

## Immortal 761

### Chapter 761: Behind the Scenes

King Wu looked toward Yun Yuqing. When he saw her slightly pink skin, his eyes were filled with infatuation. "Yuqing, you are really beautiful today."

Yun Yuqing bowed and replied in a formal tone, "Thank you, my king, for your praise. May I ask why you have sought me out today?"

King Wu frowned. He was a bit unhappy about her attitude. Just as he was about to say something, he suddenly noticed a puddle on the ground. His expression couldn't help but change.

He pretended to have inadvertently walked over to the edge of the pool. He looked at the damp floor, as well as the small puddles everywhere, and his expression sank. "What were you doing here just now?" he asked.

"Taking a bath, of course. What else would I be doing?" Yun Yuqing replied nonchalantly. She sorted out her dress and sat down at a table, pouring a cup of water for herself. All of that activity had left her feeling a bit dehydrated.

King Wu's gaze moved over to his wife's curves. Because she had just finished her shower, there was still a bit of steam coming from her body. Her clothes stuck tightly to her skin, making her curves even more seductive.

"Hmph, I wonder which store's clothes those are. They actually aren't see-through even after they get wet. My king manor will never purchase clothes from them again." King Wu retracted his gaze and said, "Why is there so much water all over the ground if you were just taking a bath?"

Yun Yuqing replied indifferently, "Can I not play around in the water if I'm in the mood?"

Zu An almost burst out laughing. It really was the case that the prettier the girl, the better they were at lying! Yun Yuqing was indeed playing around with water, but she was playing with me. At the same time, he was confused. Why did their conversation seem a bit rigid? It didn't sound as intimate as the previous time in North Order Commandery.

King Wu smiled apologetically. "Of course you can. I didn't expect Yuqing to still be so young at heart."

Yun Yuqing lowered her cup and asked, "What does the king need me for today, exactly? You even disregarded the servants and barged in, almost as if you came here to criticize me."

King Wu's smile gradually faded as well. He said, "I just received news that the assassination on Zu An seems to have failed. We didn't find Zu An's corpse." He paused for a moment, then looked at his wife. "Did you rush over and save him?"

Behind the curtain, Zu An was shocked. They had known about this assassination! In that instant, many possibilities appeared in his head. At the same time, something that had always puzzled him during this time was finally cleared up. However, there was one issue. What role had Yun Yuqing played here, exactly?

Yun Yuqing suddenly got up and stared at King Wu, exclaiming angrily, "What were you intending by deliberately keeping news of Zu An's assassination from me?!" Zu An sighed in relief when he heard those words.

King Wu harrumphed. "It's obviously because I feared that you might be worried. Why are you getting so worked up? Don't tell me you feel something for him?"

Zu An sneered in disdain. This fellow had pushed his own wife onto another man, yet he was here getting all jealous. What the hell is wrong with you?

Yun Yuqing said indifferently, "Of course. He's a true man and a reliable husband, so it's normal for me to feel something. I like him."

Zu An was shocked. He had never expected her to give this kind of answer! He had originally thought that she would try to talk her way around this, but she had chosen to charge straight ahead! Why?

"What?!" King Wu was also stunned. His first reaction was that he had heard wrong, but when he saw his wife's provocative gaze, he finally reacted. He roared, "You actually like that rascal from the streets, that piece of trash?!"

Yun Yuqing harrumphed. "No one questions the background of a hero. Why would there be a need to evaluate a man based on his status and background? I only looked at what kind of person he really is. He's clearly an outstanding man, regardless of which aspect of him it is."

King Wu seemed about to explode when he heard those words. He charged furiously at Yun Yuqing, aiming to grab her neck to question her.

Zu An was a bit worried, and prepared to save her at a moment's notice. He was full of questions. Why would Yun Yuqing make such a choice? Breaking off all relations would bring her no benefits, after all. Not only was King Wu a king, he was even a master rank expert!

Even though masters like him had been raised through the emperor Zhao Han's endless resources, it was still dependent on the premise that their aptitude was high enough. An idiot like the crown prince would only be fattened up a bit by all those treasures. It wouldn't be of much help at all.

Even though kings like King Wu had reached the master rank, their foundations weren't stable, and they lacked combat experience as well. They were probably the weakest of the world's master ranks. But even the weakest of master ranks were still masters! If they really fought, then Yun Yuqing would suffer a loss.

But Yun Yuqing tapped her toes, and streaks of runes flickered at her toe tips. She quickly evaded King Wu's assault, clearly prepared ahead of time. She sighed and asked, "Why are you getting upset? You should be getting even more excited when you hear me say this."

King Wu's expression changed. He stopped and asked, "What are you trying to say?!"

Yun Yuqing's tender and beautiful face was shrouded in a layer of frost as she responded, "Don't think that I'm not aware of those things you've done."

"What the hell did I do?" King Wu retorted. However, he immediately lost a lot of his initial confidence.

Yun Yuqing began to recall the past. "In the past, I shouldered the future of my clansmen, so I had no choice but to marry you. At first, the intelligence we received claimed that you were an outstanding king in every aspect. You were handsome, your cultivation aptitude was high, and you even had talent in administrative work. I even continued to lie to myself, to make myself accept you and love you. That way, this marriage could be considered a good conclusion for me."

Zu An sighed when he heard about the events of the past. The situations of those foreign tribes really hadn't been too great in those years.

The emperor Zhao Han had led the human race in warfare, causing a crushing defeat for the Fiend Races. Many Fiend Races had been taken captive by humans and turned into slaves. Some withdrew to the border, while some concealed their identity and lived in the central plains in hiding.

But they were still of the Fiend Races after all. It wasn't so easy for them to continue living. For the sake of the Elf Race, Qiao Xueying had no choice but to obey the Shi clan. Now, Yun Yuqing was clearly in a similar situation.

Yun Yuqing changed the topic. "I was still wondering how I was going to receive you and consummate our marriage, but who could have known that you would get dead drunk on our wedding night and not even go to the bridal room? I didn't mind at first, but later on, you always kept your distance. Even though I didn't like you back then, I was also rather unsatisfied, and I even felt alone and rejected. I wondered if it was because you looked down on me as a Demon Race woman.

"Then, I suspected that there might be something wrong with your body. But I know that you have many women in the king manor. One day, I accidentally stumbled upon the real reason."

Zu An's curiosity was piqued when he heard those words. He really couldn't understand why, even though King Wu's body was fine, he would still refrain from touching a goddess of a wife like Yun Yuqing. He looked at King Wu.

King Wu's expression changed, but he quickly calmed down. "I don't know what you're saying."

"Is that so?" Yun Yuqing sneered. "One day, one of my men discovered that you found a girl that looked similar to me, and then you had her dress up like me, and even did her hair just like mine. You trained her to speak like me. Back then, I thought that you were looking for a suitable person to act as a decoy since someone was after my life, so I became nervous. I continued to investigate until one day, I set up a recording formation in your room. I saw you carry that girl into the room, and then the two of you began to get affectionate.

"I was going to just leave it, and consider it as you seeking out a concubine. But when I was about to stop watching, who could have expected that you would make her talk like me? I could only keep watching then. That girl really was talented and did quite well. Then, at the key moment, you stopped and instead made her wear a blindfold. How could that girl dare to go against you? She thought that was just what you liked, so she complied and covered her eyes.

"However, even though that pitiful girl thought that she was receiving the favor of her king, who could have imagined that you would bring out a strong and healthy subordinate from your cupboard? Then, you had that subordinate humiliate her in front of your face! Sigh, that pitiful girl thought that the one

she was doing her best to service was her beloved master, yet she was actually being plowed by another man!

“When I saw that look of extreme excitement, I knew that you were a disgusting pervert through and through!”

## **Chapter 762: Absolutely Bizarre**

Zu An was completely stupefied. There was actually a man like this in the world? He had thought that this type of thing only appeared in his previous world’s fiction. But there was actually someone like that in the real world! Sigh, there really are all kinds of fish in the sea.

King Wu was furious and nervous as he exclaimed, “You were actually secretly monitoring me!” His originally handsome face was now extremely warped.

Yun Yuqing tapped her toes against the ground. Some rune formations flickered at her feet, widening her distance from him. She retorted, “How else would I have found out your true colors?”

Her voice was as sharp as a blade, stabbing deeply into his heart. “Maybe it was out of misgivings toward your cooperation with the Demon Race; or perhaps you were still haunted by the morals you had left, so you couldn’t bring yourself to do that to me. That was why you found someone who looked a bit similar to me, always pretended that she was me, and then had another man violate her. Only then could you get stimulated and carry out intercourse. To be honest, I was so disgusted when I saw that back then that I wanted to throw up.

“It was no wonder that you always kept your distance after we got married. It was actually because you can’t get in the mood at all without doing such a thing first! But you know that I’m not someone easily deceived, so you never dared to put this into action. But eventually, you finally couldn’t resist that disgusting fetish of yours, so under the pretext of the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, you had me seduce Zu An.”

Zu An’s eyes were wide open. He had never expected this perfect couple in the eyes of others to have such a crazy relationship in private.

Yun Yuqing suddenly smiled. “Back then, I really wanted to obtain the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra, and because I wanted to get revenge on you, I agreed to your request. Back then, I thought that rather than offering my virginity to you, I might as well give it to another man. At the very least, I could then obtain the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra for the Demon Race. Now, thinking back, that was the best choice, because Zu An allowed me to learn what a true man is like, what a true husband should be like.”

When he saw his wife’s glowing smile, that face of happiness, King Wu knew that she had already been subdued by Zu An. That man had already left behind indelible traces, whether it was in her mind or body. He couldn’t help but feel incredible envy. “That damn Zu An, I’m going to kill him! I’ll definitely kill him!”

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for +666 +666 +666...

However, he quickly reacted and said, “Virginity? Impossible! I was the one who took it!”

Yun Yuqing sneered. "Oh, are you talking about that weird game you were playing in that private room before you for me, that one time?"

King Wu's expression changed. That was precisely what he had been referring to.

Yun Yuqing said indifferently, "How could I possibly let your disgusting self touch me? After I discovered your secret that time, I was always thinking about how I would deal with you. My months of formation arrangement were finally complete by then. Together with the effects of the Devil's Eye, it was enough to make you fall into an illusion. That was why you thought you obtained everything."

Zu An was incredibly shocked. He had already had his suspicions back then. Yun Yuqing was just too underripe when she had first been with him, not like a young lady who had already experienced the bedroom. However, he had been completely deceived by the pair's outward acts of affection, so he hadn't thought too much about it. Now he realized that had indeed been her first time after all. No wonder her brows were furrowed so tightly, and she looked like she was in so much pain...

King Wu's expression changed. "How is that possible? I'm a glorious master! How could your Devil's Eye possibly affect me?"

"Is that so?" Yun Yuqing sneered. "I might not be able to deal with an authentic master, but a master like you who was raised on resources isn't so tough at all. Furthermore, that weird addiction of yours has created many openings in your mind. As long as I prepared a bit and planted a seed, I could activate it at a suitable time. Once the Devil's Eye worked against you once, it would become much easier in the future."

"But don't worry, I haven't let you down too much. At the very least, I helped you find a maid you like."

King Wu's expression changed several times. He asked in shock and disbelief, "Then all of the affection over the years you showed me was fake?"

Yun Yuqing replied, "The Devil Race had an alliance with King Wu Manor. I was worried about ruining our relationship, so that was why I played along. If I hadn't met Zu An, I might have continued the act with you. However, I'm already tired of playing pretend." When she spoke about Zu An, her eyes were full of infatuation.

However, that expression made King Wu feel as if his heart were being cut out. His expression suddenly became fierce. He stared at Yun Yuqing, exclaiming, "Fine, then I'll let you see whether I can do it or not myself!"

The stunning wife he had always thought he had under his control was actually far from his reach. It was instead he who had been played in the center of her palm! How could he swallow this resentment?

When he saw his wife's stunning face, he felt his throat go a bit dry. He decided that he had to punish her properly no matter what. However, he suddenly felt a bit of hesitation inside. He hadn't had time to prepare today. Would I... even be able to do it?

Yun Yuqing laughed. "Don't believe your own lies. Should I give you some time to find a girl to play pretend first? To have her violated by another man?"

"Nonsense, I can do it!" King Wu's face became beet-red. His breathing became heavy. However, the more he thought about it, the more his little guy didn't listen. It continued to remain completely indifferent. His expression was filled with shame when he realized that. At the same time, he was filled with anger and resentment. How can that Zu An be so strong?!

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for +777 +777 +777...

Yun Yuqing sighed. She waved toward the back of the curtain and said, "Ah Zu, you should come out now."

King Wu was speechless. Even Zu An was completely baffled. He really didn't know what Yun Yuqing was thinking. However, he had just resolved to follow his own dao, so there was no need for him to cower right now. He came out from behind the curtain on his own.

King Wu was shocked and furious when he saw Zu An. "Why are you here?!" he exclaimed.

You have successfully trolled Zhao Yan for +233 +233 +233...

Zu An sighed. He felt a bit of sympathy for the guy as he replied, "Why do you think I'm here?"

King Wu suddenly turned around toward Yun Yuqing. "You brought him here?"

Yun Yuqing said indifferently, "You wanted to kill him, so I obviously wanted to save him. However, I was accidentally poisoned during the process, so he helped me get rid of it."

"How did he help you?" King Wu immediately asked. In response, Yun Yuqing subconsciously glanced around her. There was a hint of bashfulness on her face.

King Wu then recalled how there had been water everywhere. One could well imagine just how intense it had been before. He was shocked and furious as he exclaimed, "Slut! You're a slut!"

Yun Yuqing saw the change in his pants. She remarked with a disdainful look, "Look at your body's reaction. Don't you think it's disgusting? I feel disgusted in your place."

King Wu was ashamed and embarrassed. He didn't know why there had been no reaction all this time, yet now that he learned about what had happened here, he had such a great reaction. His feelings of anger and humiliation made him want to explode. "You slut, I'm going to kill you two!"

Purple light suddenly erupted from Yun Yuqing's eyes. Then, a pair of large and mysterious eyes appeared in midair.

Devil's Eye!

King Wu's figure stopped. Then, a layer of purple suffused his eyes. He stood there in a stupor while smiling stupidly. He was clearly already trapped in the Devil's Eye illusion.

Zu An thought to himself, As expected, King Wu was already affected a long time ago. Otherwise, he was still a glorious master rank expert in the end, even if his cultivation was obtained through resources. There should have been no reason for him to be controlled so easily. Judging from the circumstances, it seemed he had already been under the influence of the Devil's Eye for a long time.

Yun Yuqing quickly arrived by King Wu's side to seal up his acupoints. Then, she tossed him to the side. Afterward, she stopped her Devil's Eye. She said apologetically to Zu An, "I've shown you a poor side of me."

Zu An had a strange expression on his face. "Your relationship really is quite something."

Yun Yuqing sighed. "I didn't want it to be this way either. After I learned about his strange fetish, I had goosebumps all over, and I wanted to throw up whenever I saw him. If it weren't because of my clansmen's future, I would have been unable to take it a long time ago."

Zy An couldn't help but say, "I have to admit that your acting is really good. Even though you hated him that much, you still looked like an affectionate couple to everyone."

Yun Yuqing had a proud smile that didn't match her usual appearance. "Did you forget that I'm a part of the Demon Race? Demons aren't such good people, you know?"

Zu An instead sighed in relief. "I would be more scared if you were always this weak and timid-looking."

Yun Yuqing gave him an annoyed look. "Do you know how good I am to you? Don't tell me you don't feel anything?"

Zu An chuckled and hugged her soft body. "I know how tender you are well enough."

Yun Yuqing blushed a little. She said playfully, "You should know the answer to the question you asked me earlier after listening to all of that, right?"

Zu An sighed and asked, "So he was one of the masterminds after all?"

Yun Yuqing nodded. "I believe it was because of... what happened last time in North Order Commandery. He went crazy from jealousy, so he wanted to use this chance to kill you. Of course, he wasn't the one who planned the entire attack. I have a selfish request. I hope you can let him go today, because he's tied to our Demon Race's future. As for the details, it's a secret that involves our clansmen, so I apologize, but I can't tell you."

Zu An couldn't help but smile. "You were the one who caught him, so I'll leave it up to you as to how you'll deal with him. Why would I kill him?"

King Wu was a master rank, while Yun Yuqing was a mysterious Rune Master with all kinds of Demon Race skills. If they really wanted to act against him, then he might really suffer quite a bit today. She had said that purely out of consideration. Meanwhile, he naturally had to play along.

Yun Yuqing smiled and said, "Ah Zu, you're the best."

When Zu An saw that innocent and naive smile and remembered her usual delicate and timid appearance, he really found it hard to associate her with that vicious and ruthless woman he had seen moments ago. Sigh, that Zhang Wuji really hit the nail on the head. The prettier the girl, the better they are at lying.

Yun Yuqing became sad when she sensed the reservation Zu An unintentionally exuded. "I know that what happened just now must have made you feel all kinds of misgivings. I was really moved because I heard that you were willing to cast aside the entire world for me, so I couldn't hold back the urge to tell

him about our relationship. I don't want you to think that I'm an unruly girl... Of course, I know that it's meaningless now no matter what I say, but I know that time will prove everything."

Zu An was way past the phase of believing anything a girl told him. He had his own beliefs and didn't tangle with her on this issue. He asked, "By the way, who was the one colluding with King Wu, anyway?"

### **Chapter 763: The Truth Comes to Light**

Yun Yuqing didn't try to beat around the bush, and instead said directly, "I believe you've already guessed at the truth. It's precisely the Shi clan, because their most beloved son Shi Kun perished at the hands of you and the crown princess. If it were just you, that would be one thing, because there are more than enough methods for the Shi clan to deal with you through their authority. However, the crown princess is also one of the 'murderers'. That leaves them little room to maneuver.

"If the crown prince becomes the emperor, she'll become the empress. There will be no hope for the Shi clan to get revenge then. Actually, though, that isn't the most frightening thing; rather, it's that they don't know what kind of attitude the crown princess has about this matter. If the crown princess believes that the Shi clan is on alert because of Shi Kun's death, the Shi clan will inevitably fall in the future. After all, everyone knows the crown prince's situation. The one who makes all of the decisions is the crown princess. By offending her, there can be no good result for the Shi clan at all.

"The Shi clan can't place their hopes on something so intangible, which is why they decided to see this to the end. They're going to get rid of the crown princess to get their revenge, as well as deal with the Shi clan's future worries."

Zu An sighed with amazement. "But once this matter is exposed, it will instead bring the Shi clan to the chopping board ahead of time!"

Yun Yuqing replied calmly, "But doing this can instead place the initiative in their hands. It's better than just waiting for their fate. All in all, their greatest mistake this time was that the one they ended up targeting was you. Something that originally should have been a cinch ended up producing all types of accidents. You managed to get away."

Zu An harrumphed. "I'm the victim here, okay? I really was almost done in by them that night."

Yun Yuqing looked apologetic. "Ah Zu, I'm sorry. I didn't expect that the man the crown princess was going to be implicated in a scandal with was you, or else I would have definitely been opposed to it."

Zu An held her hand. "If you had never appeared, I would never have thought that it was you guys who had done all of this. You ended up exposing yourself for my sake, so how can I turn on my benefactor and instead doubt you?"

A smile quickly covered Yun Yuqing's face. "I didn't like the wrong person after all."

Zu An couldn't help but ask, "Right, is Xin Rui one of your people?"

Yun Yuqing shook her head. "Not at all."



Zu An began to think to himself. Then he continued, "There is something I just can't wrap my head around. Is it really just King Wu and the Shi clan who are involved in this scheme? Are there any other powers?"

Yun Yuqing stared blankly at him for a moment. A while later, she sighed and said, "Ah Zu, you're really smart, as expected. Indeed, there is one other party. However, please forgive me; I can't tell you who they are for various reasons. You know I'm shouldering the fate of many people, so I can't selfishly sell out other people for personal reasons."

Zu An chuckled and said, "Don't worry, just tell me what you can; if you can't, it doesn't matter. It's better that you told me ahead of time, rather than trying to trick me. Besides, your words have already affirmed some of my suspicions, so I should be thanking you."

Yun Yuqing looked at him with a complicated expression. "Ah Zu, you're always so good at understanding others."

Zu An chuckled as he took her into his embrace. "Actually, I'm even better at removing clothes."

"You're so bad..." Yun Yuqing pouted playfully, her cheeks bright red.

...

After some time passed, Zu An examined the soundly sleeping King Wu. He couldn't help but feel worried. "What are you planning to do from now on? You've already become hostile to him. I don't think he'll let you go once he wakes up."

Yun Yuqing smiled. "Don't worry, after suffering from my Devil's Eye, he'll forget everything that just happened. That's also the reason why I went all out earlier."

Zu An sighed in amazement. "Your Devil's Eye is really incredible... Please don't ever use it against me."

Yun Yuqing said, looking upset, "Didn't I use it before you in North Order Commandery? And yet, I was almost done in as a result." Zu An smiled when he recalled how they had first met.

Then Yun Yuqing said, "Right, the people who tried to assassinate you have been discovered by the city defense, so I believe you should be able to solve your case soon. Zhao Yan and I will leave the capital as quickly as possible so we aren't dragged in as well. I don't know when we'll be able to meet again."

Zu An gently sorted out the hair around her temples. "We'll meet again even across a thousand miles if fate wills it. Wasn't it because of fate that we met again this time?"

"We'll meet again if fate wills it?" Yun Yuqing's eyes lit up. As she mumbled those words to herself, her gaze was full of respect when she looked at Zu An. "Ah Zu, I didn't expect you to have such skills in literature as well."

Zu An shamelessly took on the role of a plagiarist. He took her into his embrace and asked, "Do you like me even more now?"

"You're so annoying..."

...

It was still time for them to separate in the end. They gave each other reluctant goodbyes. After he left King Wu Manor, Zu An headed straight to the imperial palace. When he arrived he changed into his Sir Eleven uniform. He hurried to the Embroidery House, where he saw a man suffering from baldness in the shape of the Mediterranean Sea.

“Boss!” Chen Eighth ran over excitedly. “You’re finally back! Something huge just happened on the city outskirts.”

“Oh?” Zu An remained unfazed. He wanted to see what kind of information the Embroidered Envoy had access to right now. “What happened?”

Chen Eighth gestured for him to come inside while explaining, “An intense assassination attempt happened near the home of Xin Rui’s mother, and there was even a siege crossbow involved. His majesty was furious and put the chief commander in charge of investigating this matter thoroughly.”

Dai Seventh, who was suffering from an entirely different kind of baldness, appeared out of who knew where and added, “Judging from the corpses that were found at the scene of the crime, all of them are deathsworn soldiers from the army. Chief commander is currently checking their identity. However, we don’t know who they were after. That person got away even while attacked by a siege crossbow! Isn’t that person a bit too formidable?”

Zu An subconsciously stuck out his chest. He thought to himself, If I didn’t know that there was no chance you knew it was me, I would’ve thought that you were buttering me up.

“I believe this siege crossbow attack has something to do with the case we’re investigating,” a calm voice said from off to the side. It turned out Xiao Jianren had come out after hearing news of Zu An’s arrival.

“Oh?” Zu An was curious. He wanted to hear what this fellow had to say.

Xiao Jianren said, “Boss told me to investigate which noble clans were raising Fiend Race experts who could silently kill that casino boss.

“After looking through the Embroidery House’s records, I discovered that even though there aren’t too many clans like that, there are still a good amount. Those high officials and noble persons all seem to have some of these foreign tribe experts. However, after eliminating some clans that clearly have nothing to do with this case, I discovered that the Shi clan has a guest called Jia Sili. She’s from the mysterious southern border and excels in spirit subduing techniques. It would be extremely easy for her to silently kill a casino boss.

“Furthermore, there was a siege crossbow involved, as well as deathsworn knights. Both of them are from the army. Back then, the Shi clan’s leader Shi Miao relied on military achievements to get to his position. His third son Shi Tong is a military officer in the capital. I suspect that those deathsworn soldiers came from the Shi clan.

“Lastly, the crime happened at the home of Xin Rui’s mother. How can there be that much of a coincidence? Every single clue can be traced back to the Shi clan. That’s why I suspect that it was precisely the Shi clan who framed the crown princess, it’s just that I don’t know who was being surrounded and attacked this time.”

Zu An laughed heartily. "Indeed, your analysis is excellent. It sounds almost identical to the truth."

Xiao Jianren said with a bitter smile, "But unfortunately, all of this is speculation; we don't have proof. The Shi clan won't admit to it. Whether it's the siege crossbow or those deathsworn soldiers, the Shi clan can just say that it has nothing to do with them. Even though the chief commander is investigating their backgrounds, since they're deathsworn soldiers, it will be hard to find out anything about them."

Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth both sighed. They had already investigated this case for a long time, yet now, even though the truth was in sight, there was actually nothing to be found.

If it were anyone else, they could seize them and extort a confession, but the Shi clan was different. The clan leader Shi Miao was one of the Great Zhou Dynasty's prestigious eight dukes. His sons were also all top level officials in the court.

Ignoring the son who had died, his second son Shi Qiao was the Imperial Secretariat's Court Gentleman, and his third son Shi Tong was a high ranking officer of one of the guerilla warfare armies. His fourth son Shi Jun served as the Assistant Minister of the Huang Gate, and his fifth son Shi Jin was a senior provincial official. The least impressive of them all was probably his sixth son Shi Kun, but he was still a crown prince secretary.

That was why the Shi clan really was an incredibly powerful clan, a top tier family in the entire Great Zhou Dynasty. Furthermore, they had a death pardoning token, so the Embroidered Envoy couldn't do much to them.

When he saw their dispirited appearances, Zu An chuckled and said, "Don't worry, I have proof. I'm going to pay the chief commander a visit right now."

When they saw his departing figure, Xiao Jianren and the others looked at each other in dismay.

"We didn't manage to find any proof even when we used all of the Embroidery House's resources. But boss found a way so easily?"

"Our boss really is deep and unfathomable!"

"He really is someone to look up to!"

...

Zu An arrived outside Zhuxie Chixin's office and saw that he was currently taking out his anger on his subordinates. They had investigated all day, yet they couldn't find any records of those deathsworn soldiers in any of the military records. They couldn't find anything about their existence.

"How could these people appear out of thin air? Even if they're deathsworn soldiers, they would definitely have left behind some traces in the capital over the years! Yet you're all telling me that you can't find anything?" Zhuxie Chixin roared in anger.

His subordinates replied while trembling, "We might find something if you give us a bit more time..."

"Might? Perhaps?" Zhuxie Chixin erupted into another burst of rage when he heard those words. "His majesty is pushing me; we don't have time!"

The others fell silent out of fear. None of them were willing to say anything. Suddenly, Zu An coughed lightly and said, "Chief commander, I have some leads here."

"Oh?" Zhuxie Chixin was first shocked to see him, but he quickly became happy as he asked, "What kind of leads?"

Zu An was a bit distracted when he saw the man's appearance. After all, he had fought him to the death in Jia Sili's world of illusion. But he quickly snapped out of his daze and said, "I have some things I wish to discuss with chief commander in private."

Zhuxie Chixin knew that his identity was special, so he waved his hand and gestured for the others to leave for now. His subordinates were all happy, but also envious. They were happy that they didn't have to hear the chief commander's criticism, but they were also jealous that this Golden Token Eleven had just arrived, yet he already seemed to have received the favor of their chief commander. They are always chatting with each other in private.

When it was only the two of them left, Zu An said, "The one those deathsworn were after was me."

Zhuxie Chixin was shocked and quickly asked, "What exactly happened?"

Zu An repeated everything that happened that day, but of course, he omitted the details involving Yun Yuqing. "Later on, I continued to run, and those experts pursued me relentlessly."

"The Shi clan truly is daring!" Zhuxie Chixin slammed his table in anger. The first-rate pearwood table exploded into pieces on the spot. "Then based on what you're saying, the three experts are probably the gold and silver ring user Bo Zhou, White Horse Red Spear Luo Xin, and Three Extremes Hammer Yuan Fu. All three of them are outstanding warriors from the army who established great contributions with Shi Miao in battle. It's quite surprising that you were able to survive under their attack. Unfortunately, we have no proof. The Shi clan won't admit to anything even if we knock on their doorstep."

"Who says there's no proof?" Zu An had a strange expression. He clapped his hand, indicating for the people outside to come in.

Three corpses were carried in. Zhuxie Chixin's eyes almost popped out as he said, "It's them..."

## **Chapter 764: Mastermind**

"How did they die?" Zhuxie Chixin asked, shocked. His first thought wasn't Zu An, whom he knew was only around the seventh rank at most. Even though this fellow always seemed to manage to display strength greater than his cultivation, there was still a limit to that.

These three were all cultivators at the peak of the seventh rank, and their skills had been tempered on the battlefield, so their true strength was top-notch. They were definitely not warriors anyone could randomly skip ranks to defeat.

Zu An said without batting an eye, "I killed them." There was no way he could talk about Yun Yuqing, so he could only step up.

“You killed them?” Zhuxie Chixin exclaimed, even more shocked. He scrutinized Zu An and asked, “How did you do it?”

Zu An replied, “They continued to pursue me, so I used the surroundings to break them up. Then, I defeated them one by one.”

He remembered the story of how ancestor Blood Blade had faced off against four enemies who were on par with him and came out on top, so he revised the story a bit and fed it back to Zhuxie Chixin.

Zhuxie Chixin stared at him, stupefied. There weren’t many people who possessed real strength like this. This kid was quite outstanding. When he saw the bloody holes in those corpses, he thought that they had been attacked by tremendous power. It looked like Zu An still had many trump cards in his sleeves! He didn’t ask Zu An about his exact abilities, as that was a taboo subject between cultivators. No one was willing to expose their ultimate moves for no reason.

Zhuxie Chixin laughed out loud. “This is a great achievement! Let’s go; follow me to his majesty!”

Zu An nodded. The case this time involved the Shi clan, so it wasn’t something Zhuxie Chixin could decide on alone.

...

The two quickly arrived at the study. Zhuxie Chixin respectfully reported the information to the emperor, while Zu An used this chance to examine the emperor.

After all, Jia Sili’s illusion was the first time he had faced off against the emperor, and he had even defeated him then. Even though that was only the emperor in his subconscious, it had still given him incomparable confidence. Now, he was much calmer when he faced the emperor.

“Hmph, the Shi clan really is daring!” The emperor slammed his table in anger after listening to Zhuxie Chixin’s entire report. He was just about to say something, but he sensed something and raised his head.

The emperor seemed to have sensed that Zu An was observing him, which made him a bit unhappy. However, when he thought about how this fellow had just brought back a great achievement, he couldn’t berate him too much. He held himself back and said, “Very good. Eleven, you’ve done well. Speak, what kind of reward do you want?”

Zu An cursed inwardly, thinking, What, are you going to give me the crown princess if I ask for her? But he smiled and said naturally, “Your majesty carries our worries on your shoulders. What more reward would I need?”

He had once been a bit dissatisfied with this sort of feigned servitude, but now, he didn’t feel anything. On the contrary, he felt that this would only serve to gain more favor from the emperor.

Sure enough, the emperor roared with laughter. “Indeed! Eleven is growing more and more thoughtful.” After talking about a few other things, he said to Zhuxie Chixin, “Arrest officer Shi Tong and Huang Gate’s Shi Jun. We won’t touch the Minister of War Shi Miao yet. Furthermore, place some more men on the investigation of Xuanwu Gate’s Ou Wu. We don’t need to find the power behind him, because if I remember correctly, he’s someone King Qi brought up. You can use this chance to investigate that area.”

Zhuxie Chixin trembled and quickly bowed. "Understood!"

Zu An spoke up just then. "Your majesty, this case isn't as simple as it seems. There are many points of suspicion, and there might be another true culprit..."

The emperor waved his hand before Zu An had even finished speaking. "Enough; you've already completed your mission perfectly. Just leave this case to Zhuxie Chixin; you don't have to bother with it anymore."

Zu An frowned slightly. He was just about to say something, but Zhuxie Chixin gave him an eye signal. He kept quiet when he saw it.

The emperor closed his eyes, then sat down to meditate. He said, "This emperor is tired. You two can withdraw now."

Zu An cursed inwardly. This fella is always cultivating so he can have even a minute longer to live. What meaning is there left in living if you have to spend your life like that?

...

When the two of them left the study, Zu An asked, "Chief commander, why did you stop me from saying anything else?"

Zhuxie Chixin looked around. When he saw that there was no one around, he said in a suppressed voice, "What do you think is the most important thing when investigating a case?"

"The truth, of course," Zu An subconsciously replied. Detective Conan's BGM began to play in the back of his mind.

Zhuxie Chixin chuckled. "I can't help but remember my former hot-blooded self, from when I had just joined the Embroidered Envoy in the past. Only later did I understand that the truth isn't important at all. What's important is what kind of truth his majesty wants."

Zu An was startled. He felt as if he were picking up on something.

Zhuxie Chixin continued, "His majesty doesn't care about the truth. He has too many things to worry about. What he cares about more are the objectives he can reach through this case. Do you understand now?"

"Thank you, chief commander, for your guidance." Zu An wasn't stupid. He had spent so much time wondering about the identity of the third party, he had forgotten that fact. But after he heard Zhuxie Chixin's explanation, he finally woke up.

The current situation was the most favorable for the emperor. Not only could he deal with the Shi clan, who were opposed to the crown prince and princess, he could use this chance to purge King Qi's strength. What other truth did he need to investigate?

As for the true perpetrator, either he already knew, or he just didn't care. Either way, he was the world's strongest, so the one who was hiding in the shadows couldn't harm him.

Zhuxie Chixin chuckled and patted his shoulder, saying, "You're too polite. We'll get together and have a proper chat when there's time. I have people to arrest."

Zu An cupped his hands. After separating from Zhuxie Chixin, he returned to the Embroidery House. He summoned all of the brothers who had been with him during this case and said, "All of you have worked hard during this period. This case has already been settled."

Everyone cheered, and even the usually steady Xiao Jianren smiled. All of them were physically and emotionally exhausted from the high difficulty of the case.

Zu An said with a smile, "The reason why this case could be solved was all because of everyone's efforts. Sir Xiao, Dai Seventh, and Chen Eighth, head over to the storeroom and take out two thousand silvers. Reward everyone based on their contributions."

As a golden token envoy, he had a set amount of authority to begin with. Furthermore, the emperor had said that he was going to reward him, so Zhuxie Chixin naturally wouldn't trouble him over this.

"Thank you, Sir Eleven!" Those gathered cheered even louder. They almost picked up Zu An and raised him into the air.

Zu An smiled when he saw how happy they were. He had done his time as a corporate slave, so he obviously understood what the most important part of working was. Even though they all had their loyalty as Embroidered Envoys, they still had families to feed back at home.

Xiao Jianren was surprised. The Embroidered Envoy's members were usually cold and stern; the other golden token envoys weren't as considerate of their subordinates as Sir Eleven. Even if there were some rewards occasionally, it was only for the sake of coaxing their subordinates. But he could tell that Sir Eleven genuinely wished well for them. It really was quite rare to see.

They went to withdraw the money in high spirits. Zu An used this chance to look over all of the information gathered regarding the case. He couldn't help but frown when he saw that there was no information on Ou Wu.

When Zu An left the Embroidery House, he changed into his normal attire and headed toward the Eastern Palace.

He sighed along the way. Having so many identities really was a pain. It would be great if he could clone himself. Wait, if I clone myself, would it be considered cucking myself? He continued to ponder over this philosophical question along the way, and unknowingly arrived at the Eastern Palace.

"Heh, so our Sir Zu still remembered to report for roll call. Do you know what time it is? Could it be that you don't treat me and the crown prince with any respect?" the crown princess remarked coldly. She'd had something to discuss with Zu An today. After all, following that experience, he had become the only one she could talk about regarding many things.

However, he still hadn't arrived, even after she waited for a long time! She really was pissed off. Besides, this fellow didn't seem to report on time at all these days.

You have successfully trolled Bi Linglong for +56 +56 +56...

Zu An saluted and said, "Reporting to the crown princess! I left early for the imperial palace today, but I was attacked by assassins along the way."

"What? You were attacked?!" Bi Linglong subconsciously stood up to check his wounds, but she quickly noticed the strange expressions of the maids around her. She coughed lightly to hide her embarrassment and sat back down. "Are you injured? Who was the one who tried to assassinate you?"

"They were just some small injuries." Zu An smiled. Then, he gave her a summary of what had happened.

The crown princess had assumed it was just some thugs when she saw that he was fine, but when she heard that there had been deathsworn soldiers, a siege crossbow, and even three military experts at the peak of the seventh rank, her expression greatly changed. "Yet you're still saying it wasn't a big deal? How could you only be a bit injured from such a huge scheme?"

Zu An chuckled and said, "I was hit by the siege crossbow, but none of my vitals were hit. It felt pretty terrible back then, but I'm fine now."

"Huh?" The crown princess subconsciously wanted to check the wound where Zu An had been hit by the siege crossbow. But when she thought about how so many people were watching, it really wasn't appropriate. She could only say, "Have someone call over a physician to treat Sir Zu."

Zu An waved his hand. "It's fine, I'll just pay the hospital a visit later myself."

Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun were incredibly stunned. Everyone knew just how powerful a siege crossbow was! He had been hit by a siege crossbow, yet he still looked fine apart from being a bit pale. Sigh, he really is a brave and tough man!

The crown princess hurriedly asked, "What are you still doing here if you were injured so badly?"

Zu An replied, "I was worried that the crown princess would misunderstand. Besides, I wanted to tell you about the most recent developments in the case."

The crown princess was startled when she saw Zu An's scorching gaze. This person was normally pretty smart, so why was he sometimes so clueless? Can't you just send someone to tell me the details?

However, when she sensed his sincerity, her heart still couldn't help but soften. Even her voice became more gentle. "I'll let you have a day off today... Ahem, no, you don't need to come in for the next few days either. Just focus on your recovery."

"Thank you, crown princess!" Zu An really was spread a bit too thinly. Having this vacation would help a lot.

The crown princess thought to herself for a bit, and then she said to the maid beside her, "Little Mo, bring Sir Zu that spiritual root."

Rong Mo exclaimed nervously, "That thousand year spiritual root is incredibly precious! It's something needed for the crown princess' future breakthrough!"



The crown princess shook her head. "No matter how precious it is, it isn't as precious as a person. Sir Zu is the Eastern Palace's chamberlain, and he was injured while investigating my case. This medicine is perfect for helping him with his recovery. What, could it be that you want me to fetch it myself?"

"This humble one doesn't dare!" Rong Mo bit her lip. She could only unwillingly enter the inner room.

"Tsk tsk, this little girl is pretty interesting in terms of how she treats you." Mi Li said in Zu An's head. She seemed to have emerged because of her amusement.

Zu An ignored her and instead bowed to Bi Linglong. "Thank you, crown princess!"

Mi Li marveled, "Look at how shameless you are! You aren't even refusing something this precious and are just going to accept it?"

Zu An replied, "That's where you're wrong. There's a trick back in my hometown called 'borrowing books'. Once you borrow something, you have to return it. That way, you don't even need a reason to meet again, and both of you will start to get along. If I refuse her, I'm only gaining favor once; I won't obtain any tangible benefits. On the contrary, by accepting her gift, our good impressions of each other will rise by another level. Furthermore, this thing seems extremely important for her, so I'll just return it when she needs it. Won't I gain her favor once again then?"

Mi Li was completely stupefied. Only after some time did she harrumph and say, "What kind of place is this hometown of yours? There's actually so much thought behind something like this."

Zu An replied with a wistful expression, "It's a place full of people with outstanding skills, a magical place..."

By then, Rong Mo had already emerged. In her hands was an embroidered case resting on a red cloth. Even though the spiritual root was stored inside the case, Zu An could still feel the thick natural ki it emitted. He thanked the crown princess again.

A bit of gentleness appeared in the crown princess' eyes. "You should take some time to rest. Leave the Shi clan's matters for me to settle."

Zu An knew that she was implying that she would use this chance to completely eliminate that future worry. He signaled with his eyes that he understood.

The crown princess' face turned red. She quickly looked around, and then sighed with relief when she saw that no one else had noticed. This guy really is brazen! He dared to publicly tease her! Hmph, I'll let you off today because you're wounded.

...

Zu An exited the Eastern Palace. The crown princess sent Piao Duandiao and Jiao Sigun to escort him to the physician's courtyard. Along the way, the two of them sighed in praise.

"I've never seen the crown princess treat anyone so well in these years..."

"Exactly! I'm even starting to wonder if big bro Zu and the crown princess have an affair."

Zu An was stunned. He asked, "Are you courting death? You even dare to utter such things?"

"We brothers are just joking around in private, come on! Besides, the crown princess is still treating big bro Zu this way, even after that happened. That means she has a clear conscience."

"I guess you're right. However, if not for the crown princess' special status, I really would rather believe that she was together with big bro Zu. The crown princess had really had it hard these years. The crown prince can't do anything for her and instead needs her to protect him."

"What the hell? Why are you blaming me then!? You're courting death too!"

In the end, Zu An was beginning to develop a headache, so he made them leave. His injuries had already practically healed. Wouldn't he be exposed if he went to the imperial palace now? He didn't feel like leaving the palace, so he returned to his Embroidered Envoy residence and rested for two hours.

Soon afterward, he received news that Shi Jun had been arrested. Zu An changed into his Golden Token Eleven uniform and headed to the Embroidery House. He had many suspicions that needed to be confirmed with Shi Jun.

His status in the Embroidered Envoy was now quite high. Even though this case was no longer under him, no one would be so senseless as to stop him. Either way, Sir Zhuxie was currently interrogating Shi Tong regarding the siege crossbow and military experts.

Shi Jun sat in the prison with disheveled hair. His entire being looked listless, and he no longer carried his past arrogant appearance. When he heard that someone had come, he said weakly, "Please don't ask me anything more... We have a Death Pardoning Token, I won't say anything..."

Zu An chuckled. "But you don't have that Death Pardoning Token on you right now."

Shi Jun jumped in fright when he heard the voice. His eyes immediately narrowed when he turned around and saw the familiar figure it belonged to. He still had nightmares about his previous experience with Zu An.

Zu An's smile faded as he said, "I don't want to waste time either. I ask the questions, you answer. Otherwise, feel free to have a taste of what it feels like to wish you were dead."

"Okay, okay, okay, sir, please ask," Shi Jun immediately said with an apologetic smile. A wise man knew when to choose his battles. I'll deal with this monster first, and then my father will definitely have a way of saving us!

"How did you meet Xin Rui?" Zu An asked.

Shi Jun was hesitant, but he still replied, "I've served as the Huang Gate's Assistant Minister for years, so it was easy for me to move within the palace. One day, I ended up accidentally bumping into a frightened maid around a corner. She continued to apologize to me. When I saw her weak and alarmed expression, I couldn't bring myself to punish her. Later on, she brought me some Hundred Flower Tea to thank me. That was when I learned that she was the Hundred Flower Palace's maid, Xin Rui..."

There was a bit of tenderness in Shi Jun's eyes when he recalled the events of the past. His time with that lovely maid was clearly a joyful period.

Zu An quickly asked, "Was she the one who bumped into you, or did you bump into her?"

Shi Jun frowned. "I'm in charge of inspecting the etiquette of officials to begin with, why would I be so impudent? However, why does it matter who bumped into whom?"

"Forget it." Zu An smiled and continued, "So that's when the two of you started to get along?"

Shi Jun nodded. "She was just a maid at first, but all of the women in the palace belong to his majesty, so I didn't dare to touch her. However, she told me that she had worked in the palace ever since she was really young. But now, she's almost of age, so she'll be able to leave the palace. I had some good feelings toward her as well, so I thought that I could take her as my wife. That was why our relationship got better and better as time went on.

"Then, I learned that she had a mother and younger brother in the countryside, so I helped bring them to the capital and get them settled there. But for some reason, she fought with me over this matter," Shi Jun explained, seemingly confused. "Even so, our relationship improved again, and we began to happily dream about the future."

Zu An said mockingly, "You make it sound great, as if you're describing a man deep in love. But unfortunately, you had other motives for approaching her. You probably favored her for her status as the maid of Concubine Bai, knowing that one day, you'd be able to make use of her. Sure enough, later on, you sent her to frame the crown princess and Zu An. As for bringing her mother and younger brother, I reckon you were just using them as hostages."

Shi Jun's expression changed. "I have no idea what you're saying!"

Zu An chuckled. "There's no need for you to deny it. It's already meaningless now. Either way, the Shi clan is finished."

Shi Jun knew that what the golden token envoy was saying was the truth. Not only had the assassination failed, everyone involved was instead captured. The situation was looking extremely grim. Now, his only hope was to see if the Death Pardoning Token could save his own skin.

He gritted his teeth. His expression was extremely vicious as he said, "It's all that damn little brother's fault. If it weren't for the fact that he loved gambling and ended up being found by the Embroidered Envoy, why would we be pushed so far as to use force?"

"For the sake of Hua Bao, you had no choice but to sacrifice that casino boss. I already guessed a long time ago that the Shi clan was the one backing that casino. After all, you guys supported the Plum Blossom Sect in opening a casino in Brightmoon City." Zu An sighed.

Shi Jun revealed a look of surprise. He thought to himself that the Embroidered Envoy's information network truly was extensive, if they even knew about that.

Zu An said, "That's why you all colluded with King Wu, and drew Zu An to Xin Rui's home. You wanted to kill him there, then push all of the blame onto him. Then you would silence him, as the dead cannot testify."

"King Wu? What King Wu?" Shi Jun asked, bewildered.

Zu An was surprised when he saw that the man's expression wasn't feigned.

## **Chapter 765: Victim and Perpetrator**

“What, your people didn’t collude with King Wu to frame Zu An and the crown princess?” Zu An asked.

Shi Jun sneered. “Heh, there were people who asked me if I had something to do with King Qi, yet now, it’s King Wu all of a sudden. You Embroidered Envoys really are good at framing others.

“Besides, that Zu An or whatever... What’s so special about him? Why would a king go through all that just to deal with him?” Shi Jun became upset whenever he thought about Zu An. If not for what had happened between Zu An and his sixth brother, their Shi clan wouldn’t have fallen so far. That slap by the palace entrance in particular was just too humiliating. Why would he ever admit that this fellow was important?

You have successfully trolled Shi Jun for +411 +411 +411...

Zu An was speechless when he saw the incoming Rage points. He picked up a whip and struck Shi Jun. “Speak properly!”

“Aaah!” Shi Jun screamed in misery. The tools used by the Embroidered Envoy were all specialized, every single one of them similar to the Wailing Whip. It was incredibly hard to endure when such a whip struck the body. He didn’t know why the other party would strike him, but he didn’t dare to ask either. He could only glare with resentment.

You have successfully trolled Shi Jun for +55 +55 +55...

“Whose idea was it to scheme against Zu An? Why did you feel like you could push all of the crimes onto him?” Zu An continued.

“That fella is so annoying that everyone wants him dead.” Shi Jun snorted angrily. “The fact that he was involved in that kind of scandal with the crown princess means he’s a suspect. If he died in Xin Rui’s home, and we spread some news, we could naturally push all the responsibility onto him.”

Zu An said mockingly, “However, it’s a pity that you not only failed to frame him, but also even ended up exposing yourselves.

“For the sake of saving that idiot Hua Bao, we exposed the casino’s boss. After silencing the casino boss, we even sent out Jia Sili. With your Embroidered Envoy’s information, you would have found out that it was us sooner or later. If we took the initiative to attack, we might instead carve out a path of survival for ourselves,” Shi Jun said angrily. “It’s just a pity that Zu An always has some damned stupid luck, always managing to turn misfortune into blessing.”

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

Zu An laughed out loud. “He’s clearly the son of luck, yet you keep targeting him. Of course things won’t work out as you wish.”

Shi Jun spat on the ground. “Pah! That fella is just a lucky bastard who came from the streets. If he’s the son of luck, then I’ll do a handstand and eat sh\*t right now!”

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

He had lived an extravagant lifestyle ever since he was young, so he had the pride of a clan heir. He looked down on these commoners the most. He could accept defeat in a struggle between the court's higher levels, but he absolutely wouldn't accept losing to a nobody he had always looked down on.

Zu An chuckled. "We have more than enough of that to go around if you want some." He even had the urge to have a jailer scoop up a few bowls of feces, but he decided not to in the end, or else he might really end up grossing out his brothers here.

...

He asked a few more questions, and Shi Jun cooperated well, answering almost everything. He was probably terrified. However, if he knew that the one he was dealing with was the Zu An he looked down on, and that this was the person he was totally helpless against, he might vomit blood from anger.

Zu An had already obtained the information he wanted, so he left the Embroidery House. As for Shi Jun, there was no need to do anything to him. He was already doomed.

He returned to the Eastern Palace in his official uniform. After thinking for a bit, he headed to the Hundred Flower Palace. The crown princess had entrusted him with the task of eliminating Concubine Bai, so he had to at least have a chat with her first.

Concubine Bai had always been rather low-profile. Furthermore, after something had happened to Xin Rui, the Hundred Flower Palace had become even colder. She had always been someone who liked peace and quiet, so there weren't many eunuchs or maids there. It was almost always just the bare minimum.

When Zu An reported that he had come for a visit, a maid quickly announced his arrival. She returned and said, "Sir Zu, her highness invites you inside."

Zu An followed the maid into the palace. He saw an exquisite swing rocking back and forth slowly, and on it was a beautiful woman dressed in lavish palace clothes. Her dress outlined her slender waist and enchanting bottom. "I greet Concubine Bai," he said. He noticed that she was currently holding a chubby baby in swaddling clothes, his skin fair with a hint of red blush. He was extremely cute.

The child seemed to have entered a wonderful dream from the swing's rhythm; his soundly sleeping face had a smile. There was a bit of drool on his lips as his small mouth moved from time to time. Whenever that happened, a bit of milk couldn't help but come out. He had clearly just had his meal.

Zu An subconsciously gave Concubine Bai a look. Because she was holding a child, her chest looked especially large and heavy.

"May I ask what made Sir Zu take interest in visiting this place today?" Concubine Bai had been giving the child in her arms a doting look. When she heard Zu An's greeting, she raised her head with a smile.

Zu An had to admit that Concubine Bai really was beautiful. Her beauty was different from that of the crown princess. If the crown princess was graceful like a peony and gorgeous like a rose, then Concubine Bai was like an elegant chrysanthemum. She was like the most exquisite and gentle small white flowers in the mountains, or the snow lotus herbs high up on the peaks. The first impression she gave off was someone who was pure and without flaws, someone whom one would want to treasure and protect.

There were many officials and subordinates who obeyed the crown princess, but it was mainly because of her prestige and power. If they were to decide who they liked more deep down, they would most likely choose the gentle and kind Concubine Bai.

"The crown princess sent me to wish your highness good health," Zu An replied.

"Oh?" Concubine Bai was surprised. Her graceful brows rose slightly as she replied, "It really is quite surprising. So the crown princess actually still remembered me."

Zu An smiled. "What is Concubine Bai saying? Of course the crown princess remembers your highness. We're all members of the Eastern Palace after all, so we should all do our best for the crown prince."

Concubine Bai chuckled. "No wonder Sir Zu rose so rapidly in your career. I heard that you were promoted to crown prince's chamberlain. I reckon that the crown princess must also be fond of your way with words."

She gestured toward the maid on the side while saying, "Bring us some Hundred Flower Tea. This is big sister crown princess' rising star. How can we treat him with any disrespect?"

"Understood." The maid withdrew, but there was a bit of discontent in her eyes. She thought to herself, The crown princess is going a bit too far if even her subordinate needs to be treated so well by our madam.

Zu An knew that Concubine Bai was merely looking for an excuse to make the maid leave. He said with a smile, "To be honest, whenever I hear the words Hundred Flower Tea now, I can't help but feel some stress."

Concubine Bai smiled. She knew that he was talking about the last time Xin Rui had poisoned him and the crown princess. "Don't worry, there's definitely nothing wrong with this tea."

Zu An's gaze moved to the child in her arms. He couldn't help but say in praise, "The imperial grandson really is quite cute. Can I hold him?"

Concubine Bai stared blankly for a moment, her expression a bit strange. After all, the imperial grandson's status was special. Apart from her and her personal maid, who else dared to touch him? If something happened to him, the consequences would be too horrible to imagine. No one dared to take such a risk.

But as a mother, hearing someone praise her own child still made her feel good. She said, "Sir Zu's request is a bit improper." Despite those words, she didn't get angry at all.

Zu An smiled and said, "Concubine Bai is mistaken here. I'm now the crown prince's chamberlain, so it's my responsibility to take care of various matters big and small in the Eastern Palace. The imperial grandson is the little lord of the Eastern Palace, so it's within my range of responsibilities to take care of him."

Concubine Bai couldn't help but laugh. "An ordinary person wouldn't dare to bring up this kind of request," she said while standing up from the swing. She walked over to his side with the child, cautioning, "Sir Zu, please be careful not to wake him up. It wasn't easy for me to put him to sleep."

Zu An carefully received the child. He felt as if the baby were so delicate he weighed nothing. "This is the first time I've seen the imperial grandson for myself. He looks quite clever and pretty."

Concubine Bai was shocked. The men of this world didn't really know how to carry a child. She had actually broken out in cold sweat just now, worried that Zu An would be clumsy. However, she hadn't expected the other party to be so proficient, and she could sense that he truly was fond of the child from his cautious and serious expression. As such, she softened up as well. "Sir Zu really is quite different from others."

The two of them were close to each other, and Zu An could smell a mysterious and elegant fragrance. Because he was holding the child, his elbow even unintentionally bumped into Concubine Bai's soft body. He said with a smile, "Your highness is standing so close to me. Aren't you scared that there might be some rumors?"

Concubine Bai said indifferently, "This Hundred Flower Palace is already so cold and cheerless; there aren't that many people who can spread gossip. Besides, there are more discussions about what you and the crown princess do in private, so what do I have to be worried about?"

Zu An chuckled. "Your highness' simple and elegant bearing really is enchanting." Then he inadvertently said, "The imperial grandson is so cute. He doesn't really seem to resemble the crown prince much..."

Concubine Bai's expression changed and her tone became cold. "Sir Zu, please speak cautiously. Some words might result in capital punishment."

"Your highness has misunderstood. What I'm saying is that the imperial grandson looks more like his mother; that he's as pretty as his mother." Zu An changed his words to praise.

Concubine Bai harrumphed and took the imperial grandson back from him. "What did Sir Zu come here for exactly? I refuse to believe that you're just here for such trivialities."

"There are indeed some matters I wish to talk about. Xin Rui's case has reached a result," Zu An said. "Huang Gate's Shi Jun abused his position to approach your highness' maid Xin Rui. When has an ordinary maid like Xin Rui ever experienced the pursuit of a distinguished and accomplished young master? She ended up being caught in his trap. Unfortunately, she didn't know that she was involved in a huge conspiracy; that he approached her to frame the crown princess, as well as to use this excuse to shift the blame onto you, causing casualties to the crown prince's two most important wives at the same time."

Concubine Bai's expression changed slightly. "The Shi clan truly is vicious. It's all my fault for not paying more attention to Xin Rui. That was why I didn't notice that she had been deceived by someone."

"Is that so?" Zu An chuckled. "What I just told you was the conclusion the Embroidery House reached. However, I have a completely different suspicion."

"What do you mean?" Concubine Bai asked, puzzled.

Zu An walked over to the swing and casually sat down. He began to gently rock back and forth like she just had. "Everyone believes that Shi Jun deliberately got closer to tempt Xin Rui, and that was even what Shi Jun himself believed. But when I looked over all of the corresponding information, I discovered something interesting. The one who took the initiative wasn't Shi Jun, but rather Xin Rui."

Concubine Bai frowned. "What are you trying to say? Xin Rui has always followed the rules properly. She absolutely wouldn't have done something like this."

"Is that so?" Zu An's smile faded as he continued, "I've already obtained a certain record through a special channel. I discovered that the two bumped into each other by accident, but without assuming that Xin Rui was the victim based on first impressions, and instead considering it from a different angle, one would discover that Xin Rui was the perpetrator the entire time. She approached Shi Jun first, and made him chase after her. The entire process was all guided by her. Unfortunately, Shi Jun, that fool, always thought that he was just that special, and is still paying the scammer more money."

Concubine Bai said indifferently, "These are nothing more than baseless accusations. I understand Xin Rui's nature most clearly. She has always been kind. She would never do such a thing."

"Your highness, please let me finish." Zu An continued, "I was always confused about something. Why did the mastermind insist on going through so much effort to send Xin Rui out of the palace? Wouldn't it be better to just silence her? I immediately realized that there had to be another reason, yet I just couldn't figure it out. This continued until I received some information not too long ago. I finally understood why the mastermind would go so far to send her out of the palace."

#### **Chapter 766: All Cards Laid on the Table**

"Why?" Concubine Bai asked curiously.

"Actually, if you just think about it..." Zu An wanted to say 'I', but he immediately realized that he would be exposing himself. As such, he changed his words. "If you think about it, you can deduce a thing or two from the Embroidered Envoy's actions. If Xin Rui died, they would definitely start investigating her relationships in the palace, who she met before she died, and if anyone had the motive and opportunity to kill her. Once this happened, even Concubine Bai would be a suspect."

Concubine Bai smiled. "Indeed. After all, Xin Rui is my personal maid, so I would become the number one suspect if she dies. However, even if she left the imperial palace, I would still be a prime suspect. After all, the two of us were just too close."

Zu An continued from Concubine Bai's statement. "The mastermind is extremely smart. They used the weakness of human nature and remained in the most suspicious place from the start; but others subconsciously felt that this was just too simple, that it was someone else who tried to frame her. With this type of mentality, together with the clues that appeared afterward, people wouldn't be able to help but think 'no wonder' afterward. Then, they would investigate other suspects, even though the main mastermind was right under their noses."

Concubine Bai frowned. "Then, judging from what you're saying, it seems as if this mastermind you're speaking of is me?"

Zu An didn't reply to her question and instead continued, "What we just talked about is what would have happened had Xin Rui died. However, Xin Rui left the imperial palace alive, so the Embroidered Envoy would definitely investigate the palace gate first. If there were no records, they would naturally suspect Xuanwu Gate's Ou Wu."



“Yet when the Embroidered Envoy was about to investigate Ou Wu, he suddenly disappeared with his wife and children, while the one in charge of the gate was the Murong clan’s young master. Whether it’s Ou Wu or Murong Luo, everyone knows they’re a part of King Qi’s faction. King Qi has the motive as well as the strength to target the crown princess, so everyone concluded that the mastermind was King Qi. Even the subjects supporting King Qi’s faction probably believed that.

“That would mean the emperor would inevitably use this chance to deal King Qi a heavy blow. King Qi would feel that the emperor was abusing his power, and that the emperor was the one framing him, so of course he would retaliate. Once this happens, the tacit balance between the two powers would collapse, and the entire nation would be thrown into chaos. The one stirring the waters in the shadows would then take advantage of this crisis for personal gain.”

Just then, the imperial grandson woke up and began to wail. Concubine Bai quickly calmed him down while saying to Zu An, “I don’t know what you mean by telling me all this. Can it be that you feel that I’m that mastermind? I’m an imperial concubine, as well as the mother of the imperial grandson. What benefit would there be from throwing the entire empire into chaos?”

The maid had already returned with some Hundred Flower Tea. Furthermore, the wet nurses had also hurried over when they heard the imperial grandson cry. As that was happening, Zu An and Concubine Bai remained silent. Zu An calmly tasted the Hundred Flower Tea; its refreshing fragrance truly cleared the mind.

Concubine Bai had the maids and wet nurses bring the imperial grandson back. When only the two of them were left, she remarked coldly, “It seems you aren’t scared of there being poison in the tea today.”

Zu An said with a smile, “I don’t believe that Concubine Bai would be someone so contemptible. Furthermore, the crown princess isn’t here this time. By rendering me unconscious, wouldn’t it imply that your highness wishes to personally start a scandal with me?”

Concubine Bai’s breathing quickened. “Do you know that just these words alone are already enough for me to have you beaten to death by the rod?”

Zu An lowered his teacup. “Your highness is smart. I don’t believe you would do something so unwise.”

“Can it be that you really believe you have me completely in your grasp?” Concubine Bai sat down on the swing again. “Then I really am curious about your enlightening remarks. Why did I become that mastermind, then?”

Zu An replied, “It seems we’ve come full circle. In this case, King Qi became the main offender. Even though King Qi has more henchmen under him, the emperor is still the world’s number one. His chances of taking down King Qi are still a bit higher. That would mean that the crown prince would no longer have anyone competing with him. At the same time, the crown princess’ purity would come into question, so you could succeed her position. You’re also the mother of the imperial grandson. How could any of the other concubines compare to you?”

He sighed and said, “Actually, there’s another principle when it comes to deciphering cases. The one who has the strongest motives and obtains the greatest benefits is often the perpetrator. Unfortunately, everyone was misled by you, and overlooked that you were the greatest beneficiary.”

Concubine Bai said indifferently, "Does Sir Zu know what the crime of slander is? Everything you just said is baseless. I only have one question for you, though. If I really am the mastermind, why would I save the two of you from being seen naked together? Wouldn't that help me with my objective?"

Zu An spoke with a sigh of praise. "That's why your highness is brilliant. If you allowed the crown princess to be discovered like that, the crown princess would be finished. However, you, as the one receiving the most benefits, would rise too abruptly. Everyone would suspect you. On the contrary, by giving her a chance, the crown princess would draw all of the attention, while you would be safe behind the scenes.

"Of course, there is another reason. Compared to King Qi, the crown prince's faction was at a disadvantage to begin with. If something were to happen to the crown princess, the leader of this faction from the very start, the crown prince's faction might not be able to win against King Qi's faction. That would mean that everything would end up benefiting King Qi instead."

Concubine Bai harrumphed. "Then what about now? Aren't I just helping the crown princess? I've gotten rid of King Qi for her, and she'll become the future empress. What meaning would there be left in my doing all of this?"

Zu An looked into her usually gentle eyes and said with a sigh. "And that's precisely why I praised you as brilliant. It's because of the things you said that no one will suspect you. However, I've already roughly guessed your plans. You probably have proof of the crown princess being 'defiled', so you can still use her current power to deal with King Qi. However, once the situation is already settled, you can have some people scatter the proof whenever you want. That way, the crown princess naturally wouldn't have the dignity to remain the empress, and it's hard to say if she could continue living.

"The crown princess is incredibly smart, but she would forever remain as one of your chess pieces. After all, she's the one who has prepared the way for you," Zu An concluded. He couldn't help but respect Bi Linglong's foresight. He had felt that she was too vicious when she told him to find a chance to silence Concubine Bai; to think that she would kill such a kind and gentle woman because of such a groundless reason.

Now, he realized that she was the truly wise one. She might not have known that the mastermind was Concubine Bai, but her keen aptitude for politics had immediately made her realize that sooner or later, Concubine Bai's existence itself would be a huge threat to her. That was why she didn't hesitate to eliminate that threat.

Sigh, these two women look friendly on the surface, yet they're both equally vicious. Is it really just that the prettier the woman, the better they are at lying? Those beautiful female friends of Zu An's appeared in his mind one after another. He was starting to become truly paranoid. Hmph, it's only because the crown prince is too weak, so he can't control his women. I'm definitely different. In the end, Zu An consoled himself that way.

Just then, Concubine Bai gently clapped her hands. "You've made quite the excellent analysis. Unfortunately, these are only your own speculations. There's no proof."

"It's actually not so hard to get proof. We just need to find Ou Wu," Zu An said.

"Then let's wait until you find him first." Concubine Bai chuckled. Her delicate and pure face that had originally resembled a small white flower now seemed a bit dangerous.

Zu An sighed. "From what your highness is saying, it seems like only disaster awaits Ou Wu. Actually, I always wondered whether Ou Wu was running away on his own initiative, or if he was 'forced to'. Your people can kill him, and then make it seem as if he escaped for fear of punishment for his crimes, framing King Qi that way."

"These words might seem quite laughable in the eyes of others." Concubine Bai's slender fingers pointed at the surroundings. "Everyone here knows that I don't have the influence or the background to do something like this. I've always remained deep in my own palace and rarely leave the palace gates. How could I have the ability to kill an imperial palace gate supervisor, and even bring away his entire family?"

"Even though you're weak on your own, you have allies, don't you?" Zu An chuckled. "For example, maybe King Wu?"

### **Chapter 767: To Scheme Against**

Concubine Bai's relaxed expression finally changed. "I don't know what you're trying to say. King Wu's territory is far away in North Order Commandery. Vassal state kings aren't allowed to enter the capital without a summons. How could I possibly be his ally?"

"But I know that he's always been in the capital these past few days." Zu An chuckled. "I was surrounded and ambushed by the Shi clan in Xin Rui's home this morning, and then I just happened to run into Madam Wu there."

"The Shi clan's people tried to kill you?" Concubine Bai frowned. Then, she harrumphed. "A group of idiots."

Seeing that she was no longer putting on a front, Zu An chuckled. "That can't really be blamed on the Shi clan. After all, Hua Bao suddenly ran out and was captured by the Embroidered Envoy. Then, for the sake of saving him, their casino boss ended up being exposed. After silencing that casino boss, they had to use their southern border Spirit Master Jia Sili. The Embroidered Envoy would've found out that they were involved sooner or later, so they could only go all out and try to pin all of the blame on me..."

Concubine Bai was quite shocked. "Judging from your description, the Shi clan should have definitely succeeded with their attack. With the forces they could transfer, they should have had more than enough resources to kill you. How did you manage to survive?"

"What can I say? I'm just too charming, and I've always been quite lucky. I always manage to escape somehow," Zu An said nonchalantly.

Concubine Bai gave him a deep look. "Sir Zu's confidence isn't something ordinary men can have, as expected."

Zu An harrumphed. "What's the use in praising me now?"

Concubine Bai laughed. "I'm not just praising you; I'm starting to have a bit of sincere admiration for you. You've managed to do things that are completely impossible for many others."

Then, she changed the topic. "However, admiration is one thing. You've slandered me, but I won't admit to it. You should understand that I'm the crown prince's concubine. I can only receive the greatest benefits if the crown prince rises to the throne. Why would I cooperate with King Wu and the others?"

Zu An replied, "The reason why King Wu has gotten involved in this matter is clearly out of longing for the throne, so that's easy to understand. The crown prince isn't so smart, while King Wu is confident in his own intelligence. How could he not have thoughts of taking his place? But eliminating the crown prince alone is useless; he needs to get rid of the strongest competitor for the throne, King Qi, first. That's why he joined in on this plan. He wanted to kill two birds with one stone, weakening King Qi and the crown prince's influence. At worst, they would destroy each other, and he would then obtain a chance.

"Meanwhile, since you're inside the palace, you're being watched constantly. It's impossible for you to make anything happen alone. You must have other people to help you do the things you want to do; for example, killing Ou Wu and pretending that his family escaped. Also, there's Hua Bao. To be honest, I don't believe that a compulsive gambler like Hua Bao could escape and head to a casino from under the Shi clan's strict watch by himself. You were probably the one who arranged for that."

Concubine Bai continued to rock back and forth. A pretty smile surfaced on her face as she said, "Quite the interesting deduction. However, I still have the same words for you. These are your speculations; you don't have proof. As for Ou Wu, even though I don't know what's going on with him, judging from how things currently look, the chances of you finding him aren't high."

"Judging from your tone, I reckon that Ou Wu's corpse has already been destroyed." Zu An chuckled. "But whether or not I find Ou Wu isn't that big of a deal. I still have other proof."

"Are you talking about Xin Rui?" Concubine Bai's legs dangled as she sat on the swing, displaying her current good mood. "Since she already escaped so long ago, I believe Sir Zu must have been unable to find her."

"Your highness, please don't feel happy too soon." Zu An's eyes shifted to her fluttering dress as he said, "Your highness, don't forget that there's one more person. I believe King Wu and the others haven't had the time to leave the capital yet. As long as I arrest them and interrogate them a bit, the truth should quickly come to light."

Concubine Bai's smile froze on her face. She said in a slightly rigid tone, "Hmph, even if King Wu is here, he's still a glorious king. How can someone like him be captured just because you say so, or be interrogated at your command?"

"It seems Concubine Bai has quite a bit of confidence in King Wu," Zu An said. "I don't recommend overestimating the willpower of these nobles who were raised with a golden spoon. They haven't experienced many setbacks. As long as his majesty gives the order, the Embroidered Envoy can easily make him speak. After all, it's a huge offense for a vassal state king to even enter the capital. So, what do you think? Will he speak to ease his crimes out of self-preservation then?"

Sure enough, Concubine Bai's expression changed. She became quiet, and even the swing stopped moving. Some time later, she finally spoke again. "Why did you come here to tell me these things? Was it to mock me, or have you arranged for some other people to lie in wait in case I admit to anything? Are you going to capture me, then?" She looked around while speaking, to see if there was anyone nearby.

Zu An said grimly, "There's only one thing I want to ask you. King Wu definitely wants me dead, so why did you let me go back then? After all, you could have chosen to only let the crown princess go and have me captured by the palace staff. That would similarly achieve your objective."

"At least you remember that I let you go that day." Concubine Bai harrumphed. She got off the swing and walked over to Zu An's side. "And yet in return, what I get is you pressuring me again and again."

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle when he heard her pitiful tone. "Using this type of pleading tone, could it be that you plan to seduce me?"

"If I really did try to seduce you, would you like it?" Concubine Bai removed the small white flower in her hair. Her mature hair bun immediately broke apart, and her long hair scattered down like a waterfall. She no longer seemed like the mother of a child, but rather like a stunning young lady.

Zu An's heart rate quickened when he smelled her unique hundred flower fragrance. This woman really smells too good! Just how amazing would it be to have a woman like this in his arms? Just what kind of heroic deeds had the crown prince done in his past life to make this woman give birth to his child?

In that instant, the seemingly delicate and weak Concubine Bai suddenly attacked. She struck toward the main acupoint on Zu An's chest, her glittering fingernails releasing a vicious glint.

Zu An smiled and said, "I was waiting for you to do this."

He was absolutely not a man who would lose his head over lust and fail to do things properly in front of a girl. How could he drop his guard in their current situation? He raised his hand and pressed it against Concubine Bai's wrist, blocking her threatening attack. Concubine Bai wasn't fazed, and her other hand quickly shot over.

Zu An was startled. Concubine Bai's arm looked so slender, but it actually had such great offensive power? This woman is actually at the eighth rank? But how is that possible?!

After all, Chu Chuyan and Pei Mianman were publicly acknowledged geniuses, yet before they had met Zu An, they had only been at the sixth rank. The fact that Chuyan had reached the seventh rank was because of Zu An's help. Despite that, even though Concubine Bai wasn't that much older than them, she was actually already at the eighth rank?

However, he quickly realized that this was the world of cultivation, and he couldn't judge a person by appearances. It was just like the empress who, despite being much older than Zu An, looked just like a young woman. Every inch of her body felt no different from that of a young lady. This was something Zu An had personally experienced.

This was a similar situation. Even though Concubine Bai looked young, she could be much older than Chuyan and the others.

Tsk tsk tsk, I wonder if anyone in the imperial palace knows her real age. The crown princess and crown prince clearly don't know. What about the emperor? Does he know? Zu An's thoughts moved quickly, but his hands didn't slow down. The two of them quickly exchanged twenty to thirty moves.

Concubine Bai was also shocked. She had already given Zu An enough credit, yet it seemed she had still underestimated him in the end. If she had known it was going to be like this, she should've just...

She bit her red lips lightly. Her attacks became more and more fierce. However, since neither of them wanted to alert the emperor, they both held back a bit and reined in their power at close range.

Zu An noticed that there seemed to be a rain of flower petals around him. When he tried to look past them, he couldn't see the situation outside at all. This was probably Concubine Bai's way of blocking the line of sight of the maids and wet nurses, preventing them from seeing anything.

He chuckled when he sensed her reservations. "Are we going to fight while pressed up against each other? That's actually my specialty, you know?" As he spoke, he used Pei Mianman's Feathersilk Entangling Art to lock down Concubine Bai's arms.

Zu An pulled Concubine Bai over to him with great force. He examined her beauty as she continued to struggle up close. Her skin was fine like snow; he couldn't find a single blemish. "Your highness must be at your wit's end now, right?" he asked. He wanted to have a proper chat with her.

Suddenly, Concubine Bai revealed a charming smile and asked, "Is that so?" In that instant, pink mist sprayed out of her mouth and hit Zu An's face. At such close range, even if Zu An immediately held his breath, he still couldn't help but breathe some of it in.

## **Chapter 768: Making Things Even**

The two of them fought while almost pressing up against each other. However, no matter how Concubine Bai fought, she was entangled by the other party's slippery, snake-like hands. At first, she could still switch up her attack methods to unleash an endless barrage of attacks, but as they continued to fight, the amount of space she had left to evade shrank and shrank. Eventually, even her hands were restricted and she was unable to move at all.

When had she ever been in such close contact with another man? She was ashamed and nervous. Since she couldn't move her hands, she sent a kick at Zu An's underbelly.

However, since the Feathersilk Entangling Art was a technique that specialized in close quarters combat, how could it not have any countermeasures for such an attack? Zu An raised his leg to block Concubine Bai, then kicked the crook of her leg. Then, he used that chance to push her legs apart.

Concubine Bai jerked from side to side. Her body was extremely flexible, her waist and body both twisting at inconceivable angles. However, she still couldn't break free from Zu An's control. On the contrary, her face was flushed from their bodies rubbing against each other so close together.

Zu An asked with a smile, "Your highness must be at your wit's end now, right?" Just as he was about to negotiate with her, however, Concubine Bai suddenly smiled. Then, a pink mist sprayed out from her cherry lips, hitting Zu An in the face.

Zu An was completely caught off guard. An unnatural redness filled his face. Then, after rocking back and forth a few times, he fell weakly to the ground.

"Hmph!" Concubine Bai harrumphed after finally breaking free from his grasp. Then, she couldn't help but add a kick. "Scoundrel!"

She looked resentful as she asked, "Weren't you acting all cocky a moment ago? Why aren't you moving now?" She had really suffered from that close quarters combat just then.

She picked up her skirt and squatted down by his side. A dagger emerged from who knew where, and she ran it across Zu An's neck a few times. When she saw that there was no reaction, she finally relaxed. "He fainted after all. Hmph, I expect no less after being afflicted by my rose dew."

But then, she seemed quite troubled. She muttered, "Say, should I kill you or not? If I don't kill you, you're just a bit too smart, so it'll be dangerous for me in the palace. If I kill you, the sect master might get angry, right? There's that junior Honglei as well. Sigh, this really is a headache."

"If it's such a headache, then perhaps you shouldn't kill me?" came a man's teasing voice by Concubine Bai's ear.

Concubine Bai jumped in fright, and she quickly tried to press the dagger against Zu An's neck. Unfortunately, she was still a step too late. Her chest went numb, and in an instant all of her acupoints were sealed up.

Zu An got up from the ground with a chuckle. He looked at the furious beauty in front of him and said, "Your highness gave me a kick just now. Say, how should I get my revenge for that?"

Concubine Bai was shocked as she asked, "Why aren't you unconscious?"

They had been so close just now, and they had fought such an intense battle. His breathing should have been extremely rushed. That was why it was impossible for her poison to have not entered his system. Furthermore, her secret poison was enough to render him unconscious even if he only breathed in a tiny bit.

"I really am freaking lucky." Zu An counted his blessings. Thankfully, he had already broken through to the third level of the Primordial Origin Sutra, so he was already immune to most poisons. Otherwise, he really would have been done in.

"What kind of poison is that?" he asked out of curiosity. Concubine Bai harrumphed and refused to pay attention to him.

"I can still make my guesses even if you don't talk." Zu An sensed the poison with his primordial ki. Even though it wasn't a perfect analysis, he could still get a rough idea of its use.

"Huh? This poison actually isn't harmful to the body at all. It only makes one fall unconscious and enter an illusion." Zu An was shocked. "Why would you use a poison like this without any serious effects?"

"None of your business!" Concubine Bai felt angry and remorseful. If she had known it was going to be like this, she would have planted that dagger into his neck to begin with. Hmph, she really didn't know where this kid got his guts from, not even flinching with a blade pressed against his neck. That was why she had thought he really had been affected by the poison.

You have successfully trolled Bai Rouxue for +233 +233 +233...

"His majesty has long been trying to figure out who the spy from the Devil Sect was. In the end, the one who was blamed was the Left Guard General Cheng Xiong and his son." Zu An chuckled. "But I knew it wasn't them. That was why I was always curious to find out who leaked information to the Devil Sect.

"This person's status couldn't be low, or else they wouldn't have access to important secrets like the emperor's whereabouts, the palace's security, and other things of that nature. But if their status were too high, I wouldn't understand why they would help the Devil Sect." Zu An looked at Concubine Bai and said, "It turns out it was you in the end."

He had pretended to be unconscious earlier because he wanted to use this chance to get some information. Sure enough, he had ended up receiving such a nice piece of information.

Concubine Bai was really feeling regretful now. Why the hell had she blabbed like that? However, she quickly calmed down. "Hmph, I'm not the only one who colluded with the Devil Sect in this imperial palace. Sir Zu, aren't you one of them too? You even saved the Devil Sect Master and the saintess."

Zu An wasn't surprised. It was easy to deceive others, but such information wouldn't escape the notice of a spy on this level. After all, Yun Jianyue had always stayed in his Embroidered Envoy residence, and he couldn't always be there. These two had probably already been in contact then.

Indeed, Concubine Bai had awarded him with a bunch of stuff back then. Thinking back, Yun Jianyue's reaction was a bit strange at the time. That was probably when they had first come into contact.

Zu An chuckled. "Your highness must think that I'll let you go because of that kind of relationship. But as long as I kill you, no one will know about any of this. Won't I be safer then?"

Concubine Bai gave him a look. A while later, she said, "There's no need for you to scare me like that. How can anyone the sect master and the saintess favor be someone that despicable and shameless?"

Zu An felt a headache as he muttered, "Sigh, being rejected for being a nice guy really doesn't feel too great." He didn't continue the pretense either, and unsealed Concubine Bai's acupoints.

Concubine Bai subconsciously took a few steps back when she was freed. Then, she rubbed her chest. That area still ached a bit after being struck.

Zu An then remarked. "Since we're now allies on the same ship, I believe there are some matters we can be more open about, no?"

"What do you want to know?" Concubine Bai returned to the swing. At the same time, she flung her sleeves outward and the flower petals gradually faded. The figures of the maids and wet nurses could vaguely be made out again.

"This technique of yours is quite impressive," Zu An couldn't help but say in praise.

"Nothing more than a smokescreen," Concubine Bai replied indifferently.

Zu An nodded. Then he continued, "The ones who wanted to take me and the crown princess down were you and King Wu, right?"



After a bit of hesitation, Concubine Bai nodded and said, "Correct. Your analysis was already ninety percent there."

"Where is Xin Rui?" Zu An asked.

"She returned after completing her mission," Concubine Bai replied.

"Then her mother and little brother were both fake as well?" Zu An refused to believe that the Devil Sect would leave behind such a huge opening and let Xin Rui's loved ones be controlled.

"Correct. They were both impersonations from the sect. Otherwise, it wouldn't have been easy to escape to a casino under the Shi clan's monitoring, and he would be discovered by the Embroidered Envoy even if he had help," Concubine Bai replied.

"Your arrangements really were well thought out." Zu An gasped. The other party was so meticulous. This had definitely not been done on a momentary whim, but rather prepared several years in advance. But if this had started several years ago, then had they already planned to act against the crown princess at that time?

"We only made some preparations ahead of time. Then, the Shi clan's people just happened to be roped in recently," Concubine Bai explained.

Zu An felt relieved. He asked, "Why did you choose me and the crown princess?" He couldn't help but feel that he had been thrown under the bus here.

"King Wu suggested it. He insisted on using you. He seems to carry extreme hatred for you." Concubine Bai gave Zu An a look of surprise. "Just what did you do to him to make him hate you so much?"

Zu An began to think to himself. It seemed she didn't know about his relationship with Yun Yuqing. It was probably better to keep some things a secret. He replied, "What can I say? I'm just too charming. Maybe King Wu felt jealous when I passed through North Order Commandery in the past." Concubine Bai was speechless.

"As for the reason you let me go back then, apart from the reasons I stated... Is it also because I saved Yun Jianyue and the others?" Zu An asked out of curiosity.

"Indeed. For the sake of saving you and not rousing King Wu's suspicion, I was left quite conflicted, you know?" Concubine Bai replied with a sigh.

Zu An laughed, annoyed. "What, then should I be thanking you for making me walk around the gates of hell a few times?"

"Aren't you still fine?" Concubine Bai smiled. "The crown princess is a rare beauty, and not even the crown prince has touched her pure body, yet you ended up having her."

"Did you take off our clothes back then?" Zu An's expression darkened.

Concubine Bai recalled the past. She subconsciously glanced at his lower body, a blush appearing on her face. "What meaning is there in asking that?"

"Of course there's meaning." Zu An harrumphed. "You've already gotten to see me completely. At the very least, you have to return the favor that we're even, right?"

Concubine Bai smiled sweetly. "So you want to see? Sure, I'm sitting right here. You can come over and remove my clothes. I promise I won't resist."

Zu An became annoyed and asked, "Woman, do you really think I wouldn't dare?"

"Then why don't you do it?" Concubine Bai raised her chin provocatively. At the same time, she gave the distant maids a look. So many people are watching. Would you dare?

Zu An's eyes narrowed. He said, "Your highness, I have a friend; he really is my friend. This person really hates being provoked. If he gets provoked, he might just act on an impulse and not care about any consequences until he gets what he wants..."

Concubine Bai suddenly got up before he could finish and urgently said, "You can't act rashly, or else both of us will be done for!"

Zu An would definitely be finished in front of so many people, but because she had been touched by a man, rumors would spread about her in the palace. Then, she would become an impure person in the eyes of the royal family. All of her efforts would then go down the drain.

"But that friend of mine really is angry, you know? Already, he can't take it anymore." Zu An laughed inwardly. He had never used the skill 'I Have a Friend' that he had pulled a while ago. He hadn't expected its first use to be right here. Hmph, judging from Concubine Bai's alarmed expression, she clearly believes that the friend I'm speaking of is myself. Looks like this skill is pretty good at confusing people.

Concubine Bai's face turned red and pale. Why had she insisted on provoking this guy? She clenched her teeth, and then waved her sleeves. Flower petals began to fall again. She had to at least block their line of sight first. That way, even if something happened, she could still redeem the situation.

Zu An's expression became extremely strange when he saw the flower petals. "Can I interpret this as your highness tacitly agreeing to what I'm about to do?"

## **Chapter 769: No Idea What to Do**

"Pah!" Concubine Bai scoffed. "I just didn't want you to do something out of impulse and cause a situation that was impossible to save."

Zu An arrived at her side, and then looked at the surrounding petals. "You've already blocked their line of sight, so doesn't that mean that no matter what I do to you, you can still save the situation?"

Concubine Bai subconsciously took a step back when she sensed Zu An's strong, masculine presence. "Don't... Don't misunderstand. That's not what I meant."

"Then what did you mean?" Zu An hooked his finger under her chin, gently raising her face up. Her cheeks really were beautiful like cherry blossoms, her skin incredibly smooth. Not even white jade or pearls could compare to her beauty.

"If you... If you continue, I... I'll remove the flower screen around us..." Concubine Bai raised her hand, as if she were going to lower the screen.

Zu An smiled. He moved close to her ear and asked quietly, "Then why don't you?"

Her fragrance was even stronger when he got closer. It was sweet, and yet it wasn't overpowering. Instead, it felt fresh and clean. Was this woman the reincarnation of the flower immortal or something?

"You... How can you be so shameless?" Concubine Bai was starting to choke up. When she sensed the heat coming from Zu An's breath, she became so nervous a thin layer of goosebumps appeared on her neck.

Zu An had a pensive look on his face when he saw her reaction. "Your highness, you really don't seem like a mature woman who has already given birth to a child right now."

"You don't seem like a proper subject right now either," Concubine Bai said hatefully.

Zu An looked her in the eyes and asked, "Whose child is the imperial grandson?" The reason he had deliberately 'provoked' her was mainly because he wanted to see if he could get any information from her reactions.

"Either way, he's not yours!" Concubine Bai struggled free. She sorted out her clothes in alarm.

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. "I didn't touch your clothes, so why are you fixing them?"

Concubine Bai's face turned red. She felt that she really was too nervous right now for some reason. She looked away and ignored him.

Zu An then continued, "Is he really the crown prince's son? That doesn't seem like the case to me. Even the crown princess has remained chaste after being married to him for so long. I reckon he probably lacks the ability, or maybe the awareness, to do such a thing.

"Could it be that it really is as the rumors say, that this child is his majesty's? If it really were his seed, then with his nature, would he be willing to grant his woman to another man?" he asked while staring straight at her. "Even if it's his own son we're talking about?"

Concubine Bai's breathing became hurried. Her chest rose and fell intensely. "This matter has nothing to do with you, so there's no need for you to keep asking. I won't say anything."

Zu An laughed. "Honestly, I really am in admiration of the Devil Sect's methods! Not only did they manage to place you in such a high position, but you even managed to be the mother of the imperial grandson. That would mean that once the imperial grandson rose to the throne, the Devil Sect's comeback would be inevitable."

"What, are you going to expose us?" Concubine Bai sneered. "But you shouldn't forget that we're all in the same boat here! If I'm done for, you won't be able to get away either."

"Why so serious?" Zu An chuckled. "With my relationship with Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, how could I report you?"

Concubine Bai said angrily, "So you finally remember the sect master and Honglei now! Just how were you treating me earlier?"

Zu An waved his hands and replied, "You already saw everything, and all I did was touch your chin. I don't think I went too far at all."

Concubine Bai thought to herself, So what, are you really going to strip me in revenge? She was extremely irritated. She looked away and ignored him.

Zu An said, "Alright, it looks like this is most likely your Devil Sect's greatest secret. I won't force it if you aren't willing to talk about it. But I have one last question. Why would you collude with King Wu? After all, you two aren't connected in any way. How did you even get into contact?"

After some hesitation, Concubine Bai said, "We had a bit of contact in the past."

When he saw how ambiguously Concubine Bai spoke, Zu An sighed. "Your highness, don't be like this. You really don't sound like you're talking to an ally right now."

"What are you trying to say?" Concubine Bai frowned. She seemed to have sensed some implication behind his words.

Zu An said, "You did something that might just cause the execution of your entire clan. Who would dare to collaborate that way over such a simple friendship?"

Concubine Bai said indifferently, "There truly isn't much between me and King Wu. If you don't believe me, I can make a vow."

Zu An shook his head. "The two of you indeed don't have much of a relationship, but your relationship with Madam Wu isn't ordinary. If my suspicions aren't wrong, Madam Wu is your sect master's sister, right?"

Concubine Bai's eyes narrowed when she heard those words. Her heart rate sped up noticeably. However, she quickly reacted and said coldly, "I don't know what you're saying. However, I'm quite impressed by your imagination."

"Is that so?" Zu An laughed. "But your reaction just now told me the truth." Concubine Bai remained silent.

Zu An continued, "You're the greatest and most mysterious spy the Devil Sect has planted in the imperial palace. Back then, even with my relationship with Honglei, as well as the life-saving grace I held toward your Devil Sect's master, Yun Jianyue still refused to tell me about you. That means that in the entire sect, your status might be in the top two or three.

"In such a situation, how could you all dare to expose your existence to King Wu? No matter how closely King Wu is working with the Devil Sect, he's still a relative to the emperor. Your people would never completely trust him. Furthermore, he has a longing for the throne, so he's naturally a rival of the imperial grandson. There's no way you would give King Wu that much leverage against you guys.

"But your alliance still exists, so there's probably a middleman. Furthermore, Madam Wu's degree of involvement in this matter really is quite high. She knows about the Shi clan's matters, yet the Shi clan doesn't know about her. That's why she should be that middleman.

“Meanwhile, Yun Jianyue and Madam Wu both just happen to have the surname Yun. The same surname doesn’t say much on its own, but with so many coincidences lining up, I fear it’s no longer just a coincidence.”

Zu An began to feel some regret. This was a thought that had just emerged as he spoke with Concubine Bai. Before now, he had only suspected that she might have something to do with the Devil Sect. If he had realized this from the start, he might have had better results if he had asked Yun Yuqing directly.

After some hesitation, Concubine Bai said calmly, “I won’t stop you from imagining whatever you wish, but you can forget about obtaining any conclusive evidence from me.”

Zu An couldn’t help but say mockingly, “You Devil Sect people really aren’t very honest. I even helped you guys out of so many life and death situations, yet you’ve never told me the truth. On the contrary, look at the crown princess. She might be a bit more fierce to me on the surface, but she’s actually pretty good to me. I feel like I might really have to reevaluate which side is better to lean on.”

Concubine Bai became nervous. “Hmph! Isn’t the reason the crown princess is so good to you because I placed her right by your side? How can you forget favors so easily?”

“Let’s not be so superficial; we’re all adults here.” Zu An wagged his finger. “I only care about tangible benefits afterward.”

Concubine Bai sat down on the swing. Suddenly, she smiled sweetly and patted the seat next to her. “Do you want to swing with me?”

Zu An asked with an ambiguous smile, “Are you tempting me right now?”

“The reason why you feel that the crown princess is better... Isn’t it because of the skinship you experienced?” A bit of charm suddenly appeared on Concubine Bai’s innocent face. “Whatever the crown princess has given you, I can give it to you as well.”

“Why not?” Zu An didn’t explain anything and sat down right next to her.

Concubine Bai was stunned. She hadn’t expected him to agree so readily. On the contrary, she was now a bit baffled as to how to deal with this situation. Under normal circumstances, shouldn’t he at least have declined the first offer? Then, she would continue to seduce him, and she would have him in the center of her palm, right? Yet now, she had no idea how to play the game anymore!

Even though there was more than enough room on the swing for one person, it felt a bit cramped when two people used it together. That was especially the case when that fellow wrapped his arm right around her waist. He wasn’t treating her like an outsider at all!

In that instant, she felt as if she had invited a wolf straight into the house. She said in annoyance, “Big brother, please don’t touch me anymore. Why don’t we just talk?”

## **Chapter 770: Extreme Joy Turns to Sorrow**

“Do you think we can just chat in this kind of situation?” Zu An asked with a smile.

Concubine Bai was stunned. Her eyes shifted to his hand. How am I supposed to just chat when I'm so rattled from you touching me everywhere?!

Zu An said, "Your Devil Sect's people really are liars after all. You said you could give me everything the crown princess had given me just a moment ago, yet you're already going back on your word."

Concubine Bai's expression grew sullen as she exclaimed, "Don't tell me the crown princess let you touch her all over like this?!"

Zu An said, "That's how it was, at least when we were naked. Your highness, didn't you see it for yourself?"

Concubine Bai finally couldn't take it anymore. She struggled free from the swing and distanced herself from Zu An, saying, "Fine, I'm scared of you. If my senior sister learns how you treated me, she'll definitely smack you straight to death."

"Senior sister?" Zu An asked, a bit confused.

Concubine Bai harrumphed. "There's no point in hiding it from you at this point. The sect master is my senior sister, but I was already sent into the palace at a very young age."

Zu An was quite surprised. "Just how did you guys pull the wool over the emperor's head? He would actually be so careless as to let such a high ranking Devil Sect member remain at his side?"

Concubine Bai said proudly, "Senior sister is the world's smartest person. Furthermore, the emperor isn't a deity; how could he possibly know everything?"

Zu An nodded in deep sympathy. If that guy were omnipotent, he would've already known that the empress has already taken on my shape inside.

He didn't continue arguing and instead asked, "By the way, was that libationer one of your people too? Or does he have some kind of a secret relationship with your Devil Sect?" That libationer had helped him out before. That was something he had always been confused about. He just couldn't stop thinking about it.

"Didn't you say that it was already your last question earlier?" Concubine Bai harrumphed. "Just a man who goes back on his word."

"I learned it from you." Zu An's eyes shifted to her slender waist.

Concubine Bai's face turned red. She knew that he was referring to how she had seduced him, and yet given up halfway. "Fine, it'll be alright even if I tell you. The libationer has nothing to do with our Holy Sect. If he were one of us, then he and the sect master together would have already been enough to drag down the emperor. Why would we have to go through so much trouble?"

Zu An was shocked. "The libationer is that powerful?"

Concubine Bai nodded. "Sir Libationer has always been mysterious, and he's always been known to disregard political affairs. However, no one can disregard his existence. The publicly acknowledged top three experts are his majesty, King Qi, and the libationer.

“Everyone in the world believes that King Qi must at most be a bit weaker than his majesty, that he’s number two. However, judging from my observations these past few years, the libationer might be the true number two. After all, every disciple he’s raised ended up reaching the master rank. There are naturally many more eighth and ninth ranks under him.”

Zu An’s eyes widened. Even his disciples were masters! Just what kind of concept was that? He asked, “How many disciples does he have?”

Concubine Bai gave Zu An a look, clearly shocked that he didn’t even know such basic information. “Every student in the Royal Academy can be considered his disciple, but most people only acknowledge twelve of them as his direct disciples.”

Zu An had a pensive expression. Looks like I’ll have to pay that academy a visit to clear this up. Suddenly, he thought of something and asked, “By the way, someone tried to eliminate me when I was in the imperial prison last time. Was it one of your men?”

Concubine Bai was stunned. “Why would we do such a thing? If we really wanted to do that, forget about Honglei, not even the sect master would let me go.”

Zu An smiled. “That’s good. I hope we can help each other more in this palace in the future.”

Concubine Bai harrumphed. “I just hope you won’t come to this Hundred Flower Palace as much anymore.” She really wouldn’t be able to take it if this kid came to provoke her every time.

Zu An laughed heartily. “Then I guess I’ll make sure to stay by the crown princess’ side more in the future.”

Concubine Bai’s expression changed. After all, even though she looked friendly with the crown princess on the surface, everyone knew that they hated each other’s guts. If Zu An really did start leaning toward the crown princess, then she really would get a headache. After all, judging from their previous interactions, she could tell that this fellow’s competence and luck were both top-notch.

She asked, “How are you going to face the sect master and Honglei if you keep doing this? One of them favors you, and the other has deep affection for you.”

Zu An sighed. “It’s your Devil Sect’s fault for having so many lying, beautiful women. I’m really wondering if I’ve been PUA’d by you guys.”[1]

“PUA?” Concubine Bai was stunned. She didn’t know what that word meant.

“It means that you guys were using some superficial methods to control me, but you also never invested anything from the very start. Instead, I was completely scammed.” Zu An said darkly, “And you’re the worst of them all.”

“But you should at least be able to sense that Honglei’s feelings for you are real, right?” Concubine Bai clenched her teeth. This fellow really was hard to deal with.

Zu An replied indifferently, “Who knows? After all, she hasn’t really been given to me. Who knows whether your stupid technique even has those rules about virginity or whatever? Maybe they’re all in on this together.” He could obviously sense Qiu Honglei’s sincere feelings, but he wouldn’t be so stupid as to say that to Concubine Bai.

"Of course you can't lose your chastity if you cultivate Heavenly Devil Temptation; even I..." Concubine Bai suddenly stopped midway and harrumphed. She had almost fallen for this fellow's bait. She quickly changed the topic. "Whatever, as long as you're not scared of that crown princess being jealous in the future, then you can come here as often as you like. We'll always welcome you here."

"Thanks a bunch, your highness. This subject will bid his goodbye for now then." Zu An had achieved his objective. Whether he completely leaned toward the Devil Sect or the crown princess' side, neither choice was wise. Only in his current situation would he receive the most benefits.

Concubine Bai clenched her teeth. She thought to herself, Which subject dares to touch me however they want, like you? However, when she saw the maids walk over, she couldn't really say anything. She scattered the surrounding flower petals and said, "Sir Zu, please leave well; we won't be seeing you out."

...

As Zu An left the Hundred Flower Palace, he exited through the gate and returned home. Either way, the crown princess had given him some time off, and the Embroidered Envoy's case had been handed to Zhuxie Chixin. He was happy to have some free time.

His harvest from the Hundred Flower Palace had been quite great. Many of the questions he'd had were now fully answered. Furthermore, he had even established a friendly alliance with Concubine Bai.

Concubine Bai's body really smells good... He continued to think about various things along the way, and managed to reach his home without realizing it. Several figures welcomed him when they heard activity by the entrance.

"Ah Zu!"

"Brother-in-law!"

"Big brother Zu!"

Zu An's mood brightened. So it was Chu Chuyan, Chu Youzhao, and her stalker Murong Qinghe.

"We just received news that you were attacked! Were you injured at all?" Even though they could see Zu An standing there all fine and dandy, Chu Chuyan still continued to examine his body.

"I'm fine. Don't I look perfectly well?" Zu An felt warm inside. As expected, it was still his own wife who doted on him the most. Those other women were all more fierce than the next.

Murong Qinghe said, "I heard news from the prison that all of the barracks in the outskirts are being examined. I heard that a siege crossbow was used in the attack, and there were even signs of someone being hit by one..."

"A siege crossbow?!" Chu Chuyan's face paled. How could she not know how powerful a siege crossbow was? "Where were you injured? Hurry and tell me!"

Zu An felt more and more warm when he saw Chu Chuyan on the verge of tears. He said, "Don't worry, I managed to evade in time, so it only brushed me. I just had some light injuries. It's already gotten much better."



He didn't want to tell them what had happened back then because he didn't want to worry Chuyan. Furthermore, the Murong clan's brat was still here, so if news got out, everyone would know just how quickly he had recovered after being hit by a siege crossbow. That would draw suspicion, and subsequently, people might rush over to research his body.

Chu Chuyan still wasn't convinced. She quickly took off his clothes and said, "Let me take a look."

Murong Qinghe's face reddened. She turned away in embarrassment. Who would have thought that even though Zu An looked pretty skinny from the outside, he was actually so robust!

Chu Youzhao was the opposite; she bashfully stared at Zu An's body. Her cheeks blushed, yet she didn't really want to look away.

When she finally confirmed that there weren't any serious injuries, Chu Chuyan sighed in relief and said, "Thank goodness..."

Chu Youzhao suddenly asked, "Brother-in-law, why do you smell so good?"

Murong Qinghe also sniffed the air. "It does smell pretty good. I've never smelled this type of fragrance before."

Chu Chuyan's gaze became dangerous. She looked at Zu An with an ambiguous smile. "If I'm not mistaken, this seems to be the smell of another woman..."