

Keyboard Immortal

Chapter 16: Deep Brotherly Ties

Translator: Pika

Zu An chuckled to himself. "It would be wonderful to have Brother Twelve taking care of me along the way." He had already confirmed that this fellow harboured vile intentions. This was the perfect opportunity for him to discover who was behind these attempts on his life.

The two of them left the city together.

Only during this tour of the city did Zu An realize just how fortunate he was on the day he transmigrated. The slums he had woken up in were on the outskirts of the main city, beyond which lay the wilderness. Soldiers and cultivators still patrolled those outskirts to ward off the myriad of wild beasts that sometimes intruded from the nearby Hidden Dragon Mountain. These beasts were numerous, and sometimes accosted travelers passing by the foot of the mountain. Sentry posts had been erected just past the slums to guard against them, and to dissuade ordinary mortals from wandering beyond.

It was fortunate that Zu An had Plum Blossom Twelve with him. The latter presented an item to the guards, which appeared to be travel documents that also revealed his cultivation. Satisfied by this, the guards allowed them to pass through.

After leaving the sentry post behind, Zu An gave Plum Blossom Twelve a look of admiration. "Brother, what's your current cultivation level? Those soldiers seemed to look up to you." He wanted to learn more about who he was dealing with, so that he could prepare countermeasures in advance. It helped that Plum Blossom Twelve was still unaware of Zu An's newfound power.

Plum Blossom Twelve was obviously flattered. "It's still so-so. I'm only at the third step of the second rank."

Looks like he isn't that powerful either. That's equivalent to me cultivating for a day, Zu An thought.

Plum Blossom Twelve waited expectantly for Zu An to lavish him with further praise, anticipating another chance to humblebrag. Instead, Zu An kept silent, staring at nothing.

Plum Blossom Twelve put his silence down to a lack of knowledge. After all, Zu An was useless trash that knew nothing of cultivation levels. He wouldn't know just how difficult it was to reach the third step of the second rank.

Zu An continued with his line of questioning. "Wow. You must be the strongest one amongst your brothers, right?" He remembered how the protagonists of many webnovels had to deal with an enemy's friends, family, clan and other nonsense affiliations, after defeating said enemy. This showed the importance of gathering information before acting.

"Nay, that's not so. There are quite a few who are as strong as me, and the strongest one is actually my thirteenth brother. He's already reached the third rank," Plum Blossom Twelve declared proudly. His thirteen brothers had been enjoying quite a bit of fame these past few years.

"If all of you are this formidable, wouldn't your sect master be a really incredible figure?" Zu An followed up naturally.

"Of course! Our sect master is already..." Plum Blossom Twelve realized that he had already said too much, and quickly changed his words. "Forget it. You don't know anything about cultivation anyway. What's the point of telling you all this?"

Zu An regretted how quickly Plum Blossom Twelve had caught on to him, but at least he'd managed to sniff out some useful intelligence.

Shortly after leaving the sentry post, they spied someone walking in their direction. His face visibly darkened upon seeing Plum Blossom Twelve. He immediately pulled down his bamboo hat to shade his face, turned around, and hurried off.

There was a flash of recognition in Plum Blossom Twelve's eyes. He caught up with him in a few large strides, while calling out, "Brother Tan, what are you in such a rush for?"

Brother Tan gave up his attempted escape, turning to face them instead. He tightened his grip around the saber in his hand and asked, "Plum Blossom Twelve, are you here to capture me?"

Plum Blossom Twelve raised his hands innocently. "Brother Tan, it's one thing for you to suspect others, but why are you suspecting me too? Have you forgotten those days we spent fighting against the Azure Dragon Sect? If you hadn't risked your life to carry me out, I would be dead right now!"

"You still remember that?" Brother Tan's was visibly relieved at those words.

"How could I ever forget such a selfless act? In any case, it's just a misunderstanding between our sect master and yourself. You have nothing to fear as long as you clear things up, so why do you have to run?" Plum Blossom Twelve asked. "We used to hang out with one another, eating and drinking the night away. I haven't been able to find another companion since you left."

Brother Tan's eyes reddened, and veins popped out from his hands. "You need not speak on his behalf. How can I possibly swallow the humiliation of having my wife taken away from me? My only regret is my failure to kill him with my saber back then!"

"It's not my place to comment on the grudge between you and the sect master. Personally, I really pity you." Plum Blossom Twelve patted Brother Tan's shoulder in consolation. "However, a true man like you will never lack for women. Given your capabilities, you can easily find a place for yourself. There's no need to lose heart."

Brother Tan's eyes glimmered with gratitude. "Our brothers have been hunting me down these last few days. You're the only one who still cares about me."

"Of course! We're brothers who have braved danger shoulder to shoulder! How can the bond we share compare to theirs?" Plum Blossom Twelve replied with a chuckle.

Brother Tan was deeply moved. "Brother, can I entrust you with something?"

Plum Blossom Twelve patted his chest and said, "Feel free to speak your mind! As long as you don't ask me to betray my sect, I'll do anything for you!"

"Of course, I won't ask anything of you that puts you in a bind!" Brother Tan laid out his problem. "It's like this. I had to escape in a hurry, and left behind the 100 silver taels that I saved up over the years. Can you return to the sect and fetch it for me? I'll split half of it with you!"

"Brother Tan, you're too kind! That's no trouble at all! How could I accept payment from my benefactor? Don't worry, you can count on me to retrieve your money!" Plum Blossom Twelve assured him with a wave of his hand.

"You're truly a good brother!" Brother Tan was delighted. "Don't worry, half of it is yours once you've retrieved it! Go to the backyard in my residence. The silver is hidden in the wall, behind the ninth brick on the sixth row..."

"Alright, I got it." Plum Blossom Twelve nodded. "Unfortunately, I'm a little busy at the moment, so you'll have to wait for a bit. I'm accompanying this brother here to the Wolf Valley."

Brother Tan shot a glance at the ditzy-looking Zu An, and he quickly inferred what was going on. He knew just what kind of place the Wolf Valley was—it was perfect for disposing corpses, and they had often used that location to covertly eliminate high-profile targets. "Don't worry, I'll help you take care of him."

Plum Blossom Twelve clasped his fist. "My deepest gratitude to you, Brother Tan."

Zu An felt his breath catch in his throat as Brother Tan advanced towards him, saber in hand. "Why do I have to suffer for the sake of your brotherhood?"

He was considering revealing his cultivation, when Plum Blossom Twelve suddenly darted forward, grabbed Brother Tan's face, and drew a dagger right across his neck. Zu An stiffened in shock.

Brother Tan staggered forward, eyes wide with horror and disbelief, his hands going to his ruined throat. He pointed a finger at Plum Blossom Twelve and stammered hoarsely, "Y-you..."

Plum Blossom Twelve casually wiped the blood off his dagger with a handkerchief. "Not only will I be rewarded by our sect master, I can take all your money for myself as well. Why should I bother helping you?"

"You won't... won't die a... good death..." Brother Tan fell to the ground, his lifeblood leaking through his fingers. He took one final breath and passed on, his eyes still wide open with indignance. There was no peace in death for Brother Tan.

"Only the weak bark insults in a fit of anger." Plum Blossom Twelve sheathed his dagger, then walked over to Zu An to assure him. "Brother Zu, you need not be afraid. He's a traitor of our sect, a person who deserves to die!"

"Oh..." Zu An swallowed. 'Brother Zu' sounded particularly jarring all of a sudden. After all, the last person Plum Blossom Twelve had addressed as 'brother' was currently lying on the ground, slaughtered like a pig.

A heavy cloud hung over them as they continued onward. Zu An was flustered, but there was a refreshing quality to the air that helped calm him. It smelled sweet and clean. Perhaps it's due to the raw ki lingering in the air. Small wonder that so many people in this world were able to cultivate.

The presence of the border patrols seemed to deter wild animals from this area, and they were able to proceed in relative safety. Not many wild animals ventured this far from the Hidden Dragon Mountain, and those that did were weak.

"Now that I think about it, why are you heading to the Wolf Valley?" Plum Blossom Twelve asked out of curiosity.

"Divine Physician Ji's task for today is to acquire goubaos. I'm heading there in hopes that I might get lucky." Zu An tried to look as naive as he could.

"Get lucky?" Plum Blossom Twelve burst into hearty laughter. Even he would only dare to walk around the outskirts of the Wolf Valley, but this fellow actually dreamed of entering the valley to search for goubaos?

Zu An laughed awkwardly. "I'm just trying my luck. Who knows? Maybe I'll find some wolf carcasses lying around."

Plum Blossom Twelve looked at Zu An disdainfully. This brat sure is dumber than a rock. Nevertheless, he still held his tongue. His plan would come to nought if Zu An were to back down now. "You're the son-in-law of the Chu clan. Can't you get them to pay the consultation fee instead?"

He was familiar with the rules of Divine Physician Ji's clinic too.

Zu An sighed deeply and said, "Brother, what kind of standing could a son-in-law like me possibly have in the Chu clan? Everyone looks down on me, so who would spare me any money? In the end, it's brothers like you that treat me the best. We haven't met in so long, but you're still willing to do me this huge favor."

"Of course! If I don't stand up for my brothers, who else should I stand up for?" Plum Blossom Twelve was impressed that this dumb lad actually possessed some self-awareness. "Is the First Miss of the Chu clan really pretty?"

Someone like him could never have the opportunity to meet the lofty First Miss of the Chu clan. All he knew of her came from the rumors floating around.

"She's like a fairy descended from heaven," Zu An replied honestly. That wife of his was indeed a looker.

"How did it go with her? Did it feel like you were floating into the sky?" Plum Blossom Twelve shot Zu An a licentious look.

Zu An sneered coldly on the inside, but his tone was the polar opposite. "She was fair, tender, and smooth. It was the best I've ever had."

Plum Blossom Twelve swallowed and replied enviously, "You sure are a lucky son of a bitch."

You have successfully trolled Plum Blossom Twelve for 99 Rage points!

Zu An was delighted. This Plum Blossom Twelve was yet another toad lusting after the flesh of a swan.

A gust of wind brought with it the scent of blood, and the pair noticed some bone fragments scattered on the ground in front of them. It was difficult to tell what animal they belonged to. Plum Blossom Twelve chuckled to himself and said, "Those wild beasts that venture out of the Hidden Dragon Mountain leave some remains behind, at least. However, if you were to fall into the hands of those Assrip Wolves, there won't be anything left by the time they're done with you."

They were right on top of the Wolf Valley, and nobody else was around. Plum Blossom Twelve did not fear Zu An backing out anymore.

“So that’s the Wolf Valley?” Zu An saw the terrain dip downwards in front of him, opening into what seemed vaguely like a valley. Feigning a look of fright, he grabbed Plum Blossom Twelve’s arm and exclaimed, “Big brother, you need to protect me! You’re a formidable cultivator, right?”

“Yeap, it’s right in front of us. Don’t worry, I’ll make sure to ‘protect’ you properly,” Plum Blossom Twelve said with a sinister smile. “Zu An, do you know that I’ve always been in awe of you? I never knew someone could be so naive. You haven’t grown any smarter after surviving that lightning strike. Look, you walked right into my trap right after.”

Zu An let his eyes grow wide. “Big brother, what are you talking about?”

He had intended to catch Plum Blossom Twelve off guard and assault him, but delayed as he heard Plum Blossom Twelve’s words. He had to learn more about this matter.

In any case, he was the stronger of the two just by a little bit, and he had trump cards like the Poisonous Prick and the Poison Bottle up his sleeve. He fancied his chances against Plum Blossom Twelve.

Plum Blossom Twelve pushed him away, and he collapsed weakly to the ground. This deepened the disdain in Plum Blossom Twelve’s eyes. He brushed the part of his robe that Zu An had grabbed earlier. “Since I’m in a good mood today, I shall enlighten you before sending you on your way. Yes, I was the one who brought you to the outskirts and tied you to a tree that stormy night. I just didn’t think that you would be so lucky as to survive getting struck.”