine were to hear him speak so directly, shouldn't their expression have immediately changed, followed by them making some distance? There was definitely something fishy going on, but this woman refused to admit it. A mature woman was much better at grasping the tension in relationships than a young woman, after all.

Zu An could no longer sit still and got up. "If your highness needs nothing else, then I'll leave first."

The empress grabbed his hand. "What's wrong? Were you scared that badly by the crown princess? Are you scared that I might frame you too?"

Zu An sighed and said, "Am I wrong? Your highness' behavior today is extremely strange. I have reason to suspect that this is all a badger game."

"Badger game?" The empress was stunned. She had never heard such a term before. However, she could roughly guess its meaning. She sighed and said, "I am a woman as well."

Zu An frowned as he waited for the empress' next words.

The empress sat down. Her usual dignity and fierceness no longer showed between her brows, instead being replaced by weakness and melancholy. She said, "It has already been at least ten years since he last stayed the night here. I know he's trying to prolong his life as much as possible, but I'm still in my prime! Staying all alone here in this palace makes one feel lonely."

Zu An's heart rate quickened. However, he didn't trust her so easily. "Does your highness know that what you've just said is enough to have your entire clan destroyed?"

The empress slowly stood up. She took a step forward, closing the distance between them. Zu An could even see her eyelashes tremble lightly, and he could feel her breath. Her misty eyes stared calmly into his as she said, "If it were anyone else, I wouldn't dare to say such things. However, you're different. I know that you have no respect for his majesty, so you're also the only one who would dare to do certain things."

### **Chapter 736: Master and Servant**

The empress' gaze was filled with a feeling of uncertainty. Zu An was startled and asked, "When your highness talks about doing certain things, are you talking about yourself?"

The empress sat down and reclined comfortably. She rested her chin on her hand and replied, "What do you think?"

She had been a mature and curvaceous woman to begin with. When she lay down like this, her figure was even more seductive and carried a relaxed air. An invisible sort of seduction was taking place.

“Since your highness doesn’t need me for anything else, I’ll leave first.” Even though Zu An felt his throat going dry, he didn’t lose his head. He obviously couldn’t believe that the empress would have feelings for him for no reason, but he couldn’t figure out what she was really thinking, so he decided to just leave first.

“Don’t be in such a hurry; who said I don’t need you for anything else?” The empress grabbed his hand. “My Great Zhou Dynasty has a national treasure I need your help to evaluate.”

“National treasure?” Zu An asked, stunned. This was a world of cultivation, and he had experienced the power of magical artifacts. Just how powerful did the item have to be for the Great Zhou Dynasty to treat it as a national treasure? He became excited and continued, “May I ask what type of national treasure it is?”

The empress gently ran her fingers across Zu An’s body, her bright red lips rising into a lovely arc. “It might be right before your eyes.”

Zu An was speechless. Why did he feel like Xuanzang suffering temptation in the country of women?[1]

The empress giggled when she saw Zu An standing in a stupor. “What, is this empress not enough to be a national treasure?”

Zu An couldn’t help but sigh. “Your highness is incredibly charming, a woman among women. Of course you’re a national treasure.”

The empress’ eyes grew a bit moist. “Is that all for your evaluation? Aren’t you being too half-hearted here?”

It was clearly already long past the height of summer, yet Zu An felt the night was extremely hot. He replied with difficulty, “Then may I ask how your highness wishes for me to evaluate you?”

The empress looked at him in a seductive manner. “You can give me a try yourself. Only through the most intimate experience can you give the most accurate evaluation.”

Zu An sighed. “Your highness, are you tempting me right now?”

The empress gently bit her fingertip and giggled. “I heard from Chu First Miss that you’ve always been a slick-tongued person, that you know how to make a girl happy. But why do you seem stiff today? It’s almost as if you don’t have an ounce of romance in you.”

Zu An got up and said, “Even though I’m a bit of a lustful person, I’m not a fool. Your highness definitely has ulterior motives, but unfortunately, I’m too slow-witted and can’t read your true objective.”

When he had watched that episode of Journey to the West where Xuanzang remained completely indifferent before the seduction of endless charming beauties, he had felt that was a disgrace for all men. He hadn’t expected to be in the same situation today. He really was quite a disgrace today too.

“I’m not asking for anything else.” The empress sighed. “My only request is for you to console me tonight. I already said that I’ve been extremely lonely these years, and no one else dares to do anything to me. Only you alone dared to hit... hit me there. I can’t ask anyone else but you.”

A bit of distress showed on the empress' face as she observed Zu An's silence. "I'm a glorious empress, you know? It's already quite embarrassing for me to go this far. If you still don't respond at all, then I'll really be ashamed."

Zu An sneered. This woman was full of schemes and infatuated with authority. Would she really be discouraged by just that? It would be more believable for you to say Piao Duandiao decided to never go to the government brothel again.

He didn't reply, and instead walked out. He was worried that he might really be unable to control his own instincts if he stayed here. No matter how two-faced he thought the empress was, he had to admit that she was incredible at seduction.

The underripe methods of young girls couldn't compare. The empress gave off a powerful feminine charm that could make others unable to help but think of ravaging her in bed. Furthermore, her identity was special, so the thought of doing so carried a taboo feeling. It really was something exciting to look forward to.

Zu An only managed to free himself with tremendous willpower. The only thought in his head right now was to leave this place as quickly as possible.

The empress was ashamed and annoyed when she saw Zu An turning to leave. She stood up and asked "Mister Zu, are you even a man? You were just beaten by his majesty like a dog, yet you don't even feel anything? I'm giving you a chance to get revenge, but you don't even dare. Are you really that scared of him?"

When he heard this, Zu An, who was already at the doorstep, stopped. He suddenly turned around to look at the empress, his eyes slightly reddening. "What did you say?" This was precisely what had been gnawing at his mind. He had held back tremendous rage until just now. Now that he had been struck in his sore spot, he could no longer hold himself back.

A complacent smile flashed through the depths of the empress' eyes when she saw Zu An's expression. However, she sneered with arrogant disdain, "What? Do I need to repeat that for you? His majesty is unrivaled in this world, so it's not all that shameful if you can't beat him. But this empress is giving you a chance to get revenge through his woman, yet you don't even dare to do such a thing? Heh, it looks like fear has already been etched into your bones. I'm sure you'll be quite the loyal and devoted dog in the future... Ah!"

As soon as the empress finished speaking, Zu An's figure flashed forward, his hand clamping down on her throat. "Woman, I know you're deliberately provoking me, but I have to admit it's working."

The empress found it a bit hard to even breathe from the force on her neck. However, she wasn't scared. Instead, it felt as if electricity were running through her entire body. "What, don't tell me you actually dare to kill me? I don't think you have the guts."

Zu An's breathing quickened and the veins on his arms began to pop. He was currently engaged in a powerful inner conflict.

The empress' golden fingernails gently caressed Zu An's skin, and the sharp, cold feeling made all of his body's pores contract. "This empress knows that you don't dare to kill me, and I know that you're angry."

That's why I'm giving you this chance. You can pour out all of your rage on that person's wife. Do you dare, or not?" Her usually sharp and dignified gaze now carried thirty percent charm, and thirty percent grandeur, and the rest was all provocation.

If I die for this, then so be it! Zu An didn't reply. There was only one thought in his head right now, which was to completely subdue this arrogant woman and complete the first step of his revenge. If he didn't even dare to do this, how was he supposed to challenge the emperor in the future?

He pushed the empress straight down onto the soft seat. Then, he pounced on her with a roar. Even though the empress was left a mess by that powerful force, her lips instead curved upward. Everything was within her control.

...

However, a while later, she soon realized that some things were far beyond her control. Her eyes widened in horror. This was supposed to be a scene of a dignified big sis teasing a little brat, yet in that instant, she seemed to have returned to when she was just a young girl. She was full of shame and fear as she murmured, "You... Are you a beastman?"

Zu An harrumphed. He wasn't in the mood to reply to her at all. Right now, the only thing he wanted to do was vent out all of his rage.

...

Eunuch Lu, who had been standing guard outside the entire time, was shaking all over. He had waited for this day for a long, long time. Ning'er had finally completed her plan.

He stood guard outside while keeping all the sounds from reaching the other maids and eunuchs. Meanwhile, he silently paid attention to the crazy things that were happening inside. A single thought gradually appeared in his head. Who could have thought that this would happen to you today, Zhao Han?!

...

After a long time had passed, Eunuch Lu frowned. You damn brat, haven't you finished yet?! He arrived outside the window they had agreed on and undid the mechanism. When he saw the scene inside, his pupils narrowed and all of his skin turned red. He took a deep breath to calm his pounding heart.

Next, he sent a ki transmission. "Your highness, it's about time. We'll continue according to plan. You're in charge of holding onto him, while this old servant will end his life!"

He had witnessed Zu An fight before. Even though this fellow's cultivation wasn't high, he had endless pesky tricks. If he failed and ended up alarming his majesty, that would be no joke. Both he and the empress would be dead for sure, while their respective clans would also be finished.

If the empress worked with him, then any man would be at his weakest in this sort of situation. Eunuch Lu was confident he could finish Zu An in a single blow.

The empress' dignified hair bun was already completely scattered, and her hair stuck to her face from sweat. She bit down on her red lip and shook her head slightly in his direction.

Eunuch Lu frowned. He began to say something, but the empress didn't give him another chance. She grabbed the curtain nearby, and then the half transparent curtain slowly descended, hiding her and Zu An's bodies.

### **Chapter 737: Change of Plans**

Eunuch Lu was stunned. He didn't know why the empress would suddenly change their plans.

However, her entirely taut body and her expression didn't escape his detection. As a man... or at least a former man, he knew that at that moment, the arrogant and stubborn empress had already been completely subdued.

When he thought of that, he was distressed and jealous, and yet he also felt an unclear emotion. His expression changed several times. He wanted to barge in and kill that hateful fellow several times, yet he was scared of offending the empress.

In the end, he released a decrepit sigh, deciding to respect the empress' decision.

...

After a long time had passed, the empress' entire body was left limp as she curled up in Zu An's embrace like a kitten. She looked at him with an extremely complicated expression.

"Why are you looking at me like that?" Zu An felt a headache. Only now, after he had calmed down a bit, did he realize that he had been way too rash this time. If the emperor knew that he had molded the empress into his own shape, he would immediately be blasted to ashes. At that point, no matter where he tried to run, the emperor would vow to end his life.

But he had to admit that the empress really was quite... wet. The emperor had actually left such a rare beauty neglected for all those years? What meaning was left in being unrivaled in the world?

The empress opened her mouth slightly as if she wanted to say something, but she then hesitated. In the end, she couldn't hold back and softly said, "I finally understand why Chu First Miss would become so devoted to a rascal like you."

"Rascal?" Zu An wasn't happy to hear that description, and he gave her a pinch.

"Ah...!" the empress cried out in alarm. "I was praising you, okay?"

Zu An smiled. He had to admit that praise from a woman this gorgeous, who had such status, made him extremely happy.

The empress' chest rose and fell. She was still lingering in the afterglow of what had just happened. She stroked the scars on his shoulders and asked, "Does it hurt?"

Zu An said in annoyance, "Your fingernails are so sharp, and you scratched me really hard earlier. What do you think?"

The empress giggled. "It's your fault for being so rough. That's why I couldn't control myself..." She suddenly paused. She looked at him gently with her misty eyes, and then said with a sigh, "Everyone

says that his majesty is unmatched in this world. However, only I know that in this aspect, you're actually even greater."

These words were like the sounding of war drums. How could Zu An hold himself back? He flipped her over and immersed himself in the battlefield again.

...

When the sky brightened, Eunuch Lu finally walked into the empress' chambers. It hadn't been long since Zu An left. His eyes drifted over to the fair body resting on a seat that was now covered in a layer of pink. His breathing sped up.

The empress pulled the comforters up around herself and harrumphed in ridicule. "What are you staring for? It's not as if you can do it."

Eunuch Lu's expression warped when he heard those words. He was overwhelmed with pain and regret. In the end, he could only sigh. "Ning'er, I know that you still blame me for not having the ability to protect you back then."

The empress became worked up as she said, "There's nothing strange about not being able to beat Zhao Han. He is the emperor, after all. Who could stop him from obtaining the women he wants? I've never blamed you for that!

"The only thing I hate you for is that you... You were actually willing to join the palace and become a eunuch!"

Eunuch Lu's expression was full of pain. "I was in endless pain back then. I didn't know what I had to do to protect you. This was the only way I could think of! Only then could I continue to accompany you, continue to stay by your side."

"How useless," the empress sneered. "Even more worthless than Zu An accompanying me today."

"I'm going to kill him!" Eunuch Lu's eyes were entirely red. No man could endure this type of humiliation, even if he was no longer a man.

You have successfully trolled Lu Qi for +1024 +1024 +1024...

On the other hand, Zu An jumped in fright from the sudden surge of Rage points. How had he ended up provoking Eunuch Lu?

The empress sneered. "Kill, kill, kill! If you have the ability, go and kill Zhao Han then!"

Lu Qi instantly withered when he heard the emperor's name. "It's all my fault for being useless."

The empress waved her hands and said somewhat wearily, "What are we talking about these old things for? I already put all that behind me a long time ago. I'm tired, so you can leave."

Eunuch Lu seemed to suddenly snap out of his daze. "Right, why didn't we kill him the way we agreed, and instead let him go? What if this matter is exposed? Your highness will be executed!"

The empress rested her chin on her hand, her eyes half closed. "Don't worry, he's more scared than we are. Why would he reveal something like this?"

Eunuch Lu frowned and said, "The dead still keep secrets better." Then, he looked at her enviously and asked, "Your highness, don't tell me you actually like that brat?" He was filled with tremendous jealousy as he recalled the expression he had seen earlier.

"That kid is indeed pretty good in that aspect." The empress sighed. "But do you really think this empress is someone so easily subdued by a man?" She opened her eyes. The charming expression she'd had when she was with Zu An was completely gone, now replaced with a chilling, awe-inspiring look.

Eunuch Lu sighed. This was the Liu Ning he was familiar with, as expected. However, he was still full of complaints. At the very least, in that instant, you were subdued by that man. Of course, he wouldn't be so stupid as to say that. Instead, he asked, "Then why did you stop me from doing anything? Was there some mistake in the plan?"

The empress' charm gradually faded, replaced with her usual arrogant and dignified self. "I learned from Chu Chuyan that even though all of her meridians had been destroyed in the secret dungeon, by the time she came out, she was completely healed. Furthermore, her cultivation even increased.

"Chu Chuyan and Zu An both said it was because of the Evanescent Lotus, but both of us know that the Evanescent Lotus can only increase your cultivation. How could it repair badly destroyed meridians?

"Out of curiosity, I asked Chu Chuyan some more questions. Judging from her hesitation and embarrassment, it was probably in that secret dungeon that the two of them truly became husband and wife."

"From the intelligence we found, the two should have been married in name only. However, after that event, the two of them became incredibly close and Chu Chuyan also completely accepted him. I refused to believe that an outstanding girl like Chu Chuyan would be subdued just because she entered a relationship with a man. There had to be another reason.

"After associating that with the implausible complete recovery of her destroyed vessels, I speculated that this most likely had something to do with the consummation of their relationship. You know that I've been losing hope in my recovery these past few years. Even a slight possibility would be worth trying.

"Even if I guessed wrong, it wouldn't be a big deal. I've already been left alone for so many years, so I'd have just treated it as a bit of fun for once. But after that matter, I realized my suspicions were correct. This fellow's blood essence can indeed nourish and repair meridians."

The empress was thinking out loud. It sounded as if she were explaining, but also as if she were sorting out her own thoughts. At the same time, she seemed to be venting out her frustrations toward Zhao Han.

Eunuch Lu also became excited. "Since we were already successful, then why didn't we kill him the way we planned? I can still make it in time if I go now."

The empress shook her head. Her expression was a bit strange. "Things are a bit different from what we thought. This type of method isn't completed through a single experience, but rather requires prolonged treatment. The meridians that were damaged earlier on have already received nourishment. There are signs of recovery, but one time is far from enough. No wonder Chu Chuyan and Zu An were glued



together afterward. She was an innocent girl, and yet she was tossed and turned around day after day. It would be more strange if she didn't end up liking that kid."

Eunuch Lu's expression filled with both pain and excitement when he heard that 'extended treatment' was required. He couldn't help but ask, "Then what about your highness? Will you end up gradually liking him too?"

The empress said indifferently, "Do you think I'm some naive little girl? You know what I'm like, and you know what I need. Not even the world's number one Zhao Han could subdue me, so what's a trifling Zu An? He's nothing more than a useful elixir."

If Zu An were here, he would see an entirely different side of that woman who had accompanied him gently like a kitten earlier. As expected, the prettier the woman, the better they were at lying.

### **Chapter 738: How Disappointing**

The empress and Eunuch Lu thought that they had gotten away with their schemes, but how could they know that Zu An hadn't only relied on sex to heal Chu Chuyan? He had also used the Primordial Origin Sutra to repair her damaged meridians.

Zu An hadn't known the empress' objectives, so he obviously wouldn't have proactively helped her with her injuries. As such, the empress had only received some nourishment from his blood essence. Fortunately, he had transcendent aptitude meridians, so his sperm possessed powerful properties, and that was why the empress had received benefits as well. At the same time, she thought that she had found the real method.

The empress yawned. She waved her hand again and said, "You can withdraw now; I really am tired."

That fellow really was a vigorous beast! She had been tossed and turned around until she had no strength left. She had used quite a bit of willpower to say those things to Eunuch Lu. Now, her eyelids immediately closed.

Eunuch Lu sighed when he saw the satisfied and content expression the empress had before falling asleep. He walked forward and gently pulled up the covers for her before quietly leaving.

Zu An had already returned to his Embroidered Envoy residence to rest. He was also amazed at the body of a truly mature woman. She had been able to tolerate it no matter how rough he was, and she had lasted an entire night. A young lady definitely wouldn't have lasted that long. They were actually evenly matched.

Zu An only reminisced about the experience for a bit before clearing his mind. He began to think about the empress' true objective.

He definitely wouldn't believe that the empress had sought him out just because she was lonely. If that were really the case, she could have easily found a different person instead of waiting all this time for him.

After all, her body's reactions couldn't deceive anyone. At first, she had acted underripe like a naive little girl, but eventually, she had gradually returned to being a mature woman. It was clear that it had already been a long, long time since she had last done such a thing.

However, he just couldn't figure out her objective. Could it really just be revenge against the emperor?

He could clearly sense her resentment toward the emperor. Furthermore, when she seduced him, she had used this revenge to provoke him. Yeah, that is the most likely reason.

He didn't think about the subject any further, because it wasn't important. What was important was becoming stronger... no, it was making himself stronger.

When he thought about all of the skills he had, the skill that had raised his cultivation the most was still the 'Heaven Devouring Sutra', with its ability to absorb the cultivation of other cultivators. However, after weighing the pros and cons, he gave up on the thought of using it in the end.

With his current cultivation, it was completely pointless to absorb the cultivation of ordinary cultivators. His cultivation wouldn't improve much, and the ki would be impure as well. He had a deep impression of the side effects of the Smiling Proud Wanderer's Star Devouring Art.

That was why, if he was going to absorb anyone's cultivation, it had to come only from powerful cultivators. But he was in the capital right now, a place where countless eyes were watching him. If he wasn't careful and ended up being exposed, then he might end up making the entire world his enemy!

After all, everyone else had to cultivate properly, so why could he just steal someone else's hard work? Furthermore, people would be scared of being sucked dry, so they would all want to get rid of him first.

That was the case with Mosquito Daoist. Even though her powerful cultivation and her survival skills had allowed her to get away with such a thing, she had always lived in the shadows. If she wasn't being chased by someone, then she was about to be chased. Such a life was also meaningless.

That was why, unless it was absolutely necessary, Zu An wasn't willing to choose that path.

He began to think over his other options. Suddenly, he took out a scroll from inside of the Brilliant Glass Bead. Written on the scroll were the words 'Ki Condensation Ancient Scroll'.

This was a pill refinement method he had obtained from inside the Brilliant Glass Bead, but back then, he hadn't awakened a fire element pill refinement technique. That was why this thing had been gathering dust in the corner the entire time. He had almost forgotten about it.

Right now, he needed to increase his strength. Furthermore, he could borrow Daji's flame ability. That was why he remembered it again.

However, he didn't know how much these Ki Condensation Pills could increase his cultivation. They might not be of much help, just like ki fruits. After all, the amount of ki fruits needed to increase his cultivation was insanely high.

Zu An decided to give it a try. He had already memorized the contents of the scroll, and he had gathered all of the necessary ingredients a while ago. He arranged a medicinal furnace inside the room, then summoned Daji.

He had to admit that Daji was just too beautiful. Even though she didn't have her own will right now, and her eyes lacked the slightest bit of expression, she was just like a beautiful painting even when she was just standing casually.

Furthermore, it was precisely because she lacked her own consciousness that she lacked her legendary charm, but she instead had more of an aloof air. She was just too pretty.

Her long hair and her clothes fluttered about. She really was like a goddess from the heavens.

What a pity though, I can only look... Zu An sighed. He quickly focused and controlled Daji, making her squat down by the medicinal furnace. He began to slowly refine the medicine in the furnace.

If others knew that he was using such an insanely beautiful woman as a maid like this, their jaws might just hit the ground from shock. Still, he couldn't be bothered with such things right now. He didn't dare to show any carelessness while following the Ki Condensation Pill's recipe.

But he didn't control the temperature properly, causing black smoke to come out. When he opened the lid, he saw that the ingredients had already been burned to black dregs. It wasn't that he had been too careless. After all, succeeding on the first try wasn't too likely. So, he carefully tried again.

Failure, failure, and more failure... Unexpected things kept happening every time.

Suddenly, on his ninth attempt, a fragrance emerged from the medicinal furnace. It was different from the usual smells, because just this scent alone felt refreshing.

Zu An opened the furnace. Two small, pigeon egg-sized brown pills were sitting inside.

My luck's not bad! Zu An's eyes lit up. The Ki Condensation Ancient Scroll's recorded recipe required two portions of ingredients each time, as that would improve the success rate a bit. Even if one pill got destroyed, there would at least be one more. The chances of having a pair emerge were quite low.

He picked up one pill and swallowed it. He sensed a warm stream entering him, spreading throughout his body before disappearing.

Zu An opened his eyes in shock. That's it? Why didn't he feel any difference?

He quickly examined himself. He felt there wasn't much difference in the amount of gold in his formation either. Even if there had been some change, it was definitely negligible. At the very least, he couldn't detect anything.

Don't tell me these Ki Condensation Pills are even worse than ki fruits? He had worked so hard for this, yet this was the result? He refused to admit that and checked himself again. However, he still saw the same results.

Suddenly, a cold voice said by his ears, "This pill isn't for increasing your ki, but rather for helping you condense and refine your ki. Then, it will transform your ki into a liquid state. This way, the same body can hold more ki."

Zu An looked toward the window with shock and surprise. He saw a beauty in a red dress sitting by his windowsill. Her flawless face was absolutely stunning, and above her pretty eyes were brows that were a bit thicker than other girls'. Her presence carried a mysterious, free, and aloof aura.

"Big sis empress!" Zu An refused to believe his eyes. She had slept for so long that it had already been a long time since they last met each other.

Mi Li raised her leg and tapped the tip of her toes against his chest, stopping him from running enthusiastically toward her. "Don't even think about it. I smell a vixen on you."

Zu An smiled in embarrassment and said, "You know everything." Why did he feel as if he had been caught by his wife?

Mi Li gave him an ambiguous smile. "You guys were going at it so intensely, it'd be difficult for me not to know. I felt your ki surging crazily while I was asleep and thought that something had happened to you, but it turned out you were going crazy with a vixen. You're really quite something, aren't ya? You actually ended up sleeping with this world's empress?"

Zu An's cheeks burned up. "It's all my fault. I ended up getting too worked up and placed you in danger."

If it were just him alone, that would be one thing, but Mi Li's fate was linked to his. He had ended up provoking this world's most powerful expert out of a momentary burst of emotions. If this matter were revealed, he would be done for. That was why he felt guilty.

Mi Li rolled her eyes. "All you did was sleep with an empress. Look at how scared you are! How disappointing."

### **Chapter 739: A Feeling**

Zu An was speechless. What do you mean, all I did was sleep with an empress? What, are there a few more empresses I can sleep with out there?

Mi Li said, "I heard most of your conversation with that sly vixen, too. I reckon you were probably bullied quite badly by the emperor, and you were even flogged yesterday. That was why you poured out all of your revenge on the empress out of anger."

Zu An was embarrassed as he said, "You've witnessed a poor side of me."

Mi Li's expression remained serious as she remarked, "No, I think you did quite well."

Zu An really was confused now. He really didn't know whether Mi Li was really angry, or if she was being ironic.

Mi Li could see through his thoughts. She harrumphed and said, "I'm being honest. You're destined to become this world's strongest man. How can you be afraid of the slightest thing? The emperor did whatever he wanted to you. Over time, he could leave behind a shadow in your heart, making you too scared to go against him.

"It wasn't that big of an issue when your cultivation was lower, but at higher levels of cultivation, it could affect you more and more. It could even become an inner demon that would prevent you from making any progress."

Zu An jumped in fright. "Is it really that bad?"

Mi Li replied, "Low level cultivators like you cultivate the body and ki. Once you reach a higher level, the main focus is on cultivating the soul. Cultivating the soul requires a powerful will. The stronger your heart, the easier it becomes to make your soul stronger. On the contrary, if there are gaps in your mentality, it's easy for problems in your cultivation to arise."

Zu An shivered inside. Mi Li's cultivation level was incredibly high, so he trusted her experience. At the same time, he was glad that he had such an attractive teacher and friend to accompany him, which would save him a lot of time compared to others.

Mi Li continued, "I originally planned to find a chance to warn you about that, but you actually took this step on your own. Very good, you're worthy of being... ahem, worthy of being the man whom I beat down so viciously, but still refused to yield."

Zu An shook his head in embarrassment. "All I did was sleep with a woman out of anger, yet you're putting me on a pedestal. I'm even getting a bit embarrassed."

"Someone as shameless as you can become embarrassed?" Mi Li rolled her eyes. She continued, "Still, you have to be careful. That vixen seems to have ulterior motives."

Zu An looked a bit distressed as well. "I know she has other plans, but I just can't figure them out."

Mi Li gave him a strange look. "She wants your body, obviously."

Zu An blushed. "You shouldn't joke like that. Even though the two of us haven't done much, she's definitely not the type to do stupid things out of lust."

Mi Li laughed and said, "What are you thinking about? I was talking about your transcendent aptitude."

"Transcendent aptitude?" Zu An was stunned. He had almost forgotten about that.

Mi Li said, "She seems to have some internal injuries, and she wants to use your body to heal herself. She seemed to have used some charming technique to take some of your blood essence, and that was what startled me awake. But because that method didn't hurt your foundation, I decided not to bother you."

Zu An suddenly realized what was happening. No wonder it had felt as if there were countless little mouths sucking at him inside of the empress' body! At the time, he had been amazed at just how amazing this woman felt, but it turned out she was using these tricks on him!

Mi Li sounded a bit confused as she continued, "Your transcendent aptitude blood makes your blood essence extremely useful to any cultivator. Under normal circumstances, there's no way she would let you go if she knew about it. She would have sucked you dry."

Zu An subconsciously rubbed his neck, feeling some lingering fear.

Mi Li mused, "But if she didn't know about your transcendent aptitude, then why would she make such a huge sacrifice? Why would she exchange her body for your blood essence?"

Zu An's thoughts moved quickly. He suddenly thought of something. "She probably deduced something when she was talking to Chuyan..."

Then, he gave her a rough explanation of how he had sent Chuyan to ask Liu Ning for help.

Mi Li's brows furrowed slightly. "Tell your stupid wife to not blab about how you healed her in the future. Otherwise, it might easily bring you great harm."

"How could she have anticipated that the empress would have such thoughts? She's quite sharp normally. She was probably just a bit confused out of worry." Zu An subconsciously defended Chu Chuyan.

Mi Li's expression sank. "You don't have to do that affection stuff in front of me. She's not even here. I was just reminding you to be careful about this."

Zu An saw that her expression was off and quickly said in apology, "Okay, I'll warn her later." As the mood was a bit strange, he quickly changed topics. "By the way, did you already get rid of all of the poison?"

"How can the Red Tears of Lady Xiang be that easy to get rid of?" Mi Li harrumphed. However, her expression still eased when she sensed his concern. "But I've managed to get it under control. I won't have to suddenly fall asleep again like before."

Zu An was extremely happy to hear that. "That's great!"

Mi Li gave him an ambiguous look. "Are you being honest? Are you not scared of having another person constantly nagging you?"

Zu An chuckled. "Of course I'm being honest. As for my business, you already saw it all anyway. I'm quite fond of myself in that aspect, so it's not as if I'm scared of being seen."

Mi Li had watched the entire thing between him and Chu Chuyan anyway. Wait, didn't she possess Chu Chuyan back then? Then doesn't that mean...

Mi Li's thoughts seemed to have reached a similar point. There was a blush on her pretty cheeks, and her expression was a bit unnatural as well. "Ahem, who has the time to watch you? Let me make it clear right now, okay? We're still going to do things the way we did before. Don't rely on me when you encounter danger, or else you'll never become someone truly strong."

"Okay." Zu An's expression also softened when he looked at her.

Mi Li subconsciously tugged on her clothes. She couldn't help but feel that this fellow seemed to be able to see right through her. She quickly changed the topic. "Right, did you find any of the things I asked you to find?"

Zu An knew that she was talking about the treasures that could help her rebuild her body. "Sorry, I looked through the Embroidered Envoy database, but I wasn't able to find any information."

Mi Li's brows furrowed. "Could it be that all of those ingredients already went extinct over time?"

Zu An consoled her. "There's no need for you to be too worried. Perhaps it's just that their names changed over time. Don't worry, I'll keep it in mind. I'll have way more resources at my disposal in the future, so it'll become easier for me to find them."

A smile returned to Mi Li's face. "I guess you have some conscience. However, I've been feeling quite strange recently. I feel as if we're close to finding something for some reason."

"Is that true?" Zu An was shocked. Mi Li was an expert with high cultivation. There was no way she was just bluffing. There had to truly be a trail of fate.

"Yeah. But you don't have to force anything; just do what you've been doing." Mi Li was surprisingly optimistic. "Alright, tell me what's happened all this time."

Zu An began to chat with her, telling her about the various things that had happened. For some reason, he felt a strange sense of security whenever he was at her side.

Even though Mi Li wouldn't admit to it, she experienced something similar. To a certain degree, they were both outsiders in this world, so they shared a natural feeling of loneliness. They felt a sense of warmth from each other.

As she listened to Zu An's experiences, Mi Li's frown grew deeper. In the end, she said bluntly, "You really have no other skills apart from courting girls."

Zu An was speechless. Sis, are you praising me or putting me down here?

Mi Li continued, "You're only getting some small favors and gratitude out of the things you do. Even though your relationship with them is good, why would they help you at a crucial time?"

"Don't tell me I need to get people of my own or something?" Zu An suggested.

Mi Li still shook her head. "That's not it. Your current strength isn't high enough, so even if you try to gather some people, it'll still be useless. Furthermore, doing that will only draw bad attention from the emperor."

"Then what do I do?" Zu An was getting a headache.

Mi Li's eyes flickered brightly as she exclaimed, "There are two things you can do!"

#### **Chapter 740, Part 1: Someone Overlooked**

Zu An was startled and asked, "What two things?"

Mi Li replied, "The first is to cultivate your reputation! The more people know about you, the more they'll be willing to follow you. You'll be able to easily gather people in the future."

"Cultivate my reputation?" Zu An murmured, "And how do I do that?"

"To put it simply, you need to do things others can't do. The more difficult those things are, the greater your reputation will be." Mi Li said. "For example, in the crown princess' case, the entire capital was thrown into an uproar, and many people were discussing it secretly. If you can crack this case, together with the matter of your Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, many people will start to recognize you."

Zu An began to feel a headache. "But I still don't have any clues about this matter..."

"It's not a big problem even if you can't crack the case." Mi Li's expression became a bit strange. "There is one other method to gain recognition."

"And what is that?" Zu An immediately asked.

"If you can sleep with women that others can't have. For example, if you publicly revealed that you slept with the empress, then I can promise you that every single person in every single street would recognize you. All powers that oppose the Zhou dynasty, even the foreign tribes by the border, would see you as their idol." Mi Li smirked. It was clear that she found this suggestion quite amusing.

Zu An was speechless. He wasn't tired of living yet. If he dared to say such a thing, then even though the entire world would know his name, he would be blasted to smithereens by the enraged emperor.

"What's the actual second way?" Zu An asked impatiently.

"The second is obviously to increase your own strength. In the end, this is a world of the strong." Mi Li retracted her smile and became serious. "Unfortunately, you aren't willing to use the Heaven Devouring Art. That would have been your fastest method. But of course, there's a reason behind your misgivings."

She suddenly frowned, clearly pondering how to increase his strength as well. Eventually, she said, "Right, I remember sealing Old Mi's strength in your body before. You couldn't absorb it back then, as that would harm your foundation. Now that your cultivation is growing so much, as long as you reach the peak of the eighth rank, you should be able to absorb the rest of his power."

"Peak of the eighth rank, huh?" Zu An thought for a bit. Eight of his seventh rank formation diagrams were already lit up, so he could barely be considered to be at the peak of the seventh rank. He was still far from the peak of the eighth rank. Even though cultivation only became harder and harder the further one went, at the very least, he had some hope.

He quickly asked, "Right, just now, you said that Ki Condensation Pills can help high ranked cultivators break through. What was up with that? I don't think I've ever needed anything to help me break through along the way."

Mi Li explained, "Cultivation becomes more and more difficult the farther you go. You might not have issues with breaking through when you're at a lower rank, but once you pass the seventh rank, every single rank's breakthrough becomes extremely difficult.

"Many people who were geniuses in their youth could get up to the fifth or sixth rank at a young age, but they just couldn't break through the seventh rank and enter the eighth rank. That's because, after the seventh rank, every single increase in rank relies on more than just ki accumulation. It requires your own enlightenment."

"What do I need to comprehend?" Zu An was confused.

"Your own dao path!" Mi Li's expression became stern. "Starting from the eighth rank, you can resonate with the world and borrow its power. That's why you must harmonize with the world. The dao is extremely important from the seventh to eighth rank, and it's also tied to your future accomplishments. The more precise of a dao you find, and the more it agrees with the origin of the world, the greater your future accomplishments will be. Otherwise, you'll have to work harder without much progress."



“Ah, I understand that at least.” Zu An was confident. Whether it was a wet path or a dry one, or even if it was a delicious one... Ahem, he could find it even with his eyes closed.

“Do you really?” Mi Li frowned. “This is no joke, you know?”

“I do.” Zu An had read so many webnovels in his past world. He had already read too many similar stories. The Confucian school called it ‘resolve’, Buddhism called it ‘great aspiration’... In the end, it was finding a path most suited for oneself.

“Then what is your path?” Mi Li asked with curiosity. The other party was already close to the peak of the seventh rank. It was already a good time to start considering such a matter.

Zu An subconsciously replied, “My dao is that one day, regardless of whose path it is, I’ll be able to enter as long as I want to.”

Mi Li was speechless. Even though she didn’t really understand, she felt this kid was saying something perverted.

She shook her head and got rid of her messy thoughts, continuing, “The cultivators of this world often use some pills to condense their ki for the sake of enlightenment. Their seemingly intangible ki condenses into liquid and perhaps even solidifies, giving them a way to sense the origin of the world. Every single person has different innate talents, and their thoughts are different as well. The things they comprehend will often be extremely different.”

Zu An’s eyes lit up. Was this ‘origin of the world’ referring to the formation of the cosmos?

Sigh, these people don’t know anything about science. How can these ignorant people sense the bigger picture? Of course they come up with all types of nonsense when they’re comprehending the dao! You can’t really say that the insights they gain are wrong, but it’s just chicken scratch. Even if you combine everything they know together, they’re probably still too far from the true origin of the world.

However, even though science had developed in his past world, their comprehension of the universe was similarly lacking.

Mi Li didn’t know that Zu An already knew so much. She continued, “The Ki Condensation Pill you just refined is precisely a pill that condenses the ki within your body.”

Zu An was a bit disappointed. “No wonder I didn’t feel much increase in cultivation.”

Mi Li hesitated a bit, and then said, “It isn’t just now. Even if you reach the peak of the seventh rank, these pills still won’t be of much use.”

“Why? Can’t they help me condense ki?” Zu An quickly asked.

Mi Li said, “You cultivate those unrivaled manuals, the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra and the Primordial Origin Sutra, as well as the Heaven Devouring Sutra. Your cultivation path is different from that of others to begin with. Don’t tell me you haven’t noticed that every single rank is much harder for you than for others?”

Zu An was immediately moved when he heard this. “Finally, someone who understands me! Those protagonists all manage to level up like crazy, but why am I as slow as a freaking turtle?! Those ordinary cultivators are rabbits, but I’m just...”

Mi Li said indifferently, “Did you not realize that you’re much stronger than others at your level?”

Zu An was stunned. That made a lot of sense. He had just never really thought about it before.

Mi Li said, “Even though I’ve been sleeping all this time, I’ve been thinking about you as well. I have a pretty good understanding now. The reason why your cultivation is much slower, the reason why the amount of ki you need is far greater than others, is because you’ve already been condensing ki on your own for a long time. It’s different from the liquid form that others strive for; your ki instead exists in a state I can’t even comprehend. In other words, you already did what others at the peak of the seventh, eighth, and ninth rank did. Normal people can easily get stuck at these bottlenecks for many years, or even their entire lives.”

Zu An was silent. Mi Li continued, “Furthermore, according to my understanding, the strength and density of your ki condensation has already exceeded the level of masters and even grandmasters.”

Zu An’s brows rose. “Ah... this feels so good. Do you have more? Keep the praises coming.”

Mi Li harrumphed. “What are you getting all cocky for? Even though the quality of your ki surpasses them, its volume and overall rank is still far inferior. It still isn’t hard for them to crush you to death.”

Zu An said gloomily, “Why do you have to be like that?”

At the same time, he took out the other Ki Condensation Pill. “Sigh, I finally managed to make something after so much hard work, but it ended up being useless.” He had ended up scrapping so many materials, and he’d even had such high hopes in the beginning, so this really hurt.

“That might not necessarily be the case. Even though this pill isn’t useful for you, it’s useful for someone else.” Mi Li said.

“Who? You?” Zu An immediately dispelled this thought. Mi Li was a soul body right now. Furthermore, even if she had been in human form, with her cultivation, she should have already made it way past the period where she needed these pills.

He really was quite curious, actually. She was clearly a soul body, so why did she need to wear clothes? The red dress she was wearing was something he had bought. Furthermore, there were many similar pretty dresses in his Brilliant Glass Bead.

“Where are your eyes wandering?” Mi Li glared at him. Then she continued, “That vixen over there might need it.”

## **Chapter 740, Part 2: Someone Overlooked**

Zu An was stunned. When he followed Mi Li’s gaze, he saw that she was looking at Daji, who was sitting next to the medicinal furnace.

Daji had been devastatingly beautiful to begin with. Now that she was just sitting there quietly, her white dress made her look even more like a wise and stunning lady.

"I really find this hard to believe. Such a beautiful woman ended up becoming a simple maid." Even Mi Li couldn't help but sigh.

Zu An snapped out of his daze and asked, "The Ki Condensation Pill can be useful for her?"

"You can give it a try." Mi Li arrived at Daji's side, her beautiful eyes full of curiosity. After all, she had even wanted to temporarily occupy Daji's body, but she couldn't. That was why she was curious as to just what kind of form Daji had.

Zu An stared at the two girls in front of him. One was dressed in fiery red clothes, and the other in fluttering white clothes. The two of them really were incredible.

He walked over to Daji and fed her the Ki Condensation Pill. When he saw her red lips close gently, and then watched her swallow, he couldn't help but swallow as well. Exceptional beauties really were exceptional! She was still so enchanting, even in this state where she hadn't recovered her consciousness.

"You beast." Zu An's gulp didn't escape Mi Li's detection, and she harrumphed in disdain.

Zu An's face heated up. He was just about to say something, but he suddenly stopped. A row of characters had appeared on the holographic keyboard screen in his head:

Valkyrie skill level up material detected...

Zu An was shocked. He quickly read over the contents and saw that Daji's three skills, 'Voice of the Devil', 'Fox Charm', and 'Nine-Tailed Fox', were all skills that could be leveled up. They started at level one, but as the skills leveled up, they got stronger and stronger.

"Why does this feel like a game?" Zu An sneered. As a keyboard warrior shut-in, he had played his fair share of games. This was obviously a system he was familiar with.

Each skill had ten levels. Furthermore, regardless of which skill it was, the materials needed for each level up were the same. That was why what he needed to consider was which skill would be the most helpful right now.

Zu An didn't have enough resources to level everything up at the same time. His past experience playing games had taught him that using resources carelessly was a stupid choice. He carefully looked over the requirements needed to level up the skills, and his expression became strange.

Upgrading a skill to level two needed three types of materials: Two Ki Condensation Pills, four Dragon Scales, and 12,000 silvers.

Zu An cursed. This damn scam of a system! Why does upgrading a freaking skill need silver?!

Even though 12,000 silvers wasn't too much for his current self, he was sure that as he leveled up the skills, the required amount of silver would only become greater and greater.

He had been scammed by countless games in his past world. Each time, what he lacked was always these resources, and one would have no choice but to spend real money.

As for the four dragon scales, that was quite the easy matter. He might not have other things, but he had more than enough dragon scales. Whether it was that red dragon or the Dragon Race elder he had killed later on his way to the capital, those corpses were still in his Brilliant Glass Bead. He had been wondering what to do with them. Now, there was finally a good place to use them. The only thing he lacked now was another Ki Condensation Pill!

As such, he communicated his discovery to Mi Li. Mi Li thought it wasn't all that strange that he and Daji had a special communication method. She was instead curious about the skill leveling method. "Hm? Shouldn't the skills increase with her cultivation? There's such a simple way to upgrade them? If you could popularize this, what would be the point of cultivators cultivating anymore?"

Zu An smiled bitterly as he said, "I don't think that's possible." After all, he had only pulled Daji as his sole valkyrie. This method was definitely useless to others.

He quickly controlled Daji to continue refining pills. He thought that after his previous success, his experience would make things easier. However, all he got in return were five failures in a row.

What was even more depressing was that, during the fifth failure, black smoke came out of the furnace and it exploded into pieces.

Zu An and Mi Li subconsciously protected themselves, but Daji wasn't so lucky. Her fair face was covered in black ashes. Zu An subconsciously tried to help her wipe them off, but Daji turned away and cleaned her face herself. Afterward, she continued to quietly sit in place. Mi Li and Zu An were both left speechless.

Eventually, Mi Li couldn't help but laugh. "You wanted to use this chance to take advantage of her, but she didn't bite."

Zu An felt extremely gloomy. "I really only wanted to help her wipe them off."

He had already tested things out before. Daji would obey his orders and help him fight, but she absolutely wouldn't engage in any type of physical contact with him. Things had happened too quickly just now, so he had forgotten that.

Mi Li looked at Daji with a strange expression. "That maid of yours really is strange; she's quite defiant. Should I help you subdue her so she'll listen more?"

She had wanted to enter Daji's body previously. No matter how proud she was, she still had to admit that Daji was beautiful, and that she was someone worthy of possessing. However, she had actually been actually blown back by a mysterious force, leaving her quite upset. That was why she wanted to get back at her.

Daji subconsciously cowered when she heard Mi Li's words, although it was unclear whether her movements were a trick of the imagination. Still, there was a bit more vigilance in her eyes.

Zu An shook his head. "Stop, I'm not that much of a pervert! Furthermore, she already helped me with a lot of things recently, so she's a comrade and not a servant."

Since these valkyries were designed such that he couldn't touch them, there was definitely a reason for it. Forcing such a thing might instead cause unpredictable results. Furthermore, he had never been the type to use force. Wasn't it more fun to slowly improve their love meters?

Daji turned around to give Zu An a look. Her expression didn't didn't change in the slightest.

Mi Li sneered, "Tsk, this girl is nothing more than a leather bag. You're wasting your time."

Zu An shook his head. He didn't want to continue bickering over this issue. He asked, "By the way, why is the success rate for this damn pill so low? I'll end up wasting a ton of resources at this rate."

After all, he had already used up most of his materials from all of the trials. Some of the ingredients were actually quite expensive. But the outcome hadn't brought him many pills at all!

Now that they were talking about important matters again, Mi Li put away her playful smile and stared at the broken medicine furnace. "I watched the whole thing. You didn't make too many mistakes, so the issue is probably with this medicinal furnace. This furnace is just an ordinary furnace for making medicine. When refining pills, you need one specialized for it. Find a good pill furnace and it should solve your problem."

Zu An asked, "Where would I find one?"

Mi Li rolled her eyes. "I've been sleeping the whole time, so how could I possibly know? But judging from what you've said, the Royal Academy in the capital probably has one."

Zu An thought of something. He remembered Jiang Luofu, as well as the Xie clan's siblings. He wondered if he could get a pill furnace through his connections.

However, those eyes filled with endless depth appeared in his mind again. He immediately became serious. He still didn't know why the other party had let him off so easily. He voiced his doubts, but Mi Li couldn't figure out the empress' objective either.

"It's useless even if you try to think about these things. The difference between you is too great. You should focus on the things you should be focusing on right now." Mi Li dragged him back to reality. "Bring out the information you obtained from selling your body to that vixen."

"What do you mean, selling my body? Both sides were getting what we needed, okay?" Zu An replied gloomily. The way she put it just made him seem as if he had suffered a lot because of Liu Ning.

He took out a booklet Liu Ning had given him. It included the oral confessions of the servants and guards who had 'seen' him and the crown princess together, as well as the results of the investigation.

The two of them looked through the information together. He discovered that all the earliest witnesses had disappeared mysteriously. Most of the others had only rushed to the scene after they heard the news. According to the information, even Shi Jun had only arrived after he received news midway.

"Could it be that I made a mistake?" Zu An frowned. If the one behind the scenes wasn't Shi Jun, then who could it be?

"Hurry and look over here." Mi Li pointed at something in the booklet.

“Hm?” Zu An moved over. He suddenly smelled a faint fragrance. What the heck? She’s a soul body, right? Why does she smell so good?

Zu An subconsciously tilted his head to the side. Mi Li’s side profile seemed as if it had been drawn with a brush, sleek and fine. Because her head was lowered, some of her beautiful hair had scattered down. Paired with her perfect appearance, it really was a stunning scene.

“I’m going to gouge your eyes out if you stare any further,” Mi Li said coldly without turning around.

Zu An jumped in fright. He quickly shifted his attention to the booklet. “What...”

He had already seen this before, but he hadn’t paid too much attention to it. However, now that Mi Li had gotten his attention and pointed it out again, he noticed that something was strange. There was one common point linking all of the missing people, which was that they had either been stationed near Xuanwu Gate, or they had visited Xuanwu Gate not too long before.

Zu An immediately realized something. No one in the palace could find Xin Rui’s corpse, and yet there were no records of her leaving the palace in the records. He had thought that Xin Rui might have been brought out through the other gates and somehow managed to pass the inspection.

But now that he thought about it, it seemed he had overlooked something. Had Xuanwu Gate’s Ou Wu colluded with Xin Rui? He was in charge of guarding the Xuanwu Gate, so he obviously had a chance to falsify the records. That way, everyone else would be misled by the investigation.

He couldn’t wait any longer when he thought of that. He put on his Embroidered Envoy mask and quickly rushed out. But as soon as he left, he bumped into a soft body.

The other party let out a cry of alarm. “Ah!”

“How dare you?!” came a shocked and furious voice berating him. The sound of all sorts of weapons being drawn could be heard.