

Immortal 741

Chapter 741: Appropriate Retribution

Zu An sensed that he had bumped into someone, and that the other party had fallen backward from the force. Subconsciously, he reached out to grab them.

However, his senses were filled with a soft and fragrant feeling, leaving him shocked. He could hear multiple voices berating him and the sound of weapons being drawn. Soon, he realized that the person in his embrace was actually the crown princess, and his arm was around her waist.

He quickly let go and took a step back, saying, "I apologize. I was in too much of a hurry when I left and accidentally bumped into the crown princess. I ask the crown princess for forgiveness."

Zu An had been completely focused on looking for Ou Wu just now and hadn't noticed that there was someone outside. This really was quite strange. What was the crown princess doing in front of his residence so early? He had worked so hard in the Palace of Peace last night, and then he had chatted with Mi Li for a long time. The sky had already turned bright.

"Nonsense! Do you think a trifling apology is enough after you've offended the crown princess? Men, arrest this man immediately!" the crown princess' personal maid Rong Mo shouted fiercely.

"Wait!" The crown princess stopped her subordinates. "Sir Eleven didn't do it intentionally. There's no need to criticize him further."

"But..." Rong Mo still seemed to have more to say.

The crown princess glared at her and retorted, "Do you think I don't already have enough rumors going around about me? If you start something over this too, I'll have even more people talking about me!"

Rong Mo wasn't too happy to hear those words, but she remembered that the crown princess had just had a 'scandal' with Zu An. Having something similar happen so quickly afterward would indeed be a bad thing.

The guards all sheathed their blades when they heard what the crown princess said, and the atmosphere immediately eased.

"Why is Sir Eleven in such a hurry this morning?" the crown princess asked, blushing slightly. Even though he had only held her for an instant, the feeling of safety she'd experienced in his arms, as well as the heat she'd felt, had still made her heart rate quicken. However, Zu An's figure suddenly appeared in her head and her expression immediately grew conflicted.

Mi Li said teasingly by Zu An's ears, "Look at you. Looks like even the crown princess has some feelings for you."

Zu An said impatiently, "Stop speaking nonsense."

"What?!" The crown princess looked at him in disbelief.

Zu An smiled awkwardly and said, "It's nothing, I was talking to myself. Actually, it's a good thing that I ran into you here, crown princess. I have a matter that I need your guidance on."

"I'm not worthy of asking for guidance from. However, please speak your mind, Sir Eleven." The crown princess had a faint smile on her face, as if she were a young and lively girl. It was entirely different from the strict appearance she usually displayed in the eastern palace.

Zu An asked, "Does the crown princess know who Xuanwu Gate's Ou Wu is?"

The crown princess' pretty brows furrowed. She waved her hands to have her subordinates move a bit further away. Then, she asked quietly, "Why is Sir Eleven suddenly asking about him? Is it because you've discovered something about him in your investigation?"

She had come here so early because she wanted to learn more about his investigation. She had been worried that he might really find out what had happened between Zu An and herself.

Zu An replied, "Indeed, there are some suspicious things." In his opinion, he and the crown princess were naturally on the same side, so there was no need to hide anything from her.

The crown princess' eyes lit up. She quickly said, "He's someone from King Qi's faction. He was someone the Qin clan's State Duke of Prestige personally brought up."

Zu An frowned. King Qi? Qin clan? Doesn't this mean that this matter was caused by the Qin clan? What the hell? Is the Qin clan really willing to go that far to rip me and Chuyan apart?

He was getting really annoyed. He cupped his hands and said, "Crown princess, please forgive me. I need to visit Xuanwu Gate, so I'm unable to keep you company." He turned around to leave after speaking.

The crown princess quickly said, "I'll go with you." Seeing his confused expression, she said in a rather embarrassed manner, "I am a victim of this matter too. I want to see just who was responsible for framing me."

Zu An knew that with her ability, the crown princess definitely knew that this investigation was related to her. He nodded in response. Then, their group quickly headed to Xuanwu Gate.

When they arrived at Xuanwu Gate, Ou Wu was nowhere to be seen. When Zu An asked the imperial guards for information, he learned that Ou Wu had asked for a leave of absence a few days prior.

Zu An asked, "When did he ask for a leave?"

The guards thought for a bit and then replied, "It might have been three days after you came to investigate."

Zu An thought to himself, This is bad. This fellow probably fled because he was scared of being caught, which was why he waited a day before asking for a leave. He didn't want to make it seem as if he left as soon as he was investigated.

He quickly ordered the Embroidered Envoys to intercept Ou Wu by looking in the various cities, but he knew that there wasn't too much hope of stopping him. However, he could at least locate the records of Ou Wu's through the various gates.

Next, he brought his men to Ou Wu's residence in the city. The crown princess wanted to go too, but it was quite troublesome to leave the palace with her identity, so she couldn't. As such, she quickly returned to the eastern palace.

"Where is Sir Zu?" the crown princess asked as soon as she returned to the eastern palace. She had looked all over the place, but she didn't see Zu An's familiar figure.

"Sir Zu hasn't shown up yet today," a servant replied carefully.

The crown princess didn't say anything. She went into her inner chambers alone, and threw her pillows angrily to the ground. "That rascal! He's so unreliable during such an important time!"

This matter was related to her reputation, so she didn't dare talk to anyone else. However, that fellow actually hadn't come to work on time at such a crucial moment!

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +233 +233 +233...

...

Zu An was currently focused on the case. When he saw the string of Rage points appear, he jumped in fright. I didn't even meet her, so how am I getting these Rage points?

"What's wrong?" Mi Li asked when she sensed Zu An's strange condition. She floated through the air beside him. Even though the horse Zu An was riding was rushing quickly, she still managed to keep up perfectly. He had no idea how she was doing so.

Zu An thought to himself, Thank god no one else can see her. It wasn't nighttime yet either, so if people saw a red-clothed woman flying through the sky, wouldn't they be really frightened?

"It's nothing," Zu An replied. "I'm thinking about the case right now. I feel as if there's something fishy."

"It is quite strange." Mi Li nodded. The two of them seemed to have thought of something and didn't continue the conversation.

...

They arrived at Ou Wu's residence soon afterward. A group of Embroidered Envoys charged in ferociously. However, they didn't find Ou Wu, nor did they find his wife.

"The madam left with the young master a few days ago, going on a vacation trip."

"Isn't the master on duty in the palace?"

The servants and maids all said the same thing.

Zu An frowned and said, "This is getting quite troublesome now. We couldn't find Xin Rui's family last time, so I don't think we'll be able to find Ou Wu's family either."

"That might not be the case," Mi Li said seriously. "Ou Wu is a government gate official. Someone in such a key position shouldn't be allowed to leave the capital so easily. At the very least, in my era, such a thing was never permitted. I don't believe the emperor of this world would think otherwise."

Zu An immediately asked his subordinates for confirmation and received the information he needed. Then, he left behind some people to continue the search in Ou Manor. Afterward, he brought the rest to the Chongwen Gate.

The capital was divided into the outer city, inner city, imperial city, and the imperial palace. The imperial palace was self-explanatory. The imperial city contained the royal gardens, ancestral shrine, government office, the internal affairs organization, and many storerooms, as well as some stationed troops. All sorts of high officials and nobles resided in the inner city, as well as rich and powerful members of society. The outer city was home to the more common people.

That was why, if Zu An wanted to find out whether Ou Wu and his family had left, he could only find such records at the inner city's city gates.

Even though the inner city had many gates, every single gate had a specific purpose. For example, only the emperor's carriage could pass through some gates, while some were for the transportation of water and food. There were some gates that specialized in brick and wood, some for troops, and some for escorting prisoners. However, most people passed through the Chongwen Gate to travel between the inner and outer city.

Zu An and his group hurried to the Chongwen Gate. They were met with soldiers whose spears were raised in vigilance.

The soldiers began, "Who dares to spur on horses here..." But when they saw the Embroidered Envoys' uniforms, their expressions changed greatly. They quickly put away their weapons and said politely, "We greet Sir Eleven."

Zu An asked sternly, "Who is in charge of all of you?"

The guards answered, "Replying to sir, the Chongwen Gate's supervisor is Sir Murong."

"Murong?" Zu An frowned. Was there something wrong with the Murong clan?

Just then, Mi Li spoke with an ambiguous smile, "How amusing... You just toyed with someone else's wife last night, yet today, your own wife is together with another man. Tsk, tsk, tsk, revenge really did bite back quickly this time, hm?"

Zu An was confused. He quickly raised his head. Sure enough, he saw a familiar figure in the building, dressed in a long, ice blue dress. Her rear figure was sweet and fair. Who else could it be but Chu Chuyan?

Chapter 742: Praising Myself

A young man with pretty features accompanied Chu Chuyan, as well as a bronze skinned, healthy young lady. All of them were old acquaintances of Zu An's. However, a young master he didn't recognize was fawning over them. He seemed to be chatting about something with Chu Chuyan.

Zu An was speechless. No wonder Mi Li had spoken like that just then. From this distance, it really did look as if they were chatting in an extremely close manner. He harrumphed and stormed up the stairs with a gloomy expression.

However, he didn't suspect Chu Chuyan. Now only did he trust her, he also had confidence in himself. But that other fellow... Heh!

"Chuyan, do you see the scenery over there? This is the best viewing spot in the entire capital city. Ordinary people don't have the privilege of admiring this scenery from this angle.

"I'll bring you over to hunt when there's a chance next time. That's the royal family garden, a place ordinary people can't go to. However, our Murong clan has received the emperor's benevolence, so we have permission to hunt inside."

...

Even though the young man was dressed in armor, there was no masculinity to him. It instead made him look even more like a weak intellectual. He was chatting up Chu Chuyan with a smile.

Chu Chuyan's pretty brows furrowed slightly. She subconsciously moved to the side to keep a bit of distance from the young man. "Young master Murong, please don't call me Chuyan. You can call me Miss Chu, or Madam Zu."

The young man's eyes narrowed when he heard the words 'Madam Zu'. Anger surged within him.

You have successfully trolled Murong Luo for +110 +110 +110...

Zu An was stunned. This kid's name was Murong Luo!

As he walked up the stairs, he just happened to hear Murong Luo say to Chuyan, "Miss Chu, everyone knows that your esteemed father and mother have already driven that drafted son-in-law out of the clan. How can we still call the two of you husband and wife?"

Chu Chuyan said indifferently, "He's still my husband in my heart."

This man was Murong Qinghe's clan brother. Because of Chu Chuyan's good relationship with Murong Qinghe, she had decided to do her a favor. As such, she couldn't say anything too excessive. She could only say such a thing to clearly make some distance and make him back off.

Murong Luo was angry inside, but he looked confident and carefree on the surface. He said, "Life is full of changes. Chu First Miss is someone who values feelings greatly. I'm in awe."

"Hey, are you done yet? My brother-in-law and sister-in-law have a great relationship. Just give up already." Chu Youzhao had long since grown tired of the conversation. She jumped out and stood in between the two.

Zu An nodded internally. He hadn't doted on this kid for nothing; at least she knew to help her brother-in-law.

Murong Luo frowned. He gestured toward Murong Qinghe for help. However, Murong Qinghe was completely infatuated with Chu Youzhao and didn't notice his gaze at all.

In the end, a woman's heart belongs to her man; they're not reliable at all. Murong Luo harrumphed. He was just about to say something when a cold voice said, "Do you know what the punishment for negligence while on duty is?"

"Which idiot said that?" Murong Luo said furiously. He was the head of this gate, and he had the Murong clan behind him. He could do whatever he wanted here. He had been wondering how else to show off in front of his goddess, but now, a fool had jumped out at the perfect time. He was going to use this fellow to display his power.

However, when he turned around and saw the uniformed men, he almost pissed his pants.

Embroidered Envoys! He had grown up in the capital, so he obviously knew who the Embroidered Envoys were! Let alone the fact that the one in the lead was a golden token envoy!

Zu An sneered, "The Embroidered Envoys act in the place of the son of heaven, yet they are merely idiots in your eyes? Looking down on his majesty is a huge crime of disrespect! Men, arrest him!" He obviously needed to teach a fly who had gotten too close to Chu Chuyan a good lesson.

Murong Luo's expression changed. He quickly replied, "What are you saying? That's not what I meant!"

Murong Qinghe couldn't be bothered to continue admiring her man anymore. She quickly jumped out to protect her clan brother, pleading, "Sir, please forgive him. He didn't know that you were the ones who came here and didn't intend to offend you. Please accept my apology in his place."

Many matters weren't convenient for men to do. It was much easier for women to ease tension. She obviously couldn't let Murong Luo bear such an offense. After all, it wasn't related to Murong Luo alone, but rather to the safety of the entire clan.

Zu An harrumphed and said, "Everyone heard what he said just now, so I'm not wronging him. Didn't you all hear it?"

The other Embroidered Envoys weren't stupid. They knew that their superior didn't get along with this man, so why would they contradict him? They all nodded in agreement.

Murong Luo's face turned incredibly pale. He was normally always the one who oppressed others. Who would have thought that the tides would suddenly turn, and that he would instead be the one oppressed? Even though he knew that the other party was using this as a pretext to make a fuss, the envoy's identity was too special. He really couldn't do anything about it.

Murong Qinghe tugged on Chu Youzhao and Chu Chuyan's sleeves, begging for help.

Since it was her dear little sister who was asking, Chu Youzhao obviously couldn't just watch without doing anything. She said, "Sir, it was Miss Murong who invited the Qin clan out to play this time. We were merely stopping here for a short time, so we ended up troubling young master Murong. I hope sir can treat this matter leniently."

Zu An thought to himself that the little brat was quite smart. She hadn't argued about the matter of disrespect, because that was merely a pretext; rather, she had focused on the negligence of duty. At the same time, she had hinted at their backgrounds. In the capital, there weren't many who didn't know who the Qin clan and Murong clan were, so they still had to show them at least some respect.

Unfortunately, Zu An had no intention of doing any of that. He said, "I have always upheld the law impartially; I do not need to give anyone face. It changes nothing even if you bring out the Murong clan's name here."

Chu Youzhao got a bit upset when she heard those words. It wasn't because of Murong Luo, but rather because the other party didn't seem to treat the Qin clan as a big deal.

Seeing the Rage points the Murong clan's siblings and Chu Youzhao provided, Zu An's expression didn't change in the slightest. He didn't have the slightest good intentions toward the two clans.

Just then, Chu Chuyan spoke up. "Sir, I believe you came because there are official matters to take care of. May I ask what they are exactly? Perhaps we can all help you with that matter together."

Mi Li, who was sitting nearby atop the city wall, sneered. "Your wife is indeed the smartest one here. She immediately identified the real problem."

Zu An thought, Of course my woman is smart. Then, he coughed and looked toward Chu Chuyan and asked, "Is this one Chu First Miss?"

It was Chu Chuyan's turn to be shocked. She replied, "Indeed. Why do you recognize me?"

"You're the wife of the crown prince's chamberlain, so why wouldn't I recognize you?" Zu An then began to praise himself without the slightest sense of shame. "Sir Zu is righteous and honorable, he acts with consideration for the people, he is handsome and suave..."

Mi Li had originally just been watching the whole scenario unfold like a play. She was completely stupefied when she heard Zu An speak. It looked like she had still ended up underestimating this fellow's shamelessness in the end!

Even Chu Chuyan blushed when she heard those words. She hadn't expected her husband to be treated so well in the palace.

Zu An coughed and finally stopped. "This matter is related to Sir Zu's innocence, so I will leave the matter at that as a favor for Madam Zu. However, even though a death crime can be pardoned, it cannot remain unpunished. For negligence and disrespect, he is to be flogged twenty times!"

"Understood!" An Embroidered Envoy stepped forward and pushed Murong Luo to the ground.

Even though Murong Luo's cultivation wasn't bad, how could he be a match for the Embroidered Envoys? He immediately lost his center of gravity and was knocked to the ground. "You guys can't hit me! My dad... Ah!" He screamed in misery before he even finished his sentence. The Embroidered Envoy's rod had already smashed down on his bottom.

Even though Murong Qinghe and the others weren't too happy to see this, it was already quite a good conclusion for the matter to end this way. After all, it was something that could have been much worse. Furthermore, for better or for worse, Murong Luo was still a sixth rank cultivator, so he should be able to handle this beating.

However, they had no idea how the Embroidered Envoys did things. The Envoys knew how officials thought, and they were extremely skilled in this field. Even though it looked like just twenty strikes, this fellow would need at least half a month to recover.

As he heard Murong Luo scream miserably, Zu An sat down casually. Then, he called over Murong Luo's assistant to ask him about Ou Wu.

The assistant replied, "I believe an Ou clan carriage indeed left a few days ago."

Zu An frowned. "Why are his wife and children allowed to leave whenever they please?"

"We didn't know that Ou Wu's family was inside, and they had their clan's command tile, so we couldn't investigate inside," the soldiers replied.

"Since you didn't investigate, how did you know it was the Ou clan's carriage?" Zu An's sharp eyes scanned the soldiers.

Chapter 743: Daggers Drawn

"It's because the Ou clan's carriage was moving rather quickly at the time, and then they ended up hitting a commoner," one of the soldiers recalled.

"What do you mean, a commoner?" another soldier corrected. "It was just a good-for-nothing who deliberately gets hit and extorts compensation. He loves throwing himself at those ordinary carriages."

"That fellow always does this type of thing. Since the Ou clan is based here, and they didn't really cause too much trouble, we just turned a blind eye to it," another soldier quickly added. At the same time, he secretly watched Zu An's expression.

Mi Li harrumphed as she watched from nearby. "That good-for-nothing probably treats them with a lot of respect, and that's why they turned a blind eye to it."

Mi Li was the empress of a country, yet she actually understands these matters so well? Zu An thought. However, he hadn't come here to investigate this matter today, so he didn't care much about the guards' corruption. He asked, "Then?"

Seeing that Zu An didn't continue to ask about those matters, the guards sighed in relief. One quickly replied, "However, they really hit the jackpot that day. Even though the carriage was ordinary, the one inside definitely wasn't. The carriage's servant beat that good-for-nothing up really badly, cursing at him while hitting him, calling him blind, saying that he even dared to frame the Ou clan's carriage. That's why we had such a deep impression of the incident."

Zu An frowned. "Since they wanted to leave the capital, then the more low-profile they could remain, the better. Why did they still show off so much, as if they were scared that others didn't know they were there?"

Mi Li said, "Those bigwigs are already used to abusing people. They don't even view those of the lower levels as people. Even if they tried to remain low-profile, they'd only do so in the upper levels. What would be the point of doing that with commoners?"

The guards expressed similar opinions. Zu An couldn't help but turn around to give Mi Li a look, remarking, "I didn't expect you to understand people that well."

Mi Li harrumphed. Her chin tilted upward proudly.

Chu Youzhao quietly tugged on Chu Chuyan's sleeves. She quietly asked, "Big sis, is there something wrong with that guy? Why is he talking to himself?"

"Be quiet!" Chu Chuyan clutched her throat and said through ki transmission, "It might be because these Embroidered Envoys are all a bit eccentric while investigating cases. Don't provoke him, or he might use that as an excuse to start a fuss."

Chu Youzhao gave Murong Luo a look. He was screaming for his life, his butt having been smacked until it was a bloody mess. She couldn't help but nod in understanding.

Even though Chu Youzhao's voice was quiet, it didn't escape Zu An's detection. Even though Chuyan wasn't saying anything, judging from her mouth's movements, she was clearly sending a voice transmission. Most likely, it wasn't anything good. He thought, Thank goodness I have a mask on. As long as I don't act awkward, then it won't be awkward.

"Ahem!" He cleared his throat and continued, "Ou Wu's position is crucial, yet his clan deliberately left in a different carriage. None of you suspected anything, and you didn't stop them at all?"

The guards looked at each other in dismay. In the end, one of them said, "Sir, in the capital, those with authority are everything. Even though rules are rules, we still let their wives and children leave from time to time. This is a secret everyone knows about. No one would bicker over something like this."

Zu An frowned. The Great Zhou Dynasty appeared to be upright and flourishing, but the law had already fallen into such disuse in private. That wasn't a good sign. Tsk, I'm not the emperor, so why do I care?

Another guard spoke up just then. "Furthermore, we already carried out an investigation, but they brought out their king manor token. We didn't dare to stop them then!"

Zu An asked, "Which clan's token was it?"

The guards all shook their heads.

"We didn't dare stare at it out of fear of offending them!"

"Aren't the king manor tiles all pretty much the same?"

"Who dares to go against a king manor tile? That's a huge crime!"

Zu An knew that he wouldn't find out anything else when he heard them say such things. He left behind some people to continue investigating Ou Wu and the other clan members' whereabouts, while he himself would search the King Qi Manor with some men.

"Should we bring this person back to the Embroidery House to investigate him further?" A silver token Embroidered Envoy pointed at Murong Luo. He obviously knew that this fellow didn't get along with his boss, so he asked out of consideration.

Murong Luo's expression changed greatly when he heard the words 'Embroidery House'. That was a place even more terrifying than the imperial prison! Those who ended up there soon wished they were dead.

The only one who had lived to tell the tale was the Shi clan's young master, but even that was only because the minister of war Shi Miao had personally rescued him. Furthermore, he'd had to bring out their clan's death pardon token! Shi Miao's status in the court was extraordinary. Furthermore, the Murong clan didn't have a death pardoning token.

Murong Qinghe's expression changed as well. She gave Chu Chuyan and Chu Youzhao a pleading look. Chu Chuyan could only ask, "Sir, would it be possible to show mercy?"

Zu An voiced his agreement. "Madam Zu is pretty and speaks well. It's fine. As a favor to madam, I won't pursue this matter further. Shape up and don't make the same mistake again."

Mi Li harrumphed, "Shameless!" However, Zu An ignored her.

Murong Qinghe sighed in relief. She couldn't help but give Chu Chuyan a look. She thought to herself that Chu First Miss was pretty after all, if even an Embroidered Envoy who didn't care much about face would give her this favor. It really was enviable.

Chu Youzhao thought to herself that her brother-in-law really was awesome. This person had said previously that he owed her brother-in-law a favor.

Chu Chuyan's cheeks blushed when she heard the words 'Madam Zu', making her look even more tender and beautiful. Even the Embroidered Envoys who had tremendous self-restraint couldn't help but give her a few more looks.

"Thank you, sir! Thank you, sir! This lowly official will definitely be careful in the future." Murong Luo hurriedly nodded. Not only had he not looked good in front of his goddess, he had needed her help. He was full of hatred when he thought of that. It was all this damn Embroidered Envoy's fault!

You have successfully trolled Murong Luo for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An frowned. Was this fellow courting death? However, he was in a hurry to head to King Qi Manor right now. He couldn't be bothered to argue right now.

...

Zu An led his subordinates toward King Qi Manor. One of them asked, "Leader, are we going to rush toward King Qi Manor just like that? Should we return to the Embroidery House and get more men?"

Zu An sighed when he saw how nervous they were. The prestige King Qi had accumulated was terrifying as expected. Even the Embroidered Envoys, who were normally fearless, were scared. He reassured them, "We aren't going there to start a fight, so what are you all scared of? Don't worry, I know when to stop." All of the Envoys sighed in relief when they heard Zu An's words.

Mi Li floated over to Zu An's side. She couldn't help but say, "What can you possibly find in King Qi Manor? You couldn't even interrogate Shi Jun, so what can you do to the glorious King Qi?"

Zu An replied, "I already have an idea of what's happening. I just need to confirm something in King Qi Manor."

The group quickly arrived at King Qi Manor. When they saw that the Embroidered Envoys had come, the guards vigilantly prepared to intercept them.

Zu An said, "I am here on orders from his majesty to investigate a case. There is something I need to meet with King Qi about."

The guard leader of King Qi Manor directly refused him. "Please leave; our King is not in the manor."

"Is he not here, or does he not wish to meet us?" Zu An frowned.

The guard harrumphed. "If I say he's not here, then he's not here."

Zu An continued to ask, "Then do you know where King Qi went?"

That guard replied coldly, "The whereabouts of our king are secret. How can we tell just anyone?"

Zu An's expression darkened. He took out his golden token. "You're using all sorts of excuses. Can it be that you wish to go against the imperial decree?"

That guard sneered and said, "That thing might be useful in other places, but it's useless here. You dog-legs don't have the right to enter the manor unless his majesty comes personally."

The Embroidered Envoys were shocked and furious when they heard those words. They acted directly under the emperor himself, so when had they ever suffered this type of humiliation? But this was King Qi Manor, so they didn't dare act randomly. They could only look at Zu An with injustice in their eyes, to see what their direct superior planned to do.

Huh? Where did he go? They discovered that he was nowhere to be seen. A clear smacking noise resounded, and then a miserable scream followed. By the time they saw what happened, the guard leader was already kneeling on the ground. His mouth was covered in blood, and he was in a sorry state.

Zu An was standing next to him. He tossed the scabbard he had randomly picked up away and said, "I hope this teaches you not to shoot your mouth off next time."

The guard leader could feel that many of his teeth had fallen off. He had been hit before he even understood what happened. He wanted to resist, but Zu An's foot was pressing down on the crook of his leg. He couldn't budge at all.

You have successfully trolled Hou Wu for +888 +888 +888...

The other guards were alarmed and furious. They all drew their blades and surrounded the group of Embroidered Envoys.

"How dare you cause trouble in the king manor!" A figure appeared from the manor. His voice had already begun ringing in everyone's ears before he even arrived.

This was a powerful expert! Everyone knew many experts were said to be in King Qi Manor. Now, it seemed that was indeed the case.

The Embroidered Envoys cursed inside. Why the hell did we believe this Sir Eleven? He said he wouldn't go too far, yet he's still so reckless. Even though they had felt great when they saw that guard beaten, they were now worried about their own situation. If there really was a dispute, their lives would probably be forfeit.

The dozen Embroidered Envoys were surrounded by King Qi Manor's guards. It looked as if they were done for.

Chapter 744: Madam Qi

The floating Mi Li was surprisingly calm as she said, "A strong one came out. What are you going to do now? By the way, this empress needs to make it clear; I don't have any plans to interfere."

When he saw Mi Li on her high horse, Zu An really wanted to tell her that the last one who had called herself an empress had been plowed by him 1,800 times over. Instead, he said, "Don't worry, you don't need to do anything. Besides, this fellow is an old acquaintance."

"Oh?" Mi Li was surprised. She had sensed that the elder was at the peak of the ninth rank when he first appeared. Even though Zu An's cultivation was now at a level where he wasn't entirely without a chance, he was still far outmatched. Where did this kid get his confidence from?

The elder had a longsword on his back. He gave Zu An and the beaten Hou Wu at his feet a look. "Who's causing trouble in King Qi Manor? It looks like you really have a death wish."

Zu An said indifferently, "You're quite arrogant. We act in the place of the son of heaven; can it be that we can't even enter King Qi Manor?"

This fellow was indeed an old acquaintance. It was precisely that expert Han Fengqiu who had saved King Qi's heir last time. Zu An had to admit that his sword ki was quite frightening.

Han Fengqiu's breathing paused for a moment. "There's no need for you to try to threaten us with his majesty's name. You might be working for the son of heaven, but that's no excuse to harm our guards for no reason. All of them have posts in the court. Not even his majesty can blame us if I kill you today."

He immediately prepared to attack after speaking, as if to prove his words. He didn't dare to look down on an Embroidered Envoy leader, but even so, he had never heard of any envoy being at the master rank. As such, there was no way this individual could be stronger than him.

As for the other Embroidered Envoys' formation, there were more guards on his side, so they wouldn't dare to help this golden token envoy. He became more confident when he realized those things. However, he heard the other party speak right when he was about to attack.

"Who says I'm acting without reason?" Zu An pointed at Hou Wu, who was still on the ground. "This fellow called us dog-legs. Everyone knows that the Embroidered Envoys only listen to his majesty's decrees and orders. Isn't he then cursing his majesty as a dog?"

"I didn't, that's not what I meant..." Hou Wu had thought he was being wronged at first, but now, he really was horrified.

Han Fengqiu was completely speechless. How the hell did these guards live normally? They even dared to curse the Embroidered Envoys.

Zu An continued, "Furthermore, judging from the way Sir Han spoke of his majesty, it didn't seem all that respectful either. Could it be that everyone in King Qi Manor is like this? I wonder if the subordinates follow the example of their superiors. Or perhaps, is there another reason?"

"You'd better not speak nonsense!" Han Fengqiu began to panic. It was said that the Embroidered Envoys were difficult to deal with, and today, it seemed that was indeed the case. Once they targeted someone, even if one survived, one would have a layer of skin shaved off.

He wasn't scared of the envoy in terms of strength, but the envoy kept bringing up the emperor. He worried that he might bring King Qi trouble, leaving him in a dilemma. This Embroidered Envoy was too shameless!

You have successfully trolled Han Fengqiu for +233 +233 +233...

A dignified woman's voice suddenly resounded. "What is going on here?"

Zu An turned around. He saw that an extravagant carriage had stopped nearby, and there was a troop of guards escorting it.

The manor's guards immediately said respectfully, "We greet the madam!"

"Madam?" Zu An thought to himself. According to his sources, Madam Qi Bi Fanghua was the crown princess' older half-sister. Even though they were sisters, there was a great difference in their ages. Even Madam Qi's son Zhao Zhi was much older than the crown princess.

Bi Linglong's father Bi Qi really is an old cow who eats young grass... The reason why there's such an age gap is because he picked a young wife.

The crown princess and Madam Qi's relationship wasn't too great. They actually didn't get along at all. The first reason was the crown prince and King Qi's fight over the throne, which had naturally set them apart from each other. The second was probably their different mothers. The age difference between Bi Qi's first wife and his new wife was so obvious an idiot could tell.

Han Fengqiu rushed over to the carriage and quietly explained what had just happened. Then, Madam Qi said, "And I thought that something major happened. King Qi is not inside the manor right now. If Sir Eleven has some matters to inquire about, then it will be the same to ask me. Invite Sir Eleven inside."

Mi Li chuckled and remarked, "A sharp woman. She quickly dealt with the crux of the issue, so the other small matters were also easily dealt with."

Zu An sighed internally. How could King Qi's woman be someone easy to deal with? As such, he naturally went along. "Then I'll have to trouble the madam."

The luxurious carriage's door opened, and a pair of thick white thighs appeared. Zu An's eyes widened. What the hell? Isn't Madam Qi supposed to be an older woman? Why does her legs look just as seductive and enticing as a young lady's? He quickly warned himself, Remember that stupid Zhao Zhi! Her son is already so old; you better not have any strange fetishes.

Then, a beautiful figure left the carriage. She was tall and slender, with cool and elegant features. Her hair was casually held up by a jade hairpin that exposed her long and fair neck. She looked dignified and high-class.

Zu An was stunned. He wasn't shocked at the woman's beauty, but rather at her identity. It was because the woman with the long legs was someone he knew! It was the gorgeous principal Jiang Luofu! Jiang Luofu is King Qi's wife?

Zu An was momentarily distracted. However, he quickly sighed in relief, because a middle-aged woman came out from inside the carriage afterward. He could tell that she took good care of her health, and that she had been a beautiful lady when she was younger. However, her wrinkles still showed that she wasn't young anymore.

"Madam, please be careful!" Jiang Luofu warned. She even reached out a hand to help the woman down.

"Your gorgeous principal seems to be quite close to King Qi Manor, no?" Mi Li teased as she arrived next to Zu An. She obviously recognized Jiang Luofu, and she knew about her relationship with Zu An.

Zu An frowned. His relationship with King Qi was quite terrible. It would be quite depressing in the future if he and Jiang Luofu became real enemies.

Jiang Luofu gave Zu An a curious look when she passed by. She had heard about the new golden token envoy and was a bit curious about him. For some reason, she usually hated Embroidered Envoys. She felt they were dark and sinister. However, she felt a strange feeling of closeness toward that person. She shook her head and threw out the absurd thought, and entered the manor with Madam Qi.

Zu An was invited inside by another maid. The other Embroidered Envoys were worried, but Zu An gestured to indicate that it was fine. He had them wait outside.

Han Fengqiu was surprised. "Sir Eleven is quite something!" Golden token envoys are all extraordinary after all. The emperor has so many talents under him. Looks like Master's road ahead won't be easy.

"I admire King Qi Manor's methods as well," Zu An replied. He noticed that someone had brought away the wounded guard as well. Judging from how the guard had been moved to tears, it was obvious that Madam Qi had appeased him and even granted him a reward.

Han Fengqiu chuckled awkwardly, but didn't reply.

Zu An was brought inside the manor soon afterward. After taking seven or eight turns, they arrived at a gazebo. Han Fengqiu stood some distance away. It was clear that he didn't want to get too close to the manor's women.

Madam Qi was sitting inside, with Jiang Luofu next to her. There were a few servants around them as well. Zu An had to admit that next to Jiang Luofu, Madam Qi really was overshadowed. The only thing worth praising was the bit of noble bearing she had left.

No wonder Bi Qi doted on Bi Linglong's mother much more. She was far more attractive than her big sister.

"What did you need King Qi for? You can tell me now," Madam Qi said indifferently.

Zu An explained his intent. Madam Qi harrumphed and said, "What a joke. That person was doing perfectly well, but then he vanished after you investigated him. Now, you're coming all the way to King Qi Manor for this?"

"Everyone knows that Ou Wu was someone King Qi personally raised in the past," Zu An calmly said as he stared at her.

"We're all court subjects. There's no such thing as factions," Madam Qi said calmly. "The master usually promotes people who are capable, and not out of selfish intent."

"However, Ou Wu's wife and children left the city with King Qi Manor's command token," Zu An continued. He carefully observed her expression.

Madam Qi frowned slightly, but she quickly replied, "Is there proof that it was King Qi Manor's command token?" As Zu An said nothing in response, she chuckled and said, "There are many kings in the capital, and the king manor tokens are virtually identical. It's not too surprising for the city gate's guards to be mistaken."

Zu An began to think to himself. Madam Qi continued, "I answered so many of your questions. It's time for you to answer one of mine."

"Please go ahead," Zu An said.

"You have always worked in the palace. Do you know the eastern palace's crown prince secretary, Zu An?" Madam Qi asked.

Jiang Luofu's originally calm expression turned into one of shock.

Chapter 745: Suspicion

Zu An was stunned. Is this woman making inquiries about me? But he still replied, "I fear there aren't too many in the palace who don't know who he is."

Madam Qi harrumphed. "After such a scandal happened between him and the crown princess, it would indeed be hard to not know about him."

Zu An said with a neutral expression, "This matter has already been investigated. It is absolute nonsense, and he was framed by someone. Madam, I must ask you to watch what you say." He was an Embroidered Envoy acting directly under the emperor. He needed to protect the royal family's dignity in this type of situation.

"Nothing remains a secret forever," Madam Qi said with a sneer. "That fellow Zu An really is presumptuous, daring to even beat up my son! What kinds of things wouldn't he dare to do?"

You have successfully trolled Bi Fanghua for...

Jiang Luofu smiled. She recalled some of the things that had happened in Brightmoon City before. That fellow indeed didn't act in a predictable way.

Zu An coughed. No wonder this woman has such strong resentment. But I wonder how she'd react if she found out the one who beat up her son was right in front of her.

Madam Qi asked a few more questions, and Zu An casually answered them. In the end, when she saw that there wasn't any valuable information to gain, she picked up her teacup and gestured for the servants to escort Zu An out.

During their brief interaction, Zu An had obtained the information he wanted as well. He got up and bid her farewell.

"Stop investigating those trivialities. Trust me, there's no mastermind behind the scenes. It really was Zu An and the crown princess who engaged in that scandal," Madam Qi added.

...

"That woman's intuition is quite terrifying," Mi Li giggled and said when they left the manor.

Zu An proclaimed, "The crown princess and I are innocent."

"Hah!" Mi Li naturally knew what was going on between him and the crown princess. Even though the two of them had only embraced each other naked, and nothing else had happened, with her understanding of Zu An, something might just happen between them soon.

Zu An didn't feel like bothering with her anymore and walked straight out. Mi Li wasn't in the mood to gossip either when she saw him ignore her. She couldn't help but ask, "By the way, now that the trail on King Qi Manor's side has ended as well, what are you going to do? The time limit the emperor gave you is approaching."

In her opinion, this trip to King Qi Manor was completely meaningless. After all, Zu An couldn't investigate anything about King Qi no matter what he did.

"There are clues to investigate even if the trail has been cut off," Zu An said, smiling.

Mi Li's beautiful brows rose. "Explain!"

Zu An could only say, "Actually, there is something I've always been wondering about, and this trip here was merely to verify that. Through my interaction with Madam Qi, some of my guesses were indeed verified."

Mi Li frowned. She discovered that she still couldn't understand. However, for the sake of maintaining her competent appearance, she didn't want to lower herself. As such, she couldn't bring herself to ask further.

Fortunately, Zu An considerably continued, "The crux of this case lies with Xin Rui. From the very start, there was one thing I didn't understand. Why would that mastermind invest so much in sending Xin Rui out of the palace? Why would they buy out Xuanwu Gate's Ou Wu, and then also help his family?"

Mi Li was an intelligent person as well, so she quickly reacted. "Indeed. Actually, just killing her and throwing her into a random pond would have done the trick. After all, there are many maids and eunuchs who die mysteriously, and it's almost impossible to investigate anything. However, for the sake of a trifling maid, they had to sacrifice Xuanwu Gate's supervisor, that crucial chess piece. That's not worth it at all."

Zu An nodded. "Indeed. That's why I've been thinking that the mastermind did that for a different reason. Currently, the investigations haven't uncovered Xin Rui's whereabouts. Even though it seems as if her survival is uncertain, I know she's definitely alive. If she were dead, then there would have been no point in bringing her out of the palace before silencing her."

"Even if you know all of this, how does that help you? You still can't find her," Mi Li couldn't help but say.

Zu An smiled. "Of course it's useful. Since Xin Rui isn't dead, that means her family members are most likely alive as well. We might not be able to find her, but finding her family might not be so difficult."

Mi Li frowned and remarked "Where the heck did you learn to beat around the bush like that? Do you really think I won't smack the crap out of you?" Even though she didn't want to lower herself, she really couldn't resist her curiosity, so she decided to be a bit more direct.

Zu An was speechless. This woman was so fierce, no wonder even Qin Shihuang had had to lock her up. He could only say, "Do you remember what I said before about her family situation?"

Mi Li frowned. "Her mother is just an ordinary person, but her little brother..." Her eyes lit up. "...loves to gamble!"

"Indeed. Those who are obsessed with gambling can't go a long time without gambling. Rather than trust that he's mended his ways. I would rather believe that the sun rose from the west." Zu An said, "I've already had some people investigate their old home. They didn't go back. People will subconsciously choose to stay in places they find familiar. Since they didn't go back to their old home, then they're probably still in the capital, or the counties near the capital. As long as we investigate the nearby gambling hubs, we should find something soon."

Mi Li couldn't help but say, "But this is nothing more than speculation. What if they went somewhere far away instead and aren't in the capital?"

Zu An sighed. "We only try things that are likely to succeed when we do anything anyway; what's the point of worrying about small odds of what ifs? If they really did go somewhere else, then count me unlucky. But even if you call me incompetent, there are two things I'm the toughest in. The first is my life. I've made it past countless situations where I should have died. Why would I fail over such a small matter?"

Mi Li nodded. She agreed that there was a chance his deduction was right. "What's the other thing that's the toughest?"

Zu An had an amused expression as he replied, "What do you think?"

Mi Li was stunned. Then she blushed. "Damn brat, you even dare to tease me? You'd better believe me when I say I'll cut that filthy thing off!"

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for...

Zu An chuckled and ran ahead. As he left through the front gate, the other Embroidered Envoys' expressions changed when they saw him running. They all drew their blades and rushed forward.

"Leader, are you alright?"

“Are you being chased by King Qi Manor’s men?”

...

Zu An felt warm inside. Even though outsiders might feel that the Embroidered Envoy was sinister and terrifying, from his time with them, he could tell that many of them had warm hearts inside.

“Don’t worry, we’re still under the son of heaven’s command. What could King Qi Manor do to me?” Zu An gave Mi Li a look. When she saw him, she shot back an annoyed look. Then, she turned into a wisp of smoke and returned to the Tai’e Sword. She was too embarrassed to talk to Zu An for some time.

Zu An chuckled, and then headed back. He quickly summoned his subordinates and sent them on various missions. They became excited when they heard that the case had taken a turn for the better. One said, “Don’t worry, boss! We Embroidered Envoys have an intelligence network within the capital’s vicinity. As long as he’s appeared in a gambling den, we’ll definitely catch him!”

Zu An finally sighed in relief. After separating from the Envoys, he changed into his original outfit and headed toward the palace. He hadn’t even had time to report for the morning roll call today. That would definitely draw suspicion.

When he arrived at the Eastern Palace, Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun took the chance to walk past him. They whispered, “Big bro Zu, you need to be careful. The crown princess seems to be really unhappy that you’re late today.”

Zu An cupped his hands and gave them a grateful smile. Then, he quickly headed in to meet the crown princess.

As he passed by the main hall, he just happened to run into the crown prince. The prince wasn’t playing five-in-a-row today. It was clear that even though the game was easy, it was still a bit beyond his abilities. He had lost interest after playing a few times.

The prince seemed to be playing at shopping in a food market. He was pretending to be a vegetable seller, but if his prices weren’t ridiculously cheap, they were ridiculously expensive instead. Little Xu and Little He didn’t dare to argue with him about these things and just happily played along.

Zu An sighed in wonder. Those two lesser eunuchs were really being troubled here. He headed straight into the study. The crown princess was currently dealing with a stack of paperwork, the work that the crown prince should be doing.

“I greet the crown princess...?” Zu An began.

The crown princess remained expressionless. She continued to write on some documents as if he didn’t exist. Zu An knew that she was angry. and that she was giving him the cold shoulder on purpose. That was why he wasn’t upset. and just continued to quietly watch her.

Her brows were slender and her eyes starry. Her nose was fine and her lips were a cherry red. Zu An had to admit that the crown princess was a top rate beauty. She still looked as if she had come straight out of a beautiful painting, even when she was just working.

Even though the crown princess didn’t look at Zu An, her pretty face still carried a blush. It was clear that she could feel his scorching gaze. She coughed lightly and indicated for the maids to withdraw to the

entrance. Then, she gave Zu An an impatient look. She asked through ki transmission, "What are you staring at me for?"

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for...

Zu An smiled. "I'm obviously staring because the crown princess is gorgeous. Even just looking at you is a type of relaxation for the mind."

The crown princess was startled. She pretended to be calm and said, "Don't think you can shirk responsibility just because you can say some nice things. Why were you late today? Did you know I needed your help earlier..."

Then, she told him about how she had met Golden Token Eleven. She told him she was worried that the Envoy might find out something. "But you actually weren't here at such a crucial time!" she exclaimed. She couldn't tell anyone else about this matter. She ground her teeth in anger as she thought that.

Zu An said in a calm and unhurried manner, "I was late because I was investigating this matter. Crown princess, please don't worry. Golden Token Eleven isn't investigating the situation between us. When he visited Ou Wu's manor, he didn't find that person. Ou Wu's clan already left the capital ahead of time. Then, there was some conflict with Murong Luo by the Chongwen Gate... After that, he headed to King Qi Manor..."

The crown princess grew excited when she heard what had happened. "So that was what happened! This matter is related to King Qi after all! Heh, how can we let them go when there's such a great chance?"

She was just about to say something when she suddenly frowned. She gave Zu An a strange look. "Why do you know so much about what Golden Token Eleven did? Do you have some kind of relationship with him? Or could it be that you two... are the same person?"

Chapter 746: New Discovery

Zu An was surprised, but he didn't reveal anything on the surface. "Golden Token Eleven had some conflict with Murong Luo by the Chongwen Gate. Chu Chuyan was there at the time too, so I learned all of this from her. Why would the crown princess think such a strange thing?"

The crown princess' face heated up. She didn't know why she would suddenly blurt that out either. She always felt a strange sense of familiarity whenever she met Golden Token Eleven. Occasionally, she would even think of the time Zu An had hugged her when they met.

She had even vaguely hoped that Zu An, the one she'd shared such close physical intimacy with, was the same person as Sir Eleven. That way, she wouldn't have to worry about too many things. But she couldn't really sort out those thoughts right now. She had just suddenly voiced her suspicion impulsively in the moment.

She was incredibly embarrassed. What the heck is going on with me? Why would I associate this perverted guy with Sir Eleven? Sir Eleven is strong and collected, and he's so dashing, while this fellow is always smiling mischievously all day. They're nothing alike!

She gradually calmed down. With a light cough, she said, "It's nothing; it was just a casual question. That Sir Eleven seemed to have suddenly appeared out of thin air, so I was just a bit curious about his identity."

Zu An replied with an 'oh', but he was panicking inside. Aren't these girls' sixth senses a bit too frightening?

The crown princess' thoughts were a bit all over the place, and she didn't want to look at Zu An's face. She quickly summoned some maids. "Help me summon King Liang, Sir Meng, Sir Bi, General Liu..."

Zu An asked out of curiosity, "What does the crown princess have in mind?"

These were all members of the emperor's faction and all of them had respected statuses. If they were all being summoned, the crown princess was definitely planning something huge.

"That's not something you should be asking about!" The crown princess frowned. However, when she thought about their special relationship, her tone unconsciously softened. She explained, "Ou Wu is someone under King Qi, while the Murong clan backing Murong Luo is also under King Qi's faction. What use is there left for me to serve as the crown princess if I can't even shave off some of King Qi's influence using such a great opportunity?"

Zu An thought to himself that now that Ou Wu had gone missing, the only one left was Murong Luo. Even though the crown princess hadn't gone into detail, Murong Luo was probably going to be arrested and harshly interrogated. Even if he really was innocent, they would obtain confessions under torture and strike back against King Qi that way.

Sigh, poor brother Murong... Zu An felt sympathy toward the man, but he couldn't help but grin.

As the crown princess was going to meet with all those big shots, Zu An got up to excuse himself. The crown princess nodded. However, as he walked over to the door, she suddenly called out to him. "Right, I told you to find a chance to get rid of Concubine Bai. Do you have a plan?"

Zu An clicked his tongue inwardly. This woman really is vicious! He could only reply, "Nothing yet. Her status is special, after all, and she resides in the imperial palace. It's not easy to take care of her."

The crown princess knew that he was speaking the truth, but she still said, "Even though the matter isn't too pressing, you can't forget about it. Make sure to think about it."

Zu An gave her a few perfunctory replies and left. He was just about to thank Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun for their warning, when a eunuch came and told him that the emperor was waiting for him in the imperial study.

Those of the Eastern Palace were all full of envy.

"Sir Zu really has received the favor of his majesty! His majesty summons him frequently."

"That's not all; even the crown princess cares about him."

"We should do our best to get along with him as well."

...

They quickly rushed over to ask Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun about Zu An, because they knew that their relationship with Zu An was the closest

The two of them looked at the eunuchs with pity. "The way we got closer... I fear the eunuchs can't imitate it." Brothers fight together, run together, visit broth... Well, there's nothing for you eunuchs to imitate. Taking you all to a brothel would just be a waste of money.

...

Despite the looks of envy, Zu An was instead baffled. What the hell was up with the emperor? He met with Zu An more than he met his wives! He couldn't help but feel a bit guilty, since he had just worked the emperor's wife diligently for an entire night.

When he arrived at the imperial study, Eunuch Wen's expression was friendly, indicating that the emperor's mood was quite good. Zu An sighed in relief.

"I greet your majesty!" Zu An had always felt a strange sense of fear and worry whenever he entered the imperial study in the past. He had always felt that the one on the dragon throne was high and mighty, as if a deity were interrogating him.

But now, even though the emperor's aura was just as imposing, Zu An could now clearly see his face. The wrinkles at the corners of his eyes, as well as his faintly discernible white hair, revealed that even though he was the number one expert in the world, he still couldn't overcome the power of time.

"What are you looking at this emperor's head for?" The emperor frowned. He keenly sensed that there was something wrong with Zu An's gaze. He subconsciously touched the top of his head, but there was clearly nothing there.

Zu An thought to himself, I'm looking at that green hat you're wearing. Of course, he didn't dare to say such words out loud. He quickly said, "This subject is amazed at your majesty's might. Even in casual clothes, it still feels as if there is an invisible crown resting on your head."

A faint smile appeared on the emperor's face. Even the most powerful person, as long as they were human, liked to hear their own praises.

"Flattery is useless. How are you doing in the investigation of the crown princess' case? Once your time limit is up, if you don't find out the truth, then this emperor definitely won't be lenient." Even though the emperor was in a good mood, he didn't show it at all. He harrumphed with a grumpy expression.

Zu An was already used to the way the man did things, so he wasn't as worried as before. "Replying to your majesty, there have already been some results from the investigation over the past few days..."

Then, he told the emperor about Ou Wu, Murong Luo, and the other things that had occurred, but he didn't bring up Xin Rui's little brother yet.

He wasn't scared of the other Embroidered Envoys secretly telling the emperor anything. After all, he hadn't obtained anything conclusive on this matter yet, so it was understandable for him to not report things he wasn't sure of.

"Xuanwu Gate, Chongwen Gate..." The emperor's eyes narrowed. He thought to himself, Zhao Jing's hands are reaching deeper and deeper. These were all vital positions.

"You've done well. You may leave now," the emperor said. There was no need to discuss what he was going to do with the information with this brat. He didn't have the qualifications to know about these things.

"Understood!"

...

When Zu An left the study, he felt as if all of the resentment that had accumulated inside of him had suddenly disappeared.

The emperor is still human, not a god. He isn't omniscient and omnipotent. Like hell his divine senses cover the entire imperial palace! I can still remember clearly what I did to the empress last night, yet this emperor knows fuck-all. The emperor still treated me like a random servant, but these methods that used to be scary now only seem laughable.

What dogsh*t number one under the sky? You're nothing more than a loser in my eyes. One day, my cultivation will surpass yours.

"Look at how cocky you're getting. Who else apart from you would suddenly gain so much confidence after just playing with a woman?" Mi Li suddenly appeared out of nowhere, rolling her eyes at him.

Zu An's expression changed. "You really can read my thoughts?"

Mi Li snorted. "As if I need to read your thoughts to know what you are thinking. Even a fool can guess from how high-spirited you look."

Zu An calmly looked at her, and then he deliberately thought to himself, One day, I'm going to strip you completely naked.

Mi Li's brows rose sharply and her palm struck straight at Zu An's face. However, this time, he dodged even more quickly and narrowly evaded it.

"Hah, you're actually using the movement technique I taught you to deal with me..." Mi Li ground her teeth. She was getting angrier and angrier.

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for +233 +233 +233...

Zu An immediately cried out loudly, "And you're still saying you can't read my thoughts!"

"There's something wrong with your expression." Mi Li's expression suddenly changed. "It looks as though you're thinking nonsense about me after all." She could no longer hold herself back. She controlled the Tai'e Sword and continued to hit his head.

The nearby maids and eunuchs couldn't help but whisper among themselves.

"Is that sir training? Why does it look so weird?"

"His head really is hard. He's not breaking down even after being hit by that sword again and again."

"He's probably practicing some sword controlling technique, right?"

...

The Embroidered Envoy found news of Xin Rui's little brother a day later. Their people had found her little brother Hua Bao in a Gaoling County casino. However, the casino had been too chaotic at the time, so he got away.

"What?!" Zu An was furious. These Embroidered Envoys who specialized in such matters had actually let an ordinary gambling addict get away?

Chapter 747: Watched

Zu An barked sternly, "Who were the ones in charge of this matter? Arrest everyone involved!"

His first reaction was to think that there was something wrong with the Embroidered Envoys. Otherwise, how could Hua Bao have gotten away? However, Xin Rui's little brother really had a crappy name. Didn't it basically mean 'straw bag'? What the hell were his parents thinking?

The two Embroidered Envoys reported, "The one in charge of the troops this time was Sir Xiao. He immediately locked up all of the members involved in the case in Gaoling County's prison."

The two silver token envoys Zu An was speaking to were named Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth. They had been working with Zu An all throughout the case.

Zu An had thought that their names were just nicknames at first, but they were actually their real names. What kind of careless parents would name their kids this way? He had felt that these two names were just too good to not be made a pair, so he had put them together.

It wasn't just their names; they were both quite young, but both of them seemed to have some hair issues. Dai Seventh's hair was receding from the sides into an M shape, while Chen Eighth was the opposite, balding from the center like the Mediterranean Sea. Zu An thought that he had run into his programmer friend from his past life the first time he saw Chen Eighth.

As for this Xiao Jianren they were talking about, he was another silver token envoy. He had voiced quite a few suggestions during the Xin Rui case investigation, so he was definitely a sharp fellow. He had left Zu An with a deep impression.

Apart from the golden token envoys, who were a bit more mysterious, the names of the other envoys weren't a secret. At the very least, they were known among the Embroidered Envoy.

"Xiao Jianren..." Zu An muttered to himself. They hadn't found Xin Rui's corpse in the palace back then, nor could they find records of her leaving through Xuanwu Gate. It was Xiao Jianren who had suggested that Xin Rui's corpse might have been brought out of the palace, which had led them to begin investigating the records of other gates. Did this fella deliberately mislead me from the start?

But it was pointless to think about that too much without taking a look for himself first. Zu An had Dai Eighth and Chen Seventh call over some Embroidered Envoys, then they headed toward Gaoling County.

Gaoling County wasn't far from the capital. It was just a satellite town of the capital, somewhere on the outskirts. They quickly arrived at the yamen, where Gaoling County's magistrate welcomed them cautiously. He was scared that he might be blamed as well now that the investigation had led them to

his territory. All officials, civil and military, were extremely fearful of the Embroidered Envoy's vicious reputation.

"Who decided on this arrangement?" Zu An asked, surprised.

Dai Seventh replied, "It was Sir Xiao who arranged this. After the arrest's failure, the first thing he did was to detain all of the Embroidered Envoys involved, the boss of the casino, as well as all related personnel."

Zu An nodded inwardly. This Xiao Jianren really is quite formidable. Then, he quickly arranged for some of his men to interrogate those who were part of the operation. The Embroidered Envoy specialized in this field.

But after two hours, they didn't find anything suspicious. Zu An wasn't able to obtain any new information even when he personally interrogated Xiao Jianren. That shouldn't have been the case unless these people were all in on it together, but it really was hard to imagine that so many Embroidered Envoys would be colluding over this.

Every single Embroidered Envoy's background had been strictly investigated. It might be possible for one or two traitors to be present, but it was completely impossible for so many of them to have rebelled together.

"So many of you went to capture a single person, yet he got away? I need an explanation for this," Zu An said as he looked at the report. Hua Bao didn't even have any cultivation. Forget about the Embroidered Envoy, he shouldn't even have been able to get away from an ordinary bailiff.

Xiao Jianren said in a low voice, "Sir Eleven, I've been thinking over this case all this time. Too many coincidences took place during Hua Bao's escape. I believe there are only two possibilities. The first is that there are moles within our operation, and the other is that there's something wrong with the casino. I suspect that they might have aided Hua Bao's escape, but there's unfortunately no proof. We can only detain them for now."

Zu An's expression changed. Recently, if it wasn't the emperor, then he had been dealing mainly with kings and other high officials. He had subconsciously disregarded the casino's staff as passers-by. He quickly ordered Chen Eighth, "Bring over the boss of the casino."

Before Chen Eighth could even move, another Embroidered Envoy reported in alarm, "Bad news; the casino's boss, Ning Hao, has died!"

"What!?" Zu An quickly got up and ran to Ning Hao's room. Xiao Jianren and the others followed him. They had just undergone strict questioning, so they were pretty much free from suspicion.

They quickly saw the casino owner's corpse. Ning Hao was seated in a corner with his back to the wall, an expression of horror frozen on his face. He had already passed away a long time ago.

"Who came into contact with him during this period?" Zu An's eyes shot towards Gaoling County's magistrate.

“No... no one! All of them were kept under close watch after these individuals had been detained, for fear that something might happen. No one was allowed to approach them!” The Gaoling County magistrate wiped the cold sweat on his forehead.

Hua Bao escaping from the casino was troublesome, but it wasn't too big of a deal. However, a prisoner had been silenced under his county prison's management. This was now a huge problem. Even losing his post wouldn't be the worst outcome at this point. If his entire family were banished to serve a penal sentence, then they really would be done for.

Zu An squatted down by the corpse and examined him. His brows furrowed. Then, he gestured at his subordinates to investigate the corpse. This was another one of their specialties.

The result came soon afterward. An Envoy reported, “There were no wounds or poison. He seems to have died from extreme shock.”

Zu An frowned. These casino bosses probably all had a bit of a dark past. All of them were frighteningly bold. How could he possibly have died from fear?

Furthermore, based on the intelligence they had, this Ning Hao was close to a sixth rank cultivator. After all, it was impossible for someone engaged in this type of business near the capital to not have any strength.

Xiao Jianren was a famous know-it-all from the Embroidery House. Even though his cultivation wasn't anything special, the fact that he could take the silver token envoy post had been because he had read enough books. He had read through almost everything in the Embroidery House.

Xiao Jianren said, “Replying to sir, there are three possibilities. The first would be that a grandmaster killed him through their divine will, and the second would be that a Fiend Race individual used sorcery. It's rumored that they're proficient in some kind of mystical art that can lock onto a target based on their birth data and personal items. The third possibility would be that someone from one of the races that cultivate special abilities, such as the Dragon Race's Soulspeak, could also silently end his life. It's all my fault for sending them to an ordinary county prison. If he had been in the Embroidery House, the special runes there would have been able to block most of these powers.”

Sensing Xiao Jianren's vexation, Zu An said in consolation, “You've already done quite well. None of us could have predicted that this would happen. It's not your fault.”

He quickly deduced that, as there were only a few grandmasters in this world, they were unlikely to attack a mere casino boss. He had witnessed Dragon Soulspeak before; it was similar to his Keyboard Come ability, so that was indeed possible. Meanwhile, even though the Fiend Races mostly lived in the borderlands, after centuries of war, many Fiend Race individuals had mixed into the world of humans.

For example, Snow and Yun Yuqing were both Fiend Race individuals who had successfully integrated into human society.[1] Various powers in the capital had raised Fiend Race experts as well. However, it was hard to say which clan had done this.

As such, Zu An immediately made arrangements. He had Xiao Jianren return to the Embroidery House to investigate which clans had raised Fiend Race experts. Xiao Jianren was familiar with the capital's situation, so he was most suitable for this job.

Meanwhile, Zu An himself began to interrogate everyone else from the casino. Unfortunately, he didn't obtain any useful information even after questioning them all the way into the night. The only ones left from the casino were all some young workers who didn't know much about their boss. They only knew that he'd had a mysterious background, and he seemed to have had a backer from the capital. Unfortunately, Ning Hao had always remained quiet about who this backer was.

Zu An knew that this trail wouldn't lead anywhere. As such, he decided to return to the capital first and rushed back.

On the way, however, he suddenly frowned and quickly pulled back his reins.

"What's wrong, Sir Eleven?" the other Embroidered Envoys asked. Zu An didn't reply because he felt a strange sensation, as if he were being watched.

Chapter 748: Something I Need Your Help With

Zu An didn't say anything as he used the jade badge to control the smaller creatures around him and check his surroundings. Unfortunately, many of the smaller creatures had been scared off when their group stormed over. There were some insects, but he couldn't see much through their eyes.

After some hesitation, he called out to Mi Li. "Big sis empress, help me look around to see who's spying on me."

Mi Li said lazily, "I'm sleeping; figure it out yourself."

Zu An was speechless. This woman really needs to be taught a good lesson! Even though he knew she didn't want him to rely on her too much, as that would affect his cultivation, there were times when he really wanted to give her a good whacking. What am I going to whack her with? Do you even need to ask?

"Be on your guard! Investigate the surroundings," Zu An warned while taking the lead. Unfortunately, even though he moved quickly, he didn't detect anything in the surroundings.

He smelled a vague, faint fragrance, but he wasn't sure whether it just came from some flowers in the fields. Even though the scent felt familiar for some reason, he couldn't recall just where he had smelled it.

"Leader, what's wrong?" Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth asked as they ran over. They hadn't found anything from their search either.

"I feel as if someone was following me," Zu An replied while thinking to himself.

"That can't be, right? Who would dare go against the Embroidered Envoy? Let alone when we're still in the capital's domain?" The two of them couldn't believe such a thing.

Zu An laughed in self-mockery. The Embroidered Envoy must have gotten so used to being high and mighty that they had developed a crazy sense of self-confidence. The same thing had happened when Huang Huihong had escorted him to the capital, but look at him now. Weeds were already growing all over his grave.

However, he remained silent and ordered them to remain vigilant. Then, he returned to the capital with a group of people. Even though it was already night and the city gates were closed, Embroidered Envoys had special status. After their waist tokens were inspected, the soldiers still opened up a small side door to let them in.

Zu An no longer felt that sensation of being watched at any point on the way back. He shook his head. Was he really so tense that he had become a bit paranoid?

He decided to go back to the Embroidery House first and saw Xiao Jianren flipping through all sorts of information in their database. As they hadn't really gotten any results, he ordered everyone to go home and rest first, and then continue the investigation tomorrow.

Xiao Jianren voiced his understanding, but his eyes were still darting to the files on the table. His mind was clearly still on those files.

Zu An chuckled inwardly. This fellow really was a workaholic. I'm sure those 996 capitalists would love to have this type of worker.[1]

When he left the Embroidery House, Zu An thought to himself that it had been a long time since he had returned to his home. Thus, he left the palace and headed home first.

But when he reached a nearby alley, he suddenly frowned. He sensed that someone was hiding ahead. Was the spy finally going to be unmasked?

Zu An walked over calmly. At the same time, he was confused. Could it be that this person knows I have something to do with Golden Token Eleven? That shouldn't be the case, right? Then why is this person waiting to ambush me?

When he felt he was close enough, Zu An suddenly attacked, grabbing the person's shoulder. Huh? It feels like a normal person...?

"Ah!" came a suppressed scream. However, when the person saw that it was Zu An, his shout came to a halt with a grunt. "So it was Sir Zu; you finally came back."

"Little Zhuo?" Zu An asked, startled. This was the lesser eunuch from the Palace of Peace. The assassin attack previously had caused them to lose a lot of eunuchs, so both he and Little Gui had been promoted. He continued, "What are you doing here so late at night?" The other party wasn't wearing his eunuch uniform, so he looked just like an ordinary commoner.

Little Zhuo replied, "I was waiting for Sir Zu, of course, but you didn't return for a long time."

"Why were you looking for me?" Zu An asked out of curiosity.

"The empress told me to pass on a message. She has invited sir to inspect a treasure," Little Zhuo replied somewhat vacantly. He didn't know why the empress would ask for Sir Zu. However, he sensibly chose not to think too much about it. In the palace, the less you knew, the better.

Zu An almost burst out laughing. That empress had been left in a drought for so long she had ended up getting hooked.

Mi Li suddenly said, "That Liu Ning really is the shame of all empresses. Utterly disgraceful."

Zu An smiled, amused. He said through ki transmission, "Didn't you say she was going to use me to recover from her injuries? It might not be as bad as you made it sound."

"She needs treatment, but looking for you so frequently clearly means she has other needs as well." Mi Li harrumphed. This fella is like a freaking donkey! No wonder Liu Ning, that vixen, couldn't forget the taste after experiencing it once.

Zu An chuckled when he sensed her resentment. He told Little Zhuo, "I'll have to trouble you to report to the empress that there's no need to inspect the treasure. Perhaps another day."

Little Zhuo panicked and asked, "How can we subjects refuse the orders of an empress?"

Zu An said with a smile, "Don't worry, you only need to deliver my words to her. She won't blame you." Little Zhuo couldn't convince him, so he could only leave nervously.

Mi Li asked curiously, "Why aren't you following him back? Even though that vixen is a bit of a slut, she's decent looking. Furthermore, I'm sure that sleeping with her feels incredible."

Zu An gave her a warm look. "Since you don't like it, I won't go. I'll stay here with you instead."

Mi Li's fair cheeks quickly reddened. "Get lost! Who wants your company? I'm going to go cultivate!" She harrumphed and disappeared into a wisp of smoke.

Even though this woman was normally fierce, Zu An had already learned how to deal with her from being around her for a while. As for why he had refused Liu Ning, the main reason was that he didn't want to turn into the empress' tool. He understood the reasoning behind pushing and pulling.

He had researched too much in the field of green tea and sea king in his past world, so how could he let Liu Ning seize the advantage?[2] He had managed to curry some favor from Mi Li as well.

At this point, he was even starting to look down on himself. He had once condemned all those sea kings and green tea bitches with righteous indignation in the past, but wasn't he having a great time doing the same thing right now?

When he returned home, Zu An noticed that the building was brightly lit. He rushed inside happily, and sure enough, a stunning, icy-blue figure was standing there. He couldn't help but pounce on her, and then he began to shower her with kisses.

Chu Chuyan jumped in fright. But when she saw who it was, her body softened up and subconsciously welcomed him. The two of them embraced each other for a while longer. She suddenly remembered something, and then her face reddened. She pushed Zu An away and said charmingly, "There's someone else here..."

Zu An turned around. Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe were staring at the two of them with stupefied expressions. Chu Youzhao's fair skin was completely red, while Murong Qinghe had healthy tanned skin. The two of them really did look like a good match.

Zu An gave Chu Chuyan an upset look and said, "Why do you always have these third wheels wherever you go?"

Chu Youzhao had been happy to see Zu An, but she immediately became unhappy when she heard his words. "Third wheel? You should thank me for helping you, or else big sis would have been stolen by another man already!"

Murong Qinghe tugged on her sleeves. "It's not like that at all. My brother was just enthusiastic; he doesn't have any other intentions."

When she saw Chu Chuyan act like a pampered little girl in front of Zu An, then compared it to how cold and aloof she was in front of Murong Luo, she sighed inside. She had to tell her clan brother to give up; there was no hope at all.

Zu An obviously knew that they were talking about Murong Luo. However, with his current status, there shouldn't be any reason for him to know what had happened in that building, so he didn't say anything. Either way, an ant like Murong Luo would never affect his relationship with Chuyan.

Just then, he noticed that there were many cases in the house, and he was surprised. "Did someone bring gifts?"

Chu Chuyan gave Murong Qinghe a look. The little girl pursed her lips and said, "Big brother Zu, I was the one who brought these gifts this time. I was wondering if you could help me with something."

Then, she explained why she had come over. When the Embroidered Envoys had left, Murong Luo had sighed in relief. But soon afterward, some vicious soldiers had seized him. He seemed to have been implicated in the crown princess' case. Sir Eleven had expressed his friendship with Zu An previously. Furthermore, Zu An was now the Eastern Palace's chamberlain, so Murong Qinghe had figured that he could save her brother.

"So that was what it was." Zu An looked at the little lioness with an ambiguous smile. He shook his head and said, "No way."

Chapter 749, Part 1: Ambush and Black-Clad Woman

"Why?" Murong Qinghe was stupefied. Wouldn't normal people at least refuse tactfully? That way, she could at least still accept it. Yet this fellow didn't behave the expected way at all and had refused so ruthlessly.

Zu An remarked indifferently, "Why would I save a man who approached my wife with bad intentions?"

Murong Qinghe bit her lip. However, her tone eased up as well. "I know my clan brother was wrong, but I think he's already been taught enough of a lesson. Also, I can promise you that he definitely won't have any thoughts he shouldn't have in the future, or else I'll help you beat him up."

"It sounds like you previously approved of him getting close to Chuyan...?" Zu An's voice became increasingly cold.

Chu Youzhao began to panic as she listened from the side. She was about to speak out for her childhood friend, but Chu Chuyan grabbed her sleeve and shook her head. She clearly realized that something was off too.

When they went out for a walk that day, Murong Qinghe seemed to have deliberately led them towards Chongwen Gate. She hadn't felt any suspicion back then, but now, it seemed as if she had deliberately played the matchmaker.

"I'm really sorry." Murong Qinghe had only thought that her clan brother could help her with Chu Youzhao if he ended up with Chu Chuyan, and all of them would be even closer then. However, even though she was normally quite bold, how could she bring out such a reason now? She could only apologize shamefully.

Zu An remained indifferent. He sat down on a chair off to the side and poured some tea. He seemed to be implying for her to leave when he began to sip his tea. Murong Qinghe felt more and more sullen. It was too awkward to stay, yet if she left now, she would become hostile with the Chu clan. She was stuck in a dilemma.

Chu Chuyan couldn't bear to watch any longer and said, "Qinghe, we've known each other for a long time now. If you have anything you wish to say, you can say it directly to me. There's no need to play these types of tricks."

"Sorry, big sis Chu. I won't do it again." Murong Qinghe was also incredibly vexed. She really had gone completely stupid this time. She had seen just how close Chu Chuyan and Zu An were, yet she'd actually thought that her idiot of a clan brother had a chance of success!

Chu Chuyan smiled, and then looked at Zu An. "Ah Zu, Little Qinghe has already admitted her wrongs. She's been good friends with Chu Youzhao since she was little, and she's also a good friend of mine. Let's just leave this matter at that."

"Since you're the one saying so, then how can I be unreasonable?" A gentle smile appeared on Zu An's face.

"Brother-in-law is the best!" Chu Youzhao had been really hard-pressed this entire time as well. On one side was her childhood friend, while on the other was her sister and brother-in-law. She had really felt awful being in the middle. Now that she saw that they had already buried the hatchet, she finally sighed in relief.

"Big brother Zu really is generous." Murong Qinghe bit her lip. After a bit of hesitation, she asked, "Then, about my clan brother..."

"It's not impossible for me to save him, but you have to promise me something," Zu An said seriously.

Murong Qinghe quickly smiled and said, "Big brother Zu, please speak! Forget about a single condition, even if it's ten, I can agree to all of them!"

"Don't count your chickens before they hatch." Zu An had an ambiguous smile on his face. "My condition isn't something so easily met."

Murong Qinghe gulped when she saw his strange smile. "What kind of condition is it?"

Chu Chuyan and Chu Youzhao pricked up their ears, but Zu An waved his hand, gesturing for them to leave first. Chu Chuyan frowned, but she didn't say anything. She knew that there was someone else who definitely wouldn't be able to hold herself back.

Sure enough, Chu Youzhao immediately shouted, "Why do we have to go outside too? Are you going to bully Little Qinghe?"

Murong Qinghe cried out in alarm and subconsciously took a step back. She was on guard as she looked at Zu An.

Zu An really was left speechless. Eventually he asked, "Am I really that bad in your eyes?"

Chu Youzhao and Murong Qinghe both nodded at the same time as the scene of how he had tormented Chu Chuyan appeared in their heads. Ah... Our faces are heating up.

Zu An said impatiently, "I need to discuss the condition with her. You guys are close, so of course you'll defend her. How can I discuss these things with her if you two speak on her behalf? But if I don't help her, she might have a grudge. That's why it'll be better if you two aren't here."

Chu Chuyan knew what he was saying. She said with a smile, "Then we'll wait for you next door." Then, before Chu Youhao could say anything in response, she grabbed her and left.

...

While the sisters were next door, Chu Youzhao paced back and forth in agitation. At the same time, she pressed her ears against the wall to see if she could hear anything.

Chu Chuyan gave her an annoyed look and asked, "What are you so worried about?"

Chu Youzhao harrumphed. "Who knows what that perverted brother-in-law will do to Little Qinghe!"

"Your brother-in-law isn't that type of person." Chu Chuyan blushed as she spoke. She quickly explained, "Even though he's... a bit perverted, he's able to discern between simple and serious matters. He won't do anything to Little Qinghe. It's instead you that I'm concerned about. Why do you care so much? What kind of thoughts do you have toward Qinghe?"

"What do you mean, what kind of thoughts?" Chu Youzhao asked, stunned.

Chu Chuyan sighed. "Did you forget that you're a girl? No matter how good your relationship with her is, you can never get married. The reason you got close to her was just so she could help you hide your true identity. But what if you really forget your true mission?"

Chu Youhao curled her lips and said quietly, "I understand." She couldn't help but become sad.

Chu Chuyan then said, "It's because we have to let down Little Qinghe that we have to do our best to make it up to her. That's why I didn't bicker too much about how she tried to set me up with her clan brother. Afterward, I'll try to convince your brother-in-law to help her too."

Chu Youzhao voiced her understanding. She seemed a bit unhappy to be reminded that the two of them had no future.

Chu Chuyan sighed. They really had treated her unfairly... The Chu clan had placed all of the responsibility on her little sister, and a young lady's happiness might even be affected.

Chu Youzhao's eyes suddenly lit up. She said excitedly, "I just thought of a perfect solution that will satisfy everyone!"

"What is it?" Chu Chuyan was confused. She didn't know what could make her little sister suddenly become so happy.

Chu Youzhao said, "I can marry Little Qinghe!"

Chu Chuyan retorted impatiently, "What are you thinking? You might be able to trick her now, but what about after you get married? You can't consummate the marriage."

"Brother-in-law can take my place," Chu Youzhao said matter-of-factly. Chu Chuyan was left speechless.

Chu Youzhao continued, "I believe that with how Qinghe feels about me, she won't care that I'm a girl. But we still need a child, and it'll be too unfortunate if Qinghe can never experience the feeling of a man. We can just get brother-in-law to help... Ah! Big sis, why are you hitting me? Ouch... ouch, ouch..."

...

Meanwhile, on the other side, Zu An sized up Murong Qinghe. He had to admit that she was a beauty in the making. Her tanned skin gave her a healthy and fit aesthetic. She seemed extremely lively and energetic.

Murong Qinghe was a bit frightened when she saw that he was examining her. She asked, "Big brother Zu, what is the condition?"

Zu An replied, "I've never been all that charitable of a person. I don't really have any interest in helping people who have nothing to do with me. That's true for you as well, unless... you become one of my people."

Murong Qinghe jumped in fright. She quickly covered her collar and said, "Big brother Chu and I have been childhood lovers since we were young, and you're his sister's husband. How can you..."

Zu An cut her off impatiently. "What kind of nonsense are you thinking about? I'm asking you if you like Youzhao."

Murong Qinghe's face instantly turned red. She gave the wall an embarrassed look. There were many things she couldn't say because of her young lady's bashfulness, but she was a bit of a tomboy anyway, so she was a bit bolder. After a bit of hesitation, she still quietly voiced a confirmation.

"How much do you like him?" Zu An asked. "What if he encountered something one day and was no longer the way he looks now... or what if he got injured and became a cripple? What would you do? Would you still like him?" Um... she doesn't have one down there, so that could be considered somewhat similar to being a cripple, right? Sigh... Youzhao, Youzhao... Look how far I am going for your sake.

Murong Qinghe immediately cut him off. A firm and steady expression appeared on her face. "I like who he is, and not anything else. No matter what kind of person he becomes, I will still like him. Also, I've already vowed to myself that I won't marry anyone other than big brother Chu in this life."

Chapter 749, Part 2: Ambush and Black-Clad Woman

When he saw how unswerving the young lady was, Zu An found it a bit hard to watch. He said, "You're still young, so there's no need for you to make such an early decision. Youzhao might not be as good as you're imagining him..."

The little girl immediately frowned and clenched her fists, exclaiming angrily, "You're not allowed to speak badly about big brother Chu!"

You have successfully trolled Murong Qinghe for +233 +233 +233...

Zu An was speechless. Looks like I was worried for nothing. Whatever, girl on girl is pretty interesting in itself. As such, he said, "In that case, confirm your relationship with Youzhao. That way, you'll be one of us, so I'll have a reason to help you out."

The usually carefree and bold young lady instead became bashful when she heard Zu An's words. She continued to twiddle her fingers while walking around in place. "That's... That's not too good, is it? I don't know if big brother Chu is willing or not... Ah... This is so embarrassing..."

Zu An couldn't help but laugh when he saw her acting like a little girl. A girl in love was cute after all. He said, "You'll know whether he's willing or not once you ask." Then, he quickly called over the other two.

"Huh? Big brother Chu, why are you holding your bottom?" Murong Qinghe was always concerned about her lover. She immediately noticed something was strange.

"It's nothing." Chu Youzhao gave her big sister a resentful look. This woman really is vicious! I was only going to borrow brother-in-law for a bit, it's not as if I was going to find him a concubine or something... Why did you have to get so mad?

Zu An gave them a rough summary of what he had just said. Chu Youzhao was happy and excited, saying, "Of course I like Little Qinghe too! Little Qinghe is so cute; who wouldn't like her?"

"Ah..." Murong Qinghe covered her mouth. She was so happy she was beaming.

Zu An smiled and said, "In that case, then just get this matter over with. I have a lot of empty rooms here, so the two of you can decide your relationship in one of them."

"Huh?" Murong Qinghe was stunned. Even though she adored her big brother Chu, she still came from a great clan. Her upbringing taught her that such behavior was crude and definitely offended public morals.

But if it's big brother Chu... She gave Chu Youzhao's handsome side profile a look. Her heart was pounding fiercely. If big brother Chu really wants to, then should I really refuse him?

Chu Youzhao gave Zu An a nervous look. "Brother-in-law, you..."

She thought that her brother-in-law had forgotten that she was a girl. Why would he make her sleep with Murong Qinghe? Don't tell me he heard what I said to big sis?

Chu Chuyan was thinking the same thing. The two sisters gave him a strange look.

Zu An was instead baffled. What the heck are these two looking at me like that for?

Chu Chuyan coughed lightly. She couldn't take it anymore. "They're still too young; it's a bit too early for that."

Murong Qinghe was a young lady after all. She couldn't resist her embarrassment anymore and quickly said, "I'm leaving first." Then, she rushed out of the door. She quickly left with the servants waiting at the entrance, as if she were fleeing.

Chu Chuyan finally couldn't hold back when she saw her leave and said, "Ah Zu, what in the world are you thinking? You already know that Youzhao is... Why are you making them sleep together?"

Zu An smiled. "Don't tell me you felt she would agree?"

Chu Chuyan was stunned. Only now did she realize that Murong Qinghe, who had come from an influential family, would never agree to sleeping together before marriage.

Zu An then explained, "This way, even fewer people will suspect that Youzhao is crossdressing. In the future, Murong Qinghe will be the greatest supporter of that."

Chu Youzhao suddenly experienced sorrow that didn't match her age. "But I still tricked her... Won't she hate me in the future once she learns the truth?"

Zu An thought to himself, Could it be that love really makes one mature earlier?

Chu Chuyan said, "Indeed, we're really letting down Qinghe here. That's why, Ah Zu, can you help her with this matter? Otherwise, we'll feel too guilty."

Zu An smiled and said, "Don't worry. It's just a trifling Murong Luo; it's not a big deal. I'll try to save him."

Chu Chuyan sighed in relief. She gave him a warm look. "Ah Zu, you really are great."

Chu Youzhao subconsciously wrapped her arms around herself. "Ah! You guys are so corny! Whatever, I won't stay here and disturb you two anymore. I'm going to sleep! But... Can you two not make so much noise at night?" She was scared that she might get beaten again, and ran away while giggling.

Chu Chuyan was ashamed and panicky. "It's all your fault that she makes fun of me for this every time!"

"I'll give her a good spanking tomorrow to get revenge for you." Zu An chuckled, and then took her into his arms.

Chu Chuyan harrumphed. "You just wanted to take advantage of her."

Zu An's face went rigid. "How can you doubt your husband's integrity like this? Your husband is going to punish you with the clan law!"

"What clan law?" Chu Chuyan's normally cold eyes became misty. There was a warm smile hanging from her lips as well.

"Whip punishment!" Zu An moved closer to her ear, and then softly kissed her ice-cold and smooth earlobe.

Chu Chuyan's entire body trembled. Then, her body softened. This guy! He's always touching my most sensitive spots.

The ice-cold goddess had already completely thawed and fallen into the world of mortals.

...

The next morning, Zu An headed to the imperial palace feeling refreshed. Chu Chuyan was a girl who was cold on the outside, but warm on the inside. Everyone thought that she was a capable woman who pushed men far away, as she had a reputation as the one who managed the Chu clan's affairs.

He was the only one who knew what kind of tender being rested underneath that tough shell. She actually had a young girl's heart, and she was full of all manner of romantic fantasies. Otherwise, she wouldn't have been so obsessed with the 'Domineering Sword Immortal' novel. A warm smile appeared on Zu An's face when he recalled the previous night.

"Huh? Why are the streets so empty today? Is everyone still in bed?" Suddenly, he noticed that the originally bustling streets were now bleak instead. While he was a bit confused, he suddenly became alert. He saw a streak of dark light flying toward him out of the corner of his eye.

He quickly evaded to the side. Unfortunately, that dark light was just too fast. It was far faster than the dark elves' ambush he had faced on his way to the capital. Even so, with his current cultivation, it wasn't impossible to escape. He would just be left in a bit of a sorry state.

However, the moment he dodged, he felt pain in the back of his head. It was as if he had been stabbed by a needle. Even though he quickly recovered, that flash of dark light had already arrived in front of him in that instant.

Only now did he see that it was a large arrow... No, it was many times thicker than an arrow. It was as thick as a mature man's arm!

A siege crossbow! Those words appeared in Zu An's mind. He didn't know why such a large-scale military weapon would appear here.

He could only do his best to avoid getting hit in his vital areas. Still, the massive crossbow bolt dug straight into the right side of his chest.

Boom!

The force that struck in that instant felt as if he had been rammed into by a speeding train. He was blown back by the tremendous force, and nailed to a nearby wall.

"Hmph, I heard this fella was quite amazing. Wasn't he still easily done in by a siege crossbow?"

"Hurry and take apart the siege crossbow; we can't leave behind any information. You guys, go and remove his head."

"Huh? That fella really is sturdy. If it were a normal cultivator, half of their body would have been blown apart."

Voices spoke one after another. Zu An didn't open his eyes, and instead used the jade badge to observe his surroundings through the small birds in the trees.

There was an opening in the second floor of a nearby residence; inside of it was a massive crossbow. Several black-clad individuals were moving about next to it.

Some stayed behind and quickly dismantled the crossbows, while two other black-clad individuals rushed at Zu An with blades in hand.

Zu An frowned. The power of the attack had just been too great. That siege crossbow bolt in particular had all types of runes engraved on it. Fortunately, he had undergone the Primordial Origin Sutra's refinement, so his body was incredibly tough. His body didn't explode under the impact, and it was quickly repairing his wounds.

But even though he was still alive, the huge impact had ravaged his meridians. He still needed a dozen or so seconds before he could fight again. In a normal situation, that amount of time would be nothing. Now, it instead seemed extremely long.

When he saw those two black clad individuals get closer and closer, Zu An couldn't be bothered with the consequences anymore. He decided to summon Daji. As for Zhuxie Chixin's suspicion and everything else, he would deal with it when the time comes.

At the same time, he prepared to use 'Keyboard Come' to buy him those ten seconds of time.

The two black clad individuals arrived at Zu An's side. They raised the blades in their hands and hacked at his neck. But suddenly, another black clad individual flew over. Their hands shot out like lightning, smashing into the pair's chests. The two individuals screamed miserably as they were blown back.

"Who are you?!" A dozen or so figures surrounded the newly-arrived black-clad individual. They all had powerful auras, and were clearly all experts.

Zu An had already recovered the ability to move. He quietly examined the black clad individual standing in front of him. Even though this person was clad in black, her figure was graceful and fair. She was clearly a woman.

Chapter 750: Layers Upon Layers of Suspicion

"A woman?" Zu An murmured, stunned.

Even though the figure was masked, her wonderful curves still revealed that she was a gorgeous woman. He really couldn't figure out which girl would constantly remain hidden like this to rescue him. Yun Jianyue? But that can't be. If the Devil Sect Master herself came out here, she could immediately blow these people to smithereens.

Zu An suddenly felt his vision blur. The familiar buildings and clean streets disappeared.

...

The surroundings had been replaced by a tattered courtyard. The tavern containing that siege crossbow had also turned into a tattered ruin. Zu An had been nailed to an earthen wall by that siege crossbow's bolt, but now, the wall was almost completely in ruins as well.

Why am I here? Wasn't I on the way to the palace? I should already be close to the foot of the imperial city!

In that instant, Zu An was horrified. He thought back to what had happened. He had been shot down by that siege crossbow because it felt as if his head had been stabbed by a needle. That was why his movements had been slowed slightly for a moment.

He eventually concluded that it was probably a cultivator proficient in the spiritual element who had created this illusion and brought him here.

Huh? Wait... Then, why does this courtyard look so familiar? He saw familiar fields, spinning wheels, and the like. He suddenly realized something. Wasn't this the home of Xin Rui's mother and younger brother, which he had investigated earlier? Why had the other person decided to bring him here?

But now wasn't the time to think about such things, because several black-clad individuals leaped out from the shadows, surrounding the mysterious woman.

Three over there, five over there, seven over there... There were fifteen black-clad individuals in total. Two of them were already lying listlessly on the ground. Their lives had likely already been ended by the mysterious woman.

Three people stood at the very front. One was a stout and stocky man carrying a hammer, who seemed to focus on brute strength. Another was tall and slender, carrying a red-tasseled spear. His posture was as straight as a javelin, so he was likely quite skilled with his weapon. The third person's weapon was unique; he wore a ring around each wrist, one gold, one silver.

Zu An paid more attention to these three because, judging from the auras that had erupted from them, they were likely seventh ranked experts. However, their weapons were so special, it likely wouldn't be hard to find out their identity through the Embroidered Envoy's intelligence network. Of course, all of that was dependent on the premise that he could return to the Embroidery House alive first.

The remaining seven black-clad men wielded shining blades, and had cold and emotionless gazes. Their expressions were the sort that only deathsworn who often engaged in slaughter could have. They looked to be around the sixth rank. Furthermore, judging from their coordination, they definitely used formation tactics and the like.

Sending such a powerful force, and even attacking me with a siege crossbow... These fellas really are showing me quite a lot of respect, aren't they? Zu An thought self-deprecatingly. It was probably because of the news that he had defeated King Qi's heir that they didn't dare to look down on him.

However, these individuals had also been misled by Zu An; they believed that some mysterious expert had helped him out, not that he had won all on his own. That was why they hadn't assigned any higher level cultivators.

Hm? Wait, where's the spiritual element cultivator who created that illusion? Zu An quickly borrowed the eyes of the nearby small creatures. Unfortunately, most of them had run away in fear after the

disturbance. He barely managed to get a hold of some small birds to get a better look. Unfortunately, there were still many places he couldn't see, so he wasn't able to find anyone else.

"Who are you?" asked the expert with the gold and silver rings. The other black-clad individuals watched the mysterious woman vigilantly.

The mysterious woman remained silent. She took the opportunity to quickly observe the people around her, searching for a good opportunity to attack.

The man with the rings frowned and waved his hands, commanding, "Kill her! Her corpse is yours to play around with afterward."

The seven sixth ranked, blade-wielding deathsworn behind him were no longer emotionless. Instead, their expressions became fierce and... lustful.

Zu An was speechless. Judging from how excited those deathsworn looked, this was definitely not the first time they had done something like this. What the hell, what kind of disgusting fetish is this? They actually like to play with corpses!?

The deathsworn brandished the shiny blades in their hands. They rushed at the mysterious woman with excellent coordination. The three seventh ranked experts watched indifferently without lifting a finger.

What Zu An had never understood when he watched TV was why the villains would always send their lackeys first. That gave the main character several chances to level up and get stronger. Wouldn't the situation be easily solved if they went at the protagonist themselves from the start? It would be as easy as swatting a fly.

But after he arrived in this world of cultivation, he realized that for cultivators, unless there was truly a huge difference in cultivation, it was easy to lose due to lack of knowledge about the other party's trump cards and skills.

By having one's subordinates test the enemy out first, one would be much more prepared. As for the lives of subordinates, well, it was their fault for being subordinates.

As the deathsworn men attacked, the mysterious woman dodged gracefully. Then, she struck the blade of the one in the middle, sending it toward his chest's vital areas.

Zu An nodded approvingly. Whether in terms of cultivation or combat experience, she was first rate. Which of the girls he knew had fighting ability and stealth capabilities on this level?

Just as the woman was about to take care of another deathsworn, two blades suddenly shot out from under his arms. One was aimed at her stomach, while the other flew toward her legs. Both blades had been shot out from tricky angles.

These individuals were clearly skilled at coordinated battles, and could cover for their comrades with their attacks. Still, the mysterious woman seemed to have anticipated that, and didn't panic at all. With a tap of her feet, she leaped into the sky, where their formation was weakest.

Just as her palms were about to break several individuals' skulls into pieces, two of the men in the back suddenly raised shields to protect themselves. The mysterious woman frowned, but ultimately still decided to follow through with her attack.

The two shields flickered with runes. They were clearly top quality goods from the military. However, they were blasted to pieces in mere moments. Even though the mysterious woman looked delicate and slender, her palm strikes were definitely frighteningly powerful.

The deathsworn groaned as blood flowed from their mouths and noses.

The three experts who were watching exchanged a look. They could sense the graveness in each others' eyes. The mysterious woman's cultivation was actually this high! The key was that they had no idea who she was. Why was she interfering with their plan?

The mysterious woman suddenly rushed into the sky. As it turned out, the instant the shields shattered, the deathsworn had suddenly fired crossbows mounted on their wrists. These military-grade crossbows had special runes carved on them, and their power up close was nothing to scoff at. Not even she dared to face them head on.

The woman frowned. She had originally planned to use this chance to kill them, but she hadn't expected them to be so sinister. As such, she gave up on her plan and instead rushed over to Zu An's side. She sealed the wound on his chest, pulling out the giant crossbow bolt and asking, "Ah Zu, are you okay?"

It was her? Zu An was moved. When he smelled her familiar scent and heard her melodious and soft voice, he finally realized who she was. This was the wife of King Wu whom he had previously spent a night with, Yun Yuqing!

Who are those people that want me dead anyway? Why is she here in the capital? Also, why did she show up with such great timing? Zu An had countless questions. Furthermore, he wanted to give that spiritual element expert who was hiding in the shadows a nice surprise. That was why he pretended to be unconscious and didn't reply to her.

"Ah Zu, don't scare me like that..." Yun Yuqing's voice trembled when she saw that he didn't respond. Her fair white hands gently caressed his wounds. A faint purple light shone from them, helping Zu An heal from his terrifying injury.

"Stop her!" The short and stocky fellow with the large hammer barked, having seen how powerful the woman was. He could no longer hold back. He rushed out, his thick and sturdy calves even making the ground split apart under his feet. Then, he brandished the giant hammer in his hands.

But before he even arrived, a terrifying gust of wind swept over him. A spinning wheel nearby was tossed to the side and blasted to pieces. If the hammer had hit Zu An and Yun Yuqing, however, their bodies would have been pulverized instantly.