

## Immortal 781

### Chapter 781: I'll Be Your Cow

Zu An said with a troubled expression, "But I'm usually quite busy, so I might not have the time to teach any classes."

When he had been a math teacher back at Brightmoon Academy, there were many times where he couldn't teach the class. He couldn't help but feel a bit guilty over that. Now, he still had his duty in the Eastern Palace, as well as being an Embroidered Envoy. He was already running around like a dog and he was up to his ears in work. How could he take on another job like this?

The crown princess became worried when she heard Zu An's response. This guy was normally pretty quick, so why had he suddenly become so dumb? Did he not know how many benefits there were in being an academy teacher, how hard it was to become one? They're making an exception for you, yet you're still coming up with all types of excuses? That you're busy, of all things?

Despite the crown princess' concerns, Wang Shuyang said, "It's fine; teaching those students at Sir Zu's level would just be a waste. We can just inform the academy and tell them not to assign you any courses to teach."

Jiang Luofu became a bit hesitant. "But if he doesn't teach any classes, wouldn't that cause a lot of trouble? There'll be all sorts of rumors."

"That's not a problem. Even though Sir Zu won't teach the students, can't we make him our teacher? As for the lessons for us, we won't set a time, it'll be at Sir Zu's convenience. As for the style of lesson, we can just play a game of go. This way, it's a kind of relaxation, so Sir Zu won't be too tired either," said Hei Baizi. In his opinion, having Zu An teach the students was a complete waste. They should just use the time to play a few more games.

Yin Shi finally recovered from the silencing seal. He immediately jumped out and shouted, "You're shameless! How can Sir Zu teach through playing games? He should be discussing logic with me in front of the other students! This way, not only would we be able to benefit, even the students would gain insights!"

Wang Shuyang became upset. "All of you only blabber about trifling nonsense. Of course Sir Zu should be talking about this hybridized breeding process. This is a great undertaking that will benefit the lives of millions and millions of people!"

"We cultivators aren't trying to become monks, okay? Why do we have to care about doing virtuous works." Hei Baizi harrumphed. "Furthermore, Sir Zu already gave you a lot of help just now; how can you still be pestering him about the details? You still call yourself a farmer? Sir Zu's wisdom belongs to everyone, not you alone. Junior sister, what do you think?"

"Of course, of course." Qi Yaoguang nodded. She changed the topic as soon as Hei Baizi relaxed. "Sir Zu's wisdom belongs to the entire human race, and the future of humanity lies in the cosmos. That's why I think he should just observe the stars with me every day and talk about astrology."

"Damn kid, I pampered you all these years for nothing! I'm going to beat the crap out of you, do you believe me?" Hei Baizi exclaimed.

"Hmph, come at me then! Do you think I'm scared of you? You can't even beat me in chess; what makes you think you can beat me in a fight?" Qi Yaoguang shot back.

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When she saw the disciples arguing, the originally flustered crown princess' jaw almost dropped to the ground. Were these really the so-called aloof and indifferent figures the capital's circles spoke of? Those incredibly proud academy teachers?

The libationer couldn't continue to watch either. He coughed and said, "All of you, get out of my sight. Stop making so much noise and disturbing this old one's rest."

The disciples didn't dare to continue making a racket when they sensed their teacher's anger. They bowed respectfully toward the wooden house, and then they left with a guilty conscience.

They whispered toward each other along the way.

"Didn't you guys say that teacher never really got angry?"

"Why would he even be angry anyway?"

Jiang Luofu finally couldn't hold herself back and said, "Hah, all of you kept calling him Sir Zu one after another, and were on the verge of bowing to him as your master instead! How is your real teacher supposed to feel?"

"Didn't teacher teach us that within a group of three, one of them could be your master? Even if we really did bow down to Sir Zu, what would be wrong with that?" Wang Shuyang asked seriously.

"When did your emotional intelligence suddenly drop to the level of junior sister? Do you all really believe that in this sort of situation?" Jiang Luofu was speechless.

Qi Yaoguang became unhappy. "Eighth sister, you can scold them if you want to, but why are you dragging me into it?"

The other disciples looked at each other in dismay. All of them felt guilty when they realized that they had inadvertently offended their master.

Jiang Luofu used this chance to drag Zu An off to the side. "I still have some formalities to take care of with him, so we won't be heading off with you guys." The others were quite worried, so they couldn't find it within themselves to force the two to stay.

Zu An asked out of curiosity, "Where are we going now?"

"Didn't you say you wanted to get yourself a pill furnace? I'll bring you over to see fourth senior," Jiang Luofu replied.

Zu An was stunned. "Didn't you say that you had some more formalities to take care of?"

Jiang Luofu rolled her eyes. "Do you think we would've been able to get away from them if I didn't say that?"

Zu An smiled. "I didn't expect big sis to have such a two-faced side."

Jiang Luofu grinned. "It can't be helped when you hang around with people like them. That's why you better not offend me in the future, or else. I'm quite the petty person, you know?"

Zu An asked curiously, "And how is big sis going to be petty?"

Jiang Luofu smiled. "Did you already forget my field of specialty? I'm a law specialist who knows all thirteen thousand, six hundred and eighty two methods of punishment, from ancient times until now. If you want, I don't mind putting you through them."

But Zu An didn't feel the slightest bit of fear. "Since big sis is a lawyer, of course you won't know the law and break it. As long as I don't break any laws, I don't think big sis will punish me over such a small thing."

"Hm?" Jiang Luofu was shocked. "Kid, you really are quite something. I thought that it was just a coincidence when you subdued the others, but it now seems as if you really do understand all different fields. That's strange... There's a limit to what a single person can learn. How do you know so much at such a young age?"

Zu An was shaken up inside, but he still sounded relaxed. "I have no idea either. I've always remembered anything I read, and I read all kinds of things. That's why I know a bit about everything, but it's just that. I'm nothing like all of you, who are specialists."

Jiang Luofu smiled and said, "At least you're humble. What, are you scared that we'll grow jealous of you? Though to be honest, your transcendent aptitude really is quite enviable."

Zu An tested the waters and asked, "Does Sir Libationer know about my aptitude?" He was curious if it was because of that fact that the libationer viewed him favorably.

Jiang Luofu shook her head. "That matter is just too important. How could I talk about it with someone else without your permission? I might end up suddenly endangering your life."

Zu An felt warm inside. "Big sis, you're so good to me, but there's nothing I can do for you. How about I work tirelessly for you like a cow or horse?"

Jiang Luofu smiled and replied, "I'm not a farmer, what do I need a cow or horse for?"

Zu An sighed in regret. I'm willing to work for you like a cow, and all you would have to do is feed me grass, but you're not even willing to do that?

Suddenly, he felt something and pushed Jiang Luofu behind him. "Be careful!" Right as he spoke, a giant figure fell where he had been standing a moment ago. Dust flew everywhere, and even the ground shook.

Zu An looked at the giant thing in front of him vigilantly. It was roughly a zhang in height and tan colored. He had thought that this was some demonic beast at first, but he didn't sense any life from it. However, it looked quite similar to a human on the outside; it was just many times larger.

"This is... a robot?" Zu An was quite shocked.

Jiang Luofu stopped him and said, "You don't need to worry; this is fourth senior's golem. It probably treated you as an intruder because it doesn't recognize you." She took out a token and waved it in front of the golem, saying, "I'm here to see fourth senior."

When the golem's red eyes passed over her token, its stiff and dry voice intoned, "Identity confirmed. Please proceed."

The golem moved aside after speaking and slowly sat down. The red light in its eyes faded. Then, it remained still like a statue without any of its previous intimidating presence.

Zu An turned around several times. He was quite moved. This is a freaking mecha! At that moment, he felt as if he had returned to his old world.

## **Chapter 782: Golem**

A pair of doors opened up on their own soon afterward.

Jiang Luofu brought Zu An inside and said, "By the way, let me warn you ahead of time. Fourth senior's temperament is a bit strange. It would be hard even for me to get a pill furnace if I ask him." Jiang Luofu seemed like she was scared of Shen Xuze finding out, so she spoke through ki transmission. "If he's not willing to give you one, then I'll try to get one for you through the academy. Even though it won't be as good as one of fourth senior's furnaces, it should be good enough."

Zu An said with a smile, "Big sis really is thorough. Don't worry, my luck has always been quite good. Together with big sis' charm, I don't think we'll return empty-handed."

Jiang Luofu shot him a look. "Do you slather honey over that mouth every day or something? No wonder you have so many girls around you. Don't try that stuff on me."

Zu An chuckled and quickly changed the topic. He pointed at the giant golem behind him and asked, "Did your senior brother make that?"

"Yup. Fourth senior is a genius who can make dead things come to life." Jiang Luofu's voice was full of admiration.

"How does that thing move? What's its energy source?" Zu An asked.

"I believe he uses ki stones." Jiang Luofu added hesitantly, "But I don't know the exact details either. You can ask fourth senior about it later."

Zu An couldn't help but asked, "But aren't the expenses crazy high if they use ki stones?"

"Of course." Jiang Luofu had a weird expression on her face. "Fourth senior has always been rather... hard pressed financially."

"Haha, eighth senior still speaks so nicely for my sake. Hard-pressed? I'm completely broke!" A long sigh sounded from deep within. Then, the sound of wheels rolling could be heard. Zu An followed the source of the sound. What was slowly coming out of the forest was a... wheelchair?

A skinny elder was sitting in it. Calling him an elder wasn't quite right though; it was only his hair that was a bit white. He didn't care about his appearance at all either, so he looked a bit older than he really was.

Zu An was frightened. This elder was too skinny! His somewhat stooped figure made him look a bit like a monkey. It really was hard to imagine that the massive thing outside was his work. His eyes shifted to the man's legs. Even though he was wearing pants, he could vaguely tell that they were more shriveled up than a normal person's.

Jiang Luofu told Zu An through ki transmission, "Don't stare at fourth senior's legs. He doesn't like it when others look at him like that."

Zu An jumped in fright and quickly shifted his gaze. It wasn't that he was scared of the other party getting angry; he just thought it was quite rude. He asked, "What happened to his legs?"

Jiang Luofu said quietly, "Fourth senior was born a cripple, and that was why he used alchemy to compensate for his body's deficiencies. He's actually already succeeded. Don't think that he can't move freely because of this wheelchair. As long as he's in that wheelchair, he's actually much more nimble than most cultivators. To a certain degree, this wheelchair is his treasure... No, it's already a part of his body."

Zu An felt more and more admiration when he heard those words. This was a great example of someone changing their own fate!

The shriveled elder chuckled and asked, "What are you two whispering over there about? You're probably talking badly about me."

Jiang Luofu said, "Fourth senior has misunderstood. I was merely introducing your glorious achievement to him."

Zu An also used this chance to say, "Just now, that mech... That golem outside was just too shocking. I truly admire senior."

The skinny elder was naturally the fourth senior Shen Xuzi, whom Jiang Luofu had spoken of. He began to stroke his beard proudly when he heard Zu An's praise. "It's nothing more than some insignificant toy." Despite his humble words, the pride in his eyes gave him away.

Zu An asked out of curiosity, "May I ask what kind of energy source is used to power those golems?"

Shen Xuzi was most proud of his own work. When he saw someone asking about them, he immediately replied excitedly, "They use ki stones, of course. It took me decades of work to figure out how to use ki stones as a stable energy source..."

Zu An continued to ask, "How long can a single ordinary ki stone keep that golem running for?"

Shen Xuzi shook his head. "An ordinary ki stone isn't enough. You need at least eighty-one earth grade ki stones, and they need to be replaced after each battle. Of course, if it's just guarding this courtyard, they don't need to be replaced that often. Let me tell you, in order to make use of eighty-one earth grade ki stones, I had to..."

But who could have thought that Zu An would instead sigh? "What a pity."

This was Shen Xuzi's proud work. He had been waiting for the other party to praise him, yet this was what he had ended up hearing as a result! He erupted in rage. "Damn brat, what did you say?"

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Jiang Luofu was shocked. She tugged on Zu An's sleeves, implying for him to be careful. Zu An gave her a look telling her not to worry. Then, he cupped his hands toward Shen Xuzi and said, "Fourth senior, please don't misunderstand. I'm not questioning your work. On the contrary, I have great admiration."

Jiang Luofu had a strange expression. This fella even called him fourth senior? Why do I feel like he's taking advantage of me?

Shen Xuzi's expression eased a bit. "Then what did you mean by saying that just now?"

Zu An explained, "I just feel that if ki stones are used as the energy source, and such a large amount at that, then it'll only be something the wealthy can use. It's not just any level of wealth either; unfortunately, it can't change the lives of commoners at all."

"This type of thing was never meant to be used for the common people." Shen Xuzi couldn't help but feel a bit pained. Forget about ordinary people, even he himself had used up a ton of money! He had to use up eighty-one earth grade ki stones whenever the golem was used for battle.

Normally, alchemy was a profession that shouldn't have had any shortage of money. Yet for the sake of these golems, he had ended up dirt poor.

He coughed and then continued, "I've always been researching how to improve their energy efficiency. I hope that one day, they can operate with just sixty-four stones."

Zu An couldn't help but say, "It'll be hard to improve the energy efficiency rate, and sixty-four earth grade ki stones still aren't something most people can afford."

"Damn kid, are you here to pick faults or something?" Shen Xuzi's eyes almost popped out. He stared furiously at Zu An.

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Zu An said with a bitter smile, "The main reason for my train of thought is because I just met seventh brother, and he has always tried to improve the lives of the common people, so I was affected by his dream. That was why I subconsciously thought about whether or not this could help the common people. If fourth senior can produce an energy source that even the common people can use, then your name will definitely be remembered throughout the ages."

The man had changed his name to Shen Xuzi to leave behind his legacy as a renowned alchemist. That was why Zu An deliberately said those words.

Sure enough, a flash of excitement passed through Shen Xuzi's eyes. Even his breathing became rushed, as if he were completely sucked in by that future. However, he quickly said in disappointment, "It's hopeless. These things aren't suitable for common people's use to begin with."

"That may not be the case," Zu An said. "Ki stones might be too expensive for ordinary people, but what about other energy sources?"

“What other energy sources are there?” Shen Xuzi harrumphed. “I’ve already tried almost everything, and only ki stones are steady, and the power they provide is the greatest.”

Zu An said, “Then have you tried coal or crude oil, and things like that?”

“Coal? Crude oil?” Shen Xuzi had been wondering what kind of enlightening idea this kid had, but he quickly grew disappointed and remarked, “Those things might be good enough for lighting a fire and keeping warm, but the amount of energy they can provide is far too little.” He had already lost interest. “Go, go, go, I have things to research. I don’t have the time to waste on you.”

Jiang Luofu immediately became worried. She had originally been quite confident about getting a pill furnace from her fourth senior, yet Zu An had just had to offend him. Did this kid let things get to his head? Just because he managed to subdue Yin Shi, Hei Baizi and the others, did he think that he really was omnipotent? But you didn’t know that these brothers of mine were all at the very top of their respective fields, did you?

Even so, experiencing a setback was fine as well. It wasn’t a good thing for youngsters to have everything go their way. I’ll give him a proper talk later, Jiang Luofu thought.

Just then, Zu An spoke up again. “Has fourth senior considered a steam engine?”

### **Chapter 783: No One to Enjoy Them**

“Steam engine? What’s that?” Shen Xuzi was baffled. However, when he heard those words, he realized that it seemed to be related to what he was researching, so he wasn’t in such a hurry to chase them out anymore and planned to listen first.

Jiang Luofu instead misheard and thought Zu An had said steamed chicken. She thought to herself, Is this some famous dish from somewhere or something? She quickly said, “Ah Zu, my fourth senior isn’t someone who chases after good food. Don’t waste time on this anymore.”

Zu An was stunned. He really couldn’t figure out why she would say that to him. However, he wasn’t in the mood to ask about it right now and instead focused on replying to Shen Xuzi. “It’s a kind of machine that uses water vapor to power its movement.”

“Nonsense; how much force can steam have? It’ll only be able to move aside a saucepan lid at most.” Shen Xuzi snorted coldly. He felt more and more that talking about these things with this fella was a waste of time. He waved his sleeves and turned his wheelchair to head back inside. “Please leave, I won’t be seeing you out!”

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Zu An sighed. “I thought that your distinguished self was a famous alchemist in the capital, so I had high expectations. Who would’ve thought that your reputation was completely undeserved?”

Jiang Luofu’s entire body broke out into sweat. What the hell is wrong with this kid? He dares to offend fourth senior?

After all, even though her fourth senior was quite the recluse, he was still quite open-minded in general, apart from two things. The first was the fact that he was born crippled; when someone had mocked him without knowing the situation, that person had immediately had his legs smashed to smithereens by his golem, giving him a taste of what it was like to have broken legs.

The second was questioning his competency in his specialty. That was even worse than the first. It was to the extent where a student had questioned a bit of alchemy he taught, and then the kid was refined away by that very same alchemy technique. That student had even been the son of a duke. The duke had obviously been unhappy and caused a huge disturbance, yet in the end, the matter was settled without anything happening.

Even the son of a duke had ended up like that after offending him. Zu An's current status was too far off!

Jiang Luofu didn't even have time to get angry. She hurriedly said apologetically to fourth senior, "Fourth senior, please don't mind it too much! My friend only spoke out of rash emotions and didn't mean to offend you. I'll bring him out of here immediately."

Her fourth senior's cultivation was actually beneath hers, but she couldn't defeat him with all of those golems and alchemical magic weapons. Furthermore, this was fourth senior's home court. If they really fought, she didn't have the confidence to come out unscathed, let alone protect Zu An.

But who could have thought that Shen Xuzi wouldn't pay her any attention? Instead, he suddenly turned around. He was clearly seated in a wheelchair, yet he turned even more swiftly than an ordinary person. He stared straight at Zu An. "What did you say to me, you little bastard?"

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As he spoke, a huge rumbling noise resounded. The entire place began to tremble, and in moments, a huge golem was already waiting by the entrance. Its shoulders suddenly opened up, revealing black cannon barrels.

Zu An felt a chill run down his back. This golem was completely a humanoid weapon! He didn't dare keep the other party in suspense any longer for fear of true friendly fire. He asked hurriedly, "You said that steam could only barely move a lid, but what if it were forced through a narrow space?"

"Huh?" Shen Xuzi's eyes flickered. He quickly reached out his hand. But the golem's shoulders turned red, and it was already too late to stop it from firing.

Zu An's face turned green when he saw the cannons fire. It's all my tongue's fault for not being as smooth! He was just about to dodge, but he suddenly realized something and remained in place.

The cannon shells suddenly changed directions midway. They flew in strange trajectories, and all of them hit a nearby wall. Zu An had thought that those massive artillery shells would make the entire mountain tremble. However, golden light flickered across the walls. Then, the cannons spluttered before releasing black smoke. It was as if nothing had happened.

"That's it?" Zu An muttered. He began to look down on the cannons' strength. Don't tell me those barrels were only there for intimidation? Seems like Shen Xuzi's skills aren't complete enough.



When she saw how Zu An's expression wasn't quite right, Jiang Luofu quickly said, "You shouldn't look down on them. Fourth senior's cannons are extremely powerful. When he was carrying out experiments, even the entire rear mountains would tremble. Forget about the students, even we, the other disciples, couldn't take it anymore. However, his golems were too hard to deal with, and we had to ask him for pill medicines too, so all of us just endured it."

"But one day, fourth senior's cannons were too loud and disturbed teacher's afternoon nap, so he was given a vicious beating. Only then did fourth senior show some restraint."

Zu An was shocked and said, "Sir Libationer is actually quite... petty."

Jiang Luofu quickly explained, "Even though teacher gave him a vicious beating, he empathized with his desire to experiment. As such, he had great senior design this wall. That wall is covered in rune formations and can neutralize the cannons' great impact. That's why you thought those cannons weren't that strong."

"So that was what was going on." Zu An thought to himself, This great senior is pretty formidable! Even a random formation he made could stop the full powered bombardment of Shen Xuzi's cannons.

Shen Xuzi suddenly asked urgently, "What exactly is going on with that steam engine you talked about?"

Zu An didn't keep him in suspense this time. "The power of steam has been overlooked by everyone, but if it were sealed in a tight space, and steam were continuously poured in, what do you think would happen?"

"Either no more could go in, or that narrow space would explode?" Shen Xuzi was a famous alchemist after all. He realized the answer after thinking about it for a bit.

Zu An then asked, "Then what if there were a movable valve in that space?"

"Then of course that valve could be turned..." Shen Xuzi's eyes suddenly lit up as he spoke. "If there were gears on the other side of the valve, then it would be more than enough to make a machine move... No, wait, the expansion of steam can only push once, so there's no practical use..."

Zu An added with a smile, "Then what if the steam inside cooled off? Wouldn't you be able to do it again?"

To a certain degree, the advancements of human technology lay in all sorts of methods of boiling water, regardless of whether it was thermal power, hydroelectric power, or nuclear power.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" Shen Xuzi couldn't help but clasp his hands in place. Then, the way he looked at Zu An completely changed. It was no longer full of contempt like before, but replaced with eagerness. "Little brother over here, no, wait, sir, where did your steam engine idea come from? Even though it was just a few sentences, I can already tell that this is something that can greatly change the world!"

Jiang Luofu was dazed for a long time. She had been worried about how she was going to protect Zu An from fourth senior a moment ago, and she had even been wondering if she should ask her teacher for help. But now, fourth senior was actually praising Zu An? He had even respectfully called him sir?

Fourth senior was definitely not like Hei Baizi and the others. He was already extremely proud of his skills in his domain. This machine or whatever had that much power?

Zu An replied, "I read it in an ancient book."

"A book?" Shen Xuzi was confused. "Which book did you read this from? I've never seen it before."

Jiang Luofu explained in his place, "He previously went inside of a secret dungeon and was able to examine some ancient things there."

Shen Xuzi suddenly realized something and said, "So that was it. May I ask what else was written in that book?" He looked at Zu An with a hopeful and eager expression after asking.

Zu An coughed and said, "I actually came here today because I needed a pill furnace. It's already getting late, so I need to head over to the logistics department before they go home for the day."

"What kind of joke is that? Those pill furnaces are all defective things I gave them for free! What's the point in going there? Come, come, come, I'll give you the best one," Shen Xuzi said while inviting him inside, as if he were scared that Zu An would run away.

Jiang Luofu was completely stunned when she saw that Zu An had been dragged in. This little fella really knows how to bring me surprises! Even though Zu An was younger than her, she didn't think she had met any man who could compare to him.

Pah, Luofu, Luofu, what kind of nonsense are you thinking?! Jiang Luofu criticized herself. Her usually cool and elegant face turned a bit red.

She gently caressed her smooth thighs with her fingers. A hint of sadness flashed across her face. She said with a sigh, "Such beautiful legs, yet no one will ever be able to enjoy them. It's such a pity..."

#### **Chapter 784: Familiar Presence**

However, Jiang Luofu quickly snapped out of her daze. Her face blushed. Is this the time to be all melancholic? She quickly sorted out her thoughts and followed them in, for fear that Zu An would encounter danger inside.

Zu An followed Shen Xuzi inside. Even though Shen Xuzi was seated in a wheelchair, it didn't need to be pushed at all. The wheels spun in it on their own.

Shen Xuzi was initially quite proud, waiting to hear Zu An's praises about his wheelchair. However, the other party's expression remained completely normal. He suddenly felt a bit ashamed. Someone who understood the concept of a steam engine was definitely an expert among experts! Why would he be surprised at such a trifling thing?

But there was no way he could have known that Zu An had already seen many electric-powered wheelchairs in his past world, so he was used to it.

Shen Xuzi was still unwilling to accept this, as if he needed to earn back some dignity. As such, he secretly activated a mechanism he was normally quite reluctant to use. Whenever they passed through one door, the next door would open up on their own without the help of any servants.

Shen Xuzi looked at Zu An with a raised chin. This is going to blow your socks off! It'll cost a dozen more earth grade ki stones to maintain these mechanisms though, sigh... Looks like I'll be eating dirt again this month.

But who could have expected that Zu An's expression remained completely unfazed, as if he hadn't even seen those things happen?

Shen Xuzi was extremely shocked now. With his experience, he obviously knew that this reaction wasn't faked, but rather that Zu An really didn't treat it as a big deal. He finally couldn't hold himself back and asked, "Sir Zu, what do you think of my automatic gates?"

Zu An hesitated for a bit. A while later, he said, "Passable."

Shen Xuzi became unhappy. Were you freaking born with all this knowledge or something? He couldn't stop himself and said, "Judging from Sir Zu's tone, you seem a bit dissatisfied? There is no harm in speaking up if there are any insufficiencies. I can make some modifications."

He wanted to test Zu An out a bit. Didn't Jiang Luofu say that he had read about these things from some ancient books? He didn't dare let this scare him too badly, or else he would really be made fun of by those other disciples.

When he heard Shen Xuzi speak, Zu An said, "I noticed that you needed to press something before we passed through the door. You could just make a sensor mechanism, so as long as someone approached, it would open up on its own."

"Sensor mechanism?" Shen Xuzi was stunned. "What's that?"

"It's something like an installation that monitors infrared rays," Zu An said nonchalantly. He examined his surroundings with curiosity. What he cared about more right now was obtaining that pill furnace.

"Infrared rays?" Shen Xuzi discovered that he knew nothing about such terms, but he could roughly guess at their meanings when he heard them. When he researched alchemy, he would occasionally have some related thoughts, but they would always slip away. Only now when they were mentioned by Zu An did he gradually remember them. At the same time, he knew that Zu An was definitely not speaking nonsense.

He no longer felt any more doubt. His eyes instead became filled with zealotry as he followed along. "Sir Zu is truly like a deity! Hearing just a few words from Sir Zu is better than a decade of bitter cultivation!"

Zu An was stunned. It was just a sensor door he often saw at shopping malls. Do you really have to be that excited?

Jiang Luofu was already numb. After seeing how those other disciples had acted, it was already hard for her to be surprised at this scene.

"Fourth senior is too polite." Zu An said with a smile. "About that pill furnace..."

"Look at this stupid memory of mine." Shen Xuzi smacked his forehead. "Sir, follow me." He opened a large door. "These are the best pill furnaces I've collected over the years. Sir, if you like any one of them, then just take it. Treat it as a gift for our first meeting."

A refreshing medicinal fragrance filled Zu An's senses as soon as the door opened. It wasn't that pill medicines were being refined inside, but rather the lingering medicinal smell from past refinements. These pill furnaces were clearly all extraordinary goods.

Zu An scanned over them. He discovered that there were all kinds of delicate cupboards inside, and every one of them had different shapes. Inside of them were unique pill furnaces.

Every single pill furnace had a completely different outward style, but there was one common point, which was that their surface seemed to flow with a layer of colors. It was clear that all of them possessed a spiritual nature.

Shen Xuzy stroked his beard and said rather proudly, "These are furnaces that I've made or found over the years. All of them are top quality goods."

Zu An was now truly filled with admiration. "As expected, fourth senior really is the world's most formidable alchemist! You actually have so many top level pill furnaces."

Shen Xuzy had heard similar things too many times, yet he had never felt much. But when he heard Zu An say those words, he felt immensely satisfied, as if every single pore on his body were cheering.

I finally managed to get this fella's praise... It really wasn't easy... Shen Xuzy suddenly felt like crying. In that instant, he felt as if he returned to the past when he was praised by his teacher for the first time.

He became more and more excited when he thought of that. He quickly introduced the furnaces as if he were showing off treasures. "Sir Zu, these pill furnaces all have their own special functions; let me give you an introduction so you can pick the one you like."

Zu An's eyes lit up. "That sounds great; please do so!" He was still just a nobody in the world of pill refinement. It was better to listen to an expert's opinion here.

Shen Xuzy brought out a round pill furnace from the cabinet next to him. Zu An could smell a relaxing fragrance even from where he was. He couldn't help but say, "This pill furnace seems to have a sort of moderate and gentle feeling."

Shen Xuzy laughed and said, "Sir Zu has good insight, as expected. This furnace is named the Kindhearted Furnace."

"Kindhearted Furnace?" Forget about Zu An, even Jiang Luofu was shocked. Why would a pill furnace have such a strange name?

Shen Xuzy explained, "As the name implies, the success rate of refining healing medicines will be increased by fifty percent, but it will never succeed in the refinement of any harmful or dangerous pills. What do you think? Isn't this furnace kindhearted?"

"It is indeed kindhearted." Zu An said with a bitter smile. He added inwardly, But my little Xiaoxi is more kind.

"Then does Sir Zu want this furnace?" Shen Xuzy asked.

Zu An was a bit hesitant. In the end, he still shook his head. "Let me take a look at the other ones first."

Even though this furnace's effects were good, its uses were too limited. He might have to make some pills for offensive purposes, but this furnace would prevent him from succeeding.

Shen XuZi chuckled. Young men were usually quite vigorous, so they didn't like pill furnaces like this without any character. As such, he picked out a pill furnace with clear edges, bearing two sharp ears. "This furnace is called the Devil's Furnace. It just happens to be the opposite of the Kindhearted Furnace. It won't succeed in the creation of any healing pills, but the success rate for the creation of offensive medicines will be increased by fifty percent."

Zu An was speechless. These two were quite the pair! But if I have both, doesn't that mean that every pill's success rate can be increased by fifty percent?

As if seeing through his thoughts, Shen XuZi sighed and said, "Unfortunately, the two are completely incompatible with each other. If you refine one of them, you can't use the other anymore. That's also the reason why I've never used them all these years."

Zu An's expression became strange. "These pill furnaces are quite... stubborn."

Shen XuZi picked up another pill furnace. "Let's take a look at the others. This furnace is named the Heartless Furnace. Unlike the other two furnaces, it doesn't distinguish between good or bad. Regardless of whether you're making healing medicines or offensive pills, it's the same, adding a twenty percent boost to the success rate."

Zu An said with a frown, "Its rate of improvement is a bit low." The other two each increased the success rate by fifty percent.

Shen XuZi said, "There has to be give and take; how can there be anything that has the best of both worlds? Furthermore, twenty percent isn't low. This is the furnace I've used for a long time. Over the years, its rate of improvement has brought me considerable benefits."

Zu An was a bit hesitant. There was no need to doubt Shen XuZi's abilities. Since this was the furnace that he had used for a long time, then that meant that this one wasn't bad.

He was just about to agree when Mi Li suddenly spoke in his ear. "Don't be in a rush to make a decision yet. I think I sense a familiar feeling. Take a look around for me."

## **Chapter 785: I Share Affinity With This Color**

"Huh?" Zu An was startled and pleasantly surprised.

Mi Li had suddenly woken up and popped out, but she didn't reply when he checked up on her from time to time. He had no idea whether she was really sleeping, or she just didn't want to pay him any attention. Now that he heard her voice again, Zu An couldn't help but feel a strange sense of happiness.

"That thing, what is it exactly?" Zu An quickly asked.

After a bit of hesitation, Mi Li said, "I don't know how to explain it either; it's just a familiar feeling. You should look around first."

Zu An nodded. As such, he asked Shen Xuzi, "Do you have any other pill furnaces?"

Shen Xuzi was surprised to see that Zu An still wasn't content. He could only take out another furnace and say, "This furnace is called the Frugal Furnace!"

Jiang Luofu voiced her surprise. "There are even frugal and non-frugal pill furnaces?"

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. "Since pill furnaces can be kind and evil, of course there can be a concept of frugality."

Shen Xuzi stroked his beard and nodded. "Sir Zu is on the same level as me after all. Your skills aren't something that many can compare with."

Jiang Luofu rolled her eyes. She didn't want to lower herself to his level.

Shen Xuzi caressed the pill furnace in his hands and said, "After refining a pill, this furnace has a twenty-five percent chance to return the ingredients used. What we pill refiners lack the most are ingredients. With this furnace, you can save a lot on expenses. There are some ingredients that are extremely rare and precious, so if you used this furnace and got your ingredients back, it would be really worth it."

Zu An sighed in praise. "This really is quite the frugal furnace..."

Shen Xuzi was starting to get worked up too. Now that he had a chance to show off his collection, he quickly brought out another pill furnace. "This furnace is called the Extravagance Furnace. It uses up fifty percent more raw ingredients each time, but it has a ten percent chance to produce double the pills."

Zu An remarked mockingly, "Only a ten percent chance for doubled returns? This furnace doesn't seem to be that great of a deal."

Shen Xuzi nodded. "Indeed. If we were only refining ordinary pills, then this furnace's performance would be quite poor compared to the others. However, this furnace can often produce amazing results while making some special medicines. For example, there are some pills that have extremely rare and precious ingredients, where it's exceedingly difficult to get enough for two batches. In that case, you could give this furnace a try."

Jiang Luofu couldn't help but frown. "Isn't that just gambling? You'd lose nine out of ten times. I don't like this furnace." As a person who devoted herself to the law, she carried a natural opposition toward such things.

Shen Xuzi laughed and said, "This furnace indeed relies a bit on luck; that's why I secretly call it the Dog Luck Furnace. For some people, this furnace would never give them anything, but for some people with incredible luck, this furnace would instead only provide returns. I believe Sir Zu is one of those lucky people."

"Fourth senior is too kind with your praise." Zu An chuckled. At the same time, he remembered that he had pulled a pill that increased his luck. Even though he couldn't use it on the keyboard system, it was perfect for this pill furnace. He was quite tempted. However, when he remembered what Mi Li had told him, he still calmed himself down and decided to make a decision later.

Shen Xuzi was quite shocked when he saw that Zu An was still unfazed. He brought him further inside.

Instead, it was Jiang Luofu who became a bit worried. She said through voice transmission, "Ah Zu, I think you should just pick one soon. It'll be really bad if you end up provoking fourth senior by being so picky."

Zu An had a bitter smile on his face. It looked like Jiang Luofu thought that he was being greedy. Unfortunately, he couldn't explain the real reason to her and could only continue.

Shen Xuzi picked up a uniquely shaped pill furnace. The patterns on its surface formed a smiling face. "This furnace is called the Mischievous Furnace."

Jiang Luofu was speechless. She was already desensitized from hearing these names. Just what sorts of weird things was this guy collecting?

Shen Xuzi continued to explain, "This furnace's specialty is that whenever it successfully refines a pill, it will grant the pill a special property."

Zu An was stunned. "Then isn't this pill furnace the best? You even get an extra property after making a pill."

Shen Xuzi sighed. "If only it were that simple. The additional property is completely random; they're not always positive. Sometimes, it can add some negative properties that will instead destroy the pill."

Zu An was stunned. He said, "This pill furnace might be the most dog luck furnace of them all."

Mi Li's voice suddenly said in his head, "That green furnace in the lower cupboard up ahead, that's the one."

Zu An was quite surprised. He looked in the direction she had pointed at. He saw a furnace without anything outstanding about it, to the point where it barely looked like a pill furnace. The pill furnaces Shen Xuzi had introduced before all had brilliant colors flowing along their surface.

However, this furnace had nothing on its surface. Well... That wasn't entirely correct either. There was a bit of something; it was a layer of green...

This color really was inauspicious. Zu An felt a natural rejection toward it. "Big sis empress, are you sure? Should you check it again?"

Mi Li said with dissatisfaction, "Do you think I'm the type of person who speaks randomly?"

Zu An felt she was making sense. As such, he could only pick up that small green furnace by the corner. "I share some affinity with this color. How about I just pick this one?"

Seeing as Shen Xuzi had tossed it randomly into a corner, as if he didn't really care about it, Zu An figured that he probably wouldn't be too reluctant to part with it. As such, he didn't beg for it and just said he wanted it.

"That's the one you're choosing?" Shen Xuzi was quite shocked.

Jiang Luofu had a strange expression on her face as well. "You have an affinity with the color green?"

Zu An quickly said, "I like to bring this color that's filled with life to others; it's not that I like this color myself." He had to make that clear, or else she might think he was a freak like King Wu. Then, he looked at Shen Xuzi and asked, "What's wrong? Is this furnace extremely precious?"

"It's not that precious." Shen Xuzi shook his head. "I just happened to bump into this furnace when I went into a secret dungeon once. But no matter how I tried to study it, it didn't seem to have anything special about it. But with the difficulty of that secret dungeon, there's no way this furnace is useless. Perhaps Sir Zu knows what its uses are?"

Zu An shook his head. "I have no idea either. I just found it to my liking." Even though he didn't know, Mi Li probably did; it was just that now wasn't the time to ask about it.

Jiang Luofu asked with a smile, "What's wrong? Is fourth senior reluctant to give it away?" She could sense Shen Xuzi's hesitation. She was scared that he might refuse, so she deliberately gave him a push.

Shen Xuzi's expression became stern. "Nonsense. I, Shen Xuzi, have always been a man of my word. Forget it; since I couldn't figure anything about it all these years, that means it shares no karma with me. I'll just give it to Sir Zu."

Zu An accepted the small green furnace. He could sense Mi Li's excitement. "Thank you, fourth senior."

Shen Xuzi was surprisingly open-minded. He didn't worry about it anymore after giving it away, and instead pulled Zu An inside. "Come, come, come, tell me more about that steam engine you mentioned earlier..."

The two of them chatted inside for a long time. Zu An had just taken something from this guy, so he was a bit embarrassed and replied to all of his questions.

In the end, Shen Xuzi was extremely satisfied. He looked at Jiang Luofu from time to time, saying, "Eighth sister, you've found a good man this time."

Jiang Luofu's eyebrows rose straight up. "I already told you, he's like my little brother."

"Fine, little brother, no problem." Shen Xuzi chuckled and didn't continue to argue.

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When Jiang Luofu and Zu An left, Shen Xuzi was still waving goodbye. Jiang Luofu couldn't help but say, "Ah Zu, you'd better not take fourth senior's words to heart. Apart from alchemy, that guy is an idiot in everything else."

Zu An was stunned. "What did he say? Why don't I remember anything?"

Jiang Luofu smiled. This little fellow was surprisingly clever. But when she remembered what Shen Xuzi had just said, she worried that staying too close to Zu An would cause misunderstandings. Now that she had already helped him get a pill furnace, she had found a reason to separate from him.

As he watched her fair and long legs recede into the distance, before Zu An even had time to sigh in amazement, Mi Li's voice said in his ears, "Those really are stunning legs."



Zu An was stunned. "When did you become so indecent too? Can you tell me what's going on with this thing now?" He took out the green furnace. Its color really was a bit glaring.

"Have you heard of the legend of the nine cauldrons?" Mi Li asked in a slow and profound tone.

## **Chapter 786: Playful**

"Nine cauldrons?" Zu An was stunned. "You mean when Yu the Great divided the world into nine states, and then each of those nine states offered up bronze to create nine cauldrons as a symbol for the nine states? You mean the cauldrons that have the entire country's famous mountains, great rivers, and exotic goods engraved on their surfaces?"

"Correct." Mi Li appeared in her red dress. She stared at the green furnace in his hands with a complicated expression.

Zu An thought to himself, No wonder she insisted on me buying her a few more dresses. She does look pretty in them. Huh? If she can wear these dresses, then doesn't that mean that she's a tangible being to a certain degree? Then I wonder if she can feel anything...

But in the end, he still got rid of that death-courting thought and returned to the main topic at hand. "This little thing is one of the nine cauldrons that symbolized imperial power? You're joking, right?"

The nine cauldrons possessed legendary significance in Chinese history as the publicly acknowledged treasures of the state. They were a symbol acknowledged by everyone. How could one of them be such a small green furnace?

Mi Li raised her head, looking into the sky with her beautiful eyes. She seemed to be reminiscing about the past. "When Yu the Great forged the nine cauldrons in the past, Shang Tang took down the Xia Kingdom and placed the nine cauldrons in the capital city. When Western Zhou destroyed the Shang Dynasty, it was rumored that the nine cauldrons were lost in Sishui. Ying Zheng searched around Sishui in the past and even sent people into the waters to look for them, but they didn't find anything. Who would've thought that one of them would appear here?"

Zu An was confused. "Aren't there nine of these cauldrons? Also, every single one of them is extremely heavy. Back then, the king of Qin longed for King Zhou's cauldron, but he ended up being crushed to death by it. How can it be this small?"

Mi Li shook her head. "I don't know why it's like this either. The reason I felt that it has a connection with the nine cauldrons is because in the past, I visited the secret storeroom where the nine cauldrons were kept in the palace. Even though the nine cauldrons had already disappeared, the cauldrons' aura remained. That feeling was extremely unique, and I sensed a similar aura from this small furnace." She reached out her hands and gently caressed the small furnace with a look of confusion.

"Then how do I use this thing? Not even that researcher Shen Xuzi could figure out anything." Zu An frowned. What he lacked right now was a pill furnace. If he had known that it was going to be like this, then he would have chosen another furnace.

Mi Li harrumphed. "So short-sighted! The nine cauldrons are the imperial treasures of my world! It's completely natural for that Shen Xuzi to not have figured anything out. However, you're different. You share fate with this cauldron, so I believe you shouldn't have any issues in comprehending it."

"I hope so," Zu An said with a bitter smile. He didn't have any confidence.

Mi Li seemed about to say something, but then suddenly frowned. She said in surprise, "That Qi Yaoguang's divination wasn't wrong after all. It really is full of peach blossoms." She turned into a wisp of smoke afterward, returning into the Tai'e Sword.

Zu An was stunned and subconsciously raised his head to look around. He saw a beautiful figure standing under the peach blossom trees. Her long dress fluttered around, the ribbon tied around her waist making her figure look even more glamorous. Under the contrast of the peach blossoms, her charming face looked tender and beautiful. Who else could it be but the crown princess Bi Linglong?

Zu An was quite surprised. He walked over and asked, "Why is the crown princess here?"

Bi Linglong turned around. A perfect expression of surprise appeared on her face as she asked, "Hm? What a coincidence. What are you doing here?"

Zu An was also happy to see someone he knew, and furthermore a cute girl like her. He replied, "I was going to pay the libationer a visit, but I wasn't able to meet with him. Why is the crown princess here?"

"I came to meet an old acquaintance. Then, when I saw how pretty these peach blossoms were, I couldn't help but admire them. I didn't expect to meet you here." Bi Linglong spoke calmly, as if she really didn't know what Zu An was doing here.

"Then that really is a coincidence." Zu An suddenly became curious. Qi Yaoguang had read his fate and saw peach blossoms everywhere. Was it just this scene that she had seen?

"Are you going back now? Why don't we go back together?" Bi Linglong asked in a natural tone.

"Sure," Zu An said. Not too long before, Zu An had been feeling lonely now that Chu Chuyan and the others had left. He was more than happy to be accompanied by a friend.

Bi Linglong smiled, but she quickly hid her expression and didn't say anything else. She continued to walk forward.

Zu An had to admit that this woman always seemed to carry a bit of pride, as well as a sort of innately high-class feeling. It really gave her a distinctive sort of charm.

The two of them walked between the peach blossoms side by side. As a breeze blew about, endless peach blossoms fell from above, scattering down on their bodies. Even though these flower petals were so light they seemed to weigh nothing, they seemed to form ripples in Bi Linglong's heart.

Women would always be romantic creatures. The scene mysteriously touched her. However, she quickly calmed her heart and asked in a nonchalant manner, "I seem to have heard quite a disturbance in the rear mountains earlier. I heard that there was a sir who managed to win over every one of the libationer's disciples. I wonder, do you know who that was?"

Zu An was a bit embarrassed. "It wasn't anything like that. I just had a talk with them, and then I happened to know some things about their fields of expertise, so that was why I was able to get close to them. I don't dare to be called a sir."

Bi Linglong seemed surprised. Her red lips parted slightly as she exclaimed, "So that mysterious person was you!"

"It was just a coincidence, a coincidence." Zu An enjoyed her look of shock and admiration greatly. He had to admit that being admired by a woman was the best motivation for any man.

Bi Linglong smiled. "I didn't expect you to have these skills either. Looks like keeping you in the eastern palace was a waste of talent. I'll definitely do my best to lift you higher on the stage in the future."

"Thank you, crown princess. I'll definitely strive my utmost for the crown princess' sake." Zu An tactfully expressed his loyalty when he saw that she was roping him in.

Bi Linglong's face turned red. Why did it sound as if he were taking advantage of her? If it were before, she would definitely have become furious. However, she didn't feel half a trace of anger now, and instead felt her heart thump.

When he saw Bi Linglong's shy side profile, Zu An had to admit that her face was stunning.

Mi Li's voice said in Zu An's ear, "What a vixen."

Zu An had a strange expression as he asked, "Don't tell me you're jealous?"

"Pah! Why would I be jealous of a little brat like her?" Mi Li became upset.

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for +250 +250 +250...

Only after a while did she continue, "I was just giving you a well-intentioned reminder, so you don't end up losing your head to this little brat. This woman clearly already knew about what you were doing in the academy, yet she's still pretending she just happened to bump into you here and had no idea at all."

"Hmph, what kind of seductress haven't I met before in the palace? This little brat's acting isn't bad, but she's still far too lacking compared to those girls," Zu An replied.

"Of course!" Mi Li said unhappily as he voiced his suspicion. She continued, "I sensed her aura before outside the libationer's house. That means she was always watching everything that happened. Why is she doing all of this?"

But who could have thought that Zu An would laugh? "But why do I feel as if things are even more interesting now? Men like these kinds of cute girls who are playful like this, you know?"

Mi Li was stunned. She exclaimed, "You can just die in hell!"

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for +666 +666 +666...

Then, she disappeared into a wisp of smoke. She didn't reply to anything Zu An said anymore.

## **Chapter 787: Unexpected Leak**

Zu An was speechless. Big sis, you can be a bit more playful too; I'll like it just as much. Unfortunately, he didn't dare to say such things to her, or else there might really be danger to his life.

When he snapped out of his daze and looked at Bi Linglong again, he had an amused expression on his face. This woman was becoming more interesting.

"Why are you looking at me like that? Is there something on my face?" Bi Linglong subconsciously touched her face when she felt his gaze.

Zu An said with a chuckle, "Of course; you have flowers on your face, and they're more beautiful than all of the peach blossoms in the sky."

Bi Linglong had never expected him to praise her so aggressively. She was rattled and confused for a moment. "You really are too much. I already told you before that you can't have any improper thoughts about me just because that thing happened between us..."

But she felt she was being a bit too stiff by saying such a thing. The other party had too much value right now and was worth her investment, so she quickly explained, "The main problem is that if other people hear what you just said, it won't just be you, even I'll be in huge trouble! That's why you can't blame me for getting angry."

Zu An smiled ambiguously. "You've misunderstood; I was only sincerely praising your beauty. I didn't have any other thoughts." This woman really was a tsundere. You sounded angry on the surface, but I didn't receive a single Rage point from you.

Bi Linglong's cheeks blushed. "That's good, then." But even as the two of them both grew quiet, her heart just wouldn't stop pounding. Why had this guy stopped calling her the crown princess and started just referring to her as 'you'? Should I be the one who should calm down a bit, or should I be widening the distance between us?

But after what she had seen in the academy's rear mountain, she knew that he was an extraordinary talent. If she couldn't rope him in while he was at the bottom right now, then she might not have another chance in the future.

I can't just seduce him, right? Bi Linglong had never felt so conflicted before. She actually had natural talent in politics. Even though she was young, she had done extremely well at roping in various powers. However, even with her ability, she just felt a bit awkward when using such methods on Zu An. It was all because of that incident! That was why she couldn't face him normally.

The two walked along the small path side by side, their shoulders seemingly even touching a few times. The scene of the two embracing each other naked couldn't help but appear in Bi Linglong's mind. A flush of pink began to cover her entire face.

"Crown princess!" The maid Rong Mo called out from nearby. Bi Linglong finally sighed in relief. At the same time, the bashfulness on her face disappeared, and she instead returned to her usual dignified appearance.

"Huh? Sir Zu?" Rong Mo was completely shocked when she saw Zu An.

Bi Linglong said, "I just happened to run into Sir Zu in the rear mountain, so we're going to return together."

Rong Mo no longer asked anything further and said, "Understood." She raised the carriage curtains for Bi Linglong. Bi Linglong leaned over and walked into the carriage. She was about to invite Zu An inside as well, but she quickly realized that it would easily cause rumors. She changed her plans and said, "Sir Zu is injured, so have him sit in front of the carriage. He can also help drive the carriage."

The surrounding guards and eunuchs exchanged looks. All of them shot Zu An envious looks.

Zu An was instead in a difficult spot. Those of high status usually used the method of having their subordinates drive the carriage, or guard the restroom entrance, as a sign of getting closer to them. However, in his opinion, he was just being forced to be a freaking driver. It really was hard for him to feel gratitude.

Of course, he understood Bi Linglong's good intentions, so he wouldn't go so low as to think that she was trying to humiliate him. If he had to drive the carriage, then he'd drive the freaking carriage. At least it was better than walking. Hmph, one day, I'm going to proudly sit in the same carriage as her.

He leapt up to the front of the carriage and grabbed the horsewhip. With a 'pa!' noise, he struck the horses' bottoms. The horses all charged forward after feeling the pain.

The other guards and eunuchs chased after them in panic, crying, "Sir Zu, slow down, slow down!"

Bi Linglong staggered around inside. The carriage was always extremely steady; when had she ever ridden such a wild carriage?

Rong Mo grabbed the window frame tightly while grumbling, "Crown princess, this guy is too much! Who drives a carriage like this?"

Bi Linglong's hand brushed through her messy hair, but there was a faint smile at the corner of her lips. "And yet, I feel as if the usual carriage ride was a bit boring, and this is more interesting."

Rong Mo's mouth widened. She stared at her mistress in shock. For some reason, she felt as if her mistress had changed a lot.

When she sensed that they had lost most of the guards behind them, Bi Linglong opened the carriage curtains, allowing the wind to blow her fine black hair backward. She said, "Sir Zu, you are still injured, so we'll bring you back first."

Rong Mo was shocked. She quickly advised her, "Crown princess, you should reconsider! When has your respected self ever personally seen a subject home? If rumors got out, wouldn't that cause a huge uproar? Let alone the fact that you two just..." She didn't dare to continue her sentence, but her intent was clear.

Bi Linglong frowned. She knew that what Rong Mo was saying was reasonable. The two of them had just had that scandal between them. Even though it had already died down, and she could explain her actions with a clear conscience, getting too close might produce the opposite effect.

Just as Bi Linglong was feeling conflicted, Zu An said with a smile, "If the crown princess personally sees me home, that'll be putting me in an awkward spot! I might be killed by some of your jealous fans. I think I should send the crown princess back first."

Bi Linglong sighed. This fellow really was quite considerate. "Alright, that's fine as well. We can pay the hospital a visit to get Sir Zu some medicine."

Zu An wanted to refuse, but he suddenly changed his mind. He needed some ingredients for his pill concocting anyway, and there were many that weren't all that easy to find. It would be good if he could get some of them from the imperial hospital.

...

Their carriage headed straight for the imperial palace as Bi Linglong personally accompanied Zu An to the hospital. Commissioner Assistant Ma An rushed over when he heard the news, saying, "This humble subject greets the crown princess."

Bi Linglong nodded slightly in return. "Sir Ma, at ease. I came here today to find some treatment medicine."

"May I ask what kind of medicine the crown princess needs?" Ma An asked.

"I need..." Bi Linglong began, but she then stopped and gave Zu An a questioning look...

Zu An replied, "I need Sky Crane Root, Red Star Jade, and Purple Firmament Flower. Do you have these things here?"

These were all essential ingredients for refining the Ki Condensation pill, and they were quite precious.

Ma An was suspicious. These weren't materials for healing, but more like medicine used for a cultivation breakthrough! Even so, he didn't dare to speak up in front of the crown princess. "We have Sky Crane Root and Red Star Jade, but we don't have Purple Firmament Flower."

Bi Linglong replied, "Fine, then prepare some for me. I'm going to take some with me."

"Understood." Ma An replied respectfully. He quickly rushed back to prepare the corresponding medicines, and then politely handed them to her.

"I've troubled Sir Ma." Bi Linglong didn't receive them, and instead had Rong Mo take them. Then, she turned around to leave.

When they left the imperial hospital, Bi Linglong took the Sky Crane Root and Red Star Jade from Rong Mo and gave them to Zu An. "Sir Zu, please rest well. You shouldn't run all over the place anymore."

"Thank you, crown princess." Zu An felt warm inside. Even though this woman was a bit stiff sometimes, she still treated him well.

...

Meanwhile, in the distant imperial hospital, a pair of jealous eyes was hiding behind a pair of curtains. A glorious imperial hospital commissioner assistant like me is actually beneath that young brat?

It wasn't that he had any thoughts toward the crown princess, but he felt truly awful seeing how the ingredients he had offered to the crown princess respectfully ended up being taken by the maid, and then they were even handed to that man.

"Looks like the rumors floating around the palace last time really might be true," Ma An muttered to himself. "But why was that Zu An found innocent, to the extent where not even the Embroidered Envoy could find anything?"

"Wait, if I remember correctly, the crown princess asked for some soul healing medicine for Golden Token Eleven, and then she came to get precious ingredients for Zu An. These two instances are similar! No wonder the Embroidered Envoy couldn't find anything! If Zu An and Golden Token Eleven are one and the same, then everything makes sense!"

### **Chapter 788: Cards Revealed**

Ma An's breathing quickened when he began thinking that. He continued to pace back and forth, as if the matter weighed heavily on his mind. "No, this is merely my own speculation. If I report this, it will instead affect my master's image of me. I have to investigate this further first..." he mumbled to himself.

He then recalled Zu An's recent accomplishments. Furthermore, if he really was Golden Token Eleven, then his cultivation would only be even higher than what he had shown so far. Even though he was the imperial hospital's commissioner assistant, he wasn't confident he could take Zu An down alone.

But he wasn't worried at all. He headed into the deepest part of the room and opened up a cabinet. Then, he took out a pitch-black porcelain bottle from within.

Doctors and poison masters were one and the same. As a famous doctor, when did he ever have to personally do the deed if he wanted someone dead?

Ma An smirked as he held the black bottle.

...

On the other hand, once Bi Linglong handed the ingredients to Zu An, she left after saying a few things. Even though she had a lot of things she wanted to talk to him about, they couldn't seem too close with their statuses, and they had to be even more careful in the palace.

Zu An thought about returning to his Embroidered Envoy residence to refine some pills, but he was worried that it might cause a disturbance and draw the emperor's attention. As such, he decided to return home.

However, not long after he left, he ended up bumping into a group of maids and eunuchs. All of them held umbrellas while slowly escorting a lavishly dressed upper-class woman.

The noblewoman was dressed in splendid clothes that still couldn't hide her impressive figure. Her low-cut dress further outlined her snow-white skin. As she walked, her elegant and well-rounded bottom was enough to make any man go wild.

However, her status was something that prevented anyone from having any such thoughts. The lesser eunuchs at her side didn't even dare to give her a second look, even though they had already had their things clipped.

However, the old eunuch at her side was an exception. As he followed behind the noble lady, his eyes darted to her round and full bottom from time to time, his expression fluctuating between one of longing and one of deep vexation. He was a eunuch, so there was nothing he could do about it.

"I greet your highness the empress!" Zu An recognized Eunuch Lu. As such, who else could the beautiful madam at his side be but the empress Liu Ning?

Eunuch Lu's first reaction when he saw Zu An was endless rage. He remembered what had happened that day.

You have successfully trolled Lu Qi for +588 +588 +588...

However, he seemed to have remembered something else soon afterward, and his rage gradually eased. It was replaced with rushed breathing and reddened eyes, as if he felt satisfied somehow.

Zu An had always been on guard around him, so his reactions didn't escape his notice. He sighed. This Eunuch Lu really was quite something. He seemed to speak the same language as King Wu!

Just then, the empress saw Zu An. Her fierce and beautiful gaze softened a bit as she said, "So it was Sir Zu. I heard that the crown princess gave you a vacation, so why are you still in the palace?"

Zu An was shocked. This woman seemed to be keeping an eye on his whereabouts closely! He quickly replied, "I came to the imperial hospital to get some medicine."

He didn't dare to say that the crown princess had brought him here. As a sea king, preventing one girl from knowing the existence of another girl was part of the absolute basics.

The empress said, "That's perfect then. I have quite a bit of medicinal herbs, and I'm not doing much with them in the palace. Sir Zu has brought back great contributions in this time, so they should be perfect for treating your injuries."

Zu An said happily, "Thank you, your highness." What he needed right now for pill refinement were precisely all sorts of ingredients.

"Then please follow this empress back to the Palace of Peace." The empress licked her lips without anyone noticing. Her usually dignified eyes seemed to have become a bit misty.

Eunuch Lu's expression became conflicted. In the end, he could only sigh deeply. What was there to even say?

Zu An was completely speechless. I feel as if giving me medicines out of concern for my health is a total excuse, and that you're actually just lusting for my body...

Even though he didn't mind going at it a few times with this stunning empress, since that night had been absolutely amazing, he knew that individual ability was the most important. He didn't want to lose himself over lust. Furthermore, he already knew that the other party wanted to suck out his blood essence for her own injuries, so he couldn't help but feel a bit of apprehension.



"Thank you, your highness, for your grace. However, this subject still has matters I need to take care of outside of the palace. I'll visit the Palace of Peace next time." Zu An hurriedly left as he finished speaking.

"Next time?" The empress had an ambiguous smile as she watched him leave in a hurry. What she feared the most was that he had used up all of his courage that night.

Zu An's frantic escape made him seem scared of the emperor finding out about what they had done that night, so she wasn't too worried. On the contrary, she began to think about how she was going to make him brazenly return to the Palace of Peace for some fun. She secretly asked Eunuch Lu for his opinion.

Eunuch Lu's face went entirely red. Helping another man toy with the girl of his dreams... Such a feeling really was humiliating. But he immediately felt a strange feeling of excitement and expectation. As such, he began to discuss strategies with the empress. "You can try this..."

...

Zu An sighed in relief when he left the imperial palace. Mi Li's playful voice said, "What's wrong? Why would you refuse the invitation of such a beauty? This isn't like you."

Zu An asked impatiently, "Am I really the type of person who would ignore everything for the sake of lust in your eyes?"

"One hundred percent." Mi Li nodded confidently, leaving Zu An speechless.

"Hmph, isn't that empress a bit much? She's actually inviting you for that stuff in broad daylight." Mi Li's voice was full of dissatisfaction. "The fact that even someone like this can become an empress is simply a disgrace to all empresses!"

Zu An knew that this was something that had always annoyed her. He couldn't help but remark with a chuckle, "Didn't you say that she only did it to heal herself?"

"Isn't the fact that she needs treatment alone enough for me to look down on her?" Mi Li harrumphed. She was about to continue when she frowned. "Hm? There's someone hiding inside your house."

Zu An felt warm inside. Even though she had said that she wouldn't help him anymore and that he needed to rely on himself, she still pointed things out when they encountered them.

"Is it a man or woman?" Zu An asked.

"A man, of course." Mi Li rolled his eyes. "What the heck is going on inside your head? You're going to die in the embrace of a woman one day."

Zu An's smile quickly faded when he heard that it was a man. He became vigilant, his entire body tensing. He went inside, and saw that there wasn't a single servant in sight. He frowned, thinking that they had been attacked. However, he soon heard the sounds of even breathing. The servants were probably just unconscious.

He sneered. Looks like this burglar isn't too smart. Won't I immediately be able to tell that something is wrong if you make them all faint?

He carefully opened the door, but there was no ambush the way he had anticipated. Instead, the one sitting inside was leisurely sipping on some tea, as if he were in his own home.

Zu An was surprised when he saw who it was, exclaiming, “Sir Ma?” He really hadn’t expected to find the commissioner assistant in his own house, let alone to meet him this way.

Ma An lowered his teacup and said with a smile, “Sir Zu has finally returned. I’ve waited for you for a long time.”

Zu An asked seriously, “What is the meaning of this, Sir Ma?” He thought, Looks like the defensive formation really is too weak; it can’t stop a true expert at all. I hope Xie Daoyun can become a formidable rune master! She can help me replace the formation here.

“Please don’t worry, Sir Zu; I only wish to have a chat with you,” Ma An said.

Zu An gave the slowly burning candle on the table a look, and then he said indifferently, “Turning up uninvited, and then making all of my servants faint... I really don’t wish to chat with someone like that.”

“Don’t worry, they’ll be fine after their nap,” Ma An said. “I just believe that Sir Zu doesn’t wish for the contents of our chat to be heard by others.”

“What does Sir Ma want to talk about?” Zu An asked, his expression grave.

Ma An crossed his legs and gave Zu An a look. “Sir Zu seems to be healthy and vigorous. You don’t look injured at all.”

“That isn’t something you need to concern yourself with.” Zu An used the jade badge to control the little creatures nearby. When he saw that there wasn’t anyone else waiting in ambush, he sighed in relief.

“I can guess the truth even if you don’t say anything. The medicines you took from the imperial hospital don’t have many healing effects.” Ma An paused for a moment, and then he continued, “On the contrary, they’re mainly materials used for a cultivation breakthrough. I didn’t expect Sir Zu to even be proficient at pill refinement.”

Zu An didn’t feel like wasting time with him. “What are you really trying to say?”

Ma An didn’t beat around the bush any further. “Since Sir Zu wishes to refine a breakthrough pill, I believe your cultivation should be at a bottleneck. Everyone in the capital believed that Sir Zu was only able to defeat King Qi’s heir and fight on even footing with King Qi Manor’s Han Fengqiu because you had the help of another, but only today did I realize that this mysterious expert doesn’t exist at all. Or perhaps, I should say that the mysterious expert is in fact you. Isn’t that right, Golden Token Eleven?”

## **Chapter 789: Fortunes Rise and Fall**

Zu An was alarmed. He said in a low voice, “I have no idea what you are talking about. Sir Ma, have you developed a delusional disorder?” At the same time, he began to look around him. All of the muscles in his body had already silently gone taut, ready to strike at any time.

Ma An chuckled and asked coldly, "Sir Eleven, are you prepared to silence me? I guess that makes sense. Embroidered Envoys indeed have the authority to act first and report later."

Zu An's voice became cold as well. "Did you come all the way here just to say these senseless things?"

"Naturally, I came here to ascertain your relationship with Golden Token Eleven," Ma An said. "I wasn't too sure at first, but judging from your reaction, I'm already sure."

Zu An's eyes narrowed. "Sir Ma seems confident in your backing. Could it be that you really aren't scared that something might happen to you here?"

Even though he was the imperial hospital's commissioner assistant, their doctors didn't specialize in cultivation. Judging from Ma An's ki fluctuations, he was only at the sixth rank. Since he already knew that Zu An was Golden Token Eleven, where did he get the confidence to face him alone?

"Our imperial hospital has never been too interested in violence. However, medicine and poison are two sides of the same coin. Since we're good at healing people, we're also good at poisoning people." Ma An gave the candle on the table a look. "Aren't you starting to feel weak right now, as if your strength is slipping away?"

Zu An's expression changed. He quickly rushed outside. However, he dropped heavily from the sky midway through his flight. "You... You actually dared to poison me! Despicable!"

Mi Li couldn't help but sigh in amazement when she saw the shock and anger on Zu An's face. If she didn't know that he was impervious to most poisons, she would really have been deceived by his reaction. This brat really was a natural born actor!

But there was no way Ma An would know the truth. He smiled when he saw Zu An's reaction. "It's all the same killing. You use blades, while I use poison. How is this despicable? The difference between humans and animals is precisely in trickery and wit, in our ability to think." He tapped on his temple while speaking, his voice full of ridicule.

Zu An asked 'weakly', "What kind of poison is that? Why is it so strong?"

Ma An felt proud when Zu An asked about his field of expertise. He fished out a pitch-black bottle from his inner pocket, saying, "This poison is named Frozen Soul. It was something I obtained with great difficulty. Once you are affected by this poison, your entire body will feel as if it's in a world of ice and snow. The movement of your limbs and the flow of your ki, even your heart and soul, will be frozen still.

"It would be difficult for even a master rank cultivator to survive this poison, let alone someone of your cultivation rank." As he carefully stored the bottle away, Ma An had a reluctant expression on his face. "It's a poison that not even a master could defy, so you don't need to feel too wronged about your death."

Zu An was shocked. When he heard the poison's description, he began to wonder if his poison immunity really was enough. He secretly circulated a bit of ki and sensed that there was a bit of cold ki seeping into his body, but it was quickly neutralized by his body's primordial ki. Overall, there wasn't too much of an effect.

He sighed inwardly in relief, and then he used the chance to ask, "We share no grudges; why are you so determined to kill me?"

"No grudges?" Ma An's expression warped when he heard those words. "Twenty years ago, my younger brother died under the hands of a golden token envoy! Whenever I see you golden token envoys, I want to kill you many times over! How can there be no grudges?!"

You have successfully trolled Ma An for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An scoffed inside when he sensed the other party's strong resentment. What the hell were the political investigators doing? They had actually let this kind of person into the imperial hospital and made him the commissioner assistant.

"But the one who harmed your younger brother isn't me! How long has it been since I came to the capital? I only came here to make a living!" Zu An tried to see if he could prove his own innocence, or else having to fight someone to the death for this sort of ridiculous reason would be too much.

"Shut your mouth! All Embroidered Envoys deserve death!" Ma An's eyes turned red. "It's all that Cheng Xiong's fault for being too useless. He came to ask about the medicine records, and I even hinted that there was an issue with Sir Eleven asking for soul healing medicine, yet in the end, he didn't even manage to get rid of you and was killed instead!"

Zu An suddenly understood. No wonder Cheng Xiong had just happened to investigate him last time, and even Zhuxie Chixin had become suspicious. So it was all because of this guy working behind the scenes.

He said in a grave voice, "But the Embroidered Envoys all act according to his majesty's will. Don't tell me you wish to take revenge on his majesty?"

Ma An chuckled. "Do you think I'm stupid? Of course I won't take this up to his majesty. It's enough if I just get rid of you golden token envoys. That was the vow I made in front of my younger brother's grave. I've already managed to get rid of three of them over the years, and you're about to be the fourth."

Zu An was speechless. People always bragged about how formidable the golden token envoys were, yet they had no idea that those envoys were being done in by their own people. How embarrassing. But why was this guy so vengeful? Did he have a brother complex or something?

He couldn't help but ask, "You killed several golden token envoys just for this reason? Do you not know that this is a clan eradicating sin?"

"Who would find out that I was the one who did it once you died?" Ma An sneered, clearly not treating it as a big deal. "However, if you obediently answer my questions, then I can grant you a swift death."

Zu An sighed. "Looks like I really am finished here. Just say it, what do you want to ask about?"

He wanted to use this as a chance to look into Ma An's background too. For some reason, he felt that this matter wasn't that simple. Those golden token envoys all had powerful cultivations, and they were sharp and careful. How could they be so easily done in by Ma An?

"Does the 'Phoenix Nirvana Sutra' you offered up to his majesty truly have the ability to grant eternal life?" Ma An asked, looking eagerly at Zu An.

Zu An sneered, "What, even you desire eternal life?"

"That's not something you need to worry about. You only need to answer whether it's true or not!" Ma An insisted somewhat impatiently.

Zu An said seriously, "Of course it can; otherwise, why would his majesty grant me a noble title?"

"It actually can? Then that makes things more troublesome..." Ma An mumbled to himself.

"Why do you care if his majesty can obtain eternal life? What, do you want to take his place?" Zu An was confused. With Ma An's cultivation, he shouldn't have the ability to participate in such a battle. His eyes suddenly lit up. "So you had someone backing you."

"Damn kid, I'm the one interrogating you right now, not the other way around!" Ma An harrumphed. "Did anything happen between you and the crown princess?"

Zu An gave him a look. "Who's the one behind you? King Qi?"

Ma An exclaimed angrily, "Are you in a position to ask me questions right now?"

You have successfully trolled Ma An for +66 +66 +66...

He kicked out toward Zu An's side as he spoke. However, halfway through the motion, he stopped out of shock. "Why isn't your body covered in frost..."

He quickly backed up, but it was already too late. The 'dying' Zu An suddenly moved and grabbed his ankle. Ma An subconsciously tried to kick out with his other leg to break free. At the same time, he tried to toss out some poisons. Unfortunately, a powerful suction force caused all of his body's ki to surge toward his ankle.

He was horrified. "What kind of... demonic art..." Shortly afterward, he had already become powerless. Having one's body hollowed out that way would leave one feeling extremely weak.

Zu An sucked away all of Ma An's cultivation with the Heaven Devouring Sutra, and only then did he let go. The feeling of sucking out another person's cultivation really was amazing! It really would be a problem if he couldn't control himself and became the world's public enemy.

"Im... Impossible... Not even a master rank could withstand Frozen Soul, so why are you... fine?" Ma An leaned against the wall. His hair that had been quite glossy was now dried up, and his face had become a lot skinnier, his lips deathly pale. At that moment, he began to question everything he knew about life.

Zu An was obviously not in the mood to answer his questions. "Sir Ma, you didn't think fortunes would rise and fall like this, hm? Now, I'm the one asking you questions and not the other way around. Speak, who's the one backing you?"

Ma An smiled bitterly. "You can't expect your shoes to never get wet if you walk by the riverbank. I actually already anticipated that I would one day be done in by a golden token envoy; it's just that I didn't know it would be by a new one like you. However, I advise you not to delude yourself into thinking you can get any information out of me."

“Is that so? The Embroidered Envoy’s prison has quite a few tough fellas like you, but I don’t recall there being many of them who were able to remain silent,” Zu An sneered.

Ma An said indifferently, “I knew that this day would come one day when I decided to face the golden token envoys, so I already made a seal inside my body. Once I’ve been pushed to a certain point, my blood vessels will explode on their own. I am a glorious commissioner assistant from the imperial hospital; you better believe what I say.”

Zu An frowned. Judging from how confident this fellow sounded, it seemed that was most likely the case. However, he wasn’t worried and said, “Do you think I don’t have any other methods just because I can’t torture you?”

As he spoke, a white light flashed, and a devastatingly beautiful woman appeared out of thin air.

### **Chapter 790: Acknowledged**

Ma An looked at the ridiculously beautiful woman with complete shock. How had this woman appeared out of thin air?

But he no longer bothered thinking about that soon afterward, because he was completely enamored by her beauty. He had seen his fair share of stunning beauties as a subject in the imperial palace; for example, the empress, crown princess, and Concubine Bai. Their appearances weren’t much inferior to this woman, but this woman seemed to possess a kind of charm that seemed to affect all living things. It was to the extent that she didn’t even need to say anything or do anything. He felt as if even his soul had been hooked, even though she was only standing there.

How could there be someone this stunning in the world?

Ma An was already getting on in years, and so his lustful desires were no longer the same as they had been. However, when he smelled the faint fragrance that accompanied the woman’s appearance, he felt as if he had become a young man again. His heart that had remained stagnant for so long instantly came alive.

What kind of relationship does this woman have with Zu An? Why did she appear here? I think she was summoned when she heard Zu An’s voice...?

What the hell did this Zu An do in his last life? He’s a nobody from the streets, yet he obtained the Chu clan’s favor, and he’s clearly close to this stunning beauty too!

You have successfully trolled Ma An for +444 +444 +444...

Zu An was speechless. He thought, What is going on? Why are you getting angry at me just because you saw a pretty girl? But he didn’t feel like bothering with that. He said to the beautiful woman next to him, “Daji, control him and find out who the one behind him is.”

Daji had three abilities. Among them, Fox Charm was able to control someone of the opposite sex for a short amount of time.

Daji nodded, and then she calmly walked up to Ma An, showing him a devastatingly charming smile. Ma An immediately became stupefied. The only thing left in his head was 'I'm going to die, I'm going to die'. Drool even flowed out of his mouth involuntarily.

Daji couldn't speak, so Zu An had to speak. "Who is the one backing you?"

However, in Ma An's eyes, it was as if Daji were the one asking him. He began, "The master behind me..."

"Who is your master?" Zu An quickly asked.

"My master is..." Ma An subconsciously mumbled, but his expression suddenly changed. He immediately woke up. "Zu An, you're really something. You were actually using sorcery!"

Zu An frowned. Why would the other party wake up just then?

Mi Li's voice said, "Did you forget that there was another condition for Fox Charm? The target has to be of lower cultivation than Daji."

Zu An sighed. "Of course I knew, but I thought that their cultivation levels were similar. They're both at the initial stage of the sixth rank. I even sucked out his cultivation. I didn't expect that to still not be enough."

"Since the prerequisite for Fox Charm is that the target's cultivation level has to be lower, then we clearly need to follow it strictly. As for you sucking out his strength, that doesn't affect his true cultivation. Even though cultivators don't cultivate their souls in the early stages, it's still being influenced and nourished. You've sucked away his skills, but his soul is still at the sixth rank," Mi Li explain.

"Then what do I do?" Zu An felt a headache. This Ma An was quite cunning, setting up that restriction on himself, so he couldn't use torture. Now, trickery wouldn't work either. He really felt quite helpless.

Mi Li thought for a bit and then said, "Didn't you say that the Ki Condensation Pills could increase the rank of her skills? Why don't you give that a try?"

Zu An's eyes lit up. "Right!"

"You... Who are you talking to?" Ma An felt a chill run down his back when he saw Zu An talking to himself. He subconsciously wanted to run, but his entire body was limp. He could only barely nudge his body a little bit.

Zu An didn't feel like answering him. He smacked Ma An with his palm and knocked him out, planning to deal with him after the pill refinement. However, he quickly realized another problem. "But big sis empress, not even Shen Xuzi knows how to work this thing..."

He fished out the small green cauldron. To be honest, even though the color was a bit glaring, it was quite a nice item.

"Shen Xuzi wasn't able to use it because he didn't have the method." Mi Li's red-clothed figure appeared. She took the small green cauldron from Zu An and caressed it with her fine fingers. A while

later, she said with a sigh, "But it's a pity that it's incomplete. However, that's fine as well. Otherwise, a complete cauldron wouldn't be the sort of thing you could control with your current strength."

Zu An felt a bit upset. His Tai'e Sword was sealed, and now this cauldron was also defective. Was his luck actually good or bad

Of course, there was a more pressing matter at hand. He said, "I've actually already given it a try before. This thing doesn't really seem like a pill furnace."

"What the hell do you know?" Mi Li harrumphed. "The nine cauldrons are the symbols of authority, but they also possess the ability to prepare food. Did you forget your experiences in Yinxu's dungeon already?"

"I guess you're right." Zu An nodded. During ancient times, cauldrons were artifacts used to cook; it was just that there were strict rules for the size and amount depending on one's status.

"Even though I served as the Shang emperor for so many years, I never gave the nine cauldrons a try." Zu An felt a bit regretful. The nine cauldrons had disappeared during the Qin Dynasty, so they definitely existed in the Shang Dynasty. Unfortunately, the only thing on his mind back then had been how to pass that trial. He had never thought about such things.

Mi Li shook her head. "The nine cauldrons are too powerful, so there was no way Shang Emperor Wu Geng could recreate all their functions. Even if they did exist in that dungeon, those nine cauldrons would probably still be no different from ordinary cauldrons."

"I see." Zu An thought to himself, No wonder I never noticed the existence of any formidable nine cauldrons even though I was locked up in Yinxu for so long.

Mi Li examined the small green cauldron in her hands. "The nine cauldrons were refined by the Xia Dynasty's Yu the Great, so I believe it should operate through the Xia Dynasty royal family's technique. However, later on, the Shang and Zhou Dynasty possessed the nine cauldrons, so according to normal reasoning, their techniques should be able to activate it too. Use your Heaven Devouring Art or Phoenix Nirvana Sutra and infuse your ki into it."

Zu An nodded. The Heaven Devouring Sutra's offensive nature was too powerful, so he used the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. As his ki flowed in, the small green cauldron suddenly released brilliant radiance.

The small cauldron was originally covered in bumps. Apart from its eye-catching color, it looked completely normal otherwise. Now, after the rays of light surged from it, it was as if there were streaks of faintly discernible light around it. The bumps on the small cauldron seemed to follow some kind of rhythm. Many of them seemed to depict mountains and rivers, as well as other unrecognizable things.

Mi Li was moved. "Indeed, indeed! According to the ancient records, the nine cauldrons are adorned with the mountains and rivers of the nine provinces, as well as all kinds of magical things!" She had never been able to see the nine cauldrons for herself, even after she became the empress of the Great Qin Dynasty. Who would have thought that she would actually see them for herself here?

The small cauldron floated in midair, sparkling and translucent. It flowed with brilliant colors, no longer carrying any resemblance to its earlier sorry state. If Shen Xuzi had seen it in this state, he probably wouldn't have been willing to give it away.



Zu An felt an ancient and grand aura surrounding him, as well as a dignified and profound presence. He was also faced with many scenes he had never seen before. It was as if slides of a film strip were rushing past him at a hundred times speed. In that instant, Zu An felt as if his head were about to explode. He couldn't make out any of the scenes at all.

"Focus your mind; gather your ki toward your core!" Mi Li's frantic voice vaguely said in his ears.

Some time passed, and yet it also felt as if only an instant had gone by. Zu An finally opened his eyes. His head felt as if it were splitting. He discovered that all of his clothes were tattered, and there were small droplets of blood coming out of his skin. It was as if all of his fine blood vessels had exploded. He was horrified and exclaimed, "What is going on?!"

Mi Li said with a sigh, "I believe your cultivation is still too low, and this cauldron is too powerful. Forcefully activating the cauldron will cause a powerful rebound. Fortunately, your body was forged by the Primordial Origin Sutra, so it's incredibly tough, or else you might have died right here. But it seems you've already successfully obtained the cauldron's acknowledgment, which means that your misfortune was actually a blessing."

Zu An was stunned. He looked at that small green cauldron. Sure enough, he felt as if they were linked together. "It acknowledged me?" he asked, shocked and happy.

Mi Li harrumphed. "Put on some clothes first. Stop dangling that thing everywhere." At the same time, she turned around to look at Daji, who had turned away. She remarked, "Strange, this woman clearly has no will. Why does she look all shy and embarrassed?"