

Immortal 961

Chapter 961, Part 1: Model for Us All

Zu An couldn't help but pull Bi Linglong into his arms when he saw her nervous appearance. "Haha, you care about me after all! You treated me so coldly that even my own heart was going to turn cold."

Bi Linglong was annoyed again when she heard those words, exclaiming, "It's your fault for being like that to me last time!"

"Wasn't that because you were just too beautiful?" Zu An replied with a smile while kissing her.

Bi Linglong knew that he was praising her in order to change the topic, but she was still happy to hear that. She was soon completely engrossed in the passionate kiss.

After some time, her entire body trembled. Then, she hit him a few times with her fists. This guy really was a rascal!

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A while later, Bi Linglong lazily pushed away the man in her arms, saying, "It's almost dawn. You need to leave."

"I'm not leaving," Zu An mumbled, burying his head into her chest.

"Don't cause trouble. The maids are about to come in." Bi Linglong was also reluctant, but she still retained her reason.

Zu An could only bid her farewell out of helplessness, saying, "I'm going to leave for Cloudcenter Commandery today. It might be a few months before we meet again."

Bi Linglong's eyes were filled with a warm expression. She helped him sort out his clothes while warning him, "You have to be careful. Even if you can't find out the truth, it doesn't matter. Returning safely is the most important."

"Don't worry, his majesty gave me an imperial decree this time. If there's a moment of danger, I can use his power to help me," Zu An said reassuringly.

Bi Linglong sighed in relief. She obviously knew how powerful the imperial decree was. However, she was rather surprised. Normally speaking, the emperor only entrusted his imperial decree to his trusted imperial envoys. He had actually given something like that to Zu An?

But after thinking about it, she knew that Zu An had already shown enough competency in the academy's dungeon and helped the crown prince pass the great exam, winning his majesty's trust. Something like that made sense.

Zu An lowered his head to look at her blushing face. He smiled and remarked, "You really sound like a wife talking to her husband right now, you know?"

Bi Linglong harrumphed. She quickly pushed him into the secret tunnel. She then returned to her bed and lay down. When she thought about her current identity, she couldn't help but release a long and drawn-out sigh.

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A while later, there was some activity by her door. Rong Mo knocked and said quietly, "Your highness, it's time to wake up."

Bi Linglong subconsciously pulled up the covers to hide the hickeys on her neck, but then she realized that she couldn't be seen. As such, she said with a languid voice, "I feel a bit tired today so I'm going to sleep a bit longer. Don't disturb me." It's all that rascal's fault! We were tossing and turning for most of the night!

Her entire body felt as if it were about to break apart; there was no way she was getting up now. She was the master of the Eastern Palace after all, so she didn't have to be on duty like the emperor. That degree of freedom was something she had.

Rong Mo was surprised. After all, the crown princess had always been extremely diligent. The crown prince never did any work, so it was the crown princess who handled the paperwork in the Eastern Palace. That was why she treated herself strictly. What was wrong with her today?

But she didn't say too much either. The crown princess had suffered damage to her vitality in the dungeon, so she was probably not as energetic as before anymore. She thought, It's all that bastard Zu An's fault for not properly protecting the crown princess!

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"Achoo!" Elsewhere, Zu An released a big sneeze. Which girl is thinking about me now?

He didn't have much time to sleep after leaving the Eastern Palace. He reported to the Imperial Palace and left with a hundred armed escorts.

The Armed Escort Division was a branch of the Court Defense Army. They were all specially trained elites, and the members were practically all at the fifth rank. They might not be a match for some independent warriors, but they were proficient in coordinated warfare. If they fought an equal number of enemies of the same cultivation level, they would almost always bring back an overwhelming victory. They would also have a good chance even if they were to fight some opponents who were far above the fifth rank.

The number of men present was sufficient as well. In order to defeat a hundred of these Armed Escort Division soldiers, an army several times their number would be required. However, they were representing the imperial envoy this time, so it would constitute a huge rebellion if that happened. If the enemy really intended on rebelling, it wouldn't make a difference if they sent a hundred or a thousand men.

Soon afterward, they met Sang Hong's men by the city outskirts. Even though this world's cultivation was developed, with all kinds of runes to make transportation more convenient, it still couldn't compare to the science and technology of Zu An's previous world, where there were trains and planes.

After all, rune formations exhausted a large supply of ki stones, making them too expensive. Only a few people could enjoy such luxury, while most people couldn't. That was why, just like in the olden times of his previous world, traveling by water routes was the most convenient.

The Great Suidan River stretched several thousand miles from north to south. It just happened to pass by the capital as well. The tributary rivers had been cut wider, forming a convenient and fast system. The capital was an incredibly large city that used up a lot of food, wood, ore, and other resources; almost all of these resources came through water transport.

The diplomatic fleet would follow the Great Suidan River north. They would then get off and head west until they reached Cloudcenter Commandery. After all, the Great Suidan River didn't pass through Cloudcenter Commandery.

This time, Sang Hong was acting as the imperial envoy. There were also some officials present, representing the court. The emperor had even sent over some eunuchs to read his decree and make their send-off grander.

Zu An yawned. Thank goodness he had Sang Hong to help him deal with the formalities. Otherwise, he would really have been annoyed to death.

Suddenly, he noticed some familiar figures among the crowd. He was happy and surprised, exclaiming, "How come you guys are here too?"

The two young men had impressive bearings. Their style was entirely different from everyone else.

One of them had a square face, giving off an upright and earnest feeling. He looked quite reliable. The other one had more of a gloomy handsomeness, clearly a young man who had some psychological pains.

The two of them were naturally Gao Ying and Pei You.

Gao Ying's serious expression also gave way to a smile. He said, "This trip to Cloudcenter Commandery is a great chance to shine that many clans have competed over. Many people tried to join it, but the fact that we're able to be here today is also from sharing your spotlight."

Pei You didn't try to keep up his aloof and cool exterior anymore. He lowered his voice and said with a smile, "I heard that all of the girls up north are slender with long legs. I've been itching to go there for a long time already, and now I finally have a chance. How can I miss a chance like this?"

Zu An had a strange look on his face. This kid looked like an antisocial recluse, and yet he was actually like this in front of his close friends! Wasn't there a phrase for someone like this? Right, it was 'cold outside but passionate inside'. Many of his fellow students in his previous world were like that. He suddenly felt a strong sense of closeness then.

"This time, things might not be smooth sailing in Cloudcenter Commandery." Zu An couldn't tell them too much at the moment, so he could only vaguely warn them.

Gao Ying replied, "Don't worry, brother Zu. The two of us haven't lived all these years for nothing. At the very least, we won't hold you back. We might even be of some help."

Zu An figured that made sense as well. The two were both at the peak of the sixth rank, already the best among their peers. Furthermore, they had the Liu clan and Pei clan backing them, so they would be powerful assets.

"Brother-in-law, brother-in-law!" A young man's melodious voice rang out. The ridiculously handsome man waved toward Zu An.

Zu An smiled. He quickly greeted her, asking, "Why are you here, Youzhao?" When he saw Murong Qinghe next to her, he nodded toward her and added, "Greetings, Qinghe."

"Greetings, big brother Zu," Murong Qinghe replied naturally. However, her attention quickly returned to Chu Youzhao. Her big brother was so handsome; no other man could compare to him!

Gao Ying nudged Pei You, saying, "Tsk tsk tsk, you're being completely outdone here."

"How much admiration did Chu First Miss draw from the other aristocratic heirs in the capital back then? With such a stunning beauty as his big sister, how can the little brother be inferior?" Pei You didn't really mind. He added, "Furthermore, when did a real man ever have to depend on their face to prevail?"

Gao Ying had a bitter smile on his face. You handsome men might not have such misgivings, but the rest of us with ordinary appearances have to worry about this a lot! But he was an open-minded person and quickly snapped out of those negative emotions.

Meanwhile, Chu Youzhao had a huge smile on her face. "Brother-in-law is going on a long trip, so of course we have to come and see you off! Here, these are the warm clothes I prepared for you. It's cold up there, so you have to make sure to wear more. These are some pastries from Auspicious Virtue Restaurant for you to nibble on when you get peckish along the way. These are..."

Zu An felt warm inside when he saw her give him all kinds of things. It really is nice to have someone care about you.

"Thank you, but this doesn't seem to really suit your nature..." Zu An still quickly realized something. Even though Chu Youzhao was a girl, she had been raised as a boy, so she was a bit more crass. How could she think things through so meticulously?

Chu Youzhao's expression became a bit unnatural, but in the end, she still said truthfully, "Qinghe helped me prepare a lot of these things; for example, your clothing measurements and other stuff..."

Murong Qinghe blushed and said, "I was just helping my big brother Chu."

Zu An was surprised. Murong Qinghe, this little tomboy, actually had such a meticulous side to her! It seemed a girl was a girl after all. Comparatively speaking, Chu Youzhao was much more simple-minded.

"Thank you guys. I'll bring you around to have fun once I come back from Cloudcenter Commandery." Zu An really wanted to smack himself in the mouth as soon as he said that. Why did it sound as if he were setting a flag for himself? Pah pah pah, knock on wood...

"Yay!" Chu Youzhao became excited. Murong Qinghe didn't actually care that much, because if her big brother Chu was happy, then she was happy too.

Chapter 961, Part 2: Model for Us All

Meanwhile, Gao Ying was puzzled. He mused, "Didn't Elder Murong lose his official post because of brother Zu? Why does it seem like the Murong clan's young miss is on really good terms with brother Zu?"

"Brother Zu possesses extraordinary charm. Even someone like Lady Nan Xun, a courtesan queen who left the entire capital shaken, thinks highly of him, so how could a little girl from the Murong clan resist?" Pei You actually felt incredibly envious as he spoke. They had been witnesses themselves that night. Such a mental blow really was too powerful.

"I think Murong Qinghe is quite pretty too. Even though her skin is a bit dark, she's a beauty in the making as well. Give or take a few more years, she might not be worse than Nan Xun." Gao Ying assessed her while stroking his chin.

In what kind of situation did men grow closer the fastest? It was when they chatted about women. The two of them had experienced life and death in the dungeon together, after which they had gone to a place like Scarlet Invitation. Now, they really were close friends. They would still never say such things in front of others, but in private, there was no longer any need for them to be as uptight as before.

"Huh?" Pei You rubbed his own arm as if he had goosebumps. "I didn't expect you to be that kind of person."

Gao Ying was stunned at first, but then he was furious. "You bastard, you know that's not what I meant! I like big breasts and big butts! We even went to Scarlet Invitation a few times together; don't you know what kind of tastes I have?"

Pei You reminded him, "Lower your voice, or else your reputation will be done for if anyone else heard what you just said."

Gao Ying looked all around him. Sure enough, there were some people who had looked in their direction when they heard the noise. His face heated up.

Pei You suddenly blew a long whistle and remarked, "Oh man, who is that babe over there?"

"Where?" Gao Ying followed Pei You's gaze. He saw a woman in a blue dress arrive from a distance. Her hair was tied up in the most elegant and beautiful bun, and there was an aura of gentleness around her.

Did she come from the Book of Songs or something? For some reason, that thought suddenly appeared in both of their heads.

The girl was extremely beautiful, but that was all. For young masters like them from large clans, they were used to seeing pretty girls in the capital. What was unique about her was the scholarly aura around her. It really was a breath of fresh air for the two of them.

"This is the kind of woman you want to bring back home to serve you as a good wife!" Pei You couldn't help but say with a sigh.

"Indeed..." Gao Ying felt deep sympathy. Even though the girls from the brothel were charming and seemed cheerful, compared to this woman, those girls immediately seemed dull.

"I wonder which clan's young miss she is," Pei You mused. Even though they could tell that her clothes weren't excessively extravagant, the material was fine. Together with her special temperament, they knew she was definitely not a girl from a peasant family.

"Why does she look a bit familiar? Have we met her somewhere before?" Gao Ying asked, puzzled.

"I thought I was the only one!" Pei You was surprised. "Huh? She's walking in this direction. Don't tell me I caught her eye?" He straightened his back and sorted out his uniform. They were setting out on a formal diplomatic mission, so he was dressed up properly in his official uniform. He looked much more proper than usual.

Gao Ying thought to himself, This guy really puts on airs! He knows there's no chance she is seeking him out, but he just won't admit it. "Drop the act already. Even if she is coming for one of us, she'll be looking for brother Zu."

Pei You's eyes twitched. He was about to fire back, but his eyes soon widened. That woman did walk toward Zu An after all!

"Big brother Zu~" The sweet-tempered woman greeted Zu An warmly.

"Daoyun, why are you here?" Zu An was happy and surprised to see her. The woman was naturally Xie Daoyun.

Chu Youzhao's eyebrows furrowed. She didn't feel the happiness of seeing someone from the same hometown, but rather felt a sense of danger.

"Big brother Zu is about to go on a long journey, so I asked my teacher for half a day of vacation to see you off. My little brother wanted to come too, but he's reached a critical period in his cultivation and his teacher won't allow him to leave, so that's why I apologize in his place. I hope big brother Zu won't take offense." Xie Daoyun's voice was soothing, like raindrops falling into a lake. Those who heard it couldn't help but feel a sense of peacefulness.

"Why would I take offense? Cultivation is obviously more important," Zu An replied.

"Right, winter has already arrived. The north is cold, so this little sister prepared..." Xie Daoyun reached into a storage pouch while speaking. However, her eyes suddenly shifted to the clothes off to the side and she froze up.

Chu Youzhao cried out, "Oh my, my big sister already prepared so much winter clothing for my brother-in-law already! Could it be that Miss Xie has prepared clothes as well?"

Murong Qinghe had a strange expression on her face. Why is he saying this? Does he think this Miss Xie has something going on with his brother-in-law? This is just like the second wife and third wife fighting back home, how boring.

But my big brother Chu is doing this for his big sister! I guess this is fine.

"That's not it." Xie Daoyun quickly recovered. Her hand moved in a different direction inside the pouch. She took out something else. "The north is cold, and Cloudcenter Commandery's customs are also tougher than here. If you have this talisman with you, it can serve as an extra layer of protection."

Zu An recognized that the talisman she was holding was a Last Breath Talisman, just like the previous time. He was overjoyed, exclaiming, "Thank you, little sister Daoyun! This talisman protected my life last time in the dungeon. I feel much more at ease with this at my side."

Chu Youzhao's enmity immediately lessened when she heard that Xie Daoyun was giving Zu An a life-saving treasure. Instead, she found her much more pleasing.

Xie Daoyun instead felt a bit apologetic, saying, "It's a pity that I could only make a single one of these talismans, because the conditions for creating it are extremely strict. Otherwise, it would've been better if I could prepare more of them for big brother Zu."

"Little sister Daoyun, please don't blame yourself. I'm also a cultivator, so I know just how precious these things that can save one's life are. How could its creation be easy? I'm already endlessly grateful to be able to obtain one of them. I don't even know how to repay you." Zu An wanted to tease her and say he didn't mind devoting his entire body to her, but he was worried that he might be rude by saying that with so many people here.

Xie Daoyun smiled and said, "Big brother Zu's words are too serious. I really liked the poem and zither song you gave me last time."

Chu Youzhao immediately erupted into rage when she heard that. Her brother-in-law had secretly given another girl a poem?! Even I didn't even get one yet!

You have successfully trolled Chu Youzhao for +288 +288 +288...

Zu An jumped in fright. What is this girl getting all mad for?

Xie Daoyun said gently, "I've already been away for some time and need to return for cultivation. Big brother Zu, please take good care of yourself." There were too many people by the dock, and she wasn't too used to showing herself in the open.

"Little sister Daoyun, you need to take care of yourself as well. Don't tire yourself too much from cultivating." Zu An waved goodbye. Xie Daoyun blushed. She nodded toward him and left.

"She's already gone; what are you still looking that way for?" Chu Youzhao mumbled bitterly.

Zu An was about to respond when a sweet fragrance wafted over. A gentle and lovely voice remarked, "That seems to be City Lord Xie's daughter, right? Truly an old friend in a foreign place; a pity that she couldn't stay longer for a chat."

Gao Ying and Pei You's eyes were wide open. They exclaimed, "Why are there two more beauties?"

"They seem to be the Sang clan's people." Gao Ying recalled that the two seemed to have come from Sang Hong's side.

"There have always been rumors that the Sang clan's daughter-in-law was beautiful. Because she was widowed not long after she got married, there were quite a few young masters from the capital who were interested. Now, I can see that she's even more beautiful than the rumors state," Pei You couldn't help but say in praise.

He couldn't pick out many flaws even with his strict gaze. The woman carried the charms of a girl from the pleasure quarters, and yet also had the dignified aura of a distinguished clan's daughter. He really didn't know how one person could perfectly blend those two entirely different characteristics.

But when he recalled her background, he couldn't help but sigh. "She was widowed at such a young age... It really is tragic."

"I advise you not to have any thoughts about her," Gao Ying said quietly.

"I'm just admiring a beauty, okay?" Pei You immediately defended himself. But he still couldn't help but ask, "Why?"

"Did you not notice that she's all smiles? Does she look like a widowed woman at all? Furthermore, I heard that she and brother Zu were locked up together when they were brought to the capital, and the two of them even shared a carriage..." Gao Ying gave him a look.

"Really?" Pei You was shocked.

"Look at her expression, man. She keeps smiling as she looks at brother Zu." Gao Ying gestured toward them with his head.

Pei You looked over. Sure enough, Zheng Dan's eyes were smiling, and she was looking at Zu An most of the time. He said, "You're right... Huh? Why does Miss Sang's expression look similar?"

Even Gao Ying was shocked. He looked over, and sure enough, he saw that even though Sang Qien was half hiding behind Zheng Dan, she still looked at Zu An from time to time. There was something different in her expression!

"Miss Sang is a beauty herself too." Pei You sighed in praise. Unlike Zheng Dan, Sang Qien had an entirely different kind of beauty.

If Zheng Dan was a charming newlywed wife, Sang Qien was a youthful young lady. The reason why they had discussed Zheng Dan more before was because there weren't too many who had been widowed at her age.

His expression became strange as he said, "So you're saying that brother Zu got both of them... Amazing!"

Even the usually square Gao Ying couldn't help but say with a sigh of admiration, "Brother Zu really is a model for us all. We need to properly consult him in this journey to come."

Of course, the two of them didn't think that Zu An had any real tangible relationship with the two. However, the fact that he could receive both girls' favor was shocking in itself.

Little did they know that the target of their admiration was currently stuck in a battlefield of asuras. Chu Youzhao pinched Zu An's waist while saying with a smile, "Brother-in-law seems to have many little sisters!"

Zu An felt a huge headache. Fortunately, Sang Hong asked curiously just then, "Huh? Where is Golden Token Sir Eleven? Why hasn't he arrived yet?"

Chapter 962, Part 1: Luck Talisman

It was a perfect opportunity for Zu An. He said, "I'll go and take a look." Then, without waiting for the girls to say anything, he quickly ran off into the distance. The best way to deal with this kind of asura battlefield was to run.

Chu Youzhao huffed and puffed in anger. Brother-in-law is so unreliable! She had actually received a warning from her second sister before, but she hadn't treated it as a huge deal. After all, did she really

need a warning about something so simple? But now that she saw all of the girls surrounding Zu An herself, she suddenly realized she had been given an incredibly tough mission.

Zheng Dan looked at her with a smile and said, "Youzhao, we're all from Brightmoon City, and I was even schoolmates with your big sister. To a certain degree, I'm your big sister too. Why do I feel as if you don't like me at all?"

Chu Youzhao's eyes darted around, but then she thought of something. "Big sister Zheng... Ah, no, I should call you Madam Sang now, right? Your husband died an untimely death, and you're the one who has to bear the reputation. Sigh..."

Zheng Dan's eyes twitched. Why did this young master Chu seem as sharp mouthed as a girl, his every word attacking her sore spot?

Sang Qien took a step forward to defend her, saying, "Young master Chu, please speak carefully. These are sharp and unkind words that tarnish the Chu and Qin clan's demeanor." Since the other party had mentioned the Sang clan, she naturally couldn't just watch without doing anything.

Zheng Dan gave her a grateful look. For the first time, the two of them seemed to be of the same mind. But they both seemed to have thought of something a second later, which made both of them look away unnaturally.

Chu Youzhao wanted to say something else, but Murong Qinghe tugged on her sleeves and said quietly, "There are people watching, so it won't be good if we get into a big argument."

Murong Qinghe obviously wasn't all that worried about offending other people. What she was more worried about was that her big brother Chu's reputation might be damaged in front of so many people. She grumbled inwardly, Chu First Miss really is a bossy shopkeeper. She never does anything herself and makes her big brother Chu take on all of these annoying responsibilities.

After some hesitation, Chu Youzhao thought continuing might also embarrass her brother-in-law, so she harrumphed angrily and looked away. She didn't say anything else.

Meanwhile, Zu An arrived at Sang Hong's side. He asked, "Sir Sang, what's wrong?" It wasn't too appropriate for him to call Sang Hong 'Uncle Hong' in public. It was better to call him 'Sir Sang'.

Sang Hong said with a worried expression, "Sir Eleven hasn't arrived yet."

His concern wasn't unfounded. After all, the statuses of Embroidered Envoys were special. To a certain degree, they represented the emperor's power. Furthermore, there was going to be danger lurking on all sides during the trip to Cloudcenter Commandery. Having a golden token envoy traveling with them would give them a bit more confidence. Every single golden token envoy was a powerful asset, regardless of whether it was their intellect or cultivation.

Zu An said, "I think he's coming soon."

Three people arrived as soon as he spoke. The one in front blinked hard from time to time. The other two were bald. There was one whose forehead was balding, while the other was balding in the middle. They were quite eye-catching within the Embroidered Envoy group.

"I greet Sir Sang and Sir Zu. Silver Token Envoy Xiao Jianren reports," the person in front said. They were naturally Golden Token Eleven's subordinates. The other two were Dai Seventh and Chen Eighth, but they didn't need to introduce themselves as their ranks were too low.

"Greetings, Sir Xiao." Sang Hong also cupped his hands, his tone polite. Even though their official ranks were about the same, Embroidered Envoys were all incredible existences. A silver token envoy was already a high level figure among the Embroidered Envoys, so there was no need to offend this person. He couldn't help but look around, asking, "Where is Sir Eleven?"

Xiao Jianren replied, "Sir Eleven had us leave first. He will follow us in secret."

Zu An smiled without saying anything. This was what he had arranged with them beforehand. He really wouldn't be able to juggle everything properly if he had to accompany the fleet with both identities. Fortunately, the Embroidered Envoy had been mysterious to begin with, so these arrangements were acceptable.

Sang Hong frowned. However, when he recalled the various legends of the golden token envoys, he didn't voice any objections. "This is good as well, having both overt and covert defenses. Our plans will become more flexible too."

Then, Sang Hong had to arrange for Zu An's group to get on the boat. He said to Zu An, "I have some things to take care of. Since Little Qien and Zheng Dan came to see us off, please help me take care of them for a bit."

"Sure." Zu An's expression was a bit strange. Ever since he had found out about their plan, he began paying more attention to Sang Hong's words and actions. Wasn't Sang Hong already clearly setting him up with them?

At first, he had looked down on Sang Hong somewhat over the matter, but that gradually changed to admiration. Sang Hong was only acting for the sake of the clan. As expected, he was someone who thought of the greater situation. How could an ordinary person be able to do something like this?

He walked over to where Sang Qien and Zheng Dan were and immediately sensed an unusual mood. But he wasn't stupid enough to ask what was happening. Instead, he changed the topic, saying, "Little sister Qien, Miss Zheng, I'll take good care of Sir Sang on this trip."

Chu Youzhao's brows furrowed when she heard him call another person 'little sister'. However, it didn't seem as if there were any problems in what they were talking about, so she held herself back from acting out.

Sang Qien was already used to being called 'little sister', but when she heard it this time, she felt a bit awkward for some reason. She thought to herself, Are there any big brothers who do that kind of thing to their little sisters? But she didn't show anything in front of everyone else. "Then I'll have to trouble Zu... big brother Zu. Furthermore, this trip north will definitely be full of danger. You need to take good care of yourself."

Zu An was a bit surprised to hear that she was actually concerned about him. As such, he smiled and said, "Thank you, little sister Qien, for your care."

Sang Qien's face heated up. She avoided his gaze. Who's worried about you? This is just because I'm worried that in the future... She subconsciously rubbed her stomach. Her expression was extremely conflicted.

Zheng Dan's gaze moved between the two of them. Her woman's intuition told her that something was strange between them, and it seemed to have started from the night Zu An had drunk too much at their manor. Alright, I'm going to try and get some information out of little Qien once we get back.

She retracted her gaze and took out a parcel, saying, "These are some clothes and rations little Qien and I prepared for my father-in-law. We also prepared a portion for you. I'll have to trouble big brother Zu to give it to my father-in-law."

Such parcels were small-scale storage artifacts. Even though they were expensive, they weren't too rare. With the Sang clan's status, it wasn't surprising for them to have such things.

Chu Youzhao ground her teeth. What are the Sang clan's women trying to do? You guys can just prepare for your dad; why are you giving stuff to my brother-in-law too?! I have to warn my big sis once I go back. There are many vixens after my brother-in-law's body!

Zu An knew that she had actually prepared the package just for him, and that she was only using Sang Hong as a pretext. He received it with a smile, saying, "Thank you, Miss Zheng and little sister Qien'er."

Gao Ying and Pei You, who had been watching all of the drama from a distance, felt incredibly jealous. They thought to themselves that Zu An really had crazy luck with women! There were so many girls who had given him gifts, and all of them were even stunning beauties!

Pei You nudged Gao Ying and asked, "Look over there; is someone else coming in this direction?"

Gao Ying looked in the direction Pei You was indicating. He saw an extravagant carriage slowly stop nearby. A penetrating fragrance reached all the way to where they were. Then, a cute little maid got off the carriage and walked toward Zu An.

"Isn't that Scarlet Invitation's carriage?" Gao Ying asked, his tone uncertain.

"It is." Pei You went there more often, so he was more familiar with such things. "That seems to be Lady Nan Xun's personal maid."

Gao Ying's eyes widened when he looked at the carriage. He exclaimed, "Then doesn't that mean that the one sitting inside is Lady Nan Xun?"

"Who else could it be?" Pei You was also filled with endless envy. "It was supposed to just be a happy event without romance, and yet the capital's most popular courtesan queen actually personally came to see brother Zu off. He really is a model for all men!"

Gao Ying took a deep breath and said, "From now on, brother Zu is my big brother. If we can pick up even just one or two things from him, we'll benefit tremendously."

"You're right!" Pei You nodded in agreement. In reality, with their clan backgrounds and status, they didn't lack cultivation resources or techniques at all. That was why no matter how high Zu An's cultivation was, they would normally only feel respect and not envy. However, his ways with women were skills all men wanted.

Meanwhile, the maid had arrived. She bowed and said, “Young master Zu, my lady invites you for a chat.”

Chu Youzhao quickly grabbed Zu An’s sleeves, exclaiming, “Who is her lady? Why isn’t she coming here herself?!”

Even Zheng Dan and Sang Qien looked toward the carriage vigilantly. They felt a mysterious sense of danger.

The maid was a bit troubled. She said, “My lady’s status makes it difficult for her to show herself in public. She fears that there might be a commotion if she comes out.”

Zu An knew what she was saying. With Nan Xun’s reputation, she was just like one of his previous world’s most famous stars. Once she appeared, it would be stranger if there weren’t a disturbance.

He patted Chu Youzhao’s hand to calm her down, saying, “I’ll be back soon.” Then, he followed the maid into the carriage.

Zheng Dan got on her tiptoes and looked in the direction of the carriage. Unfortunately, she couldn’t see inside at all. She thought of something, then said to Chu Youzhao, “Your brother-in-law seems to be liked by many girls.”

Chu Youzhao rolled her eyes impatiently and shot back, “That’s none of your business.” Aren’t you one of them yourself?

But Zheng Dan didn’t take offense to her tone. She replied, “Chuyan is all the way in Brightmoon City right now, so as her little brother, you should be keeping an eye on him, right? Otherwise, those vixens might just steal your brother-in-law away.”

Chu Youzhao was shocked. Did I misunderstand this girl? Does she have nothing going on with brother-in-law, and is she only friends with him because of her friendship with my big sis? Her expression eased a bit and she said, “Of course I know that. Brother-in-law and big sis are really close anyway, so he won’t do anything that lets down my big sis.”

Sang Qien and Zheng Dan’s expressions both turned strange when they heard those words. Chu Chuyan is quite intelligent, so why is her little brother so... naive?

Sang Qien secretly snuck Zheng Dan a look. My sister-in-law is a two-faced person after all. She actually knows how to use someone else to do the dirty work, to make Chu Chuyan’s younger brother help her get rid of her rival in love!

I have to make sure to get on her good side in the future, or else she’ll screw me over without me even realizing it!

Wait, why am I even fighting against my own sister-in-law anyway? What the heck is going on...

Chapter 962, Part 2: Luck Talisman

Meanwhile, just as Zu An entered the carriage, he felt a wave of heat attack him. There was a sweet fragrance inside that would make any man melt.

A soft and expensive southern-style carpet covered the bottom of the carriage. In the center was a fine and exquisite coffee table, with a chair on each side. The chairs were covered in wool and fur, and there was a heater underneath each one that provided warmth.

Be careful of carbon monoxide poisoning... Zu An couldn't help but say inwardly. But when he recalled that the two inside weren't ordinary people, he didn't worry too much about that anymore.

No matter how extravagantly decorated the interior of the carriage was, it still couldn't compare to the two girls inside at all, though.

Nan Xun was dressed in a glistening dress that resembled something one would wear to a nightclub of Zu An's previous world. Her curves were perfectly displayed.

Kong Nanwu was much more reserved. She wore a simple yet elegant white dress. As she sat there, she looked graceful and charming, giving off the feeling of an aloof immortal goddess.

Zu An even wondered if Kong Nanwu was originally a peacock or a crane. He looked down to observe her legs underneath the dress. He wanted to see if she wore black leggings like a red-crowned crane.

When she sensed his gaze, Kong Nanwu awkwardly adjusted her dress, asking, "What is young master looking at?"

"You're dressed up so properly, I couldn't see anything even if I wanted to," Zu An replied with a smile.

Kong Nanwu was speechless.

She had spent quite a bit of time among humans. Even though she rarely made an appearance, she had still met with some human men due to her various tasks. Those men were always stunned whenever they saw her appearance, and all of them would carefully praise her out of fear of ruining her impression of them. And yet, this fellow was completely different. He didn't try to hide his lewdness at all.

Fortunately, Nan Xun helped her out of her predicament, saying, "Sigh, young master really forgets your old friends once you meet new ones. You hardly ever greet me whenever you see me. Because of you, my mouth was sore for several days for nothing."

Zu An chuckled. He sat right next to her, causing her to cry out in alarm. He took her into his arms, and his hands naturally roamed across her voluptuous body.

"Young master, you're so bad... Ah!..." Nan Xun's entire body trembled. There was a hint of an alluring expression in her eyes.

Zu An said with a smile, "But if I act too politely, you'll blame me for ignoring you again."

At the same time, he sighed in amazement inwardly. The fiend races' Tiger-Devoured Ghost technique really was incredible! Apart from her body being a bit colder to the touch than usual, she really wasn't all that different from a living person.

Kong Nanwu coughed lightly and remarked, "Can the two of you please pay attention to where we are right now? There's someone else here right now."

Nan Xun said with a chuckle, "But master isn't an outsider. Should the young master give you a hug too perhaps?"

A trace of redness appeared and disappeared in a flash on Kong Nanwu's face. She harrumphed and said, "It seems as though I've been treating you so well that you're now out of control."

"You're not allowed to scare my girl like that," Zu An said in dissatisfaction. Nan Xun really was a little demoness who knew how to get him going. The way she had been King Qi's concubine in the past made him feel even more satisfied.

Kong Nanwu shifted her gaze so that she didn't have to look at them anymore. She remarked, "I heard that the young master is about to leave for Cloudcenter Commandery. I wonder what this trip is for?"

"That's a court secret I fear I can't share," Zu An replied with a smile.

"I understand." Kong Nanwu didn't get angry. "However, right now, Cloudcenter Commandery isn't a peaceful place at all. Young master must be careful."

Zu An was shocked. "Could it be that the lady knows something?"

Kong Nanwu only smiled silently. She didn't reply to his question and instead said, "By the way, the Strange Tales the young master wrote last time were quite interesting. I wonder if there's a sequel?"

"I wasn't the one who wrote it; it was written by a sir named Pu Songling," Zu An corrected her.

"Looks like the young master doesn't wish to let his name be known due to various misgivings. However, Nanwu wishes to thank the young master in the fiend races' place. Just like humans, there are good and bad people among the fiend races, but the human race has always villainized us. Only the young master has upheld justice," Kong Nanwu said gratefully.

Zu An didn't know how to correct her misunderstanding, so he decided to just remain silent.

Kong Nanwu handed him a sachet, saying, "The north is dangerous. This is our clan's special Luck Talisman. It might be able to turn misfortune into blessing if the young master has it by his side."

"Thank you." Zu An was surprised. She seemed to be implying something, but there was no need to refuse it when he sensed the good intentions in her voice. He opened up the sachet immediately. Kong Nanwu cried out in alarm to stop him, but it was already too late.

Zu An took out a green feather from the sachet. It was a bit similar to the feather Kong Nanwu had used when they fought, but this feather was much smaller, and also softer. He had a strange look on his face as he asked, "Is this a peacock feather?"

After some hesitation, Kong Nanwu nodded. Zu An already knew that she was from the fiend races anyway, so there wasn't anything worth hiding. However, his next words completely shattered her expectations as he asked, "Did you pluck this out of your own body?"

Nan Xu burst out laughing, while Kong Nanwu was even more ashamed and panicked. She reached out her hand and shouted, "Give it back if you don't want it!"

You have successfully trolled Kong Nanwu for +111 +111 +111...

Zu An was fast, immediately putting it away and saying, "I obviously need to protect something as precious as this; I'm really grateful for your care and love."

Kong Nanwu grinded her teeth when she saw that she couldn't get it back. In the end, she looked away and ignored him.

Nan Xun chuckled and said, "Young master, the young miss has good intentions. That item will be helpful to you if you keep it at your side."

Zu An was surprised. He had examined the feather with his ki and saw that it wasn't a magic weapon or anything. He didn't know what kinds of benefits it would have. But he knew that they weren't going to tell him due to how secretive they were being.

He chuckled and said, "Then wait for me to come back. I'll share the other stories from Sir Pu with the two ladies then."

Kong Nanwu's expression thus eased a bit. She said, "I've troubled the young master. However, please have someone else do the writing next time." She was clearly mocking his handwriting for being horrendous.

Zu An thought to himself, This girl seems to hold quite a grudge. She didn't forget to stab me back here.

Nan Xun smiled inwardly. Only this young master could make my master so flustered. She leaned into Zu An's embrace and said, "Young master, I really want to go with you... I can even serve you on the way."

"How will you serve me?" Zu An hooked her beautiful chin with a finger and stared at her radiant face. He felt a bit regretful inwardly. Why did I have to pretend to be such an upright gentleman last time? She's so willing, so why am I holding back?

"In any way..." Nan Xun giggled. Someone as well-trained as she naturally knew how to tease a man. Sure enough, Zu An felt blood rush through his body. Nan Xun immediately felt it herself, and her smile became even more charming.

Meanwhile, Kong Nanwu really couldn't stand the pair anymore. She interrupted them with a light cough, saying, "Forget about the fact that you have your reputation to keep in the capital, even if you could go, you'd disappear if you got too far from me."

Nan Xun replied, "My lady can go with the young master too!"

Kong Nanwu felt annoyed at that point. She grabbed Nan Xun's ear and exclaimed, "Who is your master here?"

Nan Xun smiled apologetically, saying, "I am my lady's servant, of course. But I also became the young master's woman not too long ago."

Kong Nanwu was speechless.

Zu An voiced his amazement inwardly. This Nan Xun really is quite something! She's cold and arrogant in front of others, and yet she's as gentle as a little kitten in front of me... The two sides are way too different; even a hardened lewd veteran like me is having a bit of trouble...

Chu Youzhao called out from outside, "Brother-in-law, the ship is about to leave already! Why aren't you coming out yet?"

Kong Nanwu took the chance to chase Zu An out. Otherwise, only heaven knew what kind of crazy things the cutely acting Nan Xun would do.

...

When Zu An left, the flirtatious Nan Xun immediately returned to her usual cold and arrogant self. She sat properly down in her seat.

"What, you're done acting cute?" Kong Nanwu sneered.

Nan Xun rushed over to help massage her back, replying, "I was just carrying out my lady's orders, you know? I was doing my best to seduce him."

"Really? It looked to me as if you were actually having fun," Kong Nanwu said expressionlessly.

"Of course not! My loyalty to the lady is unbreakable. If I have any disloyalty, I won't rest easy even if I become a ghost," Nan Xun promised while patting her chest, making that part ripple.

"You're already a ghost to begin with!" Kong Nanwu laughed out of annoyance.

The two girls bickered for a while longer, but then Kong Nanwu returned to her usual strict self. She said, "Once we return, make a transcription of Strange Tales, then hand it to a bookstore to have it published."

Nan Xun felt a bit troubled and replied, "I fear there might not be many bookstores who are willing to put their seal on a book like this, no?"

There were stories about all kinds of monsters and ghosts, making it easy for one to associate them with the fiend races. They could create some problems.

"Are you really not familiar with the black market at all?" Kong Nanwu asked impatiently. "Don't go through the official channels; circulate the book among the lower level commoners first. We'll imperceptibly start to influence everyone's rigid attitudes toward the fiend races."

"My lady is wise and brilliant after all..." Nan Xun immediately showered her with praise. "Then what name should we use as the author? Should I help young master Zu leave behind his name?"

After some hesitation, Kong Nanwu shook her head in the end, saying, "Let's give up on that idea. This book might cause quite a bit of trouble, and it might have some bad influence on him later on."

Nan Xun immediately cheered up, exclaiming, "Looks like my lady cares quite a bit about the young master!"

Kong Nanwu's expression became a bit dangerous. She said, "Stop with those thoughts. I ordered you to seduce him, and it's one thing if you like him, but don't drag me into trouble just because you want to stay at his side."

Nan Xun immediately sensed waves of stinging pain in her soul. She knew that her life and death could be decided through a single thought from the other party. She couldn't help but shiver and exclaim, "My lady, forgive me!"

Chapter 963: Eleven Golden Token Envoys

Kong Nanwu stared at Nan Xun for a while. When Nan Xun began to shudder all over, she then retracted her gaze. She sat down leisurely on her soft chair again and said, "Let's go back."

"Understood!" Nan Xun replied respectfully. Then, she pushed open the door a bit to give orders to the driver outside. The carriage slowly headed back toward Scarlet Investigation.

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"Brother-in-law, you said that you went to Scarlet Invitation to investigate a case, so why did their courtesan queen come looking for you?" Chu Youzhao looked at the slowly departing carriage and asked with an unkind expression.

Zu An felt that dealing with this situation was a pain in the ass. Chuyan wasn't at his side, and yet he still had to explain such things to a silly little girl. It really was too hard! He replied, "What can I say? Your brother-in-law is just too likable and has friends everywhere. Everyone likes me regardless of whether they're men or women. You can look at the two over there if you don't believe me; they're men, but aren't they always greeting me with smiles?"

Sure enough, when Chu Youzhao turned to look in the direction Zu An indicated, Pei You and Gao Ying had brilliant smiles on their faces when they saw Zu An looking over. They thought, Brother Zu must be trying to introduce his little brother-in-law to us! Alright, we have to make sure we give off a nicer impression.

"Weirdos!" Chu Youzhao felt something entirely different when she saw their smiles. She pulled at Zu An nervously, saying, "Brother-in-law, you shouldn't get that close to other guys..."

There were quite a few high officials who had habits of raising male pets. Chu Youzhao had naturally heard about them before. After thinking about it, she would rather have her brother-in-law be a womanizer than someone who messed around with other men! Gross... I'm shaking just from thinking about it.

"Big brother Zu, that courtesan truly shares deep sentiment with you. A woman like that really is a target of admiration," Zheng Dan said as she walked over with a smile. The taciturn Sang Qien followed behind her.

"Haha, we're just normal friends..." Zu An chuckled. He thought to himself, These beauties are awesome to have around, but when they meet each other, it really is a hellish battlefield!

Fortunately, something seemed to be happening with the procession. He quickly said, "The ship is leaving soon, so I need to get on. It's cold outside, so you all should hurry back."

Now that they were about to separate, the girls couldn't be bothered with jealousy anymore. Chu Youzhao, Zheng Dan, and the others all waved to bid him farewell. "Take care of yourself!"

Their voices were full of concern. Zheng Dan knew that his trip was most likely going to be full of dangers. Chu Youzhao didn't know that, but when she thought about how she wasn't going to see her brother-in-law for a long time, she also felt truly worried.

Zu An nodded, then looked at Sang Qien. "Little sister Qien, I'm leaving soon. Aren't you going to say anything to me?"

Sang Qien's small face heated up a bit under the others' gazes. What do I have to say to someone like you? You really are shameless. But that was merely what she thought inwardly. In the end, she still said, "Big brother Zu, I wish all of you smooth sailing!" Regardless of her other thoughts, she didn't want anything to happen to Zu An either.

Zu An chuckled and remarked, "With all of you worrying about me, I have no choice but to come back safely."

While watching him leave with a big smile on his face, Murong Qinghe thought to herself, Even though this brother-in-law is a bit shameless, he is indeed quite open-minded.

After Zu An's group got onto the boat, it quickly began to move. The diplomatic representatives were all standing on deck, waving goodbyes to those who were seeing them off.

Gao Ying and Pei You walked over to Zu An's side. They looked at the young ladies in the distance who were as delicate as flowers. They were incredibly jealous and remarked, "Brother Zu truly is blessed."

"Sigh, actually, having more girls means more problems too. They almost started fighting with each other. It's hard for me being stuck in the middle too, you know?" Even though Zu An said it was annoying, he was clearly proud.

Gao Ying and Pei You were speechless.

Zu An laughed and wrapped his arm around the two of them, asking, "Why didn't I see your clansmen here to send you guys off?"

Pei You said, "I told them not to come, or else it would be all annoying if they started crying."

Gao Ying said, "I don't have too many people I'm close to back in the clan. Rather than having them come and act insincerely, it would be better to save everyone the effort."

"Haha, the two of you are rather open-minded. But having you guys on this trip with me makes it less lonely," Zu An said with a smile. He knew that Pei You was still too young, so he didn't feel too much about separation. Meanwhile, Gao Ying had a certain status to go with his identity, because even though he was part of the Liu clan in name, he was just a distant relative and not really a direct descendant. That made it so he couldn't help but feel as if he didn't really belong.

The two laughed heartily and replied, "We were just about to inquire about how one could gain the favor of women from brother Zu."

"That's simple; you just need to be handsome, perform in bed like a donkey, have a ton of money, cherish your girls carefully and gently, be considerate of them, and spend a ton of time with them..." Zu An began boasting. The two men were completely stunned and were about to prostrate themselves before Zu An.

After a while, a guard came to deliver a report. "Young masters, Sir Sang has invited you for a meeting."

Their smiles quickly faded. They knew that if Sang Hong called them over, it was definitely for something important.

Sang Hong was the imperial envoy, so his status was the highest among those present. His room was naturally also the largest and most luxurious. It was even divided into a living room, bedroom, study, and the like.

Golden Token Eleven and Sir Zu's rooms weren't bad either, and they weren't far from Sang Hong's room. Of course, Golden Token Eleven never made an appearance, and that room was still empty. However, they couldn't not prepare a room for him either.

Pei You and Gao Ying had their own rooms too. Even though they had some official rank, they were empty posts without many real responsibilities. The reason they were treated well was mostly out of respect for the clans behind them.

As for the rest, all of the others were pretty much crammed into the living quarters.

"Please have a seat, everyone." Sang Hong had a smile on his face when he saw Zu An.

"We greet Sir Sang," Pei You and Gao Ying mumbled quietly. There had always been rumors that Sang Hong was a fierce and ruthless person who didn't smile often. And yet today, it seemed those rumors weren't all that accurate.

"Everyone, there's no need for excessive formalities. We still need to work together on this trip to Cloudcenter Commandery," Sang Hong replied.

"We'll spare no effort in working with Sir Sang," came the reply. These were things the two had to say.

Sang Hong didn't think too much about those words either. He said, "I asked everyone to come today because I wanted to discuss some of the issues we might encounter in Cloudcenter Commandery..."

Then, he told them about the various points of suspicion and danger regarding the mission, discussing Cloudcenter Duke's disappearance with the group. Of course, he didn't mention the piece of information about Cloudcenter Duke's younger brother he and Zu An had found out previously.

Even so, it was enough to make both Gao Ying and Pei You's expressions change. They had thought that this would have been an easy trip to gain merit, but there were actually so many dangers involved!

However, the two weren't useless fools and didn't shrink back. Instead, they felt it was a great chance to gain some achievements. "With Sir Sang managing this situation, brother Zu's assistance, and even Golden Token Eleven, I believe we'll definitely succeed in this mission."

They had witnessed Zu An's ability in the dungeon themselves. Together with that mysterious Embroidered Envoy, there was no need for them to do too much. There was no need for them to feel scared.

Sang Hong frowned and said, "But Sir Eleven didn't get on our ship. We won't be able to coordinate with each other if something really does happen."

That was what he was most unhappy about. The other party hadn't even shown himself, so he couldn't even discuss anything with him. For someone like him who liked to scheme meticulously and think through the situation, that had become the biggest variable.

Zu An could only force a smile. He couldn't just keep hiding Golden Token Eleven forever. He'd have to see if he could resolve the matter soon.

"What are Golden Token Eleven's strengths? Do any of you know anything?" Pei You asked out of curiosity.

Gao Ying shook his head and said, "Embroidered Envoys are mysterious to begin with, and he's even a golden token envoy. I previously heard that many of the cases in the capital were solved by him, and some major figures were taken down because of him." Then, he looked toward Sang Hong and asked, "Does Sang Hong know anything else?"

Sang Hong said with an overcast voice, "Embroidered Envoys take orders from his majesty directly. As for golden token envoys, there are only eleven of them in total under the Chief Commander, and every one of them has tremendous responsibilities. There are rumors that the golden token envoys are scattered throughout the country, each of them responsible for an area spanning thousands of li. They're in charge of collecting intelligence and monitoring the local officials. Since Zhuxie Chixin oversees the capital, there has never been a golden token envoy assigned here. This Golden Token Eleven came out of thin air, so I believe no powers have been able to investigate his background."

Zu An thought to himself that no wonder, even though he had been in the capital for so long, he still hadn't met a single other golden token envoy. It turned out all of them were overseeing different areas of the empire!

That meant the golden token the emperor had given him was just an empty title! There were so many big shots in the capital, and there was even the emperor and Zhuxie Chixin, who were both above him. Compared to his colleagues overseeing different areas, their authority and resources were both on an entirely different level!

"Then what about their cultivation ranks?" Pei You asked. That was what he was more concerned with.

Sang Hong shook his head and said, "This is a secret in itself. The Embroidered Envoys were mysterious to begin with, and golden token envoys are even more mysterious. No one can say how high their cultivation ranks are exactly. However, we have a rough gauge on the strength of Golden Token Eleven."

Zu An was shocked. Did I end up revealing something I shouldn't have? Otherwise, how does he know about this?

"Sir Sang, please tell us." Pei You and Gao Ying became more interested.

Sang Hong said, "Several months ago, the Devil Sect invaded the palace and attempted an assassination. Back then, most of the palace security's attention was drawn toward the Palace of Peace, but their main target was actually the Eastern Palace. The crown prince's lesser tutor was seriously injured, and the Eastern Palace's guards suffered severe casualties. It was rumored that at a crucial time, it was Golden Token Eleven who showed up to save the crown prince and princess. There were quite a few people

present at the time, and according to their descriptions, Golden Token Eleven's cultivation should be at the sixth or seventh rank."

"What? It's only at the sixth or seventh rank?" Pei You and Gao Ying were both disappointed. They were at the peak of the sixth rank themselves. Not even a legend like a golden token envoy was much better than them?

"That's what's frightening." Sang Hong's expression became fearful. "He only displayed cultivation at the sixth or seventh rank, and yet he was able to block the full powered strike of the grandmaster rank Devil Sect Master. How many people in this world could accomplish such a feat?"

"Scary!" Pei You and Gao Ying both gasped. They were from great clans themselves, so they naturally knew how terrifying grandmasters were.

"There's no way that's possible, right?" Pei You said with a frown.

"It was indeed quite unimaginable. After all, this old one believes my own cultivation to be acceptable, but I can't imagine myself blocking the full powered strike of a grandmaster." Sang Hong changed the topic. "But this is reality. It proves that Golden Token Eleven's true cultivation can only be higher than mine, or perhaps his strength is special and can't be evaluated through normal cultivation means. But regardless of which one it is, it makes him a powerful expert."

Chapter 964: Milk of Purple Frost

Gao Ying added, "Furthermore, golden token envoys don't excel in their martial prowess, but rather in their insight and schemes."

Pei You laughed and relied, "Then that means with this Golden Token Eleven to help us, isn't this trip to Cloudcenter Commandery smooth sailing?"

As he listened to them praise Golden Token Eleven more and more, Zu An really wanted to blurt out 'I'm actually not that amazing...' He held himself back from boasting with great difficulty.

Sang Hong was quite shocked and asked, "Ah Zu, why haven't you said anything all this time?"

Gao Ying and Pei You both looked at him as well. This didn't match his style!

Zu An coughed and quickly explained, "I think we shouldn't rely on that Golden Token Eleven too much. Embroidered Envoys have always been mysterious, and they're only loyal to his majesty. They might even have a different mission this time, one that's entirely different from ours. That's why I think we should try to deal with this matter by ourselves as much as possible."

What kind of joke was this? He already had enough pressure. If he had to take on the responsibility for Golden Token Eleven too, he really would break down! That was why he quickly said that as a preventative measure.

Sang Hong nodded and replied, "What you say makes sense. Perhaps Golden Token Eleven didn't make an appearance precisely to tell us these things. That's why we should rely on ourselves from now on. We'll just treat Golden Token Eleven as additional support. We absolutely can't place all of our hopes on him."

Gao Ying and Pei You became serious. They could sense the gravity in Sang Hong's tone as well. The mission in Cloudcenter Commandery might really not be so easy. They exclaimed, "Understood!"

When he left Sang Hong's room, Zu An gazed toward the surging river waters. The outline of the capital was already about to disappear. He was surprised at the fact that the boat seemed to be moving even faster than he imagined.

He raised his head and saw that the sail had some blue patterns swirling across it. The boat had some formations running through it as well. They were probably wind element runes that were helping the ship move along. Not only did it help to reduce the ship's weight, it also increased the efficiency of the sails. No wonder the ship was able to move so quickly. Of course, it was only a bit faster than a boat that solely relied on its sails. It was still a bit slower than the steamships of his previous world.

At first, he enjoyed seeing the coastal area scenery, but the more he watched, the more boring it became. After he chatted a bit more with Gao Ying and Pei You, they all returned to their own rooms.

Even though Zu AN's room was a bit smaller than Sang Hong's, the layout was still quite nice. He could even feel a bit of the breeze through the window. Overall, the place was similar to his previous world's business suites. After all, space on this ship had been tight to begin with, so a room like this really was quite good.

"The lives of nobles in this world really are comfortable." Zu An commented on the indulgent and decadent lifestyles of the aristocrats. Soon afterward, he focused his attention and sat down to begin his cultivation.

Cultivation was king in this world. Nothing else mattered.

This mission to Cloudcenter Commandery was going to be dangerous. Both the confession Chi Tu had provided about the scheme of Cloudcenter Duke's younger brother and Kong Nanwu's warnings before he left pointed at that fact. Only by increasing his cultivation further would he have the most reliable strength against those dangers.

He transferred his ki through his body many times, but in the end, he opened his eyes out of helplessness. Ever since his breakthrough in Westhound Tomb's secret dungeon, his cultivation had been stuck at the ninth rank's eighth step. He couldn't sense any sign of another breakthrough.

At his level, the amount of Ki Fruits needed was already at an astronomical level. That way wasn't even an option. Was he supposed to rely on getting beaten up? But at his level, he probably couldn't level up even if he was beaten to death, right?

Furthermore, he had heard Mi Li mention that the breakthrough from the ninth rank to the master rank was another huge chasm. Many people failed to break through the gap even after an entire lifetime.

"Big sis empress?" Zu An asked. Mi Li had already disappeared for a long time since he came out from the secret dungeon. He really wanted to know how she was doing right now. Unfortunately, there was no response at all no matter how he called out to her.

He suddenly thought of something. He tried to call out again. "Master?"

A lazy voice spoke not long after he called out the word 'master'. "What is it?"

Zu An was speechless. He asked, "I called out to you so many times just now. Why did you ignore me?"

Mi Li said, "Because you don't know any respect."

"We're closer than that, right?" Zu An couldn't help but say. What he got in return was dead silence. "I'm being ignored again..." He could only change his tone. "Master, why aren't you showing yourself? How are your injuries from Westhound Tomb?"

Even just a glance at a beauty like Mi Li would make him feel much better. There was no one around him, and in the past, she would have already shown herself a long time ago. She didn't really like to hide in the Tai'e Sword, after all.

But he couldn't have expected for her to sigh and say, "My soul is unstable. I can't take physical form anymore."

Zu An was shocked, asking, "Why is it that serious?"

Not being able to take form was pretty much the same as being about to disappear! But with Mi Li's cultivation, that shouldn't have been the case...

Mi Li spoke again. "My injuries last time in Westhound Tomb were too serious. I've tried to recover my soul power all this time, but the injuries I incurred last time were special. With my own power, I can't recover my soul at all. I finally managed to stabilize my condition and prevent my soul from scattering."

Zu An felt ashamed. He had been living in a carefree manner all this time and forgot to worry about her.

His misunderstanding was because Mi Li had always recovered slowly after resting for a while. He was used to that and forgot just how powerful and special the enemy they encountered in Westhound Tomb had been; that enemy had even specialized in harming the soul.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" Zu An immediately asked.

"There is." Mi Li didn't try to act polite with him. "I need soul-mending treasures to stabilize my condition and gradually recover."

Zu An thought of something. He took out a stalk of medicine that overflowed with radiance from his Brilliant Glass Bead. The room was soon filled with medicinal fragrance. It was clearly something extraordinary. He said, "Here, I have a Sky Crane Root that can greatly heal a damaged soul."

The Sky Crane Root was one of the main ingredients of the Ki Condensation Pill. The emperor had given him quite a bit of soul recovery medicine after their negotiations in the past, and the Sky Crane Root was the most precious of them all.

"Even though the Sky Crane Root has mending effects on the soul, it isn't even high quality. It won't do much for my current level of injury," Mi Li replied.

Zu An was alarmed and asked, "Then what about the Five Aggregates Root?"

He had fetched a Five Aggregates Root from the imperial hospital for Yun Jianyue when her soul was injured last time. Even though he was already on the ship and was quite far from the capital, if it was for Mi Li, he had to make the trip back.

"If I had a body right now, the Five Aggregates Root would be able to help my soul recover. However, I don't have a body right now, and my soul's damage is too severe. It can't help me," Mi Li replied.

Zu An's heart sank. The Great Zhou Dynasty had unified the world, so the imperial hospital had definitely collected all types of treasures. However, the Five Aggregates Root was already the best of what the hospital had. If not even that was useful, what else could they do?

"Then what do you need?" he asked. He knew that Mi Li was well read. She probably knew something.

Sure enough, Mi Li said, "Even though I know there's a type of medicine that can repair my soul wounds, in the past, that medicine was the rarest and most precious thing. I don't even know if it still exists in this world, and the name might have changed too."

Zu An replied, "What are you still beating around the bush for? At this point, even feeding a dead horse medicine is worth it."

Mi Li's voice immediately rose a pitch as she exclaimed, "Are you calling me a horse?!"

"You know that's not what I meant!" Zu An thought to himself, The thoughts of women really change quickly! Despite what kind of situation they were in, she still cared about such things? "Just tell me so we can think about it together. After all, I'm a golden token envoy now, someone who has a lot of resources at his disposal!"

"In the past, the name of the medicine was 'Milk of Purple Frost'. I don't know what it's called now." Mi Li's voice was full of hesitation.

Zu An was stunned and asked, "Is Purple Frost a girl?"

Mi Li was stunned. She realized what he meant and exclaimed furiously, "What kind of freaking nonsense is in that head of yours?!"

You have successfully trolled Mi Li for +222 +222 +222...

Zu An quickly apologized. "Please don't get upset! You can't get emotional in your current state!"

Sure enough, Mi Li immediately felt a wave of weakness. When she finally calmed down, she lowered her voice a bit and said, "Milk of Purple Frost is created after sun and moon essence, as well as natural ki, are collected by Purple Frost Crystals over ten thousand years, after which only three drops are produced. The reason why this medicine is so hard to obtain is that the crystals are rare to begin with, and ten thousand year old crystals are even rarer. Furthermore, it has to be gathered promptly as well, because the elixir trickles out soon after taking form. Once it makes contact with the ground, it becomes tainted and loses its medicinal nature."

Zu An went numb when he heard all of those conditions. How the hell were they supposed to find something like that?

Chapter 965: Clues

Mi Li sighed and said, "I know that medicine is extremely rare as well. We probably won't be able to find it. I'll spend some time on my own, thinking about this matter to see if there are any other ways to recover from my soul's wounds."

Zu An felt emotion surge within him when he heard how downcast she was. He blurted out, "Don't worry, I'll do my best to help you find it even if it's hard!" Mi Li had helped him out so much, and they were master and disciple, brother and sister. How could he just watch without doing anything?

"Then I'll really have to thank you for that." Mi Li smiled. She clearly didn't sound too convinced that Zu An could find something like that. After all, such a thing was just way too rare. Not even the emperor himself would necessarily be able to find something like that.

Zu An didn't say anything when he heard the nonchalant tone in her voice. He just made sure to ingrain the name Milk of Purple Frost firmly in his head.

"Right, you seemed to be confused about how to break through, no?" Mi Li spoke again.

"Yeah, I've already been stuck here for a long time..." Zu An told her about his cultivation problems.

Mi Li replied, "Cultivators normally spend a large amount of time slowly accumulating their ki. If they have the effects of formations or ki stones, then the process becomes much faster. You can use the Heaven Devouring Sutra to suck away the cultivations of others and quickly rise up, but I don't advise that method. It will cause your foundation to become unstable, and it's better to just slowly build up your cultivation bit by bit yourself."

Zu An said, confused, "But the Heaven Devouring Sutra is a method on par with the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra. It shouldn't cause too many problems in theory, right?" It wasn't the Star Swallowing Art, so why would it have any major flaws?

Mi Li replied, "The universe has yin and yang. All things have pros and cons. The Heaven Devouring Sutra excels in its speed, but because of that speed, it often causes one's foundation to become unstable. The reason why successive generations of Shang Emperors didn't have that problem was because they also chose to increase their strength gradually. They had enough time to digest and absorb the cultivation of others.

"However, you carry three great techniques within you, and you've had miraculous encounters again and again. Your cultivation speed is just way too fast. You're so young, and yet you're already close to the peak of the ninth rank. I fear there aren't many in history who can compare to you. For example, that emperor of yours would've already killed you if he didn't believe that you had only inherited Old Mi's cultivation and that you had already destroyed all hopes of advancement beyond your current level."

Zu An shivered. The only one who knew his true cultivation, apart from Mi Li, was the emperor. The others had their suspicions about his cultivation, but because of his Mirror Mirage and the spice bag Concubine Bai had given him, their guesses were far from the truth.

"Then what do I do now? I can't just go out there and let myself get beat up, right? With my current cultivation, there's a limit even if I get beat up every single day, right?" he asked.

Mi Li replied, "You shouldn't keep relying on the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra to raise your cultivation. That's nothing more than Old Mi's short-sighted misconception. In the end, the Phoenix Nirvana Sutra's boost to your cultivation is merely you breaking through your own limits again and again. The more dangerous the battle, the more injuries you'll receive, and so the stronger you'll become once you recover."

Zu An said self-deprecatingly, "Isn't that the same as willingly letting yourself get beat up..."

Mi Li was speechless. She completely ignored what he said and continued, "Your trip to Cloudcenter Commandery will probably be full of dangers, so that will be a good chance for you to gain experience. However, if you want to break through to the master rank, it won't be that easy. That kind of breakthrough often involves the assistance of a tremendous treasure, or some sort of body cleansing through a natural ki paradise. These aren't things you can seek out just because you want them. When the time is right, I'll tell you more in detail."

"Then should I just work on strengthening my current cultivation, to build up my foundation?" Zu An frowned. It wasn't as if he had never worked on that before, but there was hardly ever any progress. It didn't seem as if it would do much even if he continued doing it.

"The reason I told you all of that was because I don't want you to try and break through using the Heaven Devouring Sutra. In your current situation, you're more suited to tempering your soul. If you also use this chance to condense the ki inside of you, the effects will become even better," Mi Li replied.

Zu An was stunned and said, "I thought only those at the master rank could temper their souls? Am I not starting a bit too early?"

"Your current cultivation isn't too far off from other low level master rank cultivators. What you lack is just some soul method. Your experiences were different from others. For other cultivators, their bodies might break down if they tried to refine their souls, but for you, that's not an issue at all," Mi Li explained.

Zu An was happy to hear that and asked, "Then how can I temper my soul?"

"Through meditation. Relax your entire body and sense the ki of the world. Try to produce a tangible image of your mental strength. Don't use your eyes and don't use ki; sense everything around you purely with your mind. Try to touch everything. One day, you'll be able to use your mental force to move some smaller things. When that happens, you'll have successfully tapped into this power," Mi Li explained. "I'll pass a mnemonic chant which can help you forge your mental force to you. Once you succeed in getting access to this power, I'll then teach you the method for forging your soul."

"Thank you, big sis... Master!" Zu An was excited. If his mental force could become tangible, didn't that mean he could learn to use telekinesis?

As if guessing his intentions, Mi Li warned him, "Right, there's something else I have to warn you about. Your mental force will still be quite weak at first, so don't try to touch living things. Otherwise, if that target produces a strong reaction, it'll easily cause great damage to your mind. In the worst case, you'll become an idiot."

Zu An was shocked and asked, "It's that bad?"

"Of course. Training the mind isn't something that can be done hastily. Otherwise, your body and soul will easily be destroyed." Mi Li's voice gradually grew weaker.

Zu An thought to himself that Mi Li was seriously injured, yet she was still telling him so much. She probably had to exert herself even more. He quickly said, "Right, I just remembered that after cultivating

the lower half of the Primordial Origin Sutra, I can heal someone else's injuries. Can I help you recover your soul this way?"

"Are you trying to take advantage of me?" Mi Li immediately raised her voice.

Zu An was stunned. He then reacted and quickly explained, "That's not what I was trying to say! My primordial ki can now enter another person's body and help them recover."

"There's no need. It's useless for me, because I'm a soul body." Mi Li also realized that her reaction was a bit too strong. She coughed lightly and said, "You should cultivate properly on your own. I need to go back to sleep." She became quiet again afterward.

Zu An called out to her a few times, but there was no reply from Mi Li. He suddenly felt a bit lonely. He thought, I must find the Milk of Purple Frost for her! His gaze became increasingly resolute. He quickly produced an Embroidered Envoy uniform from his Brilliant Glass Bead. He changed into it, then left his room in the dark.

The Silver Token Xiao Jianren was reading books under an oil lamp's light. He suddenly went on alert and picked up his blade, pointing it behind him and exclaiming, "Who?!"

He saw someone sitting nearby in the shadows. He narrowed his eyes and quickly made out the other person's attire. He quickly put away his blade, saying, "I greet Sir Eleven!"

Zu An grunted in response and said, "There's something I need your help with." With the Embroidered Envoy's strict hierarchy, there was no need to speak in a roundabout way.

"Sir, please give me your orders." Xiao Jianren was happy to hear that. The orders he had received were to bring some men and follow Sang Hong. Back then, he had been a bit nervous, but now that he had a task, the pressure he felt immediately lessened.

"Do you know anything about something called the Milk of Purple Frost?" Zu An looked at him nervously. This person was a living encyclopedia, and there probably weren't many who knew more than him in the Embroidery House. If even he didn't know, it would probably become really troublesome.

Xiao Jianren was stunned and asked, "Could it be that some great one's soul was wounded?" He was rather tactful in the way he asked. He actually wanted to ask if Zu An was injured, but he was scared that he might offend the other party.

Zu An immediately felt happy. It seemed the name of Milk of Purple Frost hadn't changed. That made things much easier. He replied, "Don't worry about that. Do you know where it exists?"

Xiao Jianren shook his head. "That's a divine substance rarely found in the world. If not because Milk of Purple Frost was offered to his majesty in the past, I wouldn't even know of its existence."

"His majesty has some?" Zu An frowned. That made things much more difficult. But no matter how difficult it was, he now had a goal. It was better than having no clues at all.

Xiao Jianren had a look of surprise on his face. He almost felt as if Zu An would try to fight for it with the emperor. He quickly said, "His majesty's soul was seriously injured from his battle against the Fiend Emperor, and it was through the use of the Milk of Purple Frost that he recovered."

“That’s why his majesty doesn’t have any more either?” Zu An raised his brow. He really wanted to grab the stupid bookworm and beat him up. Why did he always stop after speaking halfway?

As if sensing his ‘killing intent’, Xiao Jianren quickly said, “The one who offered Milk of Purple Frost to his majesty was the last generation Cloudcenter Duke. If this medicine can still be found anywhere in this world, Cloudcenter Commandery will be the best place to start looking.”

Chapter 966: Substitute

“Cloudcenter Commandery?” Zu An’s eyes narrowed. He hadn’t expected such a coincidence. It seemed this trip to Cloudcenter Commandery was one he had to make no matter what.

Xiao Jianren asked, “Sir Eleven, will your respected self remain on this ship? Sir Sang arranged a boat for you. Should I guide you there?”

Zu An shook his head. “There’s no need. I have another mission, so I won’t be staying on this ship.”

Fortunately, the Embroidered Envoy had been mysterious to begin with. Those of lower ranks couldn't really question the actions of those of higher ranks. Otherwise, it wouldn't be so easy to fool others.

After some hesitation, Xiao Jianren asked, “If something happens, how do we contact sir?” He just couldn't feel peace of mind if the other party was never with them.

“I’ll return to the ship from time to time to interact with you. You just need to give me a report then. If there really is some emergency, I’ll know when to arrive promptly.” Zu An replied in a serious tone.

Xiao Jianren was shocked. Sir Eleven getting on and off the ship at his own convenience is something I can understand, but if something urgent happens, how can he immediately react if he isn’t on the ship?

But he knew that all golden token envoys had extraordinary methods. Even though he was suspicious, he didn’t think about it too much and replied, “Understood!”

“Then I’ll be leaving first.” Zu An was about to leave, but when he noticed the books on the table, he stopped and said, “I advise you to just read during the day. Reading at night will damage your eyes.”

“Thank you for your concern, sir.” Xiao Jianren bowed. That was something easy to say, but hard to do. Only at night could he have some peace and time to himself. It would be a bit of a waste if he didn’t use that time to read.

After Zu An left the room, he took a bit of a detour. When he was sure that no one was following him, he then returned to his own room. He changed out of his Golden Token Eleven uniform and began to think carefully to himself. Once or twice like this was fine, but there would easily be problems if he continued to switch places. After all, whether it was Sang Hong or Xiao Jianren, they were both meticulous people.

After thinking for a bit, he suddenly thought of something. He summoned Daji.

Under the quiet moonlight that scattered through the window, it almost seemed as if there were a glistening mist swirling around her. She really was too beautiful for this world. Her long and foxy eyes added a bit of a charming feeling to her otherwise untouchable and aloof aura. It made her look pure, yet also seductive.

"It's a pity that you're like a lotus flower. You can only be admired from afar and not played with." Zu An felt gloomy. However, that was something he had already accepted, so he didn't dwell on it. He took out a set of clothes and gave it to her, saying, "Change into this."

Daji gave him an indifferent look with her alluring eyes, but then she decisively ignored him.

Zu An was speechless. Who's the real master here? He took a deep breath and put on a kind smile, saying, "You don't need to take off any clothes. Just wear this over your current outfit."

After some hesitation, when Daji realized that she didn't have to take off her clothes, she didn't have any more feelings of rejection.

"I'll help you!" Zu An exclaimed, overjoyed. But Daji immediately took a step back and looked at him vigilantly.

Zu An was speechless again. He knew she was rejecting any form of physical touch from him. He thought to himself, I can give you an order through just a thought, so to a certain extent, aren't we already spiritually linked? Your head is already in my shape, and yet you're still so on guard against me. Is there really a need for this?

"Then put it on yourself," he said as he turned around. He pulled over a chair and sat down gloomily. A while later, the sound of rustling fabric faded. Only then did Zu An turn around. His eyes immediately widened.

Daji was dressed in a well-ironed uniform, embroidered with meticulous patterns. The feeling she gave off was completely different. If she had previously been more like a goddess who fell to the human world, or like a seductress who brought down an entire country, that charm had now completely changed. Instead, she now looked valiant and formidable, like a female prosecutor or an attractive policewoman... Zu An thought, Ahem, I need to stop right here before I go too far.

After a while, Zu An took out the Golden Token Eleven mask and put it on Daji. He sighed in amazement, exclaiming, "Simply perfect!"

At first, he had been worried because she was wearing a dress underneath, and thought it would look a little strange with the Embroidered Envoy uniform over it. He had thought that would easily cause problems.

He had no idea what Daji's white dress was made of, but it was almost as if it didn't exist. The uniform still fit her perfectly well. Her build had been smaller to begin with, but because her chest took up too much space, together with the dress and uniform, her figure seemed more similar to his.

"Is her chest area a bit too much?" Zu An thought while propping up his chin. However, he quickly dispelled that thought. He had already tempered his body several times with primordial ki, so he was quite muscular himself. Even if that area was a bit larger than his, the others weren't all that familiar with Sir Eleven anyway, so they wouldn't notice anything strange.

But Daji's height was a problem. Even though she was tall, she was still a bit shorter than him. He thought for a bit, then fiddled with the Brilliant Glass Bead for a while before tossing over a pair of modified shoes, exclaiming, "Lord Huang Xiaoming's shoes of blood, sweat, and tears! Being taller isn't just a dream!"[1]

Daji looked away. She didn't know who this Lord Huang was, but she still wore the shoes. Of course, she didn't take off her own shoes. She just put them on with her own shoes inside.

Zu An's eyes twitched. He probably couldn't wear these shoes again. Fortunately, he didn't lack extra pairs of golden token envoy shoes. However, he nodded in satisfaction when he saw that Daji's height was about the same as his own now. "Not bad, not bad. Take a few steps around for me."

Daji wouldn't refuse such simple orders. She stepped forward with her long legs. However, because of her new shoes, she wasn't too used to it yet, and she almost fell down.

"Be careful!" Zu An subconsciously moved closer to support her. But unfortunately, Daji reacted faster. Her palm spread out a bit, and she forcefully stabilized herself.

Zu An withdrew his hand unhappily, saying, "I'm your master; I'm not a wolf. Do you really need to be so apprehensive about me?"

Daji ignored him. She continued to try to walk. She was a powerful cultivator in her own right, and so she quickly found her balance. She was able to walk in the shoes as if she were walking normally.

Zu An was happy at first. To a certain degree, the shoes could be considered high heels. As expected, the way she walked was graceful. However, he quickly realized something.

"Hey, don't move your butt when you're walking.

"Don't let your waist sway back and forth either.

"Can you not act so flirty? How am I supposed to face anyone again if someone catches you walking like that?"

...

Zu An finally fixed some of Daji's natural habits after great difficulty. The way she walked looked a bit more normal.

Afterward, he had her change her hairstyle a bit too. He didn't have to worry about the length, because just like Ancient China, men and women both had long hair. The main issue was Daji's hairstyle. Letting it flow down naturally the way she did normally was purely a feminine style.

After another few hours, it was finally passable.

"Next is your cultivation," Zu An muttered to himself. Even though the world's impression of his cultivation was around the sixth or seventh rank, his real strength was far above that. However, Daji had just broken through to the sixth rank, so hers was a bit too low.

When he thought of that, he brought out the Rage point system. It had already been a long time since he pulled the lottery. He had a total of 118,815 Rage points. He frowned in dissatisfaction when he saw that. He really was slacking off! He had only earned this little bit?

Could it be that the higher my cultivation climbs, the more I instinctively refuse to be as shameless?

I mustn't forget my roots!

After praying for a bit, he began to pull the lottery.

With 118,814 Rage points, he could pull a total of 1188 times. The light indicator continued to flicker around, but it never stopped on the keyboard's letters. Zu An could only acknowledge his fate there.

However, while he was feeling gloomy, the final result appeared. His eyes widened. He had pulled a total of 389 Ki Fruits!

After all, with the average rate, he was only supposed to get a bit over a hundred Ki Fruits. Yet today, he had gotten three times the amount! Wasn't his luck insanely good this time?

Zu An fed the Ki Fruits to Daji. Daji sat down to meditate, and her aura quickly became stronger. She went from the bottom of the sixth rank to the fourth step. Even though it was still a bit low, it wasn't so bad anymore.

I'll call her out to use her as Golden Token Eleven one day. I wonder if it'll be enough to fool everyone.

Chapter 967: King Yan

As Daji's cultivation rose, Zu An began to think about the things he needed to prepare for her breakthrough. After all, he couldn't suddenly start praying for a miracle when it really was time for her breakthrough already. Once Daji passed the sixth rank, she could no longer break through using just Ki Fruits. She would need all sorts of additional materials for each rank increase after that.

"The Valkyrie System really is freaking unscrupulous!" Zu An cursed the Valkyrie System. It was just like the gacha of his previous world; it was clearly a freaking scam.

But jokes were just jokes. He still had to try and gather those materials.

For Daji to break through from the sixth to seventh rank, she needed five pieces of Wuyang Jade, ten Gray Wolf King Fangs, thirty Blue Earthflowers, and twenty Nine-Headed Pheasant Feathers.

None of the palace's physicians had ever heard of the Wuyang Jade before. However, he had received some advice that Cloudcenter Commandery's Yu clan managed the precious stones business. He could probably discover their whereabouts there. Together with the Milk of Purple Frost Mi Li needed, it now seemed as if he would have had to make a trip there even if the emperor hadn't assigned him there.

As for the Gray Wolf King Fangs and other materials, even though they were precious, they weren't too absurdly rare. He believed he would have the chance to collect them.

Zu An unknowingly drifted off into sleep while thinking about those things.

He had actually wanted Daji to sleep with him, because that way, his girl would get used to all of Golden Token Eleven's behaviors. Her performance would then be even more realistic. He promised again and again that he wouldn't do a single thing, that they were just going to lie down on the bed. He was even going to put a pillow in between them. After all, Daji was so beautiful, just a single look was already an incredible experience.

But he hadn't expected Daji to refuse no matter what. Zu An was quite downcast because of that. Daji clearly didn't have a soul, but why did she have such a strong rejection toward her master?

Honestly speaking, even the original Daji herself shouldn't have defended her chastity so strongly. Isn't she a master of seduction? Shouldn't she be trying to tempt me with all of her different ways? Yet why am I now being refused no matter how decently I act?

...

Zu An trained Daji every day and night, trying to make her seem more like Golden Token Eleven. The results were getting better and better.

That day, Pei You and Gao Ying found Zu An. Pei You said, "Brother Zu, we'll arrive at Yi City in a few days. Should we brothers experience the north's women together then?"

Even the greatest homebodies would feel a bit suffocated after being on a ship for so long. They all wanted to climb ashore as soon as possible.

Zu An couldn't help but laugh, saying, "It looks to me as if you've only been thinking about those northern girls all this time."

But of course, the other party was only acting like that because he treated Zu An as his close friend.

Gao Ying said seriously, "Yi City is King Yan's domain. It'll become troublesome if we end up getting into some conflict there and offend King Yan."

"King Yan?" Zu An was puzzled. He hadn't been in this world for that long after all, so he didn't know about many things that were common knowledge.

Gao Ying kindly explained, "King Yan is his majesty's uncle. His feudal fiefdom is Yi Commandery, and that commandery is ruled from Yi City. It frequently has trouble with bandits and the Devil Sect, so he's allowed to train his own army to fend them off. This is a king who has rather great authority compared to others."

Zu An had a strange expression. Because of Yun Jianyue and Qiu Honglei, he already treated the Devil Sect as his own people. As such, he was interested in any information about them.

"Does that King Yan always gain achievements through wiping out large numbers of Devil Sect people?" Zu An asked to test the waters.

Gao Ying shook his head. "King Yan has improved the bandit situation a lot over these years, and he's also captured many people from the Devil Sect. Unfortunately, the Devil Sect's people are like weeds, growing all over the place. There are many people in the court who are saying that King Yan is too brutal, that he only knows how to fight and doesn't know how to conciliate at all. That's why the Devil Sect and the bandits continue to haunt this land."

Zu An couldn't help but feel relieved when he heard that King Yan and the Devil Sect were roughly even in their battles.

Pei You remarked, "We're only going for some drinks, so why would we offend King Yan? Brother Gao, you're worrying about too many things."

Gao Ying figured that made sense as well, so he didn't try to dissuade them further. Furthermore, they had been stuck on the ship for so long that he wanted to go out and relax a bit too.

Zu An remembered the materials Daji needed. As such, he asked, "By the way, have you guys heard of Wuyang Jade, Gray Wolf King Fangs, Blue Earthflower, Nine-Headed Pheasant Feathers, and the like before?"

He wanted to ask Xiao Jianren about those things, but it would be too fishy if he showed up as Golden Token Eleven again so soon. Who knew if Xiao Jianren would turn around and report to Zhuxie Chixin and the emperor?

Furthermore, Xiao Jianren only knew about the Embroidery House's archives; he didn't specialize in medicine. He might remember something about some special treasures, but he might not know much about some ordinary medicines.

Gao Ying and Pei You were different. They had grown up in great clans, so they had access to many resources. He might actually obtain some clues from the two of them.

Sure enough, Pei You replied, "I haven't heard of Wuyang Jade before, but I've heard of the Gray Wolf King Fangs, Blue Earthflower, and Nine-Headed Pheasant Feathers. Gray Wolf King Fang and Nine-Headed Pheasant Feathers aren't too rare; you can buy those from many black markets. The Blue Earthflowers are a bit trickier; I heard that they grow in the fiend races' territory. But you should be able to find them in cities closer to the fiend races' capital."

"Black market?" Zu An asked, surprised.

Gao Ying explained with a smile, "Because of the war against the fiend races in the past, the court has restricted normal business with the fiend races and the other organizations around them. But despite that being the case, there's still a need for a market to exist. That's why black markets sprung up to meet the demand. You can find some specialties from various clans. The closer you get to the fiend races, the more common black markets become. Eventually, the black markets began to carry things you would never find on the human side. That's why they became more and more developed. There were many that formed even back in our empire."

Zu An asked with a frown, "Why haven't I seen them in the capital?"

Gao Ying replied, "The capital is a place of virtue. Furthermore, the Embroidered Envoy's base is there, so who dares to do these kinds of things right under their eyes? That's why there are naturally no black markets in the capital. However, this Yi City is quite a sizable city too, and furthermore a traffic hub. It isn't too far from the northern frontier. If I'm not mistaken, there's a good chance that there will be black markets."

Zu An's eyes lit up. He said, "Then we really do have to make a trip around Yi City."

Pei You laughed and said, "Brother Zu is one of us as expected. Once we reach the brothels there, it's every man for himself this time! It'll depend on your own skill to see if you can get the prettiest girl."

Zu An was speechless. I was saying that I wanted to go to the black market; when did I say that I wanted to go to the pleasure quarters?

Gao Ying sighed and asked, "Brother Pei, do you know what part of you I admire the most?"

Pei You was momentarily stunned. He replied, "My cultivation talent? Or my handsome face?"

Gao Ying shook his head with a strange expression as he said, “No, I admire your confidence.”

Pei You wasn’t stupid. He sensed the mockery in Gao Ying’s tone and replied, “Hmph, Yi Commandery is close to the north, so these girls admire warriors. It’s not like the capital where they care so much about literary talent! With my looks, I definitely have a good chance.”

What he said wasn’t entirely false. He was a young master from an influential clan, and he was even handsome. He would be quite eye-catching in such a place.

Gao Ying replied with a smile, “Yi Commandery’s girls might admire warriors, but do you think you can win against brother Zu?”

Pei You still didn’t fizzle out at all when he heard that. He said, “It doesn’t matter if I can’t beat brother Zu; I just need to beat you.”

Gao Ying was speechless.

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A few days later, the ship stopped at Yi City’s port. Gao Ying and the others requested some time off to tour the city.

The ship needed some time to resupply, as they had traveled on water for so long. Everyone on the ship had already been stifled for too long as well, so Sang Hong was open-minded in that respect. He gladly agreed.

Zu An wanted to invite him to the city for some rest too, but Sang Hong refused. Sang Hong’s status was special, so he didn’t want to interact too much with King Yan and the other officials of Yi Commandery. That was why he remained on the ship.

“Sir Sang truly is self-disciplined,” Gao Ying said in admiration after they left the ship.

“He wouldn’t have made such a name for himself a few years ago if that weren’t the case. So many officials in the court feared him and secretly called him ‘Tiger Sang’,” Pei You added.

Zu An thought, As expected. He had experienced Sang Hong’s methods firsthand back in Brightmoon City. This man either held back or struck decisively. If not for the fact that the Chu clan had its own army, they would have long since been wiped out.

He suddenly noticed that their group was walking farther and farther away from the city. He was confused and asked, “Aren’t we going into the city?”

“What kind of fun is there in the city? I’ll bring you guys to a place that’s actually interesting,” Gao Ying said with a mysterious smile.

Chapter 968: Money-Squandering Establishment

Zu An was completely stunned. Pei You asked exactly what he had been wondering. “What’s fun to do in the outskirts? The city is more lively, right?” The northern girls’ beautiful legs were clearly still on his mind.

Gao Ying explained, "There's nothing special in the city. The truly good stuff is actually outside. Don't worry, your big bro here wouldn't lie to you."

Pei You knew that Gao Ying had always been a rather prudent guy, and that he never spoke carelessly. That was why he didn't think too much about it.

Zu An frowned and said, "I want to make a trip around the black market first, so I won't be going with you guys to that kind of place."

He didn't have much interest in brothels. After all, the ladies at his side were all the most stunning women in this world. How could brothel girls compare to them? This world didn't even use condoms or other forms of protection. What if he ended up getting infected by something?

Wait, with the Primordial Origin Sutra's purification abilities, I don't think I have to be worried about any sickness though.

Pah pah pah, what the hell am I thinking about? My goal today is to see if I can find any materials for Daji's breakthrough!

Gao Ying said with a smile, "If brother Zu wishes to go to the black market, that's even more reason for you to follow us. Not only does that place have gorgeous girls, they also have a casino there, as well as the largest black market within a thousand miles. It's a well known money-squandering establishment."

Zu An immediately understood. This was a super entertainment complex! He hadn't expected the people of this world to be so good at having fun too. Since it was where the biggest black market was, there was obviously no reason for him to refuse anymore.

...

The group arrived at a small town by the city outskirts. The town didn't have many people, and as the cold breeze swept through the scattered leaves on the ground, it made the place seem rather bleak. It was just like the small remote towns Zu An had seen before in his previous world.

"That huge establishment you were talking about is in this kind of place?" Pei You had a doubtful expression when he saw the scene.

Gao Ying didn't bother explaining anything as he walked over to a worn out tea hut. There were practically no guests inside, and there were only a few tables. The boss was lying in a chair with his legs casually propped up on the table.

There were a few cups of tea left behind by previous guests on the table. The teacups were the crudest of clay bowls, with many bumps and nicks on them. The leftover tea inside was somewhat yellow and turbid, clearly the lowest grade of tea. Furthermore, there was even a fly swimming inside one of the cups!

"Absolutely ridiculous!" Pei You tugged on Gao Ying's sleeves. "There's no way you're planning to drink tea here, right?" He came from a distinguished clan and had enjoyed a life of extravagance ever since he was little. Ordinary tea wouldn't even catch his eye, let alone this kind of tea.

Gao Ying chuckled and didn't reply. He chose a table to sit down at, then called out to the resting shop owner, "Boss, you have some guests."

Pei You's eyes widened. He quickly whispered to Zu An, "Brother Zu, why aren't you saying anything? Don't tell me you want to drink tea in this kind of place too?" Didn't we agree on checking out the northern babes?!

Zu An chuckled and said, "Calm down. Brother Gao has always been reliable, so I believe he isn't trying to fool us." Then, he sat down as well.

Pei You gave the mysterious stains on the chairs a look. They were so shiny they almost looked like some kind of sauce... In the end, he didn't sit down.

Gao Ying smiled toward him and said, "Look at how calm brother Zu is. You should change that temperament of yours."

Pei You scowled. When he saw that the boss of the shop still hadn't budged an inch, he erupted into anger. "Shop owner, we already called out to you several times, so why aren't you moving? Who does business like this?"

The shop boss finally removed the cloth that was covering his eyes and blocking the sunlight. He replied, "What are you being so noisy for? Are you in that much of a rush to reincarnate?"

Zu An noticed that he looked just like an ordinary commoner, and he couldn't sense any cultivation fluctuations from the man. Don't tell me I was wrong? But why would an ordinary civilian do this kind of business?

Pei You's expression turned cold. "What did you say?!" When had he ever been angered so badly before? He was just about to teach the other party a lesson when Gao Ying stopped him.

"Boss, we aren't in a rush to reincarnate, but rather in a rush to drink some of your tea," Gao Ying said.

That shop owner's expression eased a bit when he heard that. He asked, "Then where did you all come from? We're pretty well known for our tea, and people visit from all sorts of different places."

Pei You sneered. He was just about to mock the tea for being shoddy when he suddenly realized something. Gao Ying was usually steadfast and didn't like making too many jokes. That meant he was only saying those words because he had to.

Furthermore, they were all dressed in fine clothing, and they were cultivators as well. They naturally gave off a certain level of pressure, and yet the peasant-like man wasn't scared of them at all. The situation was definitely not normal. He calmed down when he realized that. He decided to watch the situation from one side.

He noticed Zu An's leisurely expression out of the corner of his eye. He immediately felt ashamed. Brother Zu is a giant among men after all; I really can't compare to him in this aspect.

Gao Ying then replied, "May I dare ask the boss what kinds of tea you have here?"

The boss stuck out his chest and said proudly, "We have every kind you would want. It just depends on what our guests would like to purchase."

Gao Ying replied with a smile, "I would like some After Snow Sparrowtongue Tea."

The shop owner replied, "Customer, I'm afraid that I must tell you that you're an amateur. Before Rain Sparrowtongue Tea is top quality stuff, and After Rain comes second. There's no such thing as After Snow. Where would you find tea after snow?"

Gao Ying didn't get upset and continued, "Then I want some Volcanic Blue Gown Tea, and it must be from the mother tree next to the volcanic lava stream."

The shop boss shook his head and replied, "This customer must be joking. The best Blue Gown Tea comes from the mother tree on Heaven's Core Cliff. As for volcanoes and lava, I've never heard of it before."

Gao Ying then said, "Then I want some Biluochun Green Tea, and it must be one that has gone through a hundred and eight thousand turns."

Sparrowtongue, Blue Gown, and Biluochun were all the most well-known teas of this world. Among them, Biluochun Green Tea was the one that required the most work to create. While being stirred in a pot, it needed to be kneaded while it was being roasted. All of the leaves would be kneaded into a small lump, then scattered again. After the process was repeated many times, it would be rolled into long hair-like strands.

A single jin of those tea leaves needed ten thousand tender shoots, so the grade of the tea depended on the number of turns. The higher the number, the higher the grade.

That shop owner's expression darkened when he heard that. "The best Biluochun Green Tea of this world has only experienced sixty-four thousand turns; where would you find one that has undergone a hundred and eight thousand turns? Did you come here to make fun of me?"

Pei You became nervous when he saw the shop owner become angry, ready to offer his help at any time. Meanwhile, Zu An was still calm. He silently memorized the conversation. This really was an entirely new experience! Even though he had crammed to learn quite a bit of this world's knowledge, it had mainly been focused on matters of cultivation, history, and geography. In such normal lifestyle matters, he couldn't compare to these young masters at all.

Gao Ying's tone also changed. He replied, "You said you would have anything we wanted. I stated a few kinds, and yet you didn't have a single one of them?"

The shop owner sneered. "You're clearly just a pretentious snob. My store doesn't welcome you. That Purple Tea Pavilion over there is more suited to people like you. Get out of here, go, go." He chased the three of them out of his tea shop.

Pei You was shocked. "Brother Gao, this is the result after all of that?"

Zu An said, "I believe brother Gao has already told them all of the keywords."

Gao Ying said with a smile, "Brother Zu has incredible foresight after all! Indeed, that tea shop is nothing more than a cover. Even though he appeared angry, he knew that we had already said what we needed to say and pointed us to the next place."

Pei You sighed in amazement. "No wonder that tea house didn't seem like it had any business. So it was just there to chase away unwanted customers to avoid trouble."

The three of them arrived at the Purple Tea Pavilion the other party had spoken of while chatting. The place looked much nicer, and its owner was dressed like a local moneybags. He immediately greeted them enthusiastically when he saw their arrival. "What do these guests wish to order?"

Pei You clicked his tongue. This person's enthusiasm was like night and day compared to the last person.

Gao Ying replied, "I want Sparrowtongue."

The shopkeeper said with a smile, "We have all kinds of seasons of Sparrowtongue. We even have After Snow Sparrowtongue."

Gao Ying continued, "I also want Blue Gown."

"No problem. I'll prepare some from the volcanic mother tree," the shopkeeper replied.

Gao Ying continued, "Biluochun as well."

"Absolutely. We even have some hundred and eight thousand turns Biluochun." The shopkeeper's eyes were about to become slits from how widely he was smiling.

"The goods?" Gao Ying reached out his hand.

The shopkeeper revealed an apologetic smile and said, "I apologize, my esteemed guests, but the goods are too precious. I must trouble sirs to come with us to the warehouse." He took out some vouchers while talking. "Please visit the corner of the street and present this voucher. There will be people who will bring you to the warehouse to pick up the goods."

Gao Ying nodded. He took the vouchers and walked toward the end of the street. Zu An was surprised and asked, "Is there a need to be that careful? It almost feels like some secret service base."

Gao Ying explained, "This kind of place isn't allowed by the court, so they have no choice but to be more careful."

Zu An nodded. He became more and more curious about the place. Perhaps he might really be able to get something he needed here.

Chapter 969: Hub of Freedom

The group quickly passed the corner and arrived by the carriage waiting area. What awaited them there was an extremely ordinary and tattered carriage. The driver's fingernails were filled with dirt, and the smell of horse manure filled the air.

Pei You subconsciously frowned. He really couldn't associate such a sloppy place with the entertainment district Gao Ying had spoken of. However, Gao Ying didn't pay the driver any attention and went straight in.

The boss inside was drinking some wine. He didn't pay them much attention when they came in. But when Gao Ying took out the vouchers he had previously received from Purple Tea Pavilion, the boss immediately became serious and said, "Sirs, this way please."

He had his subordinates take over for him, then led them to the rear courtyard. In the courtyard were two carriages. Behind them were many trees and even some flowers Zu An didn't recognize. The air there was much fresher.

The horses were clearly of a higher grade, and their manes were combed nicely and tidily. Their bellies were full, indicating that they were well-fed. These were horses that had been raised carefully, completely different from the horses outside.

But the carriages were even more eye-catching. They weren't like ordinary carriages; they had no windows, and looked more like large metal pots.

The boss walked over and said, "Everyone can see that all of our carriages are first-rate, and so the fare will naturally be different as well."

"I wonder how much that is?" Gao Ying asked.

The boss stretched out three fingers and said, "Three taels of gold, three taels of silver."

Pei You frowned. This guy is a freaking robber! Not even the best carriages in the capital are this expensive! But he knew that the conversation was probably just another coded message, so he forcefully endured the urge to lash out.

Zu An had a strange expression as he thought, What kind of relationship do you have with the Heaven and Earth Society...[1]

Gao Ying shook his head and said, "A carriage as great as this is worth more than that, so we'll take this carriage. You don't need to call over any other guests. Every one of us will pay you five taels of gold and five taels of silver."

The boss immediately gave him a big thumbs up and said, "Our guests today really are outstanding heroes. I wonder what you all do for a living?"

Gao Ying replied, "I rely on the four famous mountains; my friends come from places with golden and silver mountains. My loyalty to my friends is as sturdy as Mount Ding; a meeting with my friends is like a trip to Mount Liang."

Mount Ding was a grand and towering mountain in this world. The sacrificial offerings of the court's officials would often be conducted there. It was similar to Mount Tai in the mythology of Zu An's previous world.

As for Mount Liang, it was a place where great heroes gathered. It was a place that symbolized loyalty and brotherhood.

A polite smile immediately appeared on the boss' face when he heard that. He quickly produced a pile of masks and said to the three of them, "Esteemed guests, please choose a mask to wear."

Zu An realized that they had already changed from being 'guests' to 'esteemed guests', and the tone the other party used had become much more respectful. The other party had probably already approved of their identities.

Pei You frowned. "What is the meaning of this?"

The boss explained with a smile, "The place you're about to go to is one where it isn't convenient to show your face around. In order to ensure the safety of all of the guests, everyone wears a mask to hide their identities."

"Interesting." Zu An chuckled. He picked a fox-shaped mask and put it on. When he thought of Daji, he suddenly felt a strange sense of intimacy with foxes.

Gao Ying chose a tiger mask. Seeing that the other two had already chosen masks, even though Pei You was still confused, he chose one as well. The one he chose was a white ghost mask.

Zu An couldn't help but chuckle. This was an outwardly cold and gloomy, but inwardly passionate young man after all. The mask matched his nature really well.

After the three of them entered the carriage, there was a loud bang as the door was closed from the outside. Then, a faint light began shining above them. Upon closer inspection, there were actually some small luminescent beads above their heads.

Pei You said with a sigh of admiration, "How extravagant; they actually used luminescent beads to light up the inside of a carriage!"

Zu An said, "It's probably because they had no choice. This entire place is enclosed without letting even a strand of light in. They had to add some luminescent beads in order to not make the guests inside feel as if they were being locked up in a jail cell."

Pei You couldn't help but feel surprised. He examined the place on his own and saw that sure enough, there wasn't even a single crack. He tried to spread out his senses through ki, but his expression quickly changed. He exclaimed, "My ki can't leave this place; I can't sense anything outside!"

"There's no need to worry," Gao Ying explained. "The carriage itself has special sealing runes engraved on it, specially designed to isolate the auras of cultivators. It's to prevent people from finding out the path to the Hub of Freedom."

A sealed carriage could only block the sight of ordinary people. Cultivators could use their auras to sense their surroundings, so that was why the Hub of Freedom needed such two-fold insurance.

Zu An tried it out himself. Sure enough, his aura couldn't pass through the carriage either. He suddenly thought of something and tried to use his jade badge ability. Soon afterward, a strange scene entered his view. Trees fell away rapidly behind them, as well as the ground.

Zu An was happy. If he wanted to control some creatures of lower intelligence, the best targets were naturally the horses that pulled the carriage. He hadn't expected the jade badge's ability to be able to break through the sealed carriage!

As for the strange scene he saw, it was because of the horse's point of view. Ever since he had obtained the jade badge, he had seen things from all sorts of different angles, with the most exaggerated being the compound eyes of a fly. There had been countless pocket-sized scenes packed together, carrying enough information to make his head explode.

"What if they had some bad intentions?" Pei You asked worriedly. They were in a completely sealed carriage, so they had no idea what was going on outside. It really was way too dangerous.

“Don’t worry, they have their reputation to uphold. Nothing bad will happen,” Gao Ying consoled him.

Zu An said with a chuckle, “Brother Gao, it looks like you’re a veteran in this field. With your nature, I didn’t expect you to be someone who frequented this kind of place. Why do you know this path so well?”

Gao Ying sighed. “It’s because I came here with Liu Yao in the past. You two know that he was never too interested in cultivation, but he was a master in these areas. I was traveling with him and had to watch over him, so I ended up experiencing some stuff myself.”

Zu An thought, No wonder. However, when the three of them recalled Liu Yao’s sacrifice in the dungeon, the atmosphere in the carriage suddenly became strange.

The carriage eventually stopped. Pei You was nervous and expectant at the same time, asking, “Are we there?”

“I think there’s still a bit more to go.” Gao Ying had experience in the matter.

Zu An saw the exterior through the horse’s view. They had ended up entering an area filled with unmanaged tombs. Crows flew past from time to time. Together with the will-o’-the-wisps and the fog that filled the place, the atmosphere was incredibly sinister and frightening.

He sighed in praise. The place they had chosen really was great. Ordinary people wouldn’t dare to approach, and the authorities would never expect that someone would build an entertainment district right by an abandoned graveyard.

The carriage stopped in front of a comparatively large mound. Then, an opening suddenly appeared in the mound, and the carriage slowly drove forward. After they passed through a long tunnel, the world suddenly lit up. The driver said from the front of the carriage, “Esteemed guests, we have arrived.”

The carriage doors opened with a crash. The three inside exchanged a look, then got off the carriage one after another.

Soon, several maids came out to greet them. These maids wore masks as well, but their masks only covered their eyes, leaving their noses and enticing red lips exposed.

The maids were dressed in rather revealing outfits that would make even ordinary brothel women flush red from embarrassment and anger. Their outfits didn’t have much material, and they were transparent as well, only covering the most important areas. The maids’ slender and graceful waists were visible, as well as their long and fair legs.

Zu An felt a mysterious sense of familiarity. He felt as if he had returned to his previous world, where the girls were all dressed in bunny suits.

Pei You’s eyes immediately widened when he saw how skimpily the maids were dressed, as well as the flirtatious way they walked. When had he ever seen something like that? “Northern babes have long legs after all! The rumors were completely true!”

“Young masters, this way, please!” The maids greeted them in order, their voices extremely sweet.

Chapter 970: Most Distinguished Guest

When he saw the lively and fresh beauties before him, the dissatisfaction Pei You had felt during this journey instantly vanished. He instead showered Gao Ying in praise. "Brother Gao is reliable after all! Following you was the correct choice."

Gao Ying couldn't help but say, "You were staring daggers at me the entire time here. Now, you know what I was doing, right?"

Pei You chuckled in embarrassment. "This little brother is still young and naive. I've learned a lot today."

Zu An didn't have much of an interest in the maids. The girls from his previous world wore even less to swimming pools. This was only enough to get those without any experience going. He immediately felt a sense of superiority when he thought of that.

Since Gao Ying had been there before, and they didn't want others to hear what they were saying either, they didn't have any maids accompany them.

The maids couldn't help but feel a bit disappointed. Even though they all wore masks, they could tell that these young masters were exceptional. Furthermore, the three men were all tall and strong-looking, making them much more appealing than most of the guests they usually received.

They had all been full of excitement, wondering which one of them would be chosen. Not only would they make quite a bit of service charge, serving such a guest was a kind of pleasure in itself. However, all of them had experienced strict training and didn't reveal any of their emotions on the surface. They left after a slight bow.

...

The group soon arrived at a place filled with dazzling gold and jade. Everything was brightly lit, the previous dim atmosphere nowhere to be seen. The various shining lights made Zu An feel as if he had arrived at one of those Macau casinos he had seen on tv. As expected, the rich do the same simple things for fun!

The people on this floor were flushed red with excitement, their eyes all somewhat bloodshot. Zu An could tell it was a casino even without Gao Ying's introduction.

Zu An noticed that the chips used on the table were all quite sizable in amount. The lowest value chip was worth a thousand taels of silver. No wonder Gao Ying had said that the ones who played here were all the wealthiest folk. How could ordinary people withstand this level of squandering?

Many people present had maids in their arms. The maids played with their guests with charming smiles on their faces. Pei You's eyes widened when he saw that, and he exclaimed, "Rotten, degenerate, simply offending public morals!"

Gao Ying immediately exposed him and remarked, "You're saying you wish you were them, right?"

Pei You chuckled in embarrassment. "Why would I like something so vulgar? I need someone of courtesan queen level at the very least, right?"

Gao Ying replied, "There's an Immortal Flower Park upstairs, and every single courtyard there has a girl at the courtesan queen level. Furthermore, there are even young ladies from the fiend races and the

southern border. Of course, it'll depend on whether or not you have the skills to make those girls serve you."

Pei You raised his head and stuck out his chest, boasting, "What a joke! Girls immediately go completely weak when they see me." After saying that, he asked Zu An, "Brother Zu, where are you planning to go?"

He was always the center of attention because of his family background and looks. Unfortunately, if there was a freaking superstar like Zu An right next to him, he really couldn't have as much confidence that those girls would choose him.

Zu An shook his head with a smile. He wasn't all that interested in the pleasure quarters.

"Why doesn't brother Zu have some fun on the first floor? You can gamble for anything here, and in all kinds of different ways," Gao Ying said with a smile. "I heard that brother Zu won a few million in Brightmoon City with just ten taels of silver; you're simply the reincarnation of the gambling deity! How about you show them some of your skills here too? The house is made up of good-for-nothings anyway and deserves some losses."

"You won a few million taels with just ten taels of silver?" Pei You's eyes widened. "Brother Gao, you're joking, right?"

"You can go back and ask Sir Sang if you don't believe me. He was the governor of that area back then," Gao Ying said.

Pei You looked at Zu An for confirmation. Zu An said with an apologetic expression, "It's all exaggerated. I actually started with more than ten taels of silver."

Pei You was speechless. What the hell are you trying to say? Doesn't that mean you really did win two million taels of silver? F*ck, I really don't feel special anymore standing around this guy.

He had always been the best among his peers growing up. Yet only after he met Zu An did he realize just how large the world was. If the other party was only a bit better than him, he might feel the motivation to catch up. But the gap between them was so big that it was enough to leave him in despair. He felt nothing but admiration at this point.

"Brother Zu, why don't you give it a try? Let us see your incredible style for ourselves." Pei You's eyes were shining. Even his desire for northern girls was momentarily forgotten.

Zu An shook his head, saying, "Forget it, I don't have much interest in these things. I have some other things to take care of today too." He headed straight upstairs afterward. He didn't have a Luck Pill anymore, so wouldn't he just be embarrassing himself if he went now?

However, his words were instead enough to convince his two companions. He doesn't even think money laying around is worth picking up? Just when will I be able to reach this level?

Even though the two of them were from outstanding clans, even a clan like the Chu clan had almost suffered a crisis because of money, so who would refuse extra money? Even the smallest gambling chip here was worth a thousand taels, so if one really won, they would win at least ten million!

"Brother Zu truly is deep and immeasurable." Gao Ying sighed in amazement.

When can I become like him... Pei You thought to himself that this level of boasting was something he couldn't learn even if he wanted to.

The two quickly followed Zu An up to the second floor. Compared to the first floor, the second floor's lighting was much dimmer. But it was precisely that which created a more charming and gentle atmosphere. The sweet scent in the air and the gorgeously dressed young ladies in front of the different courtyards were difficult for any man to refuse.

Pei You said with a sigh, "Even the girls by the entrance are so pretty; doesn't that mean that the girls inside are on a whole different level?"

Unlike the maids below, these girls didn't cover their faces with masks. They were pretty, and all of them were beauties whom countless men would yearn for day and night in the outside world.

When he saw that Pei You's eyes were almost glowing, Zu An said with a smile, "I'll go upstairs on my own. Brother Gao and brother Pei should have some fun here. After all, we shouldn't waste our time."

Gao Ying wanted to go up with him, but after thinking for a bit, he realized the attendants were present and the other party's cultivation was high. There wasn't a high chance of anything bad happening. As such, he cupped his hands and said, "Then we'll meet again tomorrow morning!"

Pei You obviously went to find a northern girl that suited his fancy, while Gao Ying decided to go back down to the first floor to play a bit.

Zu An continued upward. He was amazed by what he saw. The small mound they had entered shouldn't be this large! Could it be that the mountain in the back had been hollowed out? He really wondered who had built something like this. It was definitely no small project.

Unlike the three floors below, the third floor had many men standing guard, examining every guest who came and went. Their auras seemed to be around the fifth or sixth rank, but that was already quite something. After all, the normal imperial guards at the capital were only at the fifth rank!

Zu An was quickly stopped by someone. That person wore a mask, but Zu An could tell he was a middle-aged man. His cultivation was a level higher than the other guards too. The man asked, "I am one of the managers of the third floor. Does our guest wish to play on the third floor?"

"Indeed." Zu An spoke confidently and calmly.

"Due to the special nature of the third floor, we need some advance payment as a deposit. I hope that sir does not take offense to that." The manager showed Zu An a professional smile.

"How much?" Zu An asked.

"A hundred thousand silvers. We take silver notes, and we also take precious items as assets for collateral. We have people specialized in appraisal here," the manager said in a considerate manner. After all, there weren't many people who brought that much cash with them.

"A hundred thousand?" Zu An thought to himself, No wonder this place is known as a money squandering place. They really don't treat money like money!

He thought about using silver notes, but when he thought about how he still had to use those notes to buy materials, he changed his mind. He took out a sapphire gemstone the size of a pigeon egg and asked, "Is this enough?" It was one of the items he had found in the red dragon's treasury back in Brightmoon City.

The manager's eyes widened when he saw the gemstone in Zu An's hands. His smile also became more sincere as he replied, "Of course it is. This is a chrysanthemum sapphire only found in the southern islands, and at its size, it can sell for over a hundred thousand silvers at the very least. If you are lucky, you can even sell it for more than two hundred thousand. I wonder if this esteemed guest is willing to have this item auctioned in our humble auction. We have quite a few guests today, so we promise that we can sell it at a price that will satisfy your respected self."

Zu An was stunned. And asked, "We can even give you things to sell?" The red dragon loved to collect all kinds of shiny things. He didn't expect it to have run all the way south for the sapphire.

The manager replied, "But of course. The third floor is a secure location for various distinguished guests to conduct business deals. Many guests have precious items they wish to sell, but selling the items in private exchanges would bring many misgivings, and they might not even find something they are really interested in. That is why our Hub of Freedom provides this service. Of course, we will take a small service charge. With so many guests gathered from all kinds of different places, there is a high chance that everyone will find something they are looking for."

"Sure, help me auction this thing off then." Zu An didn't think this kind of gemstone would be too useful to him. It was something some upper-class women were fond of. He might as well sell it and buy some things he needed for cultivation.

The manager handed him a jade tile with a big smile; it was marked with the number '333'. He said, "Esteemed guest, please keep this with you. This jade token is provided to the Hub of Freedom's most distinguished guests. If you see anything in the auction that you are fond of, you can raise this jade token to bid. Furthermore, with this jade token, any other expenses in the Hub of Freedom today will be free of charge. If you visit any other Hub of Freedom locations, you will also enjoy the highest level of treatment."

An ear-piercing voice spoke up from behind them just then. "I say, isn't your Hub of Freedom giving out these jade tokens willy-nilly now? I almost thought these jade tiles were pretty rare, but they now seem like something you can pick up off the streets."