

Immortal 951

Chapter 951: Trap

"What do you mean?" Sang Qien was confused. Don't tell me sister-in-law or Zu An were actually related to our Sang clan somehow?

Sang Hong slowly said, "I secretly added some stuff into the wine today."

"What? You poisoned Zu An?!" Sang Qien's eyes lit up in shock. Did her father still have some grudge against Zu An? But even though that guy was really annoying sometimes, he didn't deserve to die! He had even helped the Sang clan a lot...

She was just about to advise her father to change his mind when Sang Hong continued, "Don't worry, I didn't poison him, but rather put in a pregnancy-helping pill I acquired by spending a lot of money. The pill is harmless to the body, but it can help a girl get pregnant more easily."

"Ah!" Sang Qien cried out in alarm. Her cheeks immediately turned completely red. "Dad, you didn't tell me! I drank it too!" She didn't know if it was just the placebo effect, but she felt her entire body starting to burn up.

Sang Hong gave her a look; the expression in his eye was somewhat complicated. He said, "They might have noticed something if I told you ahead of time, and Zu An would become suspicious. Don't worry, it won't harm you at all, and will instead grant you some benefits."

Regardless, Sang Qien was still an unmarried young lady. She found such topics a bit embarrassing and quickly exclaimed, "Dad, you still didn't answer my question! Even if sister-in-law becomes pregnant, the child still won't have anything to do with our Sang clan!"

Sang Hong gave her a look and slowly said, "The child your sister-in-law gives birth to might not have anything to do with the Sang clan, but the one you give birth to will be different."

Sang Qien was stupefied. She was just about to ask something else when her entire body went weak, and she slowly fell. Someone supported her from behind. When she raised her head and saw who it was, she asked in shock, "Auntie Mu, what are you doing?"

The middle-aged woman, Auntie Mu, served her father. Ever since Sang Qien's mother had passed away, Auntie Mu had almost always been the one who assisted with her father's daily life. Even though they had never officially wed each other, everyone in the Sang clan had pretty much treated her as Sang Hong's concubine. They all respected her. Sang Qien had never expected this woman to do such a thing to her!

Auntie Mu retracted her gaze apologetically and looked at Sang Hong, asking, "Master, do we really have to do this?"

There was a look of hesitation on Sang Hong's face, but in the end, he still said, "Qien'er, please don't blame your father. I'm doing this for the sake of the Sang clan's future." Afterward, he gestured for Auntie Mu to continue with the plan. If he could still father offspring himself, why would he trouble these juniors? But he really couldn't anymore.

Sang Qien had a confused look on her face. She really couldn't understand why her father would say such a thing. Then, Auntie Mu picked her up. Her steps were quick and light as she quickly traveled across the clan estate toward a courtyard. Sang Qien was alarmed and exclaimed, "Auntie Mu, where are you bringing me?!"

Auntie Mu didn't answer this question and instead said, "Qien'er, don't blame your father. For the sake of the entire clan, he had no choice."

"What are you actually doing?" Sang Qien asked. The more vague and mysterious Auntie Mu's words were, the more scared she became. But what was strange was that there wasn't a single maid in the courtyard. They had clearly all been sent away ahead of time.

Auntie Mu didn't reply, and instead pushed open the door and placed Sang Qien on a bed. At the same time, she began to unfasten Sang Qien's clothes.

Sang Qien finally understood her father's plan. She was furious and ashamed, exclaiming, "What is father thinking?! I want to see father right now; I'll speak to him myself!"

Auntie Mu sighed. "Your father is quite troubled too, but he can't just let the Sang clan's lineage end here. He can only wrong you. But Auntie Mu has been observing all of you too. Regardless of whether it's appearance or ability, that person is a giant among men. If you can adjust your attitude a bit, you won't feel too wronged."

Sang Qien was about to cry. "How can you be the one to say whether I feel wronged or not?!"

Auntie Mu's hands moved proficiently, quickly removing all of Sang Qien's clothes and exposing her youthful body. She sighed in praise and said, "Qien'er, you really are beautiful."

Sang Qien didn't want to say anything else to her. She turned her head to the side and silently wept.

Auntie Mu sighed. She lowered the bed curtains, then blew out the lamp in the room. Only then did she close the door and leave.

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Meanwhile, Zu An saw Sang Hong return with an unsteady gait. He asked, "Respected uncle, didn't you pass out from drinking too much?"

Zheng Dan blushed. She thought to herself, Thank goodness we stopped quickly! Otherwise, her father-in-law would see the two of them together. She'd die from embarrassment then.

Sang Hong waved his hand and said, "I'm not drunk, so let's keep drinking."

Zu An looked around and asked, "Huh? Where is little sister Qien?"

"She doesn't want to drink with us crude men, so she's already returned to her room," Sang Hong said in an unconcerned way. He filled Zu An's cup all the way again.

Zu An quickly said, "I really can't drink anymore, or else I won't even be able to walk anymore later."

With his cultivation, he could quickly get rid of his intoxication by using ki. He wouldn't get drunk at all. But what meaning would there be left in drinking if he did that? That was why most cultivators wouldn't

do such a thing while drinking, and would instead let the alcohol stimulate them to give them that nice, tipsy feeling.

Sang Hong laughed and said, "It's already late, and it's not too appropriate for you to return. Why don't you just stay the night in the manor, as long as you don't find the place too shabby?"

Zu An thought to himself, That's exactly what I had in mind too. "Then I'll gladly accept." He glanced over at Zheng Dan from time to time while talking.

Zheng Dan knew what he was implying. Her cheeks immediately flushed red. Sang Qien wasn't present anymore, so it was a bit awkward for her to remain present. As such, she took the chance to leave.

Zu An didn't really mind either, and told her to wait for him through ki.

Zheng Dan's departing figure staggered. Then, her pace became faster and faster. When she returned to the courtyard, she could only think about Zu An's provocative expression. That dummy is getting braver and braver! He actually said that in front of my father-in-law...

Hm? Why are there no servants in the courtyard? She was about to push open the door when the center of her back suddenly went numb. Then, she fainted.

Auntie Mu caught her. She sighed and carried Zheng Dan to Sang Qien's room, placing her on the bed and covering her up.

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Meanwhile, Sang Hong continued to pressure Zu An to drink. They talked about everything from the layout of the court to the families of many different officials.

These were all things one wouldn't hear outside, as they'd easily offend people, and even the emperor himself might be unhappy. Judging from the sincerity in the other party's voice, Zu An knew that Sang Hong was really treating him as one of his own, so he drank even more cheerfully.

After they drank for a long time, Sang Hong completely collapsed. Zu An's eyes were growing blurry too. He thought to himself, This old fella really can drink; he actually drank me to this state!

A middle-aged woman slowly walked forward then. When she saw Sang Hong's condition, she said to Zu An, "Young master Zu, I'll bring you to your place of rest."

"I don't dare to trouble the madam." Zu An had already been to the Sang clan several times, so he naturally recognized this Auntie Mu, who was practically the second master of the clan.

"The young master is too polite. This is something I should do." A hint of happiness appeared between Auntie Mu's brows when she heard the word 'madam'. She thought to herself, This young man is handsome, and he knows how to speak well too. She immediately developed a good impression of him. She personally led him to a side room after saying, "Young master, please rest well. I won't disturb you anymore." Afterward, she left.

Zu An was confused. Couldn't a random maid take care of all of this? Why did she need to personally see me here? But the effects of alcohol were starting to overpower him. He didn't think too much about it and just treated it as extra consideration. He decided to just enter the room so Auntie Mu would think

he had gone in for the night. After she left, he left through a window and snuck over to Zheng Dan's room.

His head was throbbing a bit along the way, and the roads in front of him even seemed to have multiplied. He smacked his own head a few times. Why is the Sang clan's alcohol so strong? But all of his blood was rushing downward at the moment, so he didn't have the time to think about such minor abnormalities.

He swiftly arrived at Zheng Dan's room and gently pressed against the window. Sure enough, it wasn't completely shut. He was extremely happy to see that Dandan had left an entrance open for him after all.

He quietly went inside. There were no lights inside the room, and he saw that Zheng Dan was sleeping in bed. Her figure looked even more graceful and gentle through the curtains.

Zu An didn't know whether it was because of the feeling of alcohol or something else, but his body felt as if it were burning up. How could he still control himself? He quickly stripped down and made his way into the covers. "Dandan, you must've been waiting for a long time already..."

Chapter 952 - Old Ginger Is Spicier than Young Ginger

When he felt the smooth and youthful sensation underneath the covers, Zu An was stunned at first. Then, he was overjoyed, exclaiming, "Dandan, so you were already ready and waiting for me!"

Sang Qien was incredibly embarrassed. This cheating couple was already together after all! Even though she had already suspected that before, speculation and reality were still two different things.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qien for +444 +444 +444...

"Huh?" Zu An was surprised. He mumbled to himself, "Why is Little Qien angry?"

Sang Qien was confused as to why Zu An could sense her anger. However, she was still happy to see that. Yes, yes, hurry and find out that something isn't right! She had her acupoints sealed by Auntie Mu, so she couldn't speak to warn Zu An at all. She could only hope that he'd notice something.

But soon afterward, she heard him mutter, "That little girl is always unhappy with me. She probably already knows about our relationship."

Sang Qien thought to herself, At least this fella knows himself. But she didn't have any time to think about other things at the moment; she could only pray that he would figure out what was happening sooner.

But unfortunately, things didn't go the way she had hoped. Zu An was already drunk from drinking so much, and all of his blood was already flowing through his lower body. How could he still have the mental room to reconsider the situation? Sang Qien soon felt herself being pulled into his embrace like a toy. She knew that there was no escaping her fate and felt despair.

Zu An noticed that the feeling was a bit off and muttered to himself, "Huh? Dandan, when did you get skinnier?"

Sang Qien was ashamed and embarrassed. Her sister-in-law's build had already given her enough of a confidence blow, but even now, she had to go through another round of psychological attacks from this guy?

But she suddenly found a trace of hope. Her figure was clearly different from her sister-in-law's, so this guy should be able to tell the difference, right? It wasn't too late to stop now.

However, she soon heard Zu An say something else. "Damn those Hu clan merchants for harming you and preventing you from sleeping well. You actually became this much skinnier!"

Sang Qien wanted to cry when she heard that. Is this guy really drunk or not? How can you focus all of your reasoning on that?

But she quickly wasn't in the mood to think about such things anymore. She sensed how proficiently he moved. Before she could even react, she felt as if she had been penetrated by a hot iron rod. Two streaks of tears silently slid down her cheeks.

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Auntie Mu, who had been quietly observing from behind a large tree outside, sighed. As she heard the bed groan under the force, she decided to buy a sturdier bed sometime in the future. At the same time, there was a bit of worry between her brows. They had really let Qien'er down this time.

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The next morning, the skies in the east gradually became suffused with white. Zu An was sleeping soundly when he was woken up by quiet sobbing. He was still a bit drowsy. He reached out his hand and slapped the bottom of the beauty in his arms, asking, "Dandan, why are you crying so early in the morning?" The other party didn't reply, and only stared at him red-eyed.

Zu An's sight gradually cleared. He suddenly saw who it was in his arms. How could it be the charming Zheng Dan? It was the petite and exquisite Sang Qien! Her tearful face was heartbreaking. Zu An quickly rubbed his eyes and mumbled to himself, "Am I dreaming? Why did I end up seeing your sister-in-law?"

"Let go!" Sang Qien bit her red lip. She pushed the man embracing her away. The previous night, she had felt like a small skiff in a stormy sea, battered and beaten by the winds. In the end, she was so tired she had unconsciously fallen asleep.

When she woke up the next morning, she had finally recovered her ability to move again. She had instinctively tried to leave, but Zu An had clung to her as if she were his pet, not letting her go at all. She couldn't free herself even after trying several times.

When she thought about what had happened, she was overwhelmed with sorrow. She couldn't help but start crying, thus waking Zu An up.

Zu An finally realized that none of what had happened was a dream. He immediately jumped back in fright and pulled up the sheets to cover himself, exclaiming "What did you do to me?"

Sang Qien was speechless. She almost fainted from anger. How could there be someone this lowly in the world? She really wanted to bite him right now!

When Zu An saw her completely exposed body and the bright blossom of color on the sheets, he felt as if she were like a wounded little deer. He finally realized what had happened. He wrapped the covers around her and asked, "What really happened?"

When the blankets covered her again, Sang Qien's ice-cold heart finally felt a shred of warmth. "It's nothing."

If one asked her if she hated Zu An for stealing her virginity, of course she would say yes. But if one asked her if she blamed him, she couldn't say so. After all, what had happened the previous night was way too ridiculous. Not even she, the daughter herself, had expected her father to do something like that. How could she blame Zu An?

But the more she was like that, the more confused Zu An was. He quickly looked around him. There shouldn't be any mistake, right? This is the same room, the same familiar bed. This should be Zheng Dan's room...? He could only ask probing, "Did you return to the wrong room last night?"

Sang Qien took a deep breath. She felt anger surge within her as she said coldly, "Even if I went to the wrong room, this is still my sister-in-law's room!"

You have successfully trolled Sang Qien for +233 +233 +233...

Zu An smiled awkwardly, looking a bit embarrassed. Zheng Dan was currently the Sang clan's daughter-in-law after all.

Sang Qien wasn't in the mood to criticize him even more either. She took a deep breath and said, "Turn around, I'm going to get dressed."

"Okay." Zu An no longer acted in his usual frivolous manner. He obediently turned around.

If it were any other girl, he might have teased her a bit. However, he had really only treated her as his little sister after being around her for some time. Now that such a thing had happened, he couldn't help but feel as if he had sinned.

What was even more annoying was her identity. He had just formed an alliance with the Sang clan. His thing with Zheng Dan was one thing, since the two of them had already been together beforehand, and the Sang clan had even tacitly agreed to their relationship.

But now, something like this had happened! It was one thing to ask for a daughter-in-law, but now he had even harmed their daughter! Zu An asked himself what he would do in this kind of situation. If it had happened to him instead, he would probably explode from anger.

While Zu An was at a loss for what to do, Sang Qien spoke calmly from behind him. "Alright, you can turn around now."

Zu An turned around. He saw that Sang Qien was already fully clothed. She was still just as good-looking and delicate as before, just that her hair was a bit messy. There was a bit of a worn-out expression on her face, but it only made her look even more moving.

"What happened today was just something unexpected. In this world, only the two of us will know about this matter. No one is allowed to mention this matter again. Do you understand?" Sang Qien couldn't look him in the eyes. She lowered her head and calmly said those words.

She knew her father's plans, but she really couldn't bring herself to just cooperate and use her own body as a bargaining chip. The fact that she was still resentful toward her father's decision meant she especially didn't want things to go as he wished.

Zu An was stunned and said, "But that's not fair for you. I'm not someone who won't take responsibility..."

Even though the two of them didn't really share any feelings, he knew that the chastity of women in this world was extremely important. Now that such a thing had happened, he couldn't just pull up his pants and leave.

Sang Qien interrupted him and said, "I don't need you to take responsibility." She walked straight out after speaking. However, she stumbled as soon as she took the first step.

Zu An quickly supported her, asking, "What's wrong?"

Sang Qien pushed him away. You even have the nerve to ask something like that? Her sister-in-law looked all delicate and gentle; just how could she handle this kind of beast?

You have successfully trolled Sang Qien for +313 +313 +313...

She gave him a hateful look, then hobbled out.

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As he watched her leave, Zu An felt rather uncomfortable. What the hell was this?

"Right, what about Dandan?" he muttered, startled. He was just about to look for Zheng Dan when he saw her quickly rush over from elsewhere. He was about to call out, but he suddenly realized something. He quickly returned to the room and stored all of the messy bed sheets into his Brilliant Glass Bead.

Zheng Dan arrived soon afterward. She jumped in fright when she saw Zu An, asking, "Why are you here? It'll be bad if someone in the manor sees you!"

Zu An stared into her eyes, asking, "Why weren't you in your room? Where did you go last night?"

He even wondered if Zheng Dan was the one who had caused all of this; perhaps she wanted to drag down her sister-in-law too, as that would make things much easier for her in the future. With the way she had done things before, that was actually a possibility.

Zheng Dan rubbed her head and said, "I might have drunk too much last night, but I actually slept in Little Qien's room. Ah, right, have you seen Little Qien? I didn't see her when I woke up."

"I haven't," Zu An said rather unnaturally. Since Sang Qien didn't want what had happened to be exposed, he would respect her wishes.

He carefully observed Zheng Dan's expression, and it didn't seem that she was lying. He then thought about what was happening. The Sang clan had already tacitly agreed to their relationship, so she obviously didn't need to take such a risk. Then had last night just been a beautiful mistake?

“Hurry up and get out of here! The servants are already about to wake up.” While Zu An was thinking, Zheng Dan was already pushing him out of the door. It wasn’t that early anymore, so it would be very bad if anyone saw him in her room.

After Zu An left, Zheng Dan planned to get some rest, but she was suddenly a bit stunned when she saw that there were no sheets. She mused, “Huh? Where did the bed sheets go?”

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Meanwhile, Zu An returned to his own room. He pretended to look as if he had just gotten out of bed. He just happened to run into Sang Hong, who was doing his morning exercise.

“How was your sleep last night?” Sang Hong asked with a smile.

“It was... pretty good,” Zu An replied, avoiding eye contact with Sang Hong.

“That’s good. This old one was scared that our treatment was unsatisfactory,” Sang Hong said with a smile.

“It was extremely satisfactory...” Zu An thought to himself, Maybe it was way too satisfactory. He couldn't see anything from the other party's expression either, which only made him more nervous.

Sang Hong stopped his current stance and invited Zu An, “Since you’re here, why don’t you join me in my morning exercise?”

“That’s alright. I suddenly remembered that I have something important to take care of back home.” Zu An felt really guilty. How could he bear the shame of staying over when he had just defiled Sang Hong’s daughter? He quickly found a reason to leave.

Sang Hong couldn't help but smile when he saw Zu An leave in a flustered manner. Even this fellow is like this sometimes, hm?

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When Zu An left, Auntie Mu walked over from off to the side and asked, “Master, shouldn’t we use this chance to get some information from him?”

Chapter 953: To Suit Her Fancy

Sang Hong shook his head. “He’s a smart person. What happened last night was bizarre. He hasn’t taken the time to think about it in depth right now due to the shock, but he’ll wake up sooner or later. If we force him too hard right now, it might instead be worse; we might even end up leaving him with some ill feelings toward us.

“But if we don’t do anything or tell him anything, even if he finds out the truth, he won’t be able to act out. After all, we’ve never asked him for anything this entire time, and he was instead the one who received tremendous benefits.”

Auntie Mu asked with a worried expression, “But what if he refuses to admit to anything after everything is said and done?” She had remained in the clan for so long that even though Sang Qien

wasn't her own daughter, she had watched her grow up. Now that she was so old as well, she basically viewed Sang Qien as her own daughter. She was really worried about that.

"That won't happen." Sang Hong had a kind smile on his face. "He's someone who strongly favors comradeship. I almost destroyed the Chu clan back in Brightmoon City, and yet he single-handedly saved them. Later on, when something happened to him, he decisively cut off his relationship with them to avoid bringing them down too. How could someone like that be ungrateful and fickle?"

"Then judging from what the master is saying, he still has some affection for Chu First Miss?" Auntie Mu asked.

"But of course," Sang Hong replied. "Chu Chuyan is a proud and arrogant girl, so how could a girl like that wholeheartedly admire someone who's fickle? Furthermore, it's precisely because of their emotions still being there that it might just have the opposite effect if we try to insert Qien'er between them. After all, she hasn't spent much time with Zu An, and they don't share too much sentiment.

"It might be better to leave Zu An with the impression that he took advantage of her first, to have him feel some internal conflict and pity instead."

Auntie Mu gradually understood what he was saying. She asked, "But if that happens, then wouldn't Qien'er really be wronged?"

Sang Hong was speechless. Only after a while did he say, "As a father, I've indeed truly let her down."

Auntie Mu asked after some hesitation, "Master, should your respected self perhaps pay her a visit?"

Sang Hong shook his head. "She's still upset right now; my presence will only be adding fuel to the fire. It might be better to just let time heal her wounds."

"But I'm scared that Qien'er might do something stupid..." Auntie Mu looked extremely worried.

"That won't happen. Qien'er is a smart and rational child. Even though she's upset, the event has already happened. She'll be able to weigh the pros and cons, and won't do anything stupid." Sang Hong analyzed the situation. After a pause, he continued, "But you can visit her."

"I was the one who brought her back. If I see her now, I fear..." Auntie Mu also had an embarrassed expression on her face. She didn't dare to meet with Sang Qien now either.

"She knows that you were only acting on orders, so she'll only hate me. She won't blame you." Sang Hong waved his hand. "Please, just go and check on her."

Auntie Mu said with a sigh, "Master, even though you sound as if you don't care, you still care more about Qien'er than anyone else."

Sang Hong remained silent. In the end, after thinking for a long time, he could only release a sigh.

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After he left the Sang clan, Zu An headed straight to the imperial palace for the morning roll call. He was in a daze.

Even Bi Linglong could tell that something was off. She couldn't help but remark, "Sir Chamberlain seems to have encountered some type of trouble?"

Zu An snapped out of his daze and replied, "Thank you, crown princess, for your worries. This subject doesn't have any major issues."

He had intended to take the chance to improve their relationship again, but when she heard that he was fine, Bi Linglong didn't pay him any more attention. She continued to pay attention to the Eastern Palace's other subjects as usual.

In the end, Zu An forced a smile. He wasn't actually in the mood to coax Bi Linglong at the moment either. After spending the day in the Eastern Palace, going around in a daze, Zu An got off work when he felt it was about time.

Bi Linglong bit her lip when she looked at his departing figure. In the end, she still couldn't help but call over Rong Mo, saying, "Help me ask around if anything happened to Zu An recently."

Rong Mo was shocked and replied, "Crown princess, aren't you a bit too concerned about him?"

Bi Linglong was completely calm. She retorted, "What do you understand? He's an important member of the Eastern Palace now, so I need to make sure that he hasn't been bribed or threatened by King Qi's side."

"Your highness is wise after all!" Rong Mo's suspicion was quickly replaced with admiration.

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After Zu An left, he walked around the vicinity of the Sang clan's manor. In the end, he still couldn't figure out how to deal with the matter and gave up on going inside.

He turned around and went toward Scarlet Invitation. It wasn't because he was in a rush to vent his lust, but rather because Kong Nanwu had helped him rescue Zheng Dan before, so he had to at least express his thanks.

After the previous visit, Nan Xun had already given the servants special instructions. When Zu An arrived, he was quickly brought to a small courtyard inside to see Nan Xun and Kong Nanwu.

The two women were both cold on the outside but warm on the inside. Both of them were also stunning. When they stood next to each other, the entire room seemed to become a bit brighter.

"Thank you, Miss Kong, for your help last time. I was able to find the mastermind." Zu An noticed that Kong Nanwu was carrying a fluffy snowball-like thing. He thought that it was a pillow or something, but upon closer inspection, it was a pretty little fox.

There was actually such a pretty fox in this world? No wonder so many people from my previous world liked to raise cute pets. Zu An couldn't help but sigh. But he quickly remembered something. This could only be the second prettiest fox, because his Daji was definitely number one.

Kong Nanwu stroked the little fox's soft hair while asking a bit nervously, "May I ask who the mastermind was?"

Zu An knew what she was worried about, so he explained, “Lady Kong need not worry. He wasn’t part of the fiend races, but rather just a human who practiced evil arts.”

Sure enough, Kong Nanwu sighed in relief when she heard that. She had always been worried about whether she had ended up offending one of her fiend race compatriots.

Then, she asked about a few more details, and Zu An answered everything. Both sides were friendly and amiable.

Zu An gave the fluffy fox in her embrace several looks. He finally couldn't help but ask, “Can I pet it?” Looks like we humans really have no resistance towards cute furballs.

But who could have thought that before Kong Nanwu could even reply, the little fox would stand up and bare its fangs at him?

Kong Nanwu smiled, saying, “Looks like Huhu isn’t okay with it.”

“Huhu?” Zu An was shocked. He really couldn't associate the cute little fox with that feisty little maid.

“What, is something wrong?” the little fox shot back in human speech. She hadn’t really liked Zu An to begin with, so she took the chance to criticize him. “Everyone has always said that you humans are the most hypocritical, and now I can see that that’s indeed the case! You keep saying that you want to thank our young miss, and yet you didn’t even bring any gifts! You’re clearly just saying that. Fake!”

“Huhu!” Kong Nanwu gave the little fox a pinch and immediately scolded her. “Young master Zu isn’t a normal person. Our relationship isn’t one where we care about worldly things.”

Zu An smiled and said, “What Lady Kong says is true. I heard from Nan Xun that you don’t care much about things like wealth, so I specially prepared a small gift for you. I hope it’s to your liking.”

Kong Nanwu was a bit surprised, replying, “Then I’ll have to thank the young master.”

“What kind of gift?” The little fox couldn't help but jump impatiently onto the table. It reached out its claws and scratched at Zu An.

Nan Xun also craned her neck, curious as to what kind of present Zu An had brought.

When he saw the little fox’s cute appearance, Zu An began to tease it, saying, “I’ll tell you if you let me pet you.”

“Hmph! Rascal...” The little fox looked scared. It rushed back straight into its master’s arms.

Kong Nanwu’s expression also became a little strange as she remarked, “Young master Zu, Huhu is a girl after all.”

Zu An was speechless. In my eyes, she’s just a furball. He coughed a few times to cover up his embarrassment.

He took out a book from his inner pocket and said, “I heard Nan Xun say that the lady enjoys reading human books, so I prepared one. I believe this should be one you’ve never read before.”

Kong Nanwu was stunned at first, but then she said with a smile, "The young master is quite considerate. Your human race's books are indeed quite interesting."

But she actually felt disappointment inwardly. She had begun to collect human books even when she was still with the fiend races. Once she had entered human territory, she'd had her subordinates look for all kinds of books. She didn't believe that this book he had given her would be any different. She was just thanking him as a formality.

Nan Xun and the little fox couldn't help but move over out of curiosity. The little fox was even more blunt and remarked, "Huh, 'Strange Tales'? What kind of dumb name is this?"

Chapter 954: Voice from Afar

"Huhu, stop being rude!" Kong Nanwu gave the little fox an impatient look. Then, she looked toward Zu An apologetically with her beautiful eyes. "I'm sorry, young master Ah Zu, my maid here lacks discipline. Right, I believe I'm a well-read person as well, but I don't think I've ever heard of these 'Strange Tales' before. May I ask where the young master obtained this book?"

Zu An didn't really mind the little fox's offense. After all, her current form was just way too adorable. He replied, "In my earlier years, I encountered an old sir named Pu Songling[1]. He told me all kinds of strange stories, so I remembered them and recorded them down. I'm now gifting the lady with a copy and hope that it's to your liking."

While he had been bored in the Eastern Palace earlier that day, he had already been wondering what kind of gift to give Kong Nanwu to repay her kindness. In the end, he decided on the book 'Strange Tales'. 'Strange Tales' was a book filled with all kinds of bizarre and thrilling stories involving ghosts and humans. She was from the fiend races, so he figured it would probably suit their tastes. Since his time had been limited, he had only made a copy of a small portion. As for the rest, that was something he'd think about in the future.

Kong Nanwu looked pleasantly surprised, exclaiming "So it was written by the young master personally! This is a rare treasure..." She picked up the book while speaking. The smile on her face immediately froze, however, because the words were... really ugly.

Of course, objectively speaking, the handwriting was merely average compared to others. But for someone of her status, and furthermore for someone who liked to read the words of great masters, Zu An's handwriting really was quite unbearable.

Zu An's face heated up. He coughed awkwardly and said, "Please read it slowly. I still have something to take care of, so I'll bid my farewell first." Then he left, as if he were running away without even waiting for them to say anything.

The little fox wrinkled her nose. "At least that guy knows himself. This handwriting really is offensive to the eyes."

Nan Xun moved over, then covered her mouth and giggled. "It really is a bit ugly."

"It indeed doesn't suit his literary grace. No wonder he had someone else write his poem for him earlier." Kong Nanwu couldn't help but muse. At the same time, she picked up the booklet. As she

flipped through the pages, her previously nonchalant expression gave way to mild shock and seriousness. Then, she began to read faster and faster.

The little fox sorted out her fur that had been messed up by her master's petting while whispering, "That guy really is a joke. The young miss helped him out so much, and yet he only gave you this stupid book. The handwriting is even so ugly."

Nan Xun also added in agreement, "Right? I even helped him out, and yet he didn't give me anything. Men are all fickle in love after all."

Kong Nanwu burst out laughing when she heard Nan Xun's jealous words. "Who said he didn't give you any gifts? Wasn't this story written just for you?"

Nan Xun was stunned. She looked at where Kong Nanwu was pointing and saw the words 'Ghost of a Beauty'. She cried out in alarm, before quickly starting to read the story. With her current concentration, she could read quickly and she finished it easily. Her face was left red with embarrassment, her insides stirring with emotions.

Kong Nanwu harrumphed. "But who is this old Black Mountain witch he speaks of? Am I really someone that vicious and hateful in his mind?"

Nan Xun immediately leapt to Zu An's defense. "Come on, didn't young master Zu already say he wasn't the one who wrote this? This is the story an old sir told him."

"Look at you, weren't you a King Manor concubine and even a spy trained by the royal family? How can you still be this innocent?" Kong Nanwu shot her a look. "Even though I can't say I've read all of the books in existence in the world, I've read quite a few. However, I've never heard of these Strange Tales before."

"Maybe that Pu Songling hasn't made his mark in the world yet, so he isn't that famous?" Nan Xun speculated.

Kong Nanwu shook her head. "That's impossible. How could someone with the talent to write something like this not be known? Furthermore, the writing style is completely different from the styles popular in this world. It's a true breath of fresh air. Apart from someone of his literary talent, who else could write something like this?"

"Young miss, are you saying that this Pu Songling is just young master Zu's alias?" Nan Xun was shocked and overjoyed. "But why does he need to use an alias?"

"In my opinion, many of these stories talk about romance between the fiend races' creatures and humans, implying admiration and sympathy for the women of the fiend races. It might be because he's a court official, so he doesn't wish for this book to make him a public enemy." Kong Nanwu had a bit of joy on her face as she continued. "Last time, he wrote the verses 'Their pitiful remains scatter endlessly across the northern lake, even as wives dream and await their return', which already told me that he was different from normal humans. If we look at all of this together, we can tell that he doesn't have any prejudice against our fiend races."

Nan Xun felt strangely happy when she heard her praise Zu An. She said, "Young master Zu was an incredible man to begin with..." Then, her face suddenly turned red. Inwardly, she added, 'in every way'.

The little fox pouted and said, "I think that guy has bad intentions. Maybe he wrote about love between the fiend races and humans on purpose to seduce the lady!"

Kong Nanwu was stunned. A pink blush gradually appeared on her cheeks as she replied, "Nonsense. He also wrote about foxes here. Do you think he's trying to seduce you too?"

"There really was a fox there?" The little fox, who had originally been looking at the book disdainfully, jumped up. She ran over to read the book with keen interest.

Kong Nanwu panicked and exclaimed, "Ah, wait your turn! I haven't finished reading it yet."

"I want to see, I want to see!" Nan Xun also moved over. The master and servants quickly began fighting each other over the book.

...

Zu An exited Scarlet Invitation. When he returned home, a servant came over to report to him. "Young master, you've finally returned! Third young master came looking for you several times already."

The servants from the manor were pretty much all from the Chu clan, which was why they naturally called Chu Youzhao young master.

"Why was he looking for me?" Zu An asked curiously.

"I think he wanted you to produce a written piece for him. He wasn't willing to go back even very late last night, and waited for you the entire time. Later on, the Qin clan's people came to bring him back. He even waited here for a long time this morning." The servant replied.

Zu An's eyelids twitched. His 'written piece' earlier had just been mocked by those girls, so how could he embarrass himself even more and write something that would ruin his reputation further?

"Got it," he replied. There were just too many headache-inducing things that had happened in the past few days. He really wasn't in the mood to deal with that kid.

He was just about to leave when he heard the servant say, "Right, the third young master also mentioned that the first miss entrusted him to pass something on to the young master..."

"Why didn't you say so earlier?!" Zu An glowered. He quickly left again. It had already been a long time since he had received news about Chu Chuyan. He wondered how she was doing now. On his way there, he remembered that Chu Youzhao had waited for so long for him, so she was probably upset. It wasn't too appropriate for him to show up with nothing.

Of course, if it were that 'written piece' or something, he'd pass on it. He knew that Chu Youzhao didn't care too much about written stuff with her personality anyway, and that it was just a momentary interest.

With her nature of only wanting to play, he bought a bunch of clay figures, Chinese rings, bamboo-copters, colored lanterns, shadow puppets, and other toys before sprinting over to the Qin clan.

...

In the past, he would most likely have been refused at the entrance if he arrived, but now, the Qin clan treated him like a respected guest. The Qin clan brothers greeted him enthusiastically and asked about his well-being, almost as if they were scared of not treating him well enough.

After finally getting rid of the two brothers, Zu An arrived at Chu Youzhao's room. Chu Youzhao was a man in everyone's eyes, so she obviously had to spend more time alone to avoid suspicion.

Chu Youzhao puffed up her cheeks and ignored him when she first saw him. But when she saw the pile of strange and bizarre little toys he was holding, her attention was immediately sucked in. She was exhilarated as she listened to Zu An describe how to play with the toys. After playing with them for a while, her eyes turned red. "Everyone treats me as a boy, so I never got to play with these things. I wanted to play, but I couldn't tell them. Only brother-in-law treats me the best..."

Zu An was stunned. He had never expected that even though she appeared to be having fun, her life had actually been quite lonely. He replied, "Come on, don't feel broken-hearted anymore. If you ever want anything in the future, just tell me! Brother-in-law will secretly buy it for you to play with!"

"Brother-in-law is the best!" Chu Youzhao hugged his arm, her smile making her eyes resemble crescent moons.

Zu An tactfully freed his arm. This little girl really didn't know how to hold herself back sometimes...

"Brother-in-law, kick this shuttlecock with me! I don't even dare to ask the maids to play this with me normally," Chu Youzhao invited him.

Zu An was speechless. I'm a big guy already, what adult man kicks shuttlecocks? He was just about to refuse, but when he saw the glistening tears in her eyes, his heart softened and he agreed.

"Right, big sis wrote a letter to you! You should read it first, and then you can play with me without worrying about anything!" Chu Youzhao tapped her head and quickly stormed off into her room. She quickly returned with a letter.

Zu An received the letter and gave her a look of suspicion. "You didn't secretly read it, right?"

"Of course not!" Chu Youzhao jumped in fright... and then looked all around her with an unnatural expression.

Zu An was speechless again. Hey, your expression already completely sold you out. After he opened up the letter, however, his expression suddenly turned serious.

Chapter 945: People From the Capital Really Know How to Play

Sang Qien was so angry she was shaking all over. She had been curious where Zu An was taking them the entire time. She would never have thought that he would take them to a brothel!

For girls from distinguished clans like them, if news of this got out, their reputations would be completely destroyed! No one would ever propose marriage to them after something like this.

After all, why would any proper girl ever go to that kind of place? There was no lack of people who loved to gossip. Once they got their hands on such information, one might be known as a brothel regular soon afterward.

You have successfully trolled Sang Qien for +233 +233 +233...

Zu An was rather surprised when he saw the string of Rage points that came in through the backend. He asked, "There's no need to be that upset, is there?"

"How can I not be angry!? Why would you bring us to this kind of place?" Sang Qien didn't know how this man could be so shameless and ask something like that.

"That's why I told you two to dress up as men." Zu An had a smile on his face when he saw her so angry.

"But we still might be recognized..." Sang Qien was nervous. Their cross-dressing wouldn't escape the eyes of those who were deliberately looking for trouble.

Zu An gave her chest a look and said, "Don't worry, your sister-in-law might have a chance of being recognized, but you don't."

Sang Qien was completely dumbstruck. What does he mean?

When she noticed where Zu An's gaze was pointed, she subconsciously lowered her head to look at her ordinary and flat chest. Then, she gave her sister-in-law a look and saw that that area was completely full. She realized what he was suggesting.

She had actually been confused back when they were getting dressed. They were clearly roughly the same height, but why were her clothes so much looser? She had felt that her chest area was a bit too spacious.

"But sister-in-law isn't fat," she blurted out without thinking. Then, she finally realized what he was talking about. She felt as if she had been struck by thunder.

"You bastard!" When she saw the teasing smirk on Zu An's face, Sang Qien was beyond embarrassed.

When he saw how she was about to bite his head off, Zu An decided to give them an explanation. "The reason we're coming here is because I have a friend from this place who might be able to help your sister-in-law with her problem. If you still have some misgivings, you can wait outside."

"No way. I have to protect my sister-in-law!" Sang Qien was full of suspicion. Who knows what this guy will do!?

Zheng Dan couldn't help but smile. This girl was quite interesting.

...

Zu An didn't really mind, and he took the two of them inside Scarlet Invitation.

"Why do you have friends in Scarlet Invitation?" Sang Qien asked in confusion. Even Zheng Dan was now curious.

"They're just some friends I just happened to have met." Zu An gave an ambiguous reply.

Sang Qien harrumphed. They're definitely not just good friends.

A staff member greeted them right when they entered. "Young masters, are you here to drink, listen to music, or...?"

Zu An said, "I came to meet someone."

The staff member smiled and said, "Everyone who comes here is looking for someone, but I fear that the young master will be disappointed. All of the girls are resting right now."

Sang Qien harrumphed. This is a filthy place after all!

"It doesn't matter. I'm looking for Lady Nan Xun," Zu An said.

Zheng Dan's ears pricked up. She wondered who this Lady Nan Xun was. She had been tormented by nightmares for some time, so she hadn't been in any frame of mind to pay attention to outside information.

However, Sang Qien instead frowned. She seemed to have heard the name before, but she couldn't remember where.

The staff member chuckled. "Everyone who comes here wants to meet Lady Nan Xun. She's the pillar of our Scarlet Invitation! But unfortunately, she is not someone you can meet just because you want to."

Sang Qien finally remembered who Nan Xun was. The capital had recently been filled with a commotion precisely because Yu Nan and Zu An had been rivals in love over a brothel madam, and Yu Nan had even lost his post because of it. As the target of their rivalry, Nan Xun's reputation had naturally grown even greater.

Zheng Dan was a bit unhappy. This guy, he's always getting into situations with courtesans wherever he goes! If I remember correctly, wasn't there a Qiu Honglei in Brightmoon City?

Zu An obviously knew what the staff member was trying to say. He tossed over a few silvers and said, "Pass on a message to Lady Nan Xun for me. Tell her that Ah Zu is looking for her."

A flattering smile immediately appeared on the staff member's face when he saw the silvers. "Young masters, please wait inside here. This humble one will send the message over for your respected selves right now! However, Lady Nan Xun's status is special, so I cannot guarantee that she will agree to meet you." He had to make things clear, or else these young masters might ask for the silvers back if Lady Nan Xun refused to meet them.

"That's fine. She'll definitely agree to meet with me." Zu An spoke as if it were completely normal.

The staff member thought to himself, This man really is full of himself. Who knew how many princes and dukes were lined up just for a chance to meet with Nan Xun? Of course, he would obviously never say something like that to offend a guest. He guided them into a private room with a smile and said, "Please have some tea here. I will be back soon." He quickly rushed to Nan Xun's courtyard afterward.

At the same time, he was a bit confused. The two guests next to that guest were a bit too handsome. As someone who worked in these kinds of places, his eyes were sharp. He wasn't too sure about the skinnier one, but the other one was definitely a woman.

Tsk tsk, these young masters from the capital really know how to have fun. They even brought their own women over to play together. This staff member had a look of envy on his face. This wasn't the first time he was seeing something of the sort, so he naturally didn't find it all that strange.

He arrived at a small courtyard soon afterward. With Nan Xun's status, she naturally had the qualifications to have her own courtyard. The maid at the courtyard immediately refused when she heard his report, however. "Go go go, get out of here. Who do you think our young miss is? Do you think she'll meet with just anyone?"

The staff member didn't find the response surprising at all. He was just about to turn around and leave when he suddenly remembered what his guest had told him. Out of respect for the silver he had gotten, he added, "That person said he was Lady Nan Xun's friend, and he seems to be called Ah Zu or something."

"Ah Zu?" The maid was stunned. She thought to herself, Why have I never heard that name before? But she didn't dare to treat the matter lightly anymore. Everyone in the capital had wealthy and respected statuses, and it would be bad if the young miss ended up on bad terms with someone because of her. "Wait for a bit, I'll go and ask." She raised her dress and rushed back inside.

...

In the centermost room, the capital's most popular courtesan was massaging the shoulders of a beautiful woman. She said with a sigh of amazement, "Master, your figure really is enviable."

The beautiful woman said with a smile, "Yours isn't bad either."

"It's still far inferior to master's," Nan Xun said quietly. Her eyes moved across her master's body. She actually had a lot of confidence in her own figure and appearance, but compared to this beautiful woman, she was still lacking. Were the figures of the fiend races all this insanely good?

The beautiful woman was naturally Kong Nanwu. She wasn't in the mood to talk about such things right now. "Has that Zu An never sought you out after that event? Looks like you didn't work hard enough that night."

Nan Xun complained, "Of course I did! My mouth was sore for a long time after that night. It's just that that man is too ungrateful and fickle. Why would he care about people like us?"

As soon as she said that, however, the maid called from outside, "Young miss, young miss! There's a guest outside who says he's your friend and wants to meet you."

"I'm not meeting him! Stop bringing every random person to me." Nan Xun had been feeling annoyed to begin with. There were many young masters who flaunted themselves as her friends. Could they not tell that all she had done was show them a polite smile?

"Oh, that stupid servant boy must've taken silver from the guest. He lied to me and said that some 'Ah Zu' is the young miss' friend. I'm going to make sure he gets it later," the maid mumbled and left.

"Who did you say that person's name was again?" The door suddenly opened. Nan Xun was already by the entrance and looking at the maid nervously.

The maid looked at Nan Xun's fair, bare feet in shock. Why didn't the young miss even put her shoes on? She replied, "I think it was Ah Zu."

"Hurry and bring him in!" Nan Xun's breathing quickened. She then changed her mind and said, "No, I'll meet him personally."

She sorted out her hair and head ornament after saying that. The maid quickly reminded her, “Young miss, your shoes...”

Nan Xun secretly stuck out her tongue. With how she was feeling at the moment, it didn’t make a difference if she wore shoes or not at all, but it would draw unnecessary attention if other people saw that dirt didn’t stick to her feet the way it would to a normal person. She quickly put on her shoes and ran while raising her dress.

The male staff member who had been about to go back with the news of Nan Xun’s rejection was stupefied. That guest actually does know the courtesan! Furthermore, judging from how she’s acting, what do you mean ‘close friends’? They’re clearly lovers!

Meanwhile, Zu An was leisurely drinking tea. Zheng Dan’s condition wasn’t the best, so she was currently leaning against the chair and resting.

Sang Qien looked around her. Even though she had sounded as if she really looked down on this place, she was still quite curious about such places. After all, Scarlet Invitation’s reputation in the capital was quite high.

She gradually recovered her composure from seeing the dazzling decorations around her. When she smelled the perfume and cosmetics in the air, she asked disdainfully, “Why is there still no news? It’ll be really embarrassing if no one comes.”

Zu An said with a smile, “Don’t worry, she’s my friend.”

Sang Qien said in a sincere and heartfelt manner, “You’re pretty sharp normally, but why do you seem a bit slow today? Did you really think a woman from this place really liked you just because they told you some nice things?” She wasn’t trying to be sarcastic on purpose, but due to her upbringing ever since she was young, she had a subconscious dislike for such places.

Before Zu An could even reply, a sweet aroma wafted over. A beautiful figure was standing by the door, saying, “Talking behind someone’s back isn’t something a noble person would do. Could it be that... the young lady here is jealous?”

Chapter 946: Specter Race

The one standing at the entrance was naturally Nan Xun. When she heard Zu An had come to look for her, she was so happy that she almost forgot to even put on shoes. Only now did she notice that he had brought two other guests with him.

Her first reaction was that he had brought over his friends to show off. After all, that was something that was much too commonly seen among men. She had been quite influenced by the kind of place she was in after all.

However, she immediately realized that something wasn’t quite right, because one of his friends’ chests seemed to be a bit too big... Upon closer inspection, she saw that that person’s waist was the tiniest of them all, and their skin was fine. What else could they be but a cross-dressing woman?

She was shocked. Why would Zu An bring two women to a place like Scarlet Invitation? However, before she had the time to even think more about it, she heard the other, more flat-chested person speak ill of her behind her back. She obviously wouldn't just take it lying down and immediately fired back.

Sang Qien was shocked. She hadn't expected to be found out by the person involved so quickly! She was about to say something, but she took notice of the other woman's beauty. At first, she had thought that the courtesans of brothels would definitely use a ton of cosmetics and behave coquettishly, but this woman was entirely different. She seemed to be even more elegant than most upper-class women! She really found it hard to associate Nan Xun with a woman from this kind of place.

What dealt an even greater mental blow was, why were these girls' chests all so big?! Just what the heck did they eat for them to get so massive?!

She was pretty good at talking normally, and she had quite a few things to say to Nan Xun. However, upon seeing her voluptuous figure, she immediately lost confidence and didn't want to argue anymore. She harrumphed and looked away to show her displeasure.

Zheng Dan woke up with a start too. She looked at the woman in front of her. This woman really was stunning, and furthermore, there was a kind of aloof and indifferent expression in her eyes that made her seem completely free from the vulgarity of the world.

She's almost comparable to Qiu Honglei. Zheng Dan subconsciously straightened her posture. She felt a bit of regret inwardly. Her mental state really was too poor, and she hadn't even put on any makeup before leaving today. Of course she couldn't compare to this woman at the moment... But she soon remembered that she was here as a man. She sighed in relief.

"Nan Xun, meeting with you really isn't easy at all." Zu An quickly changed the topic when he sensed that the atmosphere had become a bit too serious.

Nan Xun's previously cold expression shifted to a smile when Zu An spoke. She replied, "It cannot be helped; there are so many guests who wish to meet me. If I had to meet every one of them, I really would be tired to death. However, young master, please do not worry. I already told those from Scarlet Invitation that if you come back in the future, you can just come right in. You don't need to let anyone know."

Sang Qien harrumphed. Is this woman flaunting her popularity right now? She had previously thought that her own sister-in-law was a bit too frivolous, but compared to this woman, her sister-in-law was as pure as a little white flower!

"Do you really need to meet with that many guests?" Zu An's brow subconsciously furrowed.

"Is the young master jealous?" Nan Xun's smile became bigger. She grabbed Zu An's arm and said, "I am really happy to hear that, you know?"

"Hmph, just putting on airs," Sang Qien rolled her eyes and murmured quietly.

Zheng Dan frowned. This woman is a formidable opponent! Hmph, if only Chu Chuyan were here...

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan normally had their differences and looked down on each other in certain ways. But today, they were actually united against a common enemy.

Nan Xun moved over to Zu An and said quietly by his ear, "Young master, do not worry. I only chat a bit with those other young masters. I have never even taken off my mask around them. I will make sure to preserve my chastity for you." She intentionally blew against Zu An's ear as she spoke, her voice full of a provocative air.

Zu An sighed. This woman really knew how to tease him! No wonder even someone like King Qi had been completely enchanted by her and couldn't completely free himself from her.

This woman had been a concubine of King Qi, but she was still a virgin? Did it even count as being a virgin anymore or not, if she had the body of a young woman but the mind of a mature woman?

He finally snapped out of his daze when he sensed the killing intent of the two women behind him and said, "By the way, I came because I had something I needed your help with. I have something to ask Miss Kong."

"Why is there another woman?" Zheng Dan's ears pricked up.

Sang Qien was confused too. And who is this Miss Kong? Is there even anyone famous surnamed Kong in the capital?

Even though there were many things about Zu An she found questionable, she still trusted his judgment in women for the most part. There was no way any random pretty girl could catch his eye. All those who could gain his praise were all ridiculously beautiful. If her surname was Kong, this woman should have been quite famous in the capital.

Nan Xun pouted and replied, "Young master really is heartless. You never came to see me after that night, and you only came to find me today to meet with another woman."

"You're even getting jealous of her? Don't worry, I really have some proper business with her," Zu An said with a smile.

Nan Xun knew that acting a bit spoiled would gain more favor at certain times, but it was easy for such things to go too far. As such, she sensibly stopped herself and said, "Okay, I'll bring you to see her. She just mentioned you not too long ago."

"What did she talk about?" Zu An was curious. Being talked about by a respected individual from the fiend races wasn't anything to feel that happy about.

"About how heartless you are, of course!" Nan Xun harrumphed. Her beautiful figure swayed as she began to walk ahead of the group to lead the way. The way she walked made the inexperienced Sang Qien feel scorn and envy.

Meanwhile, Zheng Dan was also staring at Zu An with an ambiguous expression. Even though she knew that he was a womanizer, she had never expected him to be fickle to this extent. Judging from their tone, it sounded as if this Lady Kong was also one of his close female friends.

They quickly arrived in a courtyard out in the back. Nan Xun stopped in front of the entrance and said, "Young master, I have to ask for instructions first. You know that her status is a bit..." She gave Zheng Dan and Sang Qien a look. She didn't say the following words. Zu An knew about her misgivings, so he didn't make things too hard on her.

As Nan Xun went inside, Sang Qien couldn't help but ask, "Who is that Lady Kong? Why is she acting all mysterious?"

"Her status is indeed a bit special. We're here to ask for help after all, so we should follow their rules." Zu An didn't tell them Kong Nanwu's identity. After all, the words 'fiend races' were too sensitive, especially when the fiend races had just slaughtered an entire frontier city not too long ago.

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan exchanged a look. They both saw curiosity in each other's eyes.

Nan Xun returned quickly. "Young master, she invites you inside, but I fear that it is not too appropriate for the other two."

Sang Qien frowned. Where do these courtesans get their confidence from? She was just about to flip out when Zu An stopped her, saying, "Little Qien, wait here for a bit. I'll bring your sister-in-law in to ask about her illness."

Sang Qien wasn't too happy at first, but when she heard that it had to do with her sister-in-law's condition, she endured her discontent and replied, "Forget it, this place is pretty nice anyway, so I won't go inside. Otherwise, I might just end up getting all of this foxy frivolousness on me." She wanted to say 'foul smell', but she decided not to in the end.

Zu An thought to himself, You're actually right, there really is a fox in there. Then, he brought Zheng Dan inside.

Nan Xun looked hesitant as she said, "Young master, she..."

"It's fine," Zu An said, "Have Miss Kong speak through a curtain. My consultation involves her, so I have to bring her in." He had stayed the night before, so he knew the layout inside. After hearing that, Nan Xun didn't press the issue further. She went in first to let Kong Nanwu know.

When Zu An and Zheng Dan went in, they could only vaguely make out an elegant figure behind the layers of curtains. They couldn't really make out her real appearance.

"Young master, please forgive me. We can only meet in this manner," said a gentle voice from inside. Zheng Dan's eyes widened. There was actually a voice this nice in this world? She immediately thought of orioles singing and pearls dropping onto a jade plate. However, neither of those beautiful sounds could accurately portray just how incredible this woman's voice was!

Zu An sat down while holding Zheng Dan's hand and said, "Lady Kong is too polite. I understand your worries, so I'm already thankful that you're willing to meet with me this way."

Kong Nanwu replied with a smile, "I wonder what the young master has come here for today?"

"So this is what happened..." Zu An explained Zheng Dan's condition to her. "I heard that hatred arts came from the fiend races. Do you know any solutions to this issue?"

Kong Nanwu finally knew why he had sought her out. She replied, "Hatred arts indeed came from the fiend races. The fiend races are numerous. Apart from the races that are better known, there are some more remote and neglected races, like the blood race and specter race. The hatred arts originate from the specter race, but they've been modified by humans."

Zheng Dan thought to herself, This woman really is well-learned! She actually knew so much about the fiend races... No wonder Zu An sought her out.

Zu An exclaimed in shock, "There's actually a specter race in this world?"

If there were really things like departed spirits, why the hell would the emperor even pursue immortality? Wouldn't it be great to just exist in a ghost form?

"It's not what you're thinking." Kong Nanwu explained, "They're just freaks who are neither dead or alive with some corpse and soul refining abilities. However, those ghosts don't have any intelligence and only mechanically obey orders."

"Then is there a way to cure my companion?" Zu An asked while gesturing toward Zheng Dan. He had actually wondered if Kong Nanwu was the one who had done it. After all, she had soul refinement skills too. Who knew if she had ended up having some kind of a grudge against him? But after he got to talk to her, he realized it didn't have anything to do with her.

A momentary silence filled the room. A while later, Kong Nanwu said, "That might be difficult."

Zu An was alarmed and asked, "Is there no cure?"

"That is not it..." Kong Nanwu changed to ki transmission. "The young master probably knows that since the other party used this kind of technique, they might have some kind of connection to the fiend races. You know that our fiend races have been discriminated against quite severely by humans recently. We're all in human territory right now; it's one thing if we don't combine our forces, but if we were to interfere with each other, then..."

Zu An's expression turned cold as he replied, "Is the lady planning to threaten me? Speak, what do you want?" This matter was related to Zheng Dan, so he couldn't be bothered to put up with much anymore. He wouldn't hold back from doing what he had to for her.

"The young master misunderstands. That's not what I'm saying. What I said just now were my sincere thoughts." Kong Nanwu's voice was full of hesitation as she continued, "I guess it's fine. Since she's the young master's friend, I'll meddle and help her this time."

Chapter 947: Heart Rending

Zu An sighed in relief when he saw that she had agreed. "Then I'll have to trouble the lady this time."

Nan Xun smiled and said, "Young master, Lady Kong normally does not interfere with matters at all. She really has treated the young master with special favor this time."

"Nan Xun!" Kong Nanwu reprimanded her. Nan Xun stuck out her tongue and said nothing else.

Zheng Dan was surprised. Why does this courtesan queen instead sound like a servant when those two women talk? But this Nan Xun has an incredible reputation... And with her temperament, how could she be willing to serve another? But she quickly tossed that thought to the back of her mind.

Zu An chuckled and said, "I'm afraid that there's no way for me to repay this gratitude properly. If you don't find it beneath you, I can offer you my body." With how he was now, there was no way he would

be swayed so easily by a few words. After all, this master and servant might just be working together to throw him off.

Zheng Dan smiled. After having known Zu An for so long, she already understood him well. Despite the words he had said, she could hear the mockery in his tone. That was why she wouldn't feel jealous over such a thing.

The woman behind the curtains harrumphed when she heard those lowly words, completely ignoring Zu An. She raised her head to look at Zheng Dan and said, Unfortunately, I only have a smattering of knowledge. If the user's cultivation is too profound, I might not be able to do much about it either."

"Lady Kong is too humble. It's enough as long as you do what you can; I'm not someone who doesn't know when to stop," Zu An said.

Kong Nanwu felt relieved. "Then please have this young lady sleep here. Once that evil spirit comes to bother her, I'll see if I can catch it for you."

"That might be rather difficult..." Zu An gave her a rough recount of his encounter with that sinister thing. "It might be too scared to come out again for quite some time."

That was also what had given him the biggest headache. After all, one could be a bandit for a thousand days, but who would be vigilant against bandits for a thousand days?

Furthermore, he was going to Cloudcenter Commandery soon, so he couldn't stay at Zheng Dan's side to protect her at all. It would be really troublesome if that evil thing came out while he was gone.

"The young master is actually proficient in exorcism methods?" Kong Nanwu was shocked. After all, this kind of malicious spirit was something sinister and unconventional. Rarely would human cultivators come into contact with it, let alone be able to deal with it.

"It was just a coincidence. Furthermore, I wasn't able to capture it and instead let it get away." Zu An didn't expose the fact that he knew the Primordial Origin Sutra.

"That is indeed a bit tricky..." Kong Nanwu began to think to herself. She also began to consider how to deal with the situation.

Zheng Dan felt a headache when she heard those words. A look of disappointment appeared on her face. Zu An gently held her hand to console her. Nan Xun bit her lip when she saw him do so, but she didn't say anything.

"I have a solution." Kong Nanwu didn't continue to speak. Instead, she brought over a sheet of talisman paper. Her hands moved quickly, folding it into a small and exquisite paper crane. Then, she blew against the crane, and it seemed to come alive. It fluttered around, then moved through the curtain and arrived in front of Zheng Dan.

"This is..." Zheng Dan was shocked. When had she ever seen such a magical technique?

"It's but a small trick." Kong Nanwu said. She didn't want others to know that she was from the fiend races. "It can sense the aura left behind by the malicious spirit, and it was able to sense that the user isn't anyone too formidable. It should be able to take you all to the mastermind. However, I fear that I can't get involved further, so I must apologize to the young master for that."

Zu An knew about her struggles and said, "Thank you. I'll remember this favor."

Kong Nanwu gently chuckled from the other side of the curtain and said, "This sounds much more reliable than the devotion you promised earlier."

Zu An's face heated up. Not even someone as thick skinned as him knew what to say at that moment. Fortunately, the crane began to move again. After circling Zheng Dan a few times, it spread its wings and flew in a certain direction out the window.

"Hurry and follow it; don't lose sight of it. This aura is faint, so we might not be able to track it a second time," Kong Nanwu reminded him from behind the curtains.

"Thanks!" Zu An cupped his hands toward her, then he and Zheng Dan jumped out of the window.

Sang Qien heard the activity inside and rushed over. When she saw the two jump out, she couldn't even be bothered that they were holding hands. She asked, "Did something happen?"

"I'll explain along the way. Follow that paper crane!" Zu An pointed at the paper crane. He actually noticed that it wasn't a paper crane, but rather a paper peacock. He hadn't expected Kong Nanwu to be so skilled with her hands, that she could weave such fine origami so quickly.

When she saw the flying paper peacock, Sang Qien's beautiful eyes opened wide. Her red lips were so wide open that she might be able to fit an egg inside her mouth.

"Why are you standing there looking all stupid?" Zu An grabbed her hand and chased the paper peacock.

"You can let go of me now." Sang Qien finally snapped out of her daze a while later. She felt very uncomfortable when she sensed the warmth on her wrist. Just what would others think if they saw him holding her and Zheng Dan's hands in public?

Zu An obviously wouldn't do something like take advantage of her. He took the chance to tell her about what happened just now.

"What kind of background does this young miss Kong have to be so skilled?" Sang Qien was incredibly shocked. Zheng Dan also looked at him curiously.

"She doesn't wish for others to know where she's from, so you two will have to forgive me for not telling you," Zu An said frankly.

"Just don't say it then." Sang Qien harrumphed. "But the two of you seem pretty close... She doesn't want others to know, but she doesn't mind telling you? Tsk tsk tsk..." She sneaked a look at Zheng Dan while speaking. She really didn't mind stirring the drama between them a bit. After all, Zheng Dan is my sister-in-law! Even though I know my father has his plans, it hasn't even been that long since my big brother died, but sister-in-law is already following someone else?

Zheng Dan smiled. "I really am grateful to Miss Kong today. Once this is over, I'll owe her a life-saving favor. I have to properly thank her later."

Sang Qien became gloomy when she saw that she had failed to drive a wedge between them. She lost all interest in saying anything else.

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The three quickly followed the paper peacock outside of the city. That was still expected, because the inner city was a place filled with high officials and nobles. Something sinister like this obviously had to lay a bit lower.

The paper peacock continued to fly through the air. It arrived by a remote street, then stopped near a tattered courtyard after circling it a few times. It landed on the ground, and the power supporting it ran out.

"This house seems to be unoccupied," Sang Qien said while staring at the tattered entrance.

A passing older woman saw the three of them walking around the house. She quickly came over and warned them quietly, "Did you all come here to buy this house? I advise you to choose a different one. This house is haunted."

Sang Qien quickly asked her for more information. She learned that the previous owner's family had died one after another in quick succession. It had been inherited by a distant nephew, but he didn't dare to continue living there. As such, he tried to sell the place through a middleman. But after it had passed through the hands of several owners, all kinds of strange things had happened. They all sold off the property one after another. Eventually, rumors that the house was haunted began to circulate.

Zu An couldn't help but smile. It seemed that regardless of which world it was, there were always these warmhearted and gossipy older women.

Sang Qien wanted to ask more questions, but the older woman was worried that she might catch something from staying for too long and quickly left.

Zu An smiled and said, "If it's haunted, then we came to the right place."

"Is there really a ghost?" Sang Qien's complexion paled. She had used to hate having physical contact with Zu An, but now, she unconsciously moved a bit closer to him.

"You're a cultivator yourself. For better or for worse, you're pretty strong. Why are you scared of these things?" Zu An found it rather funny.

"It's different, okay?" Sang Qien gave him a glare. This guy is so annoying! He's still teasing me even now...

"You'll know if you go in and take a look yourself," Zu An said. The main entrance was locked, so Zu An brought Zheng Dan around the wall.

Sang Qien stomped her feet. She followed along after some hesitation.

The inside was extremely run-down, with dried leaves and branches everywhere, as well as some rotting furniture. There was only a single main room and a few empty rooms. The owner of the place was clearly not that well off either.

"I don't see any trace of people living here." Sang Qien didn't dare to look around herself. Instead, she scanned the place with her ki. After all, she was at the fifth rank. Unless their cultivation was much higher than hers, it was hard for anyone to escape her detection.

That immediately gave her much more courage. She ran out and opened several doors in succession to regain a bit of dignity after how scared she had been acting a moment before. Sure enough, there was nothing inside.

"That friend of yours isn't reliable at all! There's clearly nothing here," Sang Qien said.

"Did you check that well yet?" Zu An pointed to a dried-up well nearby.

"What can a well have? Don't tell me there's someone living at the bottom of the well?" As if to prove her words, Sang Qien walked closer to the well as she said that. Unfortunately, the bottom was pitch black, so she couldn't see anything.

She felt a bit scared. Just as she was about to pull back, however, long and seemingly endless strands of hair flew out from inside the well! They wrapped around her face to pull her down.

"Ahhhh!" A shrill scream tore through the courtyard.

Chapter 948: Might of the Celestial Drake

Sang Qien was dragged down shortly afterward.

Zu An was shocked. He had just been making a joke at first. After all, in the films of his previous world, old wells were always associated with ghosts and monsters, so it had already become almost an instinct. But how could he have expected that something like this would happen? He would feel regret for the rest of his life if something really ended up happening to Sang Qien here!

Zu An rushed over. Just then, a blast of flames erupted from the bottom of the well. Then, a petite figure rushed out of it with a 'whoosh'. Who else could it be but Sang Qien?

Sang Qien had an expression of alarm. When she saw Zu An walk over, she immediately felt as if she had seen her family. She ran over and hid behind him, clinging onto his arm while shaking all over.

Only now did Zu An remember that the other party was a fire element cultivator. He couldn't help but chuckle, saying, "Since you can use the fire element, all of that hair would have been burned to ashes on contact. Why are you getting so scared?"

"Stop talking about that already..." Sang Qien blocked her ears with her hands. Her legs buckled the moment she thought of that scene. I'm finished, I'm finished! I'm probably going to have nightmares every night from now on too...

"Ah Zu, what was that thing earlier?" Zheng Dan also subconsciously moved closer to Zu An. As a woman, she was naturally more scared of such things.

"It's probably the main culprit we're looking for," Zu An replied while staring at this well.

Zheng Dan and Sang Qien both followed his gaze. They moved even closer to him. The pitch-black hair was starting to reach out from the well like vines, and it continued to grow longer and longer, as if it would never stop.

When she saw the hair surrounding the three of them, Sang Qien's face turned incredibly pale. Even though she was scared, however, she wasn't like other girls. She gathered her courage and used her fire element to burn the hair away.

But what made her widen her eyes in shock was that the hair didn't catch fire the way it had before, and instead, the fire she released quickly disappeared. She quickly tugged on Zu An's sleeves and said, "This hair is a bit strange; there's some strange sinister energy protecting it. My flames can't burn it away! Does this thing have the ice element?" She had felt a wave of bone-chilling cold from the rebound of her previous attack. Her entire body couldn't help but break out into a shiver.

Immediately afterward, she felt a warm feeling spread from the palm of her hand. The chill disappeared and she felt much better. She lowered her hand and saw that Zu An was holding her hand. She blushed, but she didn't say anything about the skinship this time.

"What the other party cultivates is something similar to evil yin energy, and not the ice element." Zu An released her hand, then looked at the well. He coldly asked, "What kind of monster are you? Show yourself!"

Jiek jiek jiek~!

An extremely unpleasant and ear-piercing voice exclaimed, "Who dares to disturb my slumber?!"

When they sensed a mysterious wave of power sweep over them, Zheng Dan and Sang Qien's expressions changed. They exclaimed, "We need to hurry and get away! This thing is too strong!"

However, they didn't expect Zu An to be completely unfazed as he said, "Don't worry." His voice had a mysterious calming ability. The two girls gradually calmed down.

"Hmph, you want to escape? Not a single one of you will leave this place today." An individual dressed entirely in black robes slowly rose from the well. His entire body was surrounded by wisps of black mist.

"Doesn't this count as black silk to a certain extent?" Zu An remarked. Even he was a bit impressed at his own ability to think up nonsense.[1]

He was actually a bit annoyed. When he saw the long black hair, he had thought that he was going to see some beautiful female ghost. At least that was how it was in those television shows. But who could have thought that he would be jebaited like this?

But unlike Zu An, Zheng Dan and Sang Qien gulped nervously. The pressure this person gave them was really great. That was especially the case when only half of the person's deathly pale face was exposed. His face was so thin it was more like a skeleton, just skin wrapped around bones. His eye sockets were deeply sunken, and his eyes were completely different from a normal person's, glowing with red light. In that instant, it was hard to tell if he was a man or a ghost.

"Oh my... So it was actually two little beauties. Your blood will definitely be even more delicious and nourishing." The half-man, half-ghost looked at the two girls. Excitement flickered through his eyes.

He practiced evil arts, so he was extremely sensitive toward yin and yang energies. He immediately recognized that the two of them were cross-dressing women.[2]

The two girls both broke out into goosebumps when they heard his words.

Zu An sighed. "There are two great beauties here, but your only desire is to drink their blood? Cultivating these evil arts ended up turning you into something that's not fully a man or a ghost, and you even lost your basic ability to be a man. Tell me honestly, is there even any meaning left in living?"

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan's faces heated up. Even though he was praising them for being beautiful, why did it sound so strange?

"You're courting death!"

You have successfully trolled Chi Tu for +444 +444 +444...

The black-clad man erupted into a rage. The black hair on the ground was pulled taut, then shot out like a rain of arrows. A normal person would be stabbed full of holes by such an attack.

Zheng Dan and Sang Qien tried to join the battle, but Zu An gestured that they didn't need to do anything. He stood in front of them and a faintly visible wall of ki took form in front of him.

The black-clad man named Chi Tu sneered. His attack specialized in destroying the ki barriers of cultivators. Not even someone whose cultivation was a level higher than his might be able to stop this attack!

This kid is so young, so how high can his cultivation be? He even wants to face me head on? He won't even know how he died. He was even considering whether he should hold back a bit to spare the kid's life, then slowly suck out the blood of his female companions. He would slowly enjoy watching him suffer.

But his smile quickly froze. When his sharp hair struck the other party's ki barrier, it was as if it had hit a steel wall, and his hair broke apart into inch-sized chunks. He himself was struck by a powerful recoil that made all of his ki and blood surge chaotically. This feeling was absolutely awful.

"How?!" He stared at the man in front of him in horror. This person was still so young, so why was his cultivation so high? It made absolutely no sense!

Forget about him, even Sang Qien was completely shocked. She knew that Zu An's cultivation was high, but compared to the last time they had met, she really hadn't expected him to have already grown to this level! After all, the pressure the black-robed man gave her was at least that of a seventh rank expert! Zu An didn't even have to move a finger to break down his opponent's attack?

Zheng Dan was much more composed. After all, she had watched Zu An take down that powerful red dragon when Zu An was still extremely weak, so what did this scene count as?

Chi Tu's expression warped more and more. I practically gave up on my physical form to obtain all of this power, and yet he didn't give up a thing. How is his cultivation so far above mine, while he was even born more handsome than me and even has two beauties at his side?! He's a complete winner! What was all of my hard work even for then?

His expression became cold. Your cultivation might be higher than mine, but that doesn't mean you can defend against my unique secret arts. He didn't hesitate at all and immediately used his secret techniques. A black thing resembling an evil spirit appeared out of thin air. It looked like a malicious soul summoned straight from hell itself! It threw itself at Zu An.

Even before it made contact, just that sinister and insidious feeling was already able to affect other parties' souls. Even though Sang Qien and Zheng Dan were both on guard, they felt fear from within their souls. This was a fear toward an unknown power that they were completely helpless against.

We're finished! The two girls were both the best among their peers. They quickly deduced that it was a soul targeting attack. As long as one hadn't reached the master rank and properly refined one's soul, there was a good chance that it was all over for them if they faced such an attack. No matter how high Zu An's cultivation was, there was no way he was at the master rank!

The two girls looked at Zu An. However, he was still extremely calm as he said, "Hmph! You think you can show off your insignificant talents in front of a real expert like me? Take this! Might of the Celestial Drake!"

A seal appeared in his hand, and he threw it straight into the terrifying monster's head. Then, that evil spirit screamed miserably. It instantly vanished like snow before a blistering hot sun.

"Pfft!" Chi Tu vomited a mouthful of greenish blood. Then, he collapsed to the ground, paralyzed.

The ghost was something he had cultivated with his very life. Now that it had been destroyed, even if he managed to prevent himself from dying, his cultivation would immediately drop to less than half of its former peak.

"It's you!" Chi Tu finally realized what had happened. When he sensed that terrifying power again, he recalled that it was precisely the same power that had wounded one of his ghost puppets earlier.

"If you want to live, then tell me properly, why did you cast your disgusting skill on my friend?" Zu An took a step forward and instantly appeared in front of Chi Tu, speaking while looking down at him.

Chapter 949: Huge Secret

"Great one, spare me, spare me!" The black-clad Chi Tu immediately begged for mercy. In their line of work, strength was everything.

Sang Qien's jaw dropped. She looked at Zu An as if she were staring at a legend. Everything had happened way too quickly! The mysterious black-clad man had been incredibly intimidating just a moment ago, yet this enemy they had felt absolute despair toward had been instantly defeated by Zu An?

Also, what was that move, Might of the Celestial Drake? It looked really majestic, how handsome... She suddenly felt like she understood her sister-in-law a bit more now. No wonder Zheng Dan couldn't stop herself from liking this man! He really was incredibly attractive at certain times.

Zu An didn't know that Sang Qien's impression of him was actually changing. He only continued to stare at Chi Tu and asked, "What's your name?"

"This humble one is called Gui Li," the black clad man replied obsequiously, doing his best to smile, but it only looked even uglier than if he were crying. He didn't look anything like someone capable and powerful.

"Hm?" Zu An's expression turned cold. Then, the other party screamed miserably as his arm was snapped in half. Furthermore, Zu An instantly sealed all of his acupoints, preventing him from retaliating in the slightest.

"Chi Tu, if you dare lie to me again, what I break next won't just be your hand." Zu An suddenly looked at him.

Chi Tu was absolutely horrified. There aren't many people who know my name; how does he know that? He had been scared of the other party's purification abilities to begin with. Now that his real identity had been exposed, the pressure Zu An gave him became even more profound and mysterious. He didn't dare to hide a single thing anymore. "Great one, please forgive me, please forgive me! I've used Gui Li as an alias for so long that I almost forgot my own name! I didn't intend to fool you!"

Zu An didn't comment on that and said, "You still haven't answered my question."

Chi Tu quickly replied, "This is what happened. A silk merchant sought me out and paid me a hefty sum to target a certain person..."

"Ah!" Zheng Dan cried out in alarm and quickly asked, "Was that merchant surnamed Hu?"

"I don't know his surname; he didn't want anyone to know his true identity either." Chi Tu noticed that Zu An's expression had changed, and he quickly added, "But I have seen what he looks like...!" Then, he gave them a rough description of what the man looked like.

Zheng Dan's face fell as she exclaimed, "It was him after all!"

"What's the situation?" Zu An asked.

Zheng Dan explained the situation, and together with Chi Tu's confession, it wasn't difficult to determine the truth. Zheng Dan had brought the Zheng clan's business to the capital, which was naturally bad news for the capital's local silk merchants.

The other party had used all kinds of methods to try and push out the Zheng clan's merchants, but Zheng Dan was experienced in that field. She had managed the Zheng clan's businesses back in Brightmoon City, and she had even secretly grasped the city's most powerful gang. It wasn't anything difficult to solve at all. In the end, she had countered every move they made. Not only were those competitors forced to return without achieving anything, she had grown their market share larger and larger.

The other side had the capital's local tyrants backing them, so for better or for worse, they had someone to rely on. As such, some strings had been pulled in court to suppress and restrict Zheng Dan. But no matter how low the Sang clan had fallen, they were still powerful officials in court. Sang Qien had felt apologetic toward this sister-in-law of hers, as she had been widowed while still so young. That was why they obviously had to help the Zheng clan in this business matter.

Seeing that not even political methods worked, the rival merchants had turned their attention toward nefarious methods and sought out Chi Tu. Such things were a walk in the park for someone like Chi Tu, so he naturally played along. With his cultivation and methods being mysterious, even if something happened, he thought, it would just be that ghost puppet dying at worst. He himself wouldn't be caught. How could he have expected that he would be found out so quickly?

"I've already spoken about everything I know! I hope the great one can be generous and let this humble one go, since nothing really happened to this young miss... This humble one will immediately leave the city, and I'll never harm another person ever again!" Chi Tu pleaded. He actually found it truly strange. How did the other party find him so quickly? But unfortunately, everything had changed too quickly, and the pressure Zu An gave off right now was too much. He didn't dare to say a single protest.

As for what he said about how he'd never harm anyone ever again, those were empty words. Those who cultivated these kinds of techniques needed blood and corpses. How could they not harm people?

Zu An obviously knew that as well. He said to Sang Qien, "Little Qien, bring this guy back to the manor. I'll leave the rest to your Sang clan. There should be no issues with that, right?" He was going to leave the capital soon, and Zheng Dan was the Sang clan's daughter-in-law in name. It was better for them to deal with it.

"Don't worry, our Sang clan isn't so easily bullied!" Sang Qien gave Chi Tu a hateful look. She was clearly still upset about being scared before.

Zu An nodded. There were many who had become destitute and homeless from Sang Hong's methods under the emperor's instigation. They were more than skilled in this field of work. Furthermore, the authentic proof was right there. If they couldn't even deal with something like this, Sang Hong and Sang Qien really wouldn't deserve their reputation. He intended to bring Zheng Dan away so she could get some proper rest. She had been tormented quite badly for some time and really needed to recover.

However, Chi Tu screamed, "Don't send me to the manor! I... I have a huge secret to tell you all!" He knew that the court suppressed evil arts. Once discovered, he would immediately suffer the most severe punishment. If he was handed to the government, death would be a better ending.

"A huge secret?" Zu An sneered. He didn't give it much attention at all. What kind of secret could somebody like this know?

When he saw that Zu An didn't believe him, Chi Tu immediately cried out, "It has something to do with Cloudcenter Commandery's duke!"

Zu An had already started walking away, but his footsteps stopped when he heard Chi Tu's plea. He wouldn't care that much if it were anyone else, but his mission this time was precisely to investigate the disappearance of Cloudcenter Duke. How could he let this clue go? He turned around and asked, "Oh? Do tell. What happened to the Cloudcenter Duke?"

"You have to agree to let me go first." Chi Tu immediately knew that the other party was interested in his bargaining chip.

Zu An didn't yield and sneered. "What kind of person is the Cloudcenter Duke? You only know your evil arts that you can't even show in public, so how could you have anything to do with him? Little Qien, make sure you deliver him to the officials properly."

Sang Qien immediately agreed. "Alright." Then, she walked forward to bring him away.

Chi Tu panicked and exclaimed, "I really do know! I encountered a seriously injured and dying person, and I learned that he was Cloudcenter Duke's trusted aide! He came to the capital to issue an accusation, but he ended up being attacked midway!"

Zu An was already seventy to eighty percent convinced when he heard those words. "And where is that guard?"

"His injuries were too serious and he already died," Chi Tu said, his expression a bit strange.

"You probably refined his soul, I reckon." Zu An sneered.

Chi Tu quickly explained, "Cultivators in my field indeed need human souls, but that guard was already fatally injured and beyond saving. I merely helped free him from his struggles a bit earlier. I only learned about this tremendous secret from his soul."

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan both shivered. Even your soul would be enslaved after you died? That really was a life worse than death...

"Speak, what kind of secret is that? If it is important enough, I'll let you live," Zu An said indifferently.

"No way, you have to make a vow! Otherwise, what if you go back on your word afterward? I won't be able to do a thing about that!" This matter was related to his very life, so Chi Tu had no choice but to remain unyielding.

Zu An fell silent. Sang Qien and Zheng Dan quickly advised him not to make the vow, because this was no joking matter.

But Zu An had his own plans. He said, "Fine. I, Zhao Zhi, vow that as long as your secret has value, I will spare your life. Otherwise, Zhao Zhi will suffer the wrath of the heavens."

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan were about to stop him, but their eyes immediately widened when they heard the vow. Zheng Dan bit her lip to prevent herself from laughing. Sang Qien instead scoffed inwardly. This man was always up to no good after all.

Chi Tu was shocked and exclaimed, "So you were King Qi's heir!" King Qi's reputation was well known throughout the world. The name of his son was no secret.

Zu An sneered. "What, do you think anyone would dare try to impersonate this young master?"

"Not at all! This humble one has no such intention..." Chi Tu immediately said with an apologetic smile. He thought to himself, No wonder this guy is so powerful even though he's still so young! He was raised with a sea of resources ever since he was little, so of course it's not something my petty cultivation can compare to. The two beauties who willingly followed the other man only further convinced him. What man other than King Qi's heir could have such charm?

When he saw that Zu An had made such a serious vow, Chi Tu didn't hesitate any longer. "That guard came to the capital to inform the court that the Cloudcenter Duke didn't go missing back then, but rather had his life conspired against."

"By whom?" Zu An quickly asked.

Chi Tu hesitated, but he still answered, "He was harmed by his own younger brother, Jian Taiding."

Zu An was shocked. Even though everyone had suspected that Cloudcenter Duke's disappearance was fishy, they would never have expected it to involve his own blood-related brother. This matter would

definitely cause a huge uproar once it was released. He didn't dare to treat it carelessly and asked, "Do you have proof?"

"That guard seemed to have carried some evidence on him, but it was taken by the assassin," Chi Tu replied.

Zu An asked for a few more details. Unfortunately, the refined soul had suffered damage to its memory. A lot of the information was fragmented and there wasn't much that remained useful.

"Can I leave?" Chi Tu gave him a hopeful look.

Zu An didn't pay him any attention and instead said to Sang Qien, "Bring him back to the Sang clan and lock him up. Don't send him to the court yet."

Chi Tu's expression suddenly changed. "Zhao Zhi, you dare to go back on your word? Are you not scared of the wrath of heaven?!"

Zu An replied with a smile, "What does a vow Zhao Zhi made have to do with me?"

Chapter 950: Rigorous Schemes

"What... the hell?" Chi Tu was someone who roamed the underworld scene too, so he quickly realized that the one in front of him wasn't Zhao Zhi. He was shocked and furious, exclaiming, "You dare to impersonate King Qi's heir? King Qi would never let you go if he found out!"

You have successfully trolled Chi Tu for +666 +666 +666...

Zu An chuckled. "I've already offended King Qi in more ways that you can imagine anyway, so this won't make much of a difference."

Chi Tu was stunned when he heard that Zu An didn't even fear King Qi. He quickly added, "But you made a vow! Heavenly dao isn't something you can disrespect. You'll suffer retribution for going back on your word!"

You have successfully trolled Chu Tu for +888 +888 +888...

Zu An sighed and said, "I'm seriously amazed. How can someone like you who lives in this kind of world not know that there are loopholes to vows?" After collecting a good amount of Rage points, Zu An knocked him out.

Fuck you! Which one of us is really the evil one here?! Chi Tu thought before he fainted.

Sang Qien was about to drag Chi Tu back, but she hesitated and stopped midway. Zu An couldn't help but chuckle when he noticed that, asking, "Little Qien, is there something you want to say?"

Sang Qien then said, "What Chi Tu said was actually true. You can't mess with heavenly dao. Making a vow to the heavens is something extremely serious. Deliberately making loopholes in your vows like that might incur the rejection of heavenly dao. It'll be really bad if you end up suffering from retribution as a result."

Zu An laughed and said, "Little Qien, I didn't expect you to worry so much about me."

"Hmph, do whatever you want. I don't care." Sang Qien harrumphed and left, blushing.

Zu An then replied, "Perhaps you might see this heavenly dao as a selfless and omniscient existence, but I don't share that notion. The heavens aren't kind; they merely view all things as the same. In the eyes of the world, good and evil don't exist; the heavens are only interested in maintaining the proper operation of the world. They won't favor someone a bit more just because they followed the rules well, and they likewise won't punish someone just because they tricked someone evil."

"The heavens aren't kind..." Sang Qien and Zheng Dan were shocked. They both began to think those words over. They felt as if they seemed to have gained something, but that feeling quickly vanished.

"What you just said seems to be quite profound, but there is one point where I beg to differ on." Sang Qien was a smart girl. She soon thought of something and said, "The virtuous who do good works will often be repaid well in return, while on the contrary, the evil almost always suffer bad endings."

Zu An explained with a smile, "That's nothing more than a result of some of society's customary conventions and rules. It doesn't say anything about the will of the world itself."

Sang Qien was stunned. She was just about to say something in return, but she suddenly realized that Zu An's answer did make some sense.

Zu An said, "Even though the natural law of the world is sacred, it will only punish those who clearly violate their vows. I believe that you've all had a misunderstanding because you worship and fear the heavenly dao too much, so you haven't thought about how there's actually a lot of room for manipulation in between. For example, I've already encountered many bad people, and this kind of thing has happened all the time. Over time, I've picked it up as well."

When he first picked up on that fact, he even felt as if making a vow in this world was pretty much useless. But when he really thought about it, he figured that if someone who was proficient in law transmigrated, these vows might really become extremely important.

His previous world was also a society that operated on contracts, but many people would already be thinking about how to break the contract as soon as it was made. Those lawyers' jobs were precisely to think of ways to plug up all kinds of holes.

Zu An thought to himself that if he encountered a true professional, he would never dare to falsify a vow.

Zheng Dan spoke up and said, "Ah Zu, even though what you said makes a bit of sense, no one knows what's really going on with heavenly dao. If you always walk along the river bank, your shoes will probably get wet. It would be way too late if you slipped up one day and incurred heavenly punishment! After all, there are many people in this world who care about your safety."

Zu An was stunned. Only now did he realize that his attitude might have become a bit extreme. After all, nothing in the world was a hundred percent guaranteed. He broke out into cold sweat when he thought of that. He quickly thanked Zheng Dan. "Thank you for reminding me... Or else I might really screw myself over one day."

Zheng Dan had thought that Zu An would persist with his previous attitude at first, but when she heard his agreement, she immediately had a big smile on her face.

Sang Qien rolled her eyes. These adulterers really are too much! Wasn't I saying the same thing not too long ago? And yet that idiot didn't treat it as a big deal at all. But my sister-in-law repeats those words and he immediately agrees? Do you really have to go that far to annoy me...

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After they returned to the Sang manor, Sang Hong rushed over after hearing the news. When he saw the unconscious black robed man, he was shocked and asked, "What's going on?"

Sang Qien gave him a rough summary of what happened. Sang Hong's expression became ashen and he said, "The Hu clan has gone too far. Do they think our Sang clan is so easily bullied?!"

Zu An knew that half of Sang Hong's feelings at the moment were true anger, while the other half was for Zheng Dan and her Zheng clan to see. Of course, he wouldn't expose Sang Hong at this point. He said, "Respected uncle, I fear I'll have to trouble you with the Hu clan's matters after this."

"But of course. This humble one has bided my time for so long that many people seem to have already forgotten what I'm capable of," Sang Hong said coldly.

Zu An had personally seen how easily Sang Hong had manipulated and suppressed the Chu clan's strength. He obviously didn't have to worry about a trifling Hu clan. He added, "But there is something else that's troublesome right now, which is that there's someone claiming that Cloudcenter Duke's younger brother plotted against his older brother. How should we report this to the emperor to get the most out of it?"

Sang Hong remained quiet for some time and said, "In my opinion, it might be better to not report it."

"Why is that?" That was actually what Zu An had been thinking as well, but he hadn't made his decision yet.

Sang Hong said seriously, "Do you think that by sending us to investigate Cloudcenter Duke's case, his majesty is actually interested in knowing the truth?"

Zu An shook his head and replied, "He only wants to borrow this as a pretense to fully bring down the Yu clan."

Sang Qien's expression changed slightly, but she wasn't too surprised when she heard Zu An's analysis. After all, her father and Zu An had mentioned the emperor several times, and yet neither of them were particularly respectful. However, if these words were to be heard by a third party, they would immediately be accused of being utterly disgraceful. Looks like father has already decided for the Sang clan to fully side with Zu An.

Sang Hong spoke up and said, "Indeed. So in that case, his majesty will instead be unhappy if we deliver this man's testimony, and he'll even get annoyed that we're being busybodies. Regardless of how he reacts, we'll be putting ourselves in a bad situation."

"Then respected uncle's intention is...?" Zu An asked.

"Cripple any abilities he has and break his limbs. Lock him up in the manor, and both Qien'er and Dan'er will watch over him. Once we return from Cloudcenter Commandery, we'll make our decision whether to use him or not depending on how the situation plays out," Sang Hong said coldly.

Zu An inwardly clicked his tongue. Sang Hong was a ruthless man after all! If it were me, I would probably have just decided to give Chi Tu an easy death.

"Little sister Qien is going to remain in the capital? I was hoping that she'd come with us and help us with our work." Zu An was actually a bit disappointed.

Sang Hong had an ambiguous smile on his face. Does this fella want Little Qien too? But he didn't expose Zu An and said, "Worthy junior might not know about the court's rules, but to prevent important subjects from having disloyal hearts, family members must remain in the capital."

"So that's why." Zu An looked disappointed.

Off to the side, Zheng Dan's face heated up a bit. Even she could tell that Zu An was up to no good.

Sang Qien rolled her eyes.

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After locking up Chi Tu, Zu An saw that the sky was already getting dark, so he got up to say his goodbyes. However, Sang Hong held him back instead and said that he wanted to share a few drinks.

A while later, everyone in the group was starting to become a little buzzed. They somehow ended up talking about Sang Qian, and Sang Hong couldn't help but weep. After a long time had passed, he said, "I don't know how long it'll be before we'll return from this trip... If Zheng Dan gives birth to Qian'er's posthumous child, our Sang clan will have hope."

Zu An scoffed inwardly. Did you go crazy? The two of them didn't even properly complete their wedding ceremony, so how could they have a child? But he suddenly realized something. This old man was implying something else!

He was about to ask Sang Hong what he meant, but the other party had already collapsed from drinking too much. Sang Hong lay on the table, mumbling nonsense.

"Big brother Zu, pardon my father. He drank too much." Sang Qien's complexion wasn't so good either, but she still got up to help her father. "I'll bring him back to his room. Sister-in-law, I'll have to trouble you to accompany him for a while," she said, and left with her father afterward.

Because of the alcohol, Zheng Dan's cheeks were red. She harrumphed under her breath, "Who makes their sister-in-law accompany another man? What the heck am I even doing..."

The maids had already been chased off by Sang Hong a while before, so it was only the two of them left in the room. Zu An no longer had so many misgivings and moved over, wrapping his arm around her waist. He remarked, "When did I become an outsider?"

Zheng Dan harrumphed and quickly pushed him away. "We're still in the Sang clan! Behave yourself."

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Meanwhile, in another room, Sang Qien tossed her father onto a chair in annoyance, asking, "Are you really that impatient, father?"

Sang Hong opened his eyes, but there wasn't even a trace of drunkenness in his expression. He said, "I have no choice. This trip to Cloudcenter Commandery will take at least half a year. If she got pregnant after that, not even a fool would believe that it was Qian'er's posthumous child."

"I just can't help but feel as if we're letting my brother down, though." Sang Qien bit her red lips, her expression extremely conflicted.

Sang Hong harrumphed. "Having no sons is the worst situation. Continuing the Sang clan's legacy is what's most important."

Sang Qien began to panic as well. She finally voiced her misgivings. "But even if sister-in-law got pregnant, the child would have no blood relation to the Sang clan! In that case, why don't we adopt a child? It's better than doing something humiliating like this."

Sang Hong gave her a calm look. After a momentary pause, he said, "There is a way to make the child have something to do with the Sang clan..."